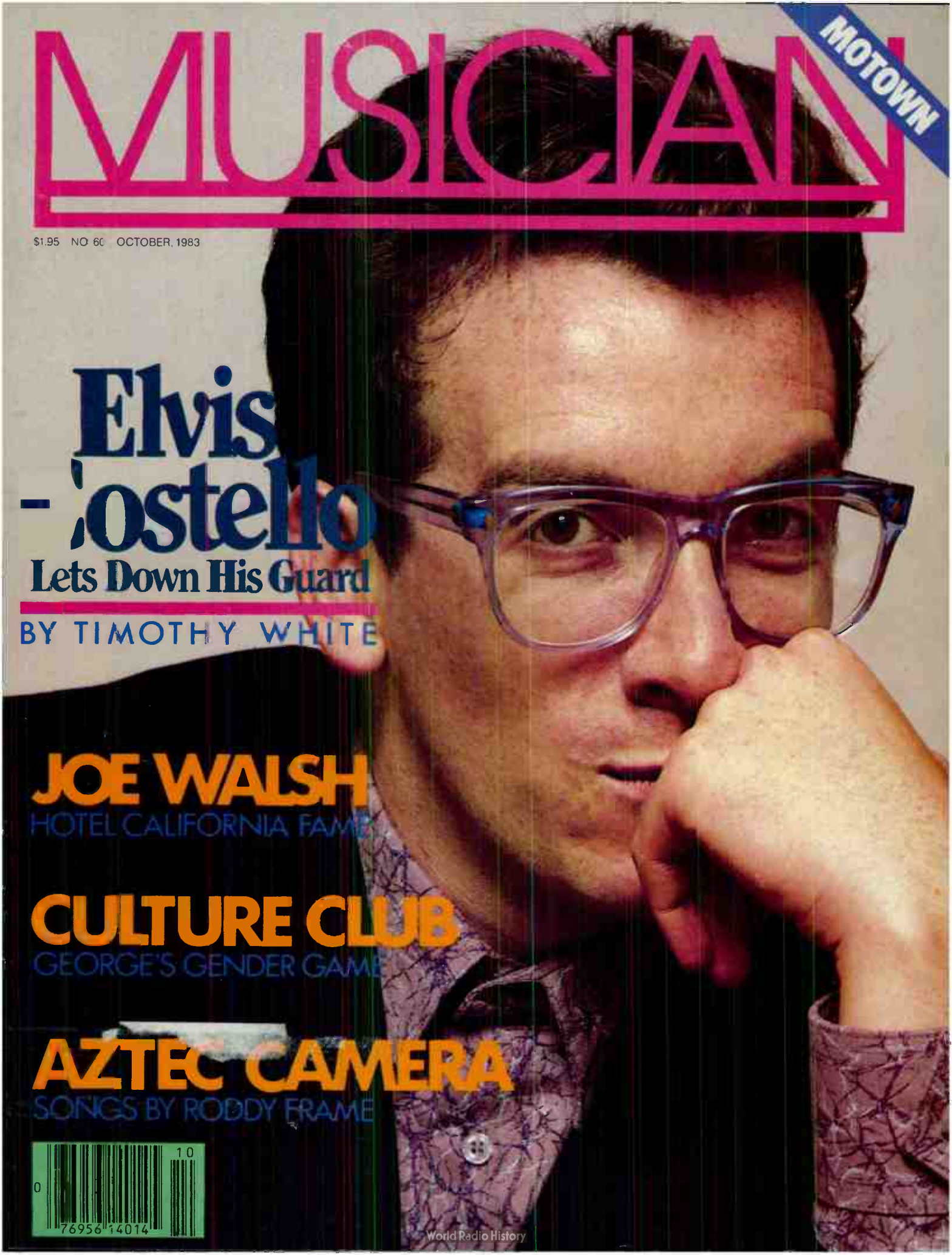
MUSICIAN

MOTOWN

$1.95 NO. 60 OCTOBER, 1983



Elvis Costello
Lets Down His Guard
BY TIMOTHY WHITE

JOE WALSH
HOTEL CALIFORNIA FAME

CULTURE CLUB
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AZTEC CAMERA
SONGS BY RODDY FRAME

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(shown actual size)

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BOSS

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MUSICIAN

NO. 60, OCTOBER, 1983

Elvis Costello arrived on the British scene six years and nine albums ago with a blast of bitterness and brute honesty that made him the first new wave superstar. As his prolific intelligence moved musically from pub to punk to post-modern, even embracing cabaret and country, his career remained stormy and underacclaimed. Now, basking in a new Costello climate of warmth, honesty and commercial appeal, Elvis relaxes over sashimi with Timothy White. Page 44

Culture Club and its tuneful crooning front-person Boy George have elevated the phrase "everything's not what you see" to epic pop proportions. While makeup and gender-shock may only be skin-deep, their musical savvy and sense of rock/soul tradition run quite a bit deeper. Geoff Himes joins the Club for a chat about appearance, reality and the joys of not being a "white boy." Page 54

The session men of Motown stood in the shadows of the 60s' biggest American stars, churning out rhythm tracks that are still setting the world in motion. Despite their formidable talents and unforgettable contributions, however, men like James Jamerson, Benny Benjamin, Earl Van Dyke, Uriel Jones, Robert White and Johnny Griffith are virtually unknown today. Nelson George sets the record straight and describes the seminal sound of Hitsville's real hitmakers. Page 60

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Cover Photo by Deborah Feingold

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Sales/Promotion
R. Bradford Lee
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Advertising Sales
Ross Garnick
Production Manager
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Typography
Don Russell
Administration
Hyacinth Amero Michelle Nicastro
Mary Ellen Cataneo Maria Pallazola
Main Office/Production/Retail Sales
31 Commercial St., P.O. Box 701
Gloucester, MA 01930 (617)281-3110
New York Advertising/Editorial
MUSICIAN, 1515 Broadway, 39 fl.
N.Y., N.Y. 10036 (212) 764-7400
Group Publisher
Gerald S. Hobbs
Circulation Manager
Donna DeWitt (212) 764-7562
Subscriber Service
Helene Miller (212)764-7536

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Letters

KULTISTS' KOMMENTS

Vic Garbarini really outdid himself with the Ray Davies article. Or should I say R.D. really outdid himself? I got more insight into R.D. from this article than from many others put together. (Not to mention a lot of insight into Pete Townshend!) I have only one suggestion, which I think is already too late to heed: change the cover line to read, "C'mon, Ray, is it madness, the weather, comedy, P.T., or just Confusion?" I think Townshend should get some billing since he was mentioned so much (not that I mind). I do have one other comment on the article: HOW DARE RAY DAVIES REFER TO RONNIE LANE AS "SOMEONE ELSE"?!
Shelley J. Mills
San Diego, CA

Being the hopelessly devoted Kinks "Kultist" that I am, I can't tell you how delighted I was to discover your cover story on Ray Davies. I had been watching the magazine stands intensely the last couple of years for an interview with Ray. Finally, *Musician* delivered. Ray Davies is as colorful a character as rock 'n' roll has ever produced. But underneath all those jackets and that goofy grin also lies one of rock's more talented writers. The new album, *State Of Confusion*, is certainly one of Ray's better recent efforts. My only complaint is that the two best songs on the album, "Property and "Cliches Of The World (B Movie)," get very little airplay. Maybe the young up-and-coming bands can stand up and learn a lesson from these crafty old veterans. Maybe we all can. Thanks, Ray.
Mark T. Perez
Westfield, MA

YOU CAN'T GO HOME

The only thing I don't like about going to concerts is that the group usually plays through their set without playing that *one* song I love, that song that would've made the performance, for me, a totally satisfying experience. I found myself in that same situation after reading your article on Steve Swallow. The piece itself was very interesting; Chip Stern did an excellent job of interviewing Swallow. But there's one album called *Home—Music By Steve Swallow To Poems By Robert Creeley* that I heard once and had to have. Why wasn't *Home* mentioned? How did Swallow feel about the LP? What inspired it?

And so I come away from your article as I would walk away from the concert, muttering, "Sure, it was a great article, but if I could've read that one comment...."
Bertram D. Oshe
Alexandria, LA

FAVE RAVE

Thank you for the cover story on Bob Marley. If I thought my ranting and raving would help motivate you to do another excellent in-depth biographical sketch such as July '83's, I'D START RIGHT HERE AND NOW...

Threatening to continue subscribing indefinitely,
Howard Lawson
Longport, NJ

HENLEY LEAKAGE

Thank you so much for the interview Mitchell Glazer did with Don Henley and Danny Kortchmar! It was about time that someone gave Henley the chance to speak his mind about the Eagles, and prove to readers that he is not the "bad guy" that other publications and media made him out to be in the past few years. Howard Rosenberg's spread photo of Henley and Kootch was very refreshing. In all my years as an Eagle/Henley fan, it is the first photo of Don Henley I've ever seen where he has a smile on his face. Thanks for the *personal* rather than the *print* side of Henley and his music. We like leakage too, Don!
Wendy Hayon
Sheboygan, WI

Don Henley certainly makes for an interesting interview. After giving us nearly a decade of laid-back music that could only inspire yawning and napping, Henley tries to hand it on the Eagles' engineer, Bill Szymczyk, and producer, Glyn Johns. Equally humorous was the idea that Henley could pick up the message where Bruce Springsteen left off in *Nebraska*. Forget it, Mr. Henley. Music and message is a *real* songwriter's hob. Not that *Hotel California* didn't have its message. It just took me a year to realize that the characters in the album with misplaced principles and values were actually autobiographical. In any other state of the union, Henley's commentary would be viewed as hypocritical. Here at the Hotel California, however, it just means a new recording contract.

Sorry about this letter. I really *do* like your magazine.
Brian Richard
Room 220 (Los Angeles)
Hotel California

MOANS & GROANS

The Ramones? In a serious music magazine? Next thing you know, you'll be doing an interview with Black Flag. I really enjoyed it, having just come off a three day Ramones binge (saw them two nights in a row and then watched *Rock 'N' Roll High School*). I would like to know two things, though. What did the Clash say about them that was so bad (and how could they)? And is John really a punk? I thought the only things punks weren't supposed to do was tell other punks what to do. Oh, and one more thing—is his jacket made of vinyl?
The Moans: Eddie Ramoan, Phyllis Ramoan, Dickie Ramoan, Luggy Ramoan
West Palm Beach, FL

I was shocked by the political ignorance and insensitivity to human suffering expressed by the Ramones in your July interview. To state that denouncing American foreign policy is an indication of being just a hippie and that, furthermore, there's no point in complaining about it since Joan Baez has already done so, does a terrible disservice to the thousands who are suffering from starvation, torture and murder at the hands of brutally repressive regimes which are not only supported by but probably owe their continued existence to massive military aid from the U.S. government. Those experiencing this waking nightmare are desperately relying on the pressure of American public opinion to alter the present course of events. It's too bad that Johnny isn't against killing people as well as animals.
George Kosinski
Jasper, AB, Canada

TRUST & SUSPICION

I'm not usually one to write to magazines or, for that matter, write for any product suggested by a magazine. However, I trusted your publication this first time and you didn't let me down. I'm referring to One Plus One's debut EP on Aarson Records. It's great! Thank you for reviewing the EP and passing it on to us.
Nelson N. Weaver
Newton, NC

In our Music Industry News of #58, we incorrectly stated that Creedence Clearwater Revival had won $8.6 million in unpaid royalties from their label, Fantasy. In fact, the defendants in the case were an Oakland accounting firm who had invested Creedence's earnings in a Nassau bank which eventually folded. Our apologies to Fantasy. In addition, the photo of Kimberle Ames in the same M.I. News was taken by Jillian LeVine.

THE OBERHEIM SYSTEM

"Let me overturn a myth here—this is the greatest drum box for sound and programmability. . . ."

Stewart Copeland
(The Police)
Melody Maker
June 18, 1983

"The system inspires creativity and experimentation on every level."

David Sancious
May 27, 1983

"In truth, these three little boxes (DMX, DSX & OB-8) will do far more than we yet know how to make use of musically."

Jim Aikin
Keyboard/April 1983

"There's no other way to record a symphony by yourself. . . ."

Sting (The Police)
Musician/June 1983

"The interface with the DSX exponentially enlarges the possibilities of what I can do."

Jeff Lorber
Obernotes/Fall 1982

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music industry news

by Jock Baird

The aftermath of Motown's distribution deal with MCA has been more stormy than similar defections from the indie distribution network by Chrysalis and Arista. A mid-Atlantic distributor, Schwartz Bros., hit the label with a five million dollar lawsuit and got a temporary injunction from a Maryland judge to keep MCA from handling Motown product in Schwartz's territory until September 19. This marks the first time indie anti-trust and breach of contract arguments have been accepted by an American court. Motown plans an immediate appeal. Buoyed by Schwartz's success, a Dallas distributor, Big State Distributing, has begun another suit in Federal court, asking for $450,000 a year for an indeterminate period and three and a half million in damages.

The big merger between PolyGram and Warner Communications is still on hold and no formal application to the West German cartel office has yet been made. A new argument for the merger has been advanced on the basis of extensive layoffs that would have to be made by the financially ailing PolyGram should the deal be scotched. The German government, mindful of an unemployment problem, may find these arguments difficult to resist. Anti-trust actions in several nations raise additional obstacles, but a spokesman for PolyGram parent Siemens recently commented. "We wouldn't have entered into these negotiations if we thought we couldn't answer any anti-trust objections."

Another big industry story on hold is the Supreme Court's decision on the legality of home videotaping, closely related to the ongoing effort in Congress to pass a levy on blank tape and recording machines. The high court put off its decision until its September session, leaving it up to Congress to act before then. Since both House and Senate bills are still at the subcommittee level, this probably won't happen before the Burger bench hears re-arguments in the case. The unusual delay sent ripples of confusion through the lawyers and lobbyists who have been lined up for and against the levy and dampened hopes for a decisive victory in the electronic copyright battle.

As part of the revitalization at Elektra/Asylum, veteran producer Roy Thomas Baker (the Cars, Queen, Cheap Trick, Journey, Devo) was hired as senior vice president of A&R. Baker plans an aggressive pre-production program of grooming new artists, including help with songwriting, arranging and demo-making. He points out the youth of E/A's new A&R staff, adding, "You don't want old farts going out there looking for someone who sounds like Foreigner, because Foreigner is very good at sounding like Foreigner." Baker's confirmation ends a stick situation involving former Boston producer Tom Werman, who had just come back over to E/A from CBS when the big shakeup occurred back in January. Not comfortable with a dual senior v.p. of A&R situation (one national, one worldwide), Werman recently resigned his executive post and went back behind the board. Baker's first big assignment was to replace himself as the Cars' producer, a job he gave to Mutt Lange (Foreigner, AC/DC, Def Leppard).

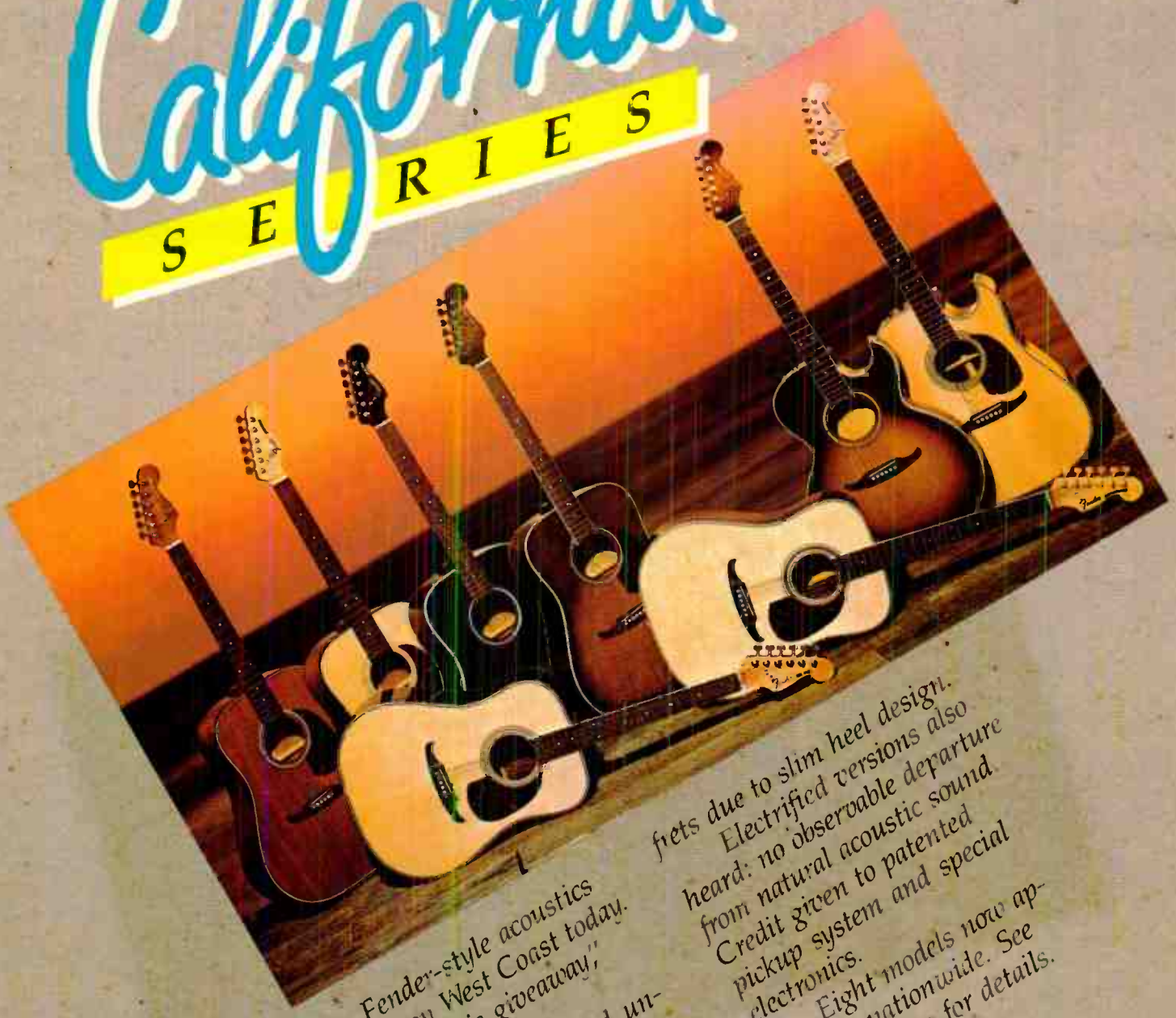
It's breakup time in the U.K., with **Dave Wakeling** and **Ranking Roger** leaving **the Beat** (a.k.a. the English Beat). Having lost their front-liners and their record deal with Arista, the Beat will pack it in. Wakeling and Roger will form a new project, entitled General Public.... **Terry Hall** of **Fun Boy Three** announced he had broken up the group, although it is still not known whether band-mates **Lynval Golding** and **Neville Staples** were told, since they are incommunicado in Jamaica.

In U.S. partner-changing, **Holly Beth Vincent** of the Italians replaced singer **Patty Donahue** in **the Waitresses**, only to walk out during soundcheck of her first gig. Patty's returning.... Bassist David Provost left the Textones (who contributed **Kathy Valentine** to the Go-Go's) to join **Dream Syndicate**. Not to be left in the dust, the Textones promptly filled his chair with **Joe Read** (once of Bram Tchaikovsky and Code Blue) and added **Phil Seymour** (once of Dwight Twilley) on skins. Tom Petty's **Stan Lynch** has also been sitting in on drums and plans to produce them. Superguitarist **Alan Holdsworth** (U.K., Tony Williams) is working on a **Ted Templeman**-produced solo LP with ex-Creamer **Jack Bruce** on vocals.... **Cornelius Bumpus**, ex-keysman and saxman for the Doobies is now fronting his own quintet.... Not to be outdone by the Animals' reunion, **the Blues Project** is getting back together. The non-news events of the summer: two organists in Wales performed **Erik Satie**'s seventeen-hour "Vexations," a piece consisting of one tuneless page of music repeated 840 times; scholars consider the work the world's most boring piece of music. And in Paris, the only existing copy of a new album by **Jean-Michel Jarre**, *Music For Supermarkets*, was bought at auction for $8,960. And you thought $8.98 was a lot....

Chart Action

Drifting along in the summer doldrums, the chart competitors seemed to be saving their energy for the big fall rumble, with the Police's LP/single triumph being the only big change. Michael Jackson dropped no further than #2 in the exchange, with *Flashdance*, Def Leppard and a slightly ennervated Stevie Nicks rounding out the top five, followed closely by Bowie, Loverboy, Men At Work and a resurgent Journey. A surprise new #10 was the *Stayin' Alive* soundtrack, while Donna Summer's quick rise to #12 and an incredible sixteen-point resuscitation by Duran Duran to #11 were the only other top twenty movers. Chart losses by Prince, Styx, Eddy Grant, the Kinks, Bryan Adams and A Flock Of Seagulls all broke open the teens for new blood like the Fixx, Talking Heads, the Eurythmics, Robert Plant (did he say new?) and Joan Jett.

California SERIES



Fender-style acoustics spotted on West Coast today. "Headstock is giveaway," agreed many.

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Fender

THE SOUND THAT CREATES LEGENDS

Aztec Camera

Teen Tales of the Unexpected

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Romantic Scot Roddy Frame thinking of ways to further subvert pop cliché.

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

Slipping into Warner Bros. Records' offices after a late lunch, Aztec Camera's Roddy Frame looks more like an errant office boy than a rising pop star. Short brown hair askew, his complexion slightly mottled and his elaborately embroidered cowboy shirt hanging from his shoulders as if impatient for him to grow into it, Frame seems even younger than his nineteen years. With his shy, soft-spoken manner and thick Scottish accent, he could as easily pass for one of the kids in the film *Gregory's Girl*, seeming far more realistically adolescent than actual cast member Clare Grogan.

None of which jibed with the mental image I'd formed listening to Frame's songs from Aztec Camera's debut, *High Land, Hard Rain*. Although some of the melodies are buoyant enough to be called "youthful," most of the music smacks of a sophistication usually thought impossible for those in their teens. The chord progressions are complex yet graceful, managing a sort of subtle modulation on vintage Cole Porter without seeming studied or overly clever. And although the lyrics carry a sense of romantic self-absorption, there is a maturity and wariness of cliché not found in sophomores. After playing and replaying such gems as "Oblivious" and "Walk Out To Winter," the Roddy Frame I had conjured up in my mind looked more like a somber old pro who'd been honing his sound in obscurity for the last half-dozen years.

As it turns out, I was right about the length of the development period, anyway. Although Frame had set his sights on music "and nothing else" as early as his ninth birthday, it wasn't until the punk explosion of 1977 that he really found a sense of direction, of genuine excitement.

Significantly, it wasn't the high-voltage thrash of the punks themselves that made the most lasting impression, but the train of historical awareness that followed in their wake. "Punk just tended to open up a whole new thing. I was a lot more open to everything that perhaps I'd missed out on by not being around in the sixties. People were looking back to what was considered to be underground then, people like the Velvet Underground, Captain Beefheart, the Stooges and all that."

By 1979, Frame was out of school and writing his own songs. After passing through a band called Neutral Blue in East Killbride, the Glasgow suburb in which he grew up, he formed Aztec Camera "just to do songs I'd been writing." In less than two years, the band had been signed to the adventurous Scottish independent, Postcard Records, home of Orange Juice, Josef K. &

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

Bobby Cochran: "The Ibanez UE300 has all the sounds that the working guitarist looks for. It's rugged and very professional, what I've come to expect from Ibanez."

BOBBY COCHRAN Guitarist
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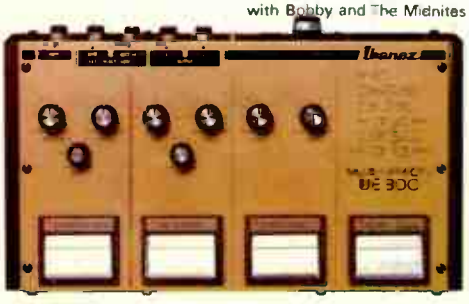

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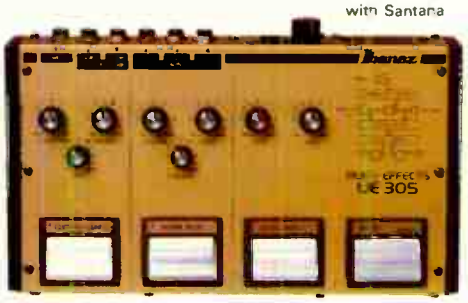
Tom Coster: "The Ibanez UE305 is exactly what I've been waiting for! It's got everything I need to give my keyboards the modern textures and effects used in today's music. It sets up in minutes, is extremely quiet and DOESN'T cost a fortune!!!"

Keyboard player Tom Coster
with Santana



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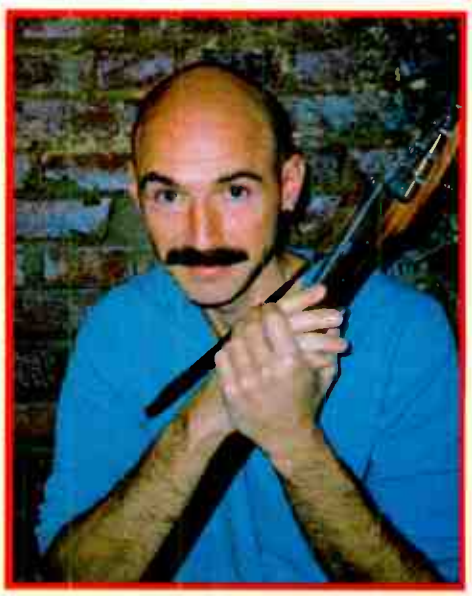

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Tony Levin Bassist
with King Crimson

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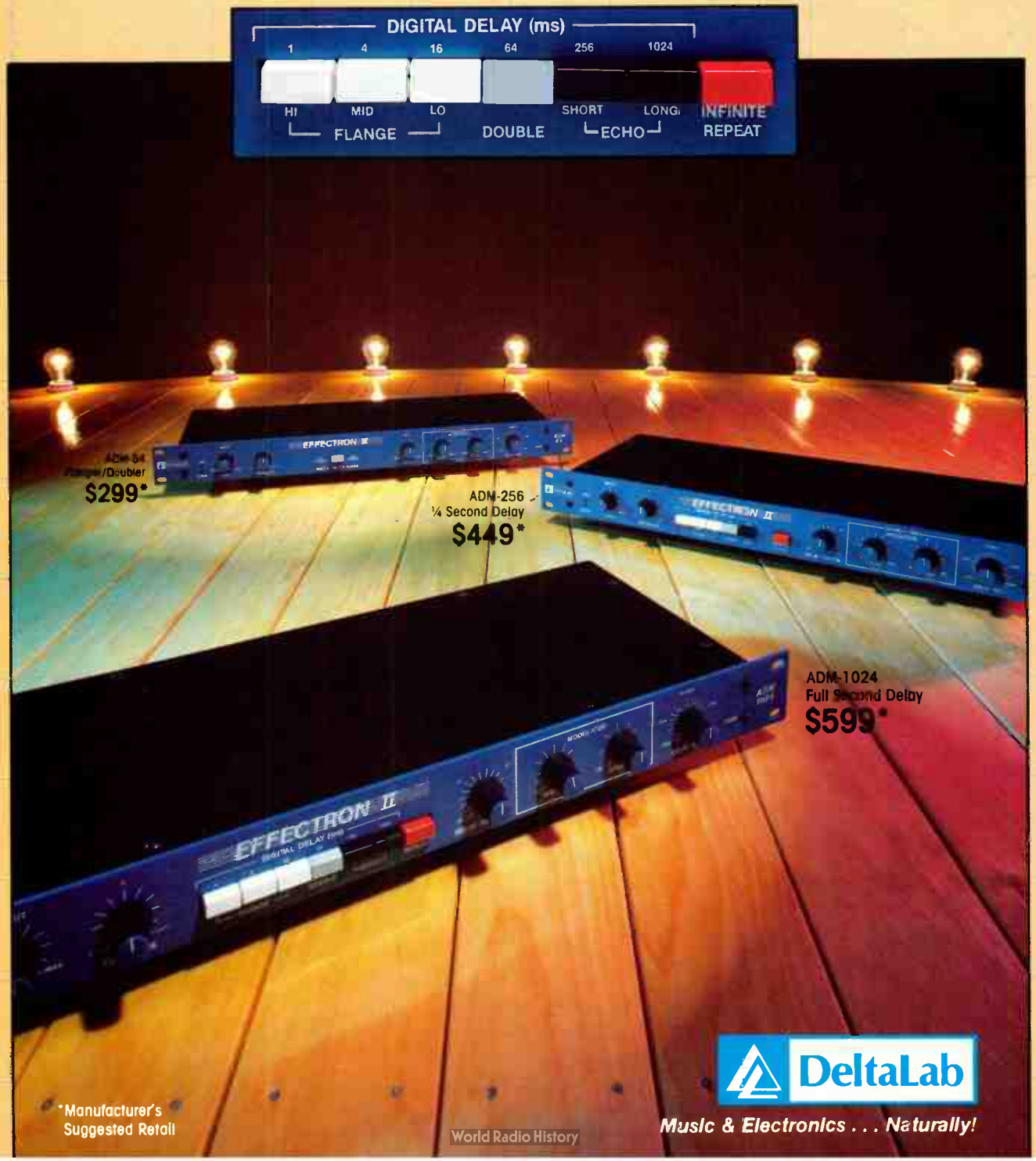

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the Bluebells, among others. Although Aztec Camera started out with a heavy Joy Division fixation, the band soon distinguished itself from the rest of the British pop scene by developing an unfashionable, utterly distinctive sound, full of acoustic guitars and hummable melodies.

At first, the band was written off as 60s revivalists. "When the first single came out on Postcard," Frame recalls, "there was a lot of talk in every review about Arthur Lee's Love. Just the acoustic guitar thing, major 7th chords, all that stuff, and the fact that the lyrics were slightly different from the music and didn't quite fit. So I could see a connection there."

But the real difference wasn't so much a matter of influences as of priorities, because for Frame, the whole thing centered on the idea of writing songs, not simply trying to translate a social philosophy or a certain amount of energy into a few minutes of rock 'n' roll.

"Eight out of ten bands you see are riff bands that usually write the stuff at rehearsals," he says with obvious disapproval. "I've always hated that idea, and just wanted to be a songwriter, really. To me, if you have a good song you should be able to play it at home on a guitar and hear it with the same dynamics and impact as with an orchestra, or whatever. I don't think there are many people writing songs that can stand up to that, apart from a few people who have already made it because of that, like Paul Simon.

"I don't know, I just don't like it when a band gets into a sound, and that sound becomes more important than the whole song. There isn't much substance there. I think the emphasis on production today is a real pity; production has replaced the songs these days, particularly in England with bands like ABC."

To Frame's mind, the studio is just a tool, and "production is something that should be sympathetic to the songs." That doesn't mean he favors a bare-bones approach; *High Land, Hard Rain* expands Aztec Camera's four-piece lineup to include everything from soulful back-up singers to touches of disco-style percussion. The point, Frame insists, is that it's all done to reinforce or contrast a certain musical idea, to provide an additional point of reference for the song's use of cliché.

Cliché is one of Frame's fixations. Although he makes a real effort to avoid parroting clichés in his writing, he likes to play on the idea of using the familiar to add an unexpected twist to his music. "If you start with something that people think they've heard before, say a six-chord sequence that almost makes people feel comfortable immediately; if you make the sixth chord something they weren't expecting, that makes the song jar a little bit, then pull back in. I like things like that. I think some of the things the Velvet Underground did were really like that, like 'Pale Blue Eyes.' It's bittersweet, where you can have a sweet melody and just throw it on the last chord."

In other words, seize upon the familiar in order to take risks.

"The thing is," Frame continues, "music's gotten really safe again. I think everyone's just writing songs called 'I Love You.' All the people who are really popular today seem to be people who are saying, 'Oh, all this post-punk stuff, all these people like Joy Division—we're not interested in that. We're a traditional pop group. We're happy, not cynical, not bitter.' It tends to come from bands like Culture Club, Haircut 100, all those people.

"To me, *those* people are the cynics. They must have said to themselves, 'There's nothing new to do, so let's be an ordinary, stupid pop group.' They must think that—I mean, they *are* intelligent people. And that to me is much more cynical than something like New Order, who, by the way, I don't particularly like. But at least New Order are adventurous in what they do. They are going against the grain a little bit."

Of course, Aztec Camera doesn't exactly sound like a group of rebels on first listen, either. "Wimps" is the most

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common first impression they engender, and Frame admits that a certain amount of patience is required to get the gist of Aztec Camera's sound. "A lot of groups come out to hit you the first time, just *blam! blam!* Our music is more subtle. One person described us as subversive mainstream rock, which was nice."

For an example of how Aztec Camera subverts the mainstream, consider Frame's inclination toward a jazzy guitar sound. In part, it's simply the fact that he plays an underamplified old Gibson hollow-body guitar and uses "all these jazzy little progressions." But, as Frame insists, "I don't pretend to be a jazz guitarist, because I'm not. What I do, I think, is just steal little bits from people. The song 'Release' on the album starts off with guitar; I was trying to get the beginning of that song to sound like Wes Montgomery. And the end of the song, it sort of builds up to a frenzy, with that really tacky organ sound. It's really wild. Live, it's just like the Velvet Underground, because it's just these guitars thrashing away.

"I like the idea of using two extremes. Take someone like Neil Young. As far as rock guitarists go, I think he's just one of the best I've ever heard, because he does things that are really.... He almost reminds me of someone like Tom Verlaine, or the Velvet Underground, yet he's so established, such a mainstream artist. The fact that he can still do things like the guitar on 'Hurricane,' for example; it's almost standard rock guitar, except there's something there. It's got something that really jars."

The fact that Frame can synthesize his enthusiasm for artists as divergent as Buffalo Springfield, Michael Jackson and the Go-Betweens into such a distinctive and original sound suggests that Aztec Camera ought to be able to survive the usual dose of faddish favor the British music press throws about to keep the circulation up. Even in the band's early days, Frame says, "We played one week to a sort of put-about crowd, and it didn't go down that well. We came back two weeks later after appearing in the British music press—we were 'hip' that week—and got three encores."

Still, Frame has no ill feelings about Britain's Trend-of-the-Month syndrome, especially when it works out in his favor. "People are so fickle," he shrugs. "I don't think you should be bitter about that and say, 'Aah, these people don't understand my music.' I think you should just accept that, and play on it, try to get what you're doing over to as many people as possible." That's one of reasons why Frame doesn't seem too befuddled by the fact that, since appearing on *Top of the Pops*, Aztec Camera's British audience now ranges from the hipsters who picked up on the band in its Postcard days to young kids who ask Frame to sign their autograph book right next to the signatures of Duran Duran. In fact, he says, "I think more and more people are starting to get into Aztec Camera because they recognize it as a really human thing. It's no big production or any of that stuff."

Nonetheless, Frame still has his private jokes, not the least of which is his "Aztec Camera look"—ersatz Western shirts, cowboy boots and suede jackets that look as if they fell off the cover of an old Neil Young album. "It's quite funny, just the idea of jeans and wearing cowboy boots and all that, because over there, in Britain, for a couple of years now everything's been new wave, and everyone's been walking around in grey macs, that sort of thing. I just liked the idea of being a bit loose about the way you dress.

"The fringed jacket came about because I'm a little bit contrary, I suppose. Most groups really try to deny their influences, I think, but when people started talking about Buffalo Springfield being one of my influences, I thought, 'Well, maybe they are.' So I listened, and loved the stuff. Then I thought, 'If they want to see it as being that, then I'll play

continued on page 42

NRBQ

Organic Eclecticism in Orbit

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Maestros of creative anarchy NRBQ: drum pummeler Tom Ardolino, gruff 'n' tumble guitarist Al Anderson, bassist Joey Spampinato and thirft-store-on-LSD pianist Terry Adams.

BY MARK ROWLAND

Seeing NRBQ play in a club for the first time is a little like sauntering into an amusement park with all-new rides—you're happy to be in on the discovery, and you're having fun, but it's still a little uncertain just *what* is going on. With NRBQ, the whirl-a-gigs commence as soon as they walk onstage. No blow-dried MTV musickers these: wearing a patchwork jacket with more color combinations than a kaleidoscope, pianist Terry Adams is more suggestive of a thrift store on LSD, and bassist Joey Spampinato, only slightly more muted in a candy-striped leisure shirt, is virtually dwarfed by guitarist Al Anderson, who looks like a mountain man. The fans in front are already screaming requests as Terry, all loopy grin and shaggy blond hair, sets himself behind the ivories with mock solemnity and amiably surveys the scene before signalling to the drummer. At which point Tom Ardolino brings down a thwock! so hard that it pulls his dark cloud of curls over his face, and off NRBQ rides across the richly contoured terrain of Musica Americana.

The next surprise is the music itself, for few NRBQ songs are much alike. Typically they begin with a sprightly jump tune like "The Music Goes Round And Round," preserving the song's ingenuous Dixieland chassis while Ardolino's pummeling backbeat, Adams' dissonant clavinet figures and Anderson's gruff 'n' tumble voicings refurbish the veneer. Without pause the band swivels into "Don't She Look Good," a hip-popping original, as Spampinato's more casual vocal delivery slides across a sizzling rockabilly rhythm like grease on a griddle. Just as the jitterbuggers prepare to swoon into dance heaven, though, yes, Terry pulls the plug with a softly reflective, "Yes, Yes, Yes," coloring the romantic lyricism with a spare, Monkish melody. The room quiets. Terry looks up with a gleam in his eye.

"Did you bring any apples?" he asks Al.

"I've got all the apples!" Al yells back.

"Did you bring any peaches?"

"Every one of 'em!"

And off they fly into "Daddy-O," a mariachi-flavored polka of deceptive innocence about a fellow who delivers not only apples and peaches, but a kiss or two. Now anarchy beckons. Trombonist Donn Adams, half of the NRBQ brass section known as the Wholewheat Horns, introduces something called the finger dance ("It's sweeping the nation," he assures) on a goofy cover of "Woolly Bully," while the other Wholewheat Horn, tenor saxophonist Keith Spring, pumps the instrumental break full of kickapoo joy juice. When NRBQ sings "Captain Lou," a catchy pop paeon to their erstwhile "manager" and otherwise professional wrestler Lou Albano, the Captain scales the stage to join in on the chorus. One moment Anderson is crooning an impossibly sweet ballad like "Never Take The Place Of You," the next he's raking the bejesus out of Johnny Cash's "Get Rhythm." Bodies are cramming the dance floor now as he spirals crescendoes from a seemingly ancient Telecaster, as Terry digs for that space where the rhythm sends shock waves up your spine, as Spampinato lassoes it all together with smooth, loping runs. Another thwock! and people are spilling their drinks as the band drives toward its denouement, screaming, singing along, laughing, yelling for encores, pleading for encores, and when, finally, there are no more encores, stumbling about in happy disorientation as if stepping off a rollercoaster. The music goes 'round indeed.

Were this show merely an eccentric pastiche, NRBQ's sheer range and grasp of songwriting craft would still be

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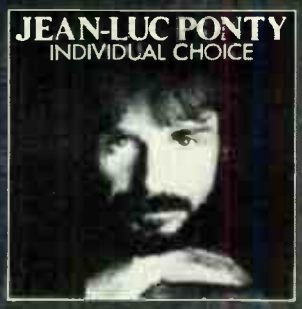

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FELA

Return of the Afro-beat Rebel

Purveyor of African outrage, frustration and self-assertion, Fela exhorts the faithful.

BY RANDALL F. GRASS

Kano, Nigeria 1974: Sitting in the midst of a spacious, immaculate patio surrounded by manicured shrubbery and the graceful curved stone-and-glass walls of a post-modern restaurant, it was easy to forget that a few feet away beggars squatted in the dust, a few blocks away women carried buckets of cistern-water on their heads through an ancient walled city, and a few miles away nomads in cloaks herded their cattle and turbanned desert-men led lines of camels. In the garden, elegant women and men—Europeans, Africans, Asians and Arabs, spiffily garbed in gowns, suits, and traditional cloaks—sipped cool drinks brought by deferential waiters.

Out of the tiny speakers suspended from light poles in the garden came a discordant sound—a driving boogie-line bass and drums overlaid by ringing electric piano. A voice, in stentorian tones, chanted phrases in pidgin English, scarcely intelligible except for a single repeated phrase: "open...open and close!" Unlike the elastic lilt of so much African music, with its easy-rolling rhythms and the ever-gentle phrasing, this voice conveyed sarcasm, defiance, aggression. Whoever it was spoke his mind without the slightest restraint: "the hell with *you*," the voice seemed to say, "this is what *I'm* about!" It was an unmistakable dose of trash-all-limits rock 'n' roll spirit.

Who was that?

"Oh, that's Fela!" someone said, smirking with relish and shaking his head, bemused.

Fela's name was on everybody's lips. His throbbing Afrobeat blared out of the shops into the streets. Newspaper headlines trumpeted the news of his latest arrest (usually for "hemp"—marijuana, that is) and the beating of his followers by police. "Zombie," his none-too-subtle satire of the military, had been banned. Rumors of his first film, *The Black President*, abounded. Teenagers idolized him, students championed him, the elite despised him and the man-in-the-street shook his head delightedly: "That Fela!" they laughed.

Fela Anikulapo-Kuti is unlike any other prominent African musician. In Africa, musicians have most often acted as agents of social cohesion—even when they were being critical. It was always a personage or behavior, not social institutions, they criticized. So a traditional musician might sing a satirical song mocking the actions of a chief but his criticism would be indirect. African music itself brings people together; it cannot exist without cooperative effort on the part of the musicians and, often, the audience as well.

But Fela doesn't mince words: "International thief" he calls the leaders of his country and, in case anyone misses his reference, he calls them by name. And there's no lilt in his music—the horns bleat and blare sharp, angular lines; Fela

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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 of 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

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MC-4/MTR-100

The Roland MicroComposer has, without question, written the industry rules for music programming and computer control of a musical performance. Roland has refined this process into an artform 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 $1295.

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 almost 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

The MC-202 is a two channel polyphonic sequencer that employs the same advanced music-programming system found on Roland's MC-4 and MC-8 Micro Composers, is battery operated for go-anywhere convenience, and even contains a full function synthesizer.

The MC-202 can be programmed live or by step programming off its own keyboard or by connecting another synthesizer keyboard, and it easily syncs to Roland's TR-606 Drumatix and TB-303 Bassline to form a complete computer-controlled ensemble. The real beauty of the MC-202 is that it contains a tape sync function (like the MC-4) that allows it to lay down a sync tone on one tape track, and then sync to that track to lay down a whole orchestra of sounds. Even more remarkable is the amount of performance you get from the MC-202 for $595.

Roland

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impressive. But analyzing NRBQ that way is like examining the body of a doughnut; if you just tally up the parts, you miss the whole. In fact, NRBQ congeals musicianship as integrated and artful as the Band's with the thoroughly artless, try-it-on spirit of a New Orleans rent party. At once steeped in tradition and resolutely organic, their aura reflects a romantic 60s idealism without the sentimental posturing of that era or the equally cynical posturing of this one. NRBQ is funny but never camp, tight but not slick, loose but only rarely sloppy; ridiculous *and* sublime. And it is that intangible essence which ultimately provides the communal link between the band and their intensely loyal following, the members with one another, and each song to the next. For it's no accident that the group's more obvious forebears—Monk, the Beatles, Lee Dorsey, Jimmy Reed, Ray Charles—were all themselves unconventional artists whose achievements transcended the limits of their genres.

Probably no band, however, has a keener grasp of how to make its points through humor. In this regard NRBQ stories abound, but two are particularly illuminating. One time the group, rather notorious for not even beginning concerts before midnight, were slotted to play at an outdoor festival at eleven o'clock in the morning. They showed up on the dot and performed a great set—in their pajamas. On another occasion, a club date, they discovered that their set was being surreptitiously taped. Terry ordered the offending scofflaw to the stage and demanded his tape recorder. Then the rest of the band gathered around its microphone and sang one of their songs *a cappella*. Terry handed the recorder back to the startled fan, and NRBQ continued with their performance.

Though live is unquestionably their metier, NRBQ has also recorded nine albums (including their latest, *Grooves In Orbit*, on Bearsville) over the course of their career, most of them of more than respectable quality. Their original compositions "I Want You Bad" and "Green Light" have been covered by Dave Edmunds and Bonnie Raitt respectively (both singers also tried their hand at Terry Adams' "Me And The Boys"), and over in England NRBQ's blistering arrangement of the rockabillly staple "This Ole House" was less respectfully pirated by Shakin' Stevens, for whom it became a number one hit. Their praises have been sounded in print by Elvis Costello, and over the years pop critics have regularly showered enough NRBQ accolades to start a ticker tape parade.

Still, they make some people nervous.

The music industry, for example, has not yet figured out what to make of

continued on page 42

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Jeff Baxter's always been into instruments that musicians can afford. It's obvious that he's also been heavily involved at the leading-edge of recording technology.

Besides telling you his feelings about Otari tape machines, there's just one other tip Jeff would like to leave you with:

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blows honking, squealing saxophone phrases and doesn't sing so much as declaim, punctuating his utterances with grunts and harsh laughter. Afrobeat, his invention, is a city sound packed with outrage, frustration and clenched-fist abandon emanating from Fela's defiant self-assertion. There are hundreds of juju bands, scores of highlife, congo and funk groups, many of them excellent, but Fela Anikulapo-Kuti is the only credible purveyor of Afrobeat.

Yet something's gone wrong. Fela was supposed to succeed Bob Marley as the next global superstar. He has everything—funk, charisma, great chops, pungent, understandable pidgin English lyrics—but he has not yet made it. Of course, in 1977, soldiers destroyed his home, his equipment and master tapes, severely brutalizing everyone in his organization, including his mother, who died soon after. Then, too, the notion of touring with up to seventy people is a difficult economic proposition. His mistrust of multinational record labels has kept him at arm's length from their star-making machinery. And some say his ego misleads him, propels him down blind alleys.

Those who count him out already are selling him short. He's ready to emerge again; he wants to conquer America. A biography, appropriately titled *Fela—This Bitch of a Life,* has just come out in England. Arista has released two LPs in Europe during the last two years. Bands like Konk and Pigbag have been stealing his licks. A French documentary feature film is ready for release. With a monster buzz happening in African music, Fela's time may have arrived.

The Shrine, Lagos, 1975: Walking into the Shrine, Fela's personal club, in 1975 was like entering the free zone of a new society as Fela envisioned it.

"Why Shrine?" he has said. "'Cause I wanted someplace meaningful, mindful of progressive background with roots. I didn't believe in playing in nightclubs anymore."

The deep thunder of bass and drums rumbling through the walls of the Shrine did not prepare you for the sight inside. Lit by an orange-red glow, the open-air courtyard scene had the look of a religious rite. A sea of bobbing heads and twisted bodies crowded the dance floor, while the faithful pressed against the stage at the far end. The sweet smell of hemp perfumed the air. Teenage girls wriggled on raised platforms at the corners of the courtyard. Ringing the dance area were the flags of every African nation, icons signifying Fela's commitment to pan-African unity.

Onstage, above the crowd, Fela's Africa 70 band churned out warm Afrobeat rhythms, a throbbing pulsation of drums and blaring horns. A half-dozen young women jiggled in place behind a clutch of microphones. Two percussionists advanced and retreated, whirling and jumping while they beat the sticks and gourds they carried. The conga drummers played with a steady fury, following the lead drummer on his trap set, while saxophonists and trumpeters stood impassive between stabbing bursts on the horns.

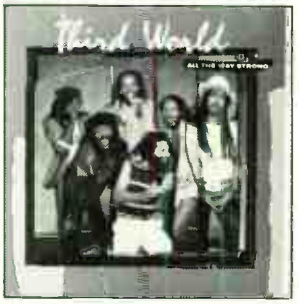
In the middle of all this stood Fela, his legs spread wide apart, blowing with savage abandon on a tenor saxophone. His thick, raw tone turned the abrupt lines he played into an assault. He was stripped to the waist with his left arm bandaged to his side, the result of a confrontation with the police. A young boy ran up onstage to receive Fela's saxophone as he picked up a microphone and paced the stage like a restless panther, surveying the audience. As with so much African traditional music, it was no show but a communal experience having spiritual or satirical or social significance, depending on what Fela chose to sing or preach:

My friend just come from prison
Him de look for work
waka, waka, day and night
police man stop am for road
he say, "Mister I charge you for wandering..."

"Trouble Sleep"

WHAT YOU DON'T HEAR CAN HURT YOU.

These people were trying to have an intelligent discussion about new music until it became clear that the citizen above was bluffing...he hadn't actually heard the new albums by Elvis Costello & The Attractions, WHAM! U.K., Translator, Third World and Herbie Hancock. Let's hope he learned his lesson.



ON COLUMBIA RECORDS AND CASSETTES.

Maybe Fela sang about something in the news or about the soldiers ("Zombie") or bourgeois Africans ("Opposite People") or sex ("Na Poi") or the aping of Western fashion ("Yellow Fever") or philosophical social commentary ("Rofo-rofo Fight"). Every phrase was answered by his chorus of female singers. He sometimes addressed his words directly to someone in the audience. And after his preaching he might move behind the piano, jabbing at it to produce emphatic, rhythmic phrases, almost Monkish in their spare dissonance. The trumpet player would blow a solo, the crowd heaved and shuddered like an agitated ocean and so it went for forty minutes, an hour, even two hours. And when it stopped...next tune.

The Shrine doesn't exist anymore; it was closed by the government in 1977 when Fela's communal home was destroyed. A new Shrine has risen but it is miles away in Ikeja, the dusty, deprived outskirts of Lagos. An understanding of the terrible struggle of Fela today can only come by knowing what went into the creation of the original Shrine, Africa 70 and Kalakuta Republic.

Africa 70: In 1938, Fela, like Sunny Adé, was born in Western Nigeria—Yorubaland, some would call it. His father was a prominent educator and minister while his mother was a renowned political activist who successfully challenged corrupt chiefs during colonial times. A rebellious streak, combined with a passion for music, defined his youth. He studied both classical music and jazz in London as a young man. When he returned to Nigeria in the 60s, he was playing jazzy highlife which was not well accepted; his music was too esoteric for the Lagos party people. A visit by Geraldo Pino, a Sierra Leonian pop musician, gave Fela his first revelation.

"I was playing highlife jazz when Geraldo Pino came to town in '66 or a bit earlier with soul," Fela recalls in his biography. "That's what upset everything, man. He came to town with James Brown's music, singing 'Hey, hey, I feel all right, ta ta ta ta!' And with such equipment you'd never seen, man. This man was tearing Lagos apart. Made me fall right on my ass! I never heard this music before.

"After seeing this Pino, I knew I had to get my shit together and quick! I said to myself, 'this James Brown music...this is what's gonna happen in Nigeria soon-o. I have to be very original and clear myself from crap. I must identify myself with Africa."

By 1968, Fela's Afrobeat sound was taking shape, but he was still searching for direction. His band was called Koola Lobitos when he arrived virtually penniless with them in America in 1969, courtesy of some air tickets from a wealthy friend. After months on the verge of starvation, with no working papers, he scored a little gig at a club in L.A. and met an American woman who changed his life: Sandra Isidore, musically inclined and heavy into black nationalist movements (she later sang on "Upsidown," one of Fela's greatest recordings).

"Sandra gave me the education I wanted to know. She was the one who opened my eyes. I swear, man! She's the one who spoke to me...about Africa! One day I sat down at the piano in Sandra's house. I said to Sandra 'do you know what? I've been fooling around. I haven't been playing *African* music. So now I want to write African music...for the first time. I want to try.' Then I started to write and write. In my mind, I put a bass here...a piano there...then I started humming, then singing. I said to myself 'how do Africans sing songs? They sing with chants. Now let me chant into this song: La-la-la-laaa...' Looking for the right beat, I remember this very old guy I met in London—Ambrose Campbell. He used to play African music with a special beat. I used that beat to write my tune, man."

So Fela's encounter with Sandra Isidore freed his mind from the sense of cultural inferiority that was the legacy of colonialism, and Afrobeat was born. He returned to Nigeria and began releasing records the likes of which had never been heard before in Nigeria: "Chop And Quench," "Buy Africa," "Black Man's Cry" (recorded in London with ex-Cream drummer Ginger Baker). And everything he released sold in a steady stream.

Soon after he christened his club the Shrine, he established a communal home for himself, his band members and others in his Africa 70 organization, including dozens of young women who flocked to him. He called it Kalakuta Republic, and it became a kind of liberated territory wherein he created his own version of traditional African lifestyle in which everyone shared work and spoils. Runaways were welcomed and the press bloomed with photos of Fela holding court before a crowd of young people, clad, as was his custom, only in a pair of briefs, his horn in hand. Photos of the bare-breasted beauties of his harem and tales of open hemp-smoking scandalized Nigerian society. The government hated it; the kids loved it.

Kalakuta Show, 1977: The arrests started—Fela never really hid his hemp smoking—and the harassment increased as he formed a social-action movement that captured the imagination of many young people and even thought of run-

DRUMS HAVE BEEN ROUND FOR AGES

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SIMMONS

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ning for President someday. His ads in newspapers castigated the latest government folly, such as FESTAC, the second World Black Arts Festival held in Nigeria in 1977—in which Fela did not participate. "I cannot participate in anything that is not first quality," his ads proclaimed.

"FESTAC!" he recalls. "One big hustle, man. A rip-off! They tried getting me in it. They started out being nice to me and that sort of thing. So I presented a nine-point program to make the festival meaningful. The first point of my program called for the participation of the people. Then I denounced the way in which the cultures of Nigeria were being treated trivially. But Major General Haruna rejected these proposals. It was then that I resigned.

"So FESTAC came for one month. I stayed at the Shrine and made my counter-FESTAC there. All the big musicians and artists FESTAC brought in wanted to see me, man. For one whole month, every night, Shrine was packed by blacks from all over the world. And since they wanted to know what was happening in Nigeria, I told them!"

Shortly after the spotlight of world attention disappeared with FESTAC's finale, the government moved on the Kalakuta Republic. The attack devastated Fela, his family and his organization. He and his people were injured physically and creatively; the tools of a musician—instruments, recording equipment, master tapes—were destroyed. Though Fela began piecing his life back together, releasing new recordings and performing in Europe, his drive toward global recognition was shattered. He married all twenty-seven of his "queens" who had stayed with him through thick and thin and licked his wounds.

"The destruction of his home and the death of his mother had a serious impact on his life," recalled Sandra Isidore. "I didn't realize how serious it was until I went there. The destruction of Kalakuta has broken him to some degree. The government has practically destroyed the man. In the newspapers, they tell people that if they go to the Shrine, they go at their own risk. The only way Fela was able to come back at all was through outside help and help from friends. Someone donated land and he built another Shrine. The government only allowed it to happen because it *is* a Shrine, not a club. They beat him to his knees, then they began beating his knees."

Egypt 80, 1983: It's a testament to Fela's strength that he's getting back on his feet—a new Shrine, a new band (Egypt 80), new recordings. The music had become moodier and slinkier but its powerhouse rhythms still pack more punch than just about anything else on the planet. "Original Sufferhead," his most recent release, showcases some of his most lucid blowing on record and its lyrics are as biting and funny as ever—yet serious as life and death.

With Sunny Adé infiltrating Babylon with African music, the way has never been clearer for the original rebel, Fela. Those who suggest that Sunny will fill Bob Marley's global role are hopelessly off the mark; the beauty of Sunny's music is rooted in harmony emanating from simple religious faith and the placid vision his privileged status has given him. Fela has cast away security and is leading the world's sufferers to a showdown; rock 'n' roll rebellion, African style. His mission now is to bring his music, his message, to the world—it's all that he has left.

"I think I'm a great person," he declared nearly ten years ago in an interview, "and I hope all Africans think they are great persons because that's the only way we can survive. Most Africans think that life is a white man ruling a black man for life. They think everything from overseas is greater but they don't know that everything from overseas could have gone from here to overseas and come back to us. America gave me that line of thought. When I come back, it will be as the king of African music!"

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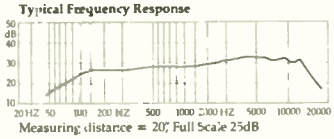
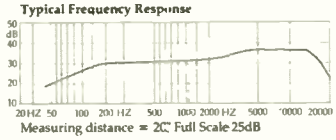


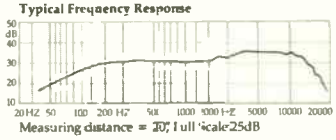
D-2 Dynamic Microphone

The satisfying heft of the D-2's satin gunmetal case and the smooth, seductive sound it lends to vocals place it a step above other dynamic mics. Its low harmonic distortion and high spl capability tell part of the story—but specs alone can't convey the D-2's natural, well-balanced, exceptionally musical sound quality. $137 (suggested retail).



D-3 Slim-Line Dynamic

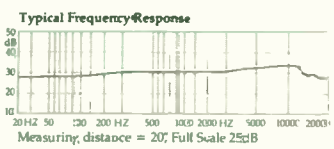
Finally, a great performance mic designed specifically for the smaller hand—with an elegant, slimmed-down case and a response curve that's carefully shaped for warmth and smoothness. And the thin profile doesn't sacrifice directional characteristics or ruggedness. A stunning new combination of great looks, sound, and value. $149 (suggested retail).



The Truth Comes Out.

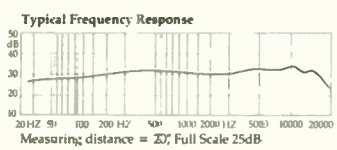
P-1 Condenser Microphone

This superbly accurate, multi-purpose mic uses Fender's breakthrough technology in permanently charged condensers. It can reproduce blistering sound levels of over 150 dB without overload. Four switch-selectable response options allow tailoring of frequency response for virtually any application. External phantom or battery powered. $220 (suggested retail).



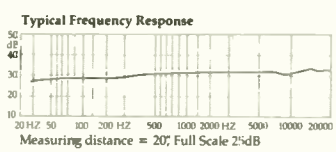
P-2 Condenser Microphone

With the same advanced element technology as the P-1, this economical mic offers much of the same great performance. Consistent on- and off-axis sound and amazing ruggedness make it an unbeatable all-around stage mic with studio-quality sound. Like the P-2, the P-1 is covered by Fender's 1-year Road Hazard™ warranty. $99 (suggested retail).



M-1 Miniature Condenser Microphone System

A brilliant bit of Fender applications engineering that opens the door to a whole range of innovative microphone techniques. The high-performance cardioid condenser pickup fits virtually anywhere. The M-1 features a pocket-sized preamp box that's packed full of features. Its notch filter (tunable from 50 to 320 Hz) increases gain before feedback at least 6dB in acoustic guitar applications. There's also a music/voice switch for reducing breath blast and excessive proximity effect. The M-1 is able to withstand an incredible 150+ dB spl. This gives you the freedom to get as close as you like to any sound source. Special, optional application kits let you mount the M-1 to a drum stand, an acoustic guitar, a headset or eyeglass frame. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination! $175.00 (suggested retail). Accessory mounting kits are priced separately.



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THE SOUND THAT CREATES LEGENDS

FACES

MADNESS

OBSERVATIONS FOR INQUIRING MINDS

ERET ROBERTS

You couldn't ask for a better summary of the Madness sound than "Our House." Unlike "One Step Beyond" or "Night Boat To Cairo," the ska-fueled singles that first sent the group to the top of the British charts, this isn't a one-dimensional pop song. From the driving, Motownish bass line that powers the verse, the song shifts effortlessly into a modified "Louie Louie" pattern for the chorus, blithely bridging two of the sturdiest strains in British rock. And that doesn't even take into account the Music Hall strings, honking R&B saxophone and touch of New Orleans piano sprinkled throughout.

Then there are the lyrics, which make a good show of looking back on the joys of youth with a sentimental gaze, but keep coming up with little ironies or intimations of painful reality to really sell us on the idea. It's not as God-and-Country English as Ray Davies would have made it, or as mockingly satirical; nor is it as smugly literary as it might have been had it come from Chris Difford and Squeeze. Instead, it's plain-spoken without seeming simple-minded, just like the people you'd expect to find in that house in the middle of that particular street.

How do they manage such a subtle level of difference? "We're observers," offers Carl Smyth, the singer whose words grace "Our House." As he sees it, the typical Madness song is "didactic." "They explain a situation, so it's our view on something we see. But we like to write so that on the surface there seems to be one story, and then if you read into them, there's another. If we've got something to say and it's not particularly funny, or if we are dealing with something serious, we like to cloak it a bit. So if you're the sort of person who wonders or inquires, there's more there for you; if you're not inclined that way, it's just a stimulus."

The group's musical variety wasn't quite as intentional, however. "We're all about the same age, so we all started listening to records at about the same time and our influences are roughly the same: Motown, reggae and so on. Also R&B. A number of us are into Professor Longhair and Fats Domino, particularly Lee Thompson, the sax player. The British Music Hall influence came in the way we moved and acted. We sort of like that tradition of comedy and characters, being able to go over the top, visually.

"It didn't come out consciously; it was more a sort of natural mixture of all of us together. It just seemed to come out and other people noticed it before we did. We gave it our own label, 'The Nutty Sound,' just so we wouldn't get labeled.

"Unfortunately, we did anyway, as a ska band. But we felt that was unfair. The original reason we played a lot of ska and reggae was because we were so bloody awful in the beginning. We were really bad. We started with R&B, just getting covers, and we moved on next to reggae, because we got a little better and it seemed an easy progression."

So that is the Madness secret—progress through practice?

"I like to think it's our attitude," Smyth laughs. "We don't mind laughing at ourselves, but we're doing it for a purpose, so that other people can look objectively at themselves. We try to pinpoint and show people the stupidity of a lot of things, but in a nice way." — ***J.D. Considine***

ROBERT PALMER

21ST CENTURY RETRO MAN

Robert Palmer strode onstage at the Ritz in Manhattan one sultry night last July dressed in subdued, vaguely futuristic plain white shirt, tie and square-cut trousers. His garb recalled Harrison Ford's hip twenty-first century/retro man in the film *Bladerunner*, and as Palmer's sleekly customized steamroller of a six-man band glided in the oscillating heartbeat of his 1980 synth-pop classic, "Johnny And Mary," the image made even more sense.

Palmer owns a voice that melds all the right traditional/R&B influences—Gaye, Redding, Pickett—with a keening, edgy Celtic soul sound. Palmer has also doggedly pursued the nouveau through all its chameleon-like changes in a decade of solo recording, starting with his early use of studio heavies like the Meters, Stuff and Little Feat, and extending more recently to his bent towards multiple synthesizer tracks and cross-cultural rhythmic stews. The result has been a slightly hazy public image, which translates to mid-level stardom in Europe (Joe Strummer is an ardent admirer) and something more like a cult following Stateside.

Palmer's latest LP, *Pride*, takes his idiosyncratic excursions into stripped-bare funk, reggae and African rhythms one step further. The album covers a lot of terrain. The


EBET ROBERTS

title track is a mildly tongue-in-cheek, anti-aerobics, Caribbean-flavored lilt that exhorts a woman, "Sister, don't you jog it all away." Elsewhere, Palmer moves through synth-rock and synth-funk with equal gusto. Such eclecticism may not cater to standard consumer tastes, but that night at the Ritz, Palmer's anatomy-of-the-groove approach worked stunningly. Using the band from the album, Palmer sailed through an hour-and-a-half long set that featured ear-bending polyrhythms from drummers Dony Wynn and Michael Dawe, and seamlessly sequenced segues by synth whiz Jack Waldman; throughout the set, the beat never stopped. Palmer's current characteristic groove is a solid-state pulse that's located somewhere between rock thump, funk whump and reggae bump. Bassist Frank Blair added a virtuoso bottom that neatly contrasted the futuro shenanigans, while guitarists Alan Mansfield and John Staehley bristled with sparse accents and a crackling chordal attack. Palmer subjected every song to some variation on this demonically controlled pulse.

When asked how he puts this music together in the studio, Palmer cheerfully admitted that "although I love to work with expert musicians, I'm not famous for having a 'band' sound. And yet, I'm aiming at something very specific, so for this album I spent time devising rhythms and parts very precisely on a drum machine and a PPG synthesizer. This way, I was able to define exactly what I meant in musical terms to the musicians, who could then bring their own spirits to the parts and songs. The interpretation, then, had more to do with real playing than with everybody being content with what we were aiming at—I'd already had that covered. For me, synthesizers are fabulous tools for both writing and increasingly greater musical expression—as long as I can keep the thing organic, in my own terms. Remember the time when everybody was picking up a guitar and had a harmonica around their necks? Well, I think synthesizers and electronics are at the same stage now." — ***Crispin Cioe***

GIL EVANS

SPONTANEOUS ARRANGEMENT

Dealing in predetermined subtleties—the manipulation of moods, ensemble voicings, timbral textures, grooves—the goals of the arranger would almost appear to be diametrically opposed to the improvisatory freedom associated with jazz. But in reality, all great improvisers have been masters of the art of spontaneous arrangement (as much as the widely used analogy of spontaneous composition). Like the arranger, the improviser attempts to elaborate on the composition at hand by infusing it with distinct elements of his or her musical personality. Like the improviser, the best arrangers write urgency into their works. Some of the most memorable jazz possesses the stamp of an arranger, and in many cases the stamp is that of Gil Evans. Who else could translate Bird tunes like "Cheryl" or "Relaxin' At Camarillo" or Monk's "Well You Needn't" into the musical syntax of the 80s, naturally substituting funk for swing and convincingly molding these tunes into his own image?

Packing Sweet Basil (one of New York City's plushest and best run clubs) for a string of Monday nights, Evans' big band (three trumpets, two saxes, trombone, electric guitar and bass, drums, piano and synthesizer) attracted both an unusually mixed audience and a bevy of prominent musicians. Evans warmed up the band with long, looping compositions revolving around funky riffs and loosely stated ensemble parts, much in the vein of Miles Davis' seminal *Bitches Brew*. Using David Sanborn's distinctive alto as the lead voice, both on "Short Visit" and "Priestess," Evans gave Sanborn ample room to prove why he's one of our great saxophonists (listen to how he nearly plays Arthur Blythe under the table on Evans' latest, *Priestess*). While the tenor shouting of George Adams became a bit monolithic, he did open up on Evans' playfully moody arrangement of Mingus' "Orange Was The Color Of Her Dress Then Silk Blue." Lew Soloff's lead trumpet sparked the band throughout, but his solos lacked the manic flame of the ever-wild Marvin "Hannibal" Peterson.


DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Ever since he put himself on the map with the revolutionary, now classic, arrangements for Miles, Evans has demonstrated an impressionist's penchant for utilizing every color available in his orchestral palette. With expansive voicings, Evans made his band sound twice as large while using unison lines to retain the rhythmic unity and conceptual focus of a smaller group; the band roared, whispered and danced. "Well You Needn't" and Evans' brilliant treatment of Hendrix's "Little Wing" (two of the band's best performances) illustrated Evans' taste for variety and showed how well he can still inspire young players—Hiram Bullock's improvisations soared on the Hendrix tribute. Evans' writing puts him in rarefied company: he's one of the few really good arrangers still around, and his Antilles record captures a healthy portion of the band's spirit and his own writing. But don't be a fool and pass up chance to hear them live. — ***Cliff Tinder***

DIFFORD & TILBROOK

LIFE AFTER SQUEEZE

EBET ROBERTS

Difford & Tilbrook, that most British of songwriting teams, producing Grandmaster Flash, the grand poobah of rap?!?

"It is a pretty surprising combination," Glenn Tilbrook agrees with a laugh. "The way it came about was, Sylvia Robinson (head of Sugarhill Records) met somebody from our management company and the idea of our writing a song for Flash was bandied about," Tilbrook explained. "I went mad about the idea but I didn't know if it would come off. But I think what we came up with worked out pretty well. It sounds like a Grandmaster Flash record, but you can hear us in the tune as well—I play piano on the song. It's a rap record but we didn't write the rap, we just supplied the buzzword: "The Amazoon."

"The word 'Amazoon' comes from a play we did last year called 'Labeled With Love,'" continues Difford. "It's about a pub that's losing business so it's changed into a disco and renamed 'The Amazoon.' The play did very well, and played to sold-out houses in London for thirteen weeks."

Difford & Tilbrook have been keeping a fairly high profile in the U.K., what with their play, and Tilbrook deejaying at a British club one night a week. However, "The Amazoon" is the first thing America has heard from the pair since Squeeze, the brilliant pop quintet they led for five years, called it a day. That is about to change. They recently signed a seven-album contract with A&M America, hooked up with Shep Gordon's high powered management firm, Alive Enterprises, and are presently whipping a new band into shape.

"We finished auditioning players and began rehearsals last month," says Tilbrook. "Pino Palladino, who's played with Jools Holland, Gary Numan, and is on just about every record in Britain's top ten at the moment, is our bass player. He's the only new member we can mention at the moment. The new band is not going to be Squeeze—it'll be a new band with a new style. It hasn't been a conscious decision, but our writing seems to be showing more of a black influence—you can hear it in songs like "Tempted" and "Black Coffee In Bed."

Difford & Tilbrook's sabbatical from touring has given them a chance to stockpile a hefty amount of new material, which Tilbrook describes as "really good, if I do say so myself."

"This year I've been writing in a completely different way," Difford explains. "I live in the country now and I've been pressuring myself to write more because I have the time to do it. I've written about sixty or seventy lyrics in the past three months. It even got to the point a few weeks ago where I began to feel I was strangling myself with words and had to force myself to stop writing. As to what the new stuff is like, I'd say that it's a bit less dark. I'm not writing as much about being drunk and depressed in pubs, partly because I think I've completely exhausted the subject, and partly because having not been on the road for the past few months, I've been spending less time in bars."

Asked if they felt satisfied with what they accomplished with Squeeze, Difford replies, "In many ways Squeeze was really successful and I think it was underestimated by both the band and the public." Adds Tilbrook: "In terms of popular success, I think Squeeze was a little ahead of its time. The kind of music we

continued on page 40

JUDY MOWATT

I-THREE WITH A MESSAGE

When Peter Tosh briefly joined Judy Mowatt on stage towards the end of her New York debut at First City, it felt for a moment as if the Wailers were miraculously whole again. Bunny might have been in Jamaica and Bob in Zion, but Sister Judy and Peter sang "One Love" as if *they* had written it. The capacity crowd got a taste of the impromptu professionalism that only veterans of the notorious Jamaican studio system can deliver.

Judy Mowatt, one third of Bob Marley's female complement, has long awaited the chance to assert her own ideas as songwriter and producer. She created the Ashandan label in the early 70s to release a series of devil-soul flavored rock-steady singles, many of which have subsequently

continued on page 40

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LAURA LEVINE

Athens, Georgia is home of many a marvelous mutant dance band: The B-52's, Love Tractor, Method Actors, Oh-OK, not to mention bizarro popsters R.E.M. But none of them, not even the vaunted B-52's, can match Pylon for sheer unadulterated motivational power. Pylon is easily the most radically revisionary of the Athens crew in terms of refracted/remodeled arrangements. Yes, Pylon *can* be compared to Public Image, Ltd. circa *The Metal Box* but minus the mewling nihilism, and to Gang of Four minus the political polemic. But they are *the* most muscular and spartan purveyors of new white funk-rock around, and if you don't believe me, I urge you to check out their singles ("Cool"/"Dub," "Crazy"/"M-Train," "Beep"/"Altitude") and their albums (*Gyrate* and *Chomp*), all on Athens' own independent DB Recs. Especially check 'em out live, at New York's Ritz for example, where they can mow you down even as they seem to levitate the house, spinning the dance-floor dervish-like and threatening to fly right off the stage through pure centrifugal velocity.

The principals, singer Vanessa Briscoe, guitarist Randy Bewley, bassist Mike Lachowski and drummer Curtis Crowe, unassumingly come out and set about plowing a deep groove: Lachowski's vibrato treble-toned lead bass churns through Bewley's spiky drone, Vanessa coos/talks/sighs/screams, and all of it rides atop Crowe's turbine drive-train rhythm. In no time, Vanessa goes into her trademark dance, a sort of free-form, friendly pogo, and most of us in the decent-sized but enthusiastic crowd are doing abandoned variations on her theme. Pylon's set spans its whole career: their epochal '79 debut "Cool," alternately ticking like a time bomb and exploding like depth charges; stuff from *Gyrate* like the stupendously ominous chiller-theater punk-funk of "Danger," "Crazy" and "Altitude," which introduced an unlikely lyricism into their pile-driving trademark sound; the careening, Roadrunner-paced "Beep"; and the cuts from *Chomp*, which radically depart from Pylon's typical rhythm & bruise formula. Fittingly, Pylon encores with "M-Train," a devastatingly basic lesson in the stripped-down basics of avant-funk muscle.

Ask Pylon how they do it and they have no real answers. Each and every one of them says the same thing: "We don't analyze what we do, we just do it." Bewley didn't even know what kind of weird Near-Eastern tunings he was using until he got a strobe-tuner and found out. Curtis says, "A drummer should just hit the skins as hard as he can and keep a good beat, and that's all I try to do." Vanessa claims her lyrics are "personal...I guess there's an inner logic there. People can take from them whatever they want." A triumph of instinctive American creativity? You bet. But Pylon is aware of what its music can *do*. Curtis and Mike proudly produce a letter from the proprietor of the ribs and juke joint in Winston-Salem's black ghetto they frequented while recording *Chomp*. "She wrote," chuckles Mike, "that 'Beep' is her favorite song of all time, and that 'whenever things get too slow here, I just put that on the juke and everybody gets in the groove.'"—***Michael Shore***

ARTHUR BROWN

CRAZY LIKE A FOX

A few months ago, MTV viewers may have been surprised by a video in which a bearded, balding stringbean of a man rushed through a series of technological landscapes to the accompaniment of a heavily synthesized dance track. When the credit said Arthur Brown, the response was probably two-fold. The youngsters said "Who?" and us older types said "Not *the* Arthur Brown."

Yes, it's *the* Arthur Brown, all right. The former God of Hellfire, ex-leader of Kingdom Come, and generally all-purpose loony is back on the scene after a couple of years of painting houses in Austin, Texas. Not that he's turned into a cosmic cowperson, no, indeed. He's still weird, don't worry about that; Arthur Brown has always been a bit odd. A native of Whitley, Yorkshire, Brown started out playing in trad bands, and wound up, like so many young British musicians in the early 60s, with a blues band, Blues & Brown. Unable to get a record contract for the band, he left for Paris to

continued next page

DAVID FOX

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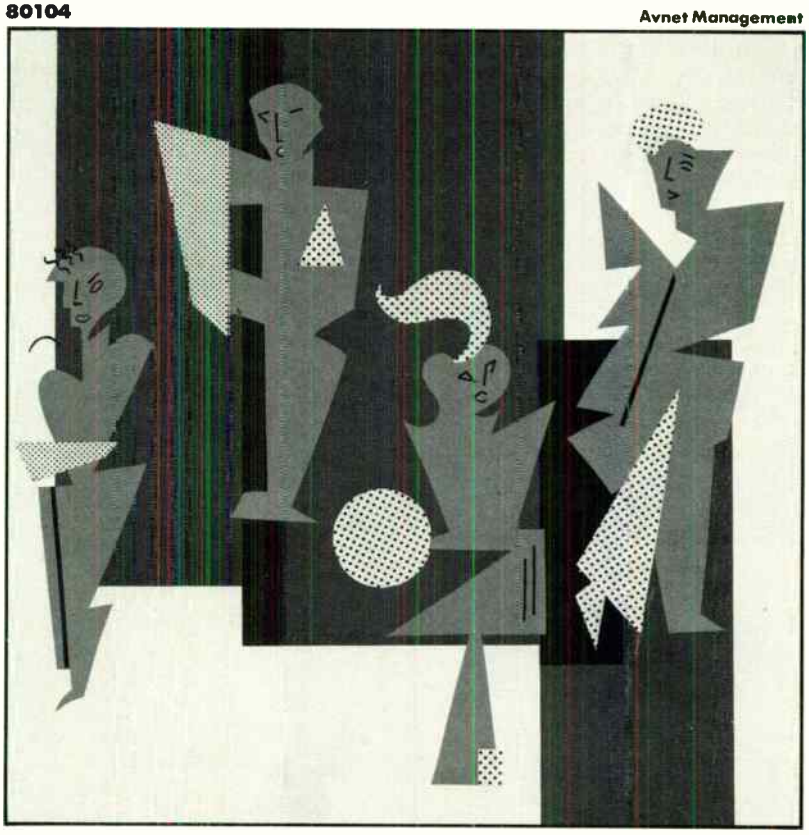

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were doing in '79 and '80 didn't become popular on a large scale until last year, and a lot of bands that don't do it as well have had a lot more success with it. I'm not bitter about that, but that is my appraisal of the situation. As to why Squeeze never became massively popular, I suppose it's because we never had a strong image, and the longer the band existed, the more impossible it became for us to change that.

"Video has become a very important tool and it's something we plan to build into the new band from the start. There's got to be some way that we can harness video to put ourselves across better. The unfortunate thing about video is that it always seems to promote individual people instead of music, and it's always tied to a specific person's sexuality. I generally find that objectionable, although there are exceptions. Sting exploits his sexuality on video in a way that's somehow acceptable. Elvis Presley could do the same thing on film. I guess it all comes down to that fact that some people have it and some don't." — ***Kristine McKenna***

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been re-recorded for LPs. Of the three albums presently available, she takes credit only for the latter two—newly released on the Jersey-based label Shanachie. *Mellow Mood* (Tuff Gong, '77) however, was produced by Alan "Skill" Cole with Bob Marley, and although some of Judy's own compositions were used, she describes her actual input as being little more than that of a hired voice. So 1977 was also the year she gathered her own musicians and embarked on a highly personal "message" album relying largely on her own financial and technological resources.

"The *Black Woman* album took me a very long time because I was touring with Bob during those years and wasn't able to spend a month or two straight in the studio," Judy explained. "Nothing was completed until 1979. But to minimize costs I'd have to rehearse the musicians at home and write down what I wanted in terms of bass and horn lines the night before we recorded. I have no formal music training, and I don't really play an instrument, so on the tunes I arranged I have developed my own special notation for how I wanted a specific track laid.

"On 'Joseph,' Earl 'Wya' Lindo, who played keyboards with Bob, just came in and began creating his own keyboard improvisations around my vocals. I never told him what to do, and just let the other musicians center themselves around his inspiration. It was perfect from the start."

Judy's particular inspiration pervades "Sister's Chant," which is full of subtle harmonic distortions and evocative dub effects quite different from anything else on the album. The later LP, *Mr. Dee-Jay* (*Only A Woman* in the U.S.) contains nothing so adventurous. Judy claims that on the second record she was collaborating more closely with her musicians and her decisions were not quite so idiosyncratic as on *Black Woman*.

"For the third album, though, I am thinking that I would like to find a black American arranger for a more contemporary sound on one or two tracks," Judy confided. "But as far as the new dance music goes, I really prefer my acoustic sound. "You see," she continued, "Rasta music is about people living, feeling, working together. And the absence of the human element represented by this synthesizer technology is not what I want to put across. I love my horns, my bass man, my drummer. We are not here to eliminate the human element, and I think that must be proven in our music." — ***Carol Cooper***

Brown from previous page
"start a rock empire." That's just what he did, too. "We were huge over there. The Arthur Brown Set played with Blossom Toes, Davey Jones and the Lower Third; we did mime as part of our act. Salvador Dali came to see us." And in a hotel one night, Arthur stumbled across the prop that was to make him famous.

"There was a crown, just lying in the

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THE Kit®

NRBQ from pg. 22

NRBQ, or more accurately, how to make something of them. They're too independent, too adept at parlaying too many styles into a collective voice too broad to be easily encapsulated in standard programming formats. "We try to leave the real sound of the band intact," Terry emphasizes. "We're not marching to the tune of I.B.M.—we're swinging to the tune of B.M.I. I say I.B.M. because so many records now are built around an automatic drum track; the rhythm is steady, sure, but then if the band has to go out and play somewhere, they can't match it—it's superhuman. If we can't get the rhythm right, we're not gonna bring in a machine. We'll just come back the next night."

Small wonder record labels (Bearsville is their fifth) aren't sure how to promote them, radio stations where to slot them, or record stores even where to stock them. So far. For their part, however, NRBQ isn't much concerned. Of course, they wouldn't *mind* a little more plush here and there—a few more concert stages, a few less saloons. But since the current sextet has held together for nine years (the band itself for considerably longer), they aren't likely to change their, uh, tune to get it.

"It's like the tortoise and the hare with us," says Terry, who founded NRBQ with Spampinato back when the locks below their collars were actually in fashion. "We've got the shell, we've got the feet, and we're *goin'*. Sure, we've seen all these other guys zooming past—I mean, Bruce Springsteen once opened for us, y'know? Nyooooom!" he laughs. "We see it all the time, and we always wave 'good luck.' But we know where we're headed, and that we're solid. I wouldn't be happy with any other rhythm section. Al knows no other band could showcase him the way we do. We are all in this thing *together*."

"It's kind of a safe place for us," Joey explains. "I know I can count on Tom and Al never to bore me. We're having fun, and doing exactly what we want. We keep gaining fans, and so far we've done it without losing our old fans—so as far as we're concerned, we're the most commercial band around."

We are hanging out in the comfortably neo-rustic confines of Albert Grossman's Bearsville studios, as Adams and Spampinato take a break between final mixes of *Grooves*. The first NRBQ album in almost three years (an interim LP with country singer Skeeter Davis was released overseas), its eleven tracks provide a fair sampling of the band's musical prowess, infectious cheer and characteristic drollery. Bubbly pop singalongs ("Rain At The Drive-In") alternate with winsome balladry ("How Could I Make You Love Me"), jaunty two-steps ("I Like That Girl"), rockabilly in overdrive ("Get Rhythm" and Jack Butwell's obscure gem "Twelve Bar Blues"), rumbling rockers ("When Things Was Cheap") and aching bunions ("Hit The Hay").

"Though in a way, our records are all fairly consistent," Joey declares. "I mean, we would never start recording...Indian ragas or something."

"Well, it's true, people are always asking, 'How do you classify your music?'" admits Terry with a mix of amusement and bruised exasperation. "Or else, 'Why do you *play* so many kinds of music?' I want to know, what kind of music did the Beatles play? Was it 'Get Back' or 'Strawberry Fields'? 'Eleanor Rigby' or 'Revolution'? What bag were they in? I don't want to just say, 'We're a rockabilly group,' because that's not our point. I don't want to relive rockabilly and put grease in my hair—I can't really, it's too late. Now if it comes up, we'll play the heck out of it, and a lot of guys better *stray* when they hear us play it," he grins slyly. "Because when we play rockabilly, it kills.

"But that's not my goal. We have other things to do, and we just want the license—and we have the license. Because I know what music can do. I was there when *Help!* came out, weren't you? So there's no reason to screw around and settle for mediocrity. Let's shoot for all that music can be."

Such lofty ambitions are still more discernible within the maelstrom of an NRBQ live performance than on vinyl, where lack of direct audience rapport and the band's relatively lax regard for lyricism (Terry: "I never go back and change a lyric.") tends to diffuse some of their intensity. Most of the songs on *Grooves* stick to such congenial topics as girls, the joys of rhythm & blues, girls, going to sleep, and going to the movies (with a girl). "Well," Joey drily philosophizes, "if there aren't any girls, there isn't gonna be much music."

Wry personal reflections and oddball humor do occasionally give glimpses of deeper underpinnings, but the indications are rarely overt—NRBQ doesn't sing a lot of songs about, say, Afghanistan. "I don't know that we have much of a message," Terry agrees. "Basically, we just groove out. The message is in the beat." Ⓜ

Aztec from pg. 17

along.'" He laughs, then continues, "I would show up at photo sessions with great, thick fringed jackets, string ties, cowboy gear and all that, just playing on it, especially with journalists.

"I think people can see the humor in that. I mean, obviously someone who walks around in a fringed jacket can't take it *that* seriously.

"Apart from that," he adds, mischievously, "I like the look of them." Ⓜ

Brown from previous page

hallway, with candles on it. I thought, 'great,' so I wore it to the next gig and people went crazy." But candles drip, so he had one of his lunatic friends design a helmet that would shoot flame, and the God of Hellfire act was born.

Actually, it almost never happened. Disputes with gangsters drove the Set out of their club, and Arthur found himself stranded in Europe. He did a soundtrack for Roger Vadim and with the proceeds returned to England and assembled his most famous band, the Crazy World of Arthur Brown. "Nobody would book us until Joe Boyd opened the UFO in Covent Garden. We got to be top draw there. We were voted 'most undanceable band in England' by one of the music papers.

"I wrote the *Fire* album as a stage act; by the time the single was on top in England, though, the keyboard guy and the drummer were both in mental hospitals. The U.S. tour had freaked them out. That's when Carl Palmer joined the band. After he left, I formed a jazz/electronic band and recorded an album in 1970 that never came out; we were all over the place."

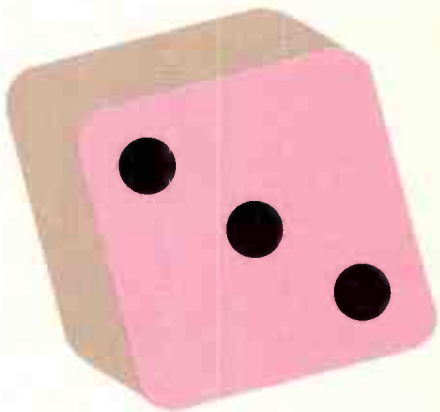
His next band, Kingdom Come, featured a drum machine and was an electronic band featuring visuals. "We'd use makeup and all the theatrical stuff. We were the first white band signed to Tamla, and did an album with members of the Kiki Dee band, but the contract folded two weeks later.

"In 1979, I started working with Klaus Schutze, and I made two albums with him and one with Vince Crane, experimental stuff. In 1980, I moved to the U.S. Robert Fripp told me this was a happening place, my wife had been at the University of Texas in the late 60s, and a couple of guys I knew were going to start a record label in Austin. It fell through, of course. Then Craig Leon moved here, and we collaborated on an album." The album turned into two: *Requiem*, a concept album about war, was issued on the elusive Republic of Texas label, and it was from this that the catchy "Busha Busha" single and video came. There was also a purely electronic album, *Speaknotech*, that was issued as a picture-disc. But with little promotion, no one knew they were out there. (Both LPs are available from Arthur Brown, P.O. Box 5820, Austin, TX 78763.)

At this point, Arthur's back to painting houses, looking to make another album and launch "a tour with a proper visual trip on it." All of which takes money, and at the moment, he's fresh out. But he's nonetheless optimistic: "I know there's an audience for it; that's no problem." Hopefully Arthur can soon go out and remind the world that all-purpose lunacy has no season, and that he's still got plenty to spare. — ***Ed Ward***

CHALKIE DAVIES

He's sweating like a stevedore, running hard and sucking wind as he traverses a broad, sun-scorched street in London's West End, dodging tourists, spinning free of snippy shop-girls and seeming almost in the clear until two infernal lorry drivers decide to hit their accel-



BY TIMOTHY WHITE

ELVIS COSTELLO

A MAN OUT OF TIME BEATS THE CLOCK

erators and aim to flatten him. Truly. Good God, these devils wanna ruin his red shoes!!

"Aaaaye!!!" Elvis Costello wears the fear-frozen gape of a haunted man who's just awakened in a shooting gallery as he jumps back onto the curb. Dressed in a midnight-colored suit and matching tab-collar shirt, his swift reflexes have spared his life but not his smart crimson floaters, as the predatory trucks splash a squalid puddle of black water down upon them. "The cheek of those wankers!" he hisses as they roar past. Only momentarily shaken, he picks up his hectic pace again, hurrying from newsstand to newsstand, searching, searching.

"Damn, damn," he mutters, his unexplained efforts apparently fruitless, and abruptly suggests catching a hack to his favorite Japanese lunch spot. The car is cruising through

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Apostle of anger: "negative but *definite* emotions."

Covent Garden when Elvis—"Aha!" he whoops—suddenly begs the cabbie to pull over and then he leaps out, returning a few moments later with the new issue of *Melody Maker*, hot off the presses. "Excuse me a minute while I look into this," he says and whips through the venerable British rock journal until he reaches the record review section. He eases his glasses back up the bridge of his pug nose and peers anxiously at a piece headlined IMPOSTER UNMASKED (The Imposter having been his alias for a limited election-time release of the scathingly anti-Thatcher/ruling class "Pills And Soap" on the independent Demon label).

"Ummm, ummmm—my God!! They like it! They like it!" he exults, waving aloft the magazine's glowing assessment of Elvis Costello & the Attractions' new album, *Punch The Clock*. When we reach the restaurant, the husky rocker wearing the tinted hornrims disappears into a phone booth and emerges moments later to announce that the first new single issued in the U.K., the shimmering soul bopper "Everyday I Write The Book," has just hit the top thirty. As a result, a scheduled band rehearsal for an imminent U.S. tour will be shortened tomorrow so that Elvis & the Attractions can hold forth as guests on *Top of the Pops*. This calls for sashimi.

It's a steamy ninety-degree day in London in the summer of 1983, but it obviously feels like a deep-freeze for the former Declan McManus when compared with the pop purgatory in which he's been roasting since 1979. That was the year that Elvis and company hit the road for the third time in the States, at that stage in support of their acclaimed *Armed Forces* LP. Cocky and largely incommunicado off-stage, the characteristically taciturn leader of the band got into a drunken bout of fat-mouthing in a Columbus, Ohio ginmill with a belligerent Bonnie Bramlett and other members of the Stephen Stills band, and wound up odd lout out for his highly-publicized racial slurs about Ray Charles and James Brown. Costello has long since apologized for his grievous utterances, stating that he was pie-eyed, perversely petulant and just trying to irk his barmates with the most gratingly nasty remark he could muster. People do a lot of foolish things at the age of twenty-four, and western civilization rarely takes much notice, but this time a fair chunk of the world was watching, greatly unamused.

It was, of course, a bizarrely self-destructive move for the leading, most critically beloved figure in the new wave hierarchy after the stunning originality of his first two albums (*My Aim Is True*, 1977; *This Year's Model*, 1978) had established him as a rising rock craftsman *sans pareil* (he was twenty-two when he debuted)—and one of the few seemingly destined for mass acceptance. Ironically, he was also one of the few in his sphere of influence who had gone out of his way to reaffirm the enormous debt he and his young colleagues owed to the R&B, blues and soul greats, in addition to being quite active in the Rock Against Racism movement and a sworn enemy of England's fascist, anti-black National Front (his "Night Rally" was an unequivocal denunciation that put him in personal jeopardy with its rabid membership). In short, the Angry Young Man image which Costello cultivated had backfired, severely crippling his career's momentum.

Following the 1979 tour, the Attractions—Steve Nieve, keyboards; Pete Thomas, drums; Bruce Thomas, bass—broke up for a time, while Elvis weathered squalls in his personal life. When the group reunited in 1980 (thanks to manager Jake Riviera) it was to release *Get Happy!* a twenty-song celebration of rockin' R&B that demonstrated enormous energy and invention but little direction. That same year, *Taking Liberties*, a score of obscure B-sides, unreleased masters and cuts previously relegated to U.K. LPs, was shipped into the States. Like the previous record, it contained many fascinating tracks and was a testament to Costello's prolificacy, but was too diverse to digest and sold poorly. The year 1981 was a gloomy period that showed an even more reclusive Elvis come together with longtime producer Nick Lowe for their sixth LP, *Trust*, notable for the single "Watch Your Step," and a duet with Squeeze's Glenn Tilbrook on "From A Whisper To A Scream." The record received no radio response and a lukewarm sales reception in the U.S. market and Elvis shifted gears dramatically, heading down to Nashville in May to do an album with veteran country producer Billy Sherrill. A grossly underrated effort by a canny fan of George Jones, Don Gibson and the best of modern country, *Almost Blue* did well in the U.K. but only served to confuse Costello's loyal (and somewhat dwindling) following in America.

It took the bold, highly impressionistic *Imperial Bedroom*,

with its elaborate orchestrations by the brilliant Steve Nieve to regain mainstream attention for all of the right reasons. Produced by George Emerick, it was a record that was fierce in its desire to flex new muscles and take freshly focused chances, and even the most dogged detractors were forced to unclench their fists and applaud a noble and sagacious compositional effort.

Now, with *Punch The Clock*, Elvis Costello has a shot at a full-scale artistic breakthrough as well as total access to the airwaves and a triumph at cash registers on both sides of the Atlantic, and it was clear as he took his place before the *sushi* bar that he was not going to blow it again. A highlight of the new album is "Mouth Almighty," on which Elvis asserts: "I know I've got my faults/ And among them I can't control my tongue." Candid admissions of weakness are the first signs of real strength, and this year's model plainly has come to like himself for himself. Open, vulnerable—and unescorted—he exhibits an easy poise leavened with an engaging self-deprecation. Gone are the defensiveness and hair-trigger fulminations of the untempered, ninety-eight-pound weakling who once cooed "my aim is true" behind Coke-bottle lenses. He's been replaced by a broad-shouldered, affable, articulate, acerbic-within-bounds and enormously likable adult who laughs heartily at other people's jokes, offers to share his octopus and squid (no thank you), and during the course of a long, lively talk was at one point unable to suppress—I swear it!—a full-blown blush.

No longer a man out of time, Elvis Costello is learning how to make the most of whatever the clock still holds in store for him.

MUSICIAN: *How do you see the evolution of your songwriting style?*
ELVIS: Evolution isn't a word I'd use, but I'd constantly move from one style of writing to another as I felt I'd exhausted one or was selling my ideas short. I largely thought that the songs on *Armed Forces*—which coincidentally is my most successful album to date, and I hope won't be by the time this appears—were rather *glib*. I've since adopted a style of writing that's a bit more direct and honest. On *Get Happy!* the songs were shorter, very immediate; I didn't allow as much excess.

I'm a bit of a magpie—I don't play any instrument particularly well, so I do things by feeling rather than by technique. If I think, "Now I'm going to write a Four Tops song or an Erik Satie song" (laughter), obviously it's a bit limited as to how close I can get. But it's not important how close to somebody's musical ideal it is. It's only important how well the song works, and if I've gotten something I'm satisfied with because it did the job. So I started using lots of other *styles* of music, if you like, quite consciously, but always trying to keep my musical identity in them. That culminated in the *Imperial Bedroom* album, where there are lots of loose ends and lots of potential directions. In each song there's some fake psychedelia or a 40s-style riff or things written with a strict format after the fashion of a standard ballad. I wanted to see what effect I could achieve.
MUSICIAN: *Were these later records regenerative projects or exploratory ones?*
ELVIS: Well, the last album was exploratory. There are a lot more deliberate obscurities in the lyrics on that one to allow them to work on the listeners' imaginations rather than making a specific point every time. I sometimes like to make an impression rather than a statement. "Kid About It" is an example, and "New Amsterdam" on *Get Happy!* Almost unconsciously, they give off the feeling of an event without describing it.
MUSICIAN: *What was the first song you ever wrote?*
ELVIS: I couldn't tell you what it was called. I was writing back when I was fifteen, so I should imagine it was all about the trials and tribulations of being fifteen—not to knock that. I'm just damned glad that I wasn't discovered then. A song I wrote before the first album which didn't appear until later should give you an idea of the sort of songs I didn't choose to record at first—it was "New Lace Sleeves," on *Trust*. The arrangement was a later thing but that less direct kind of song was written in its entirety before my first album. "Ghost Train," which I've done a solo version of, was also written before the first album.
MUSICIAN: *You appear to have a very fitful attitude toward the supposed war between the sexes. It's very Thurber-like, acting as a jocular conscience of human folly.*
ELVIS: James Thurber's one of my favorite writers. I never thought about it all along those lines, but maybe there is an element in that sympathy to Thurber's attitude that comes through. I've read a lot of his writings and I love his cartoons, so it might filter through.
MUSICIAN: *Thurber's view is one of "I see you all doing this, and I give up! I don't know who's in charge here, but dammit, I do see* patterns, *so I'm going to throw them all back at you!"*
ELVIS: I think that's quite it, really, and people sometimes make the mistake with the songs of presuming that every one is written about my life. They say, "*This* has happened to him," but it could have been something I just saw in the same way that Thurber did. (grinning) But my life's not a cartoon. For instance, I didn't really meet my wife by finding her crouching on top of the wardrobe!
MUSICIAN: *Could you at least detail how one of your better-known songs, like "(The Angels Wanna Wear My) Red Shoes," was built up?*
ELVIS: That's an odd one to pick, because I occasionally get visions in my head that I just write down, and there's no experience of having worked upon them—that being one of those instances. I wrote it all in ten minutes.

> *"I think that because everything happened so quickly, my judgment wasn't at its best. My enthusiasm was misplaced."*

I go into a trance when I'm writing, and can remember very little, like, except sitting down once with the newspaper. It can just be a mass of print, or at other times a mass of one-liners that stick out as possible parts of songs. With "Pills And Soap," I had written the title down as something that had come off the TV, and it suggested all these ideas. The substance of the later verses came from reading a newspaper, and these other things leaped out at me. It was as mundane as that.
MUSICIAN: *That's a pretty angry tune. There's a cutting edge to most of your music that makes it dart and stab out of the radio. Would you say that most of your songs are angry?*
ELVIS: Well, even if the emotions in my songs are negative, they are *definite* emotions. That's the main thing about them. To some extent I'm satisfied with the songs that give only an impression of an emotion instead of adamantly saying, "This-is-the-way-I-feel," but they're the ones that are the least memorable. They're passive songs—you have to come to *them*. The other songs, whether negative, positive, angry or glad about something, come at *you*.

There aren't any passive songs on this new record. There was one passive song called "The Flirting Kind" which is on the B-side of one of the singles here in England but was left off the album. I made a conscious effort to be as brief as possible lyrically. I try not to have so many superfluous things in a song but also take care not to strip them of any images that make them vivid and exciting to listen to. Chiefly, I want to keep

the ultimate point of the song uppermost.

MUSICIAN: *To my ears, virtually all the songs on* Armed Forces *seemed to have a definite quality to them, while the 1981 country album,* Almost Blue, *had a passive feel, as if you were basically in the act of warming up to them.*

ELVIS: Yes, but it's not so much that on the country album as, "Why am I *doing* them?" To view somebody being that unhappy, or to be in sympathy with songs which portray that amount of unhappiness requires a degree of resignation on the part of the person carrying that out. You can't go in there and give those songs *stink*, you know, you can't give them *hell*.

But I was in that melancholy attitude. I was disillusioned with my own writing and therefore chose to sing those songs. Those songs reflected my frame of mind as well as any others I could have written.

MUSICIAN: *You were disillusioned in what sense? You thought you weren't hitting the mark?*

ELVIS: I think there was a period of a hangover from the *Armed Forces* era, which was very successful. So it was on the one hand not enjoying that, making rather a mess out of it in terms of my life and my career, and on the other hand, feeling that I'd squandered an opportunity to have a large audience. I was feeling that I didn't have anything to say for myself, and then when I did have something to say—on the *Get Happy!* and *Trust* albums—I no longer had the means of the medium with which to communicate with a larger audience. The fact that the audience was getting smaller at that point sort of led me to the conclusion that I should stop writing songs.

"The music is built around my singing. My voice is powerful in a certain register, one that's most effective harrassing people."

I decided to do a record of other people's songs to bring some other *talent*, if you like, to the fore—which was the ability to sing rather than just have my words out. It had gotten to where the reviews were just concerned with, "What's he saying on this one? Who's he having a go at now?" I mean, I like to be my own most vitriolic critic about what I'm bleeding on about, 'cause there are always those people who are not convinced by you at all and think you're a terrible sham.

MUSICIAN: *Do you think that critics put too much emphasis on your words rather than the total composition?*

ELVIS: Sure, but there's no point in being false about the fact that there's more substance to my lyrics than quite a lot of other writers—not to say that there aren't others who write interesting lyrics. But overall, there are a lot of very poor lyrics on records. I always used to say that the minute that the critics found somebody who *could* string three words together, they immediately called him the new Bob Dylan, they called him the new Bruce Springsteen. It's a very dangerous thing to pay that much attention to someone who perhaps can't withstand it. Whatever happened to Elliot Murphy? Whatever happened to Willie Nile? These people never had a chance because, when they came out, the critics presumed one exalted thing about them and so much was expected. It's extremely unfair.

MUSICIAN: *It's been said that the reason so many American rock critics love Elvis Costello is because they look like Elvis Costello.*

ELVIS: (booming laughter, blushing) That's quite a good one. But they don't, you know. Again, that's the thing: they just look the way they *think* I look! I don't look anything like they think I look!

MUSICIAN: *You spoke to me earlier, in the taxi, about the incestuous, elitist qualities of the British press as opposed to the rock-crit self-importance of some of the American press. Do you think the music press makes any significantly positive contributions to the overall environment?*

ELVIS: If they're not actually informative—which in different ways they are, I guess, on both sides of the Atlantic—and merely negative, then they set up something to work against. Fighting the American press is like disobeying your parents, because they're so pompous. Critiques in the States usually have the tone of book reviews a lot of the time. In live concert reviews they treat you like opera!—"*Mister* Costello did this" ...and so forth.

MUSICIAN: *There's the famous instance of Meat Loaf being referred to in the* New York Times *as "Mr. Loaf."*

ELVIS: (laughing convulsively) Aaah! Mister Loaf! Mister Loaf! That's *fantastic*! Mister Loaf! (catching his breath, wiping his eyes) The rolling buzzards!

MUSICIAN: *It must be incredibly frustrating to constantly have your gradual development, your emerging muse, sharply criticized. A lot of times, just at the stage when artists are beginning to reach a big audience, they are not necessarily doing their best work.*

ELVIS: I felt that I *was* at the time with *Armed Forces*, because I hadn't been one who simply stuck around a long time and suddenly gained a massive audience when they'd made their worst record. I actually felt that I was still ascendant artistically, but in retrospect I think that because everything happened so quickly my judgment wasn't at its best. My great enthusiasm for elements of the way my work went in the light of that initial burst of acclaim was misplaced. I'm not totally denying all the work, though. There were some damned good songs in that transitional period.

MUSICIAN: *Do you have any absolute favorites thus far?*

ELVIS: There are songs I still enjoy playing which are not necessarily our best-known songs. "Big Tears," which was the B-side of "Pump It Up" in England, is probably one of the best songs we've made. I still like "Pump It Up" as well. I couldn't imagine going in and making that record now, but I'm glad I made it then.

MUSICIAN: *Your range of focus is an uncommonly wide one. How did you come to put "My Funny Valentine" on the back of the 1979 "(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love And Understanding" 45?*

ELVIS: I'd always liked the song, since I was a child. My parents played Sinatra's rendition around the house, and the band just needed another B-side, really. It was one of those situations where I was available and nobody else was, so we just did the guitar and voice and it seemed okay to me. I ignored all the criticism of it at the time, people saying that I had a lot of bloody cheek singing a song like that because, after all, I was a *punk* (sly grin).

MUSICIAN: *It seems that you're really concentrating on your vocals this time around. In "The Invisible Man" in particular on the new LP, you seem to be paying a lot more attention to your singing. There's almost a delicacy to the vocal on that track—I also hear a bit of a Ray Davies influence in there.*

ELVIS: (delighted laughter) That sort of became the standing joke when we were recording it! We were not actually copying anything, but without any conceit at all—just an in joke among the band—a song will often become known as "the Al Green tune" or whatever because it has some little lick in there. While we were recording "Invisible Man" Clive Langer said, "That's like the Kinks!" and once he'd said that, I couldn't get it out of my head. You know, I'm not a bad mimic when I want to be.

On the *Get Happy!* album we consciously abandoned the arrangements we were working on and rearranged everything based on a load of soul records I'd bought to refresh my

BBC/RETNA

Elvis & the Attractions: (l.to r.) Bruce Thomas, deranged arranger Steve Nieve, Declan McManus and Pete Thomas.

memory "King Horse" had the "Reach Out" guitar part, for example, along with a long "Poppa Was A Rollin' Stone" intro which we chopped off the record. There were a lot of little jokes on the album, and I think that's quite good fun. You shouldn't be afraid of making those kinds of jokes between yourselves—it helps to deflate any conceit that you have.

MUSICIAN: *The horns on "T.K.O. (Boxing Day)" on the new album have a nice Stax soul review quality.*

ELVIS: It's funny, in America folks tend to treat Stax as a vaudevillian throwback. We have a lot more...I don't want to say reverence, but more...respect for soul and R&B overall. A lot of big bands in the States seem to be frighteningly ignorant of stuff that is really their own heritage. They have this rock and this heavy metal music in America that doesn't have any roots in rock 'n' roll and soul or *anything*. It's a creation of the 1970s. I'm talking about the Totos and the Rushes—those groups that sing, *"We're a rock 'n' roll band!"* or *"We're rocking tonight!"* And they don't have anything to do with rock 'n' roll, and wouldn't know it if it bit them (laughter). I think there are very true rock 'n' roll bands in America, such as the Blasters. The people who have the least clue of what's really good about rock 'n' roll hold it as a god that must be bowed down to. I think it's so bloody old-fashioned, behind-the-times. I can't understand why anybody would be the slightest bit interested in "We're-going-to-do-it-all-night" kinds of songs.

MUSICIAN: *In terms of your style of composing and playing, I sense that you like to hurry the melody and rush the hook. Are you conscious of that? Sometimes it's almost an examination-in-progress of how mannered rock 'n' roll can be.*

ELVIS: Well, more recently I tend to sing behind the beat instead of ahead of it, except on some of the uptempo songs. On the last album, I sang very consciously behind the beat, but I don't think I understand what it is you're saying.

MUSICIAN: *There's a hurry-up quality to the structural resolution of your recorded material and to its live presentation that makes me as a listener hear with new ears. It's one of the things that I enjoy most about your music.*

ELVIS: The music is built around my singing, and there is a particular tone in my voice at the register I sing at most of the time which tends to sound—some would say *urgent*, others would say *agitated*, depending on whether it jars you or is pleasing. So that might be it. My voice is very powerful in that certain register and it's the one that is most effective at harrassing the listener (chuckling). You know what I mean? It cuts through backing and cuts through the beat as well, so perhaps that's what creates that effect. I've never really analyzed it.

I try not to get too self-conscious about my singing, for instance, and the only time I'm conscious of my singing is when I feel I've been consciously trying to eliminate sounds I don't like from my style. Over the years, I've dropped certain inflections and phrasings, but getting analytical about it is the worst thing you can do. In a few instances, I've allowed records to go out when I was unhappy with the vocal style, particularly on the last album, on which I indulged my experimentation. Normally, excepting the country records, I've always been produced under the disciplines of Nick Lowe, but because I wasn't producing myself on *Imperial Bedroom*, I was going overboard.

MUSICIAN: *What was it like working with Nick Lowe?*

ELVIS: I first knew him as a fan of Brinsley Schwarz, and he was the first person I ever knew who was in a professional group that made records and things. I knew him socially from around 1973, before I was a professional musician. I met him in a pub opposite the Cavern in Liverpool—this sounds like something a press officer would invent but it's true. He was playing there just before the club finally closed. I was in a little group, all of us working under our own names, and I met him at the bar. Then he was the first artist signed to Stiff and became the house producer by the time I was signed.

MUSICIAN: *What specific contributions has Lowe made to your sound?*

ELVIS: (smiles) When I first knew Nick, his attitude was, "Hell, it's no big deal that I'm in a group! You bang three chords together and you write songs!" Up until then, because I had no

experience in recording, I always thought that the more complicated the song was, the more merit it had. To some extent, he was instrumental in making me see the benefit of simplicity—and I adopted that as a creed from there on.

As a singer, I always had an understanding with him that he would let me go so far with a vocal, but if he thought I was going past it and becoming too considered and losing the feeling, he'd stop me and use the earlier, imperfect take. He'd always allow me one or two wild takes beyond what he thought was it, in case I did something extraordinary that he wasn't expecting. He taught me a lot about craft *and* non-calculation—and that they needn't be in conflict.

MUSICIAN: *Is* Punch The Clock *a title meant to comment on the drudgery of the work week or a rage concerning age?*

ELVIS: No, but I like titles with double meanings, like *Trust*. It's got a great double meaning to it: you could say, "Trust *me*!" or "Trust *them*!" *Punch The Clock* could mean stopping time, or

DAVIES & STARR

Contemporary Costello: "Personally, I'm much less guarded."

let's punch in and get to work, but it's not a manifestation of rage about getting old. We were going to give a deliberately pretentious title to the last album just to irritate people—we were going to call it *Music To Stop Clocks*. And then we were going to call it *This Is A Revolution Of The Mind*, which comes from "King Heroin" by James Brown—but I discovered that *he* did call one of his albums that! But I'm not a prisoner of time. (crooning) "Time is on my side...."

MUSICIAN: *The first time I played "Love Went Mad" from* Punch The Clock, *I cracked up laughing because I thought I caught a certain ingenious obscenity in the lyrics that I believed I must have heard wrong, but I checked and, yes, the lyric read: "I wish you luck with a capital F."*

ELVIS: Hmm. I don't think that's a particularly good line. I think it's a lousy one, actually. I prefer the line before it, "With these vulgar fractions of the treble clef." That's just my personal preference. The other one's a bit of an untidy payoff, one of the worst lines on the record.

MUSICIAN: *Seriously? I love it! It's a line I'd use in a pub.*

ELVIS: Well, yeah. I suppose you're right. See, that's a song about complacency from a comic opera that will never exist. The detail in it about Piccadilly being turned into Brands Hatch refers to a racing car track in this country that's like the Indianapolis Speedway.

The song is about Mr. Complacency being down in the fallout shelter, totally resigned to his fate just seconds before he's obliterated. There he is down there, playing his family favorites on a tissue and a comb and thanking God he won't have to be tempted by young girls dressed as older women anymore—"There'll be no more lamb dressed as mutton rather than mutton dressed as lamb." (laughter) He's counting his few blessings that are left, 'cause he's lived such a good, saintly life.

MUSICIAN: *Your writing has always seemed especially concerned with a stark kind of political commentary that's almost Kafkaesque. There's a line in "Pills And Soap" that goes, "You think your country needs you but you know it never will." Do you have a sense of cynicism about these things?*

ELVIS: First of all, concerning how much you belong to your country or your country belongs to you, definitely so. I think it's a really false belief when they tell you, "Your country needs you." Yeah! A great nonsense, isn't it? They only need you as long as they've got a particular function for you. It's not *your* country or *my* country—it doesn't belong to *me*.

MUSICIAN: *Do you vote?*

ELVIS: Yes, I do. I voted for the Labour Party in the last election. Why I would not vote for Thatcher is easy: I think that it's an insensitive government, it doesn't have any compassion for people who are not self-made business people. They have no feeling for people who haven't got any money or a job. They're quite prepared to *damn* large portions of the population to miserable lives. I don't think there's any way that you can justify voting any other way but Labour. I suppose you could say that's a very high-handed attitude to take toward any political party, but I should think it goes beyond politics—it's actually morally wrong to vote for the Tories.

MUSICIAN: *Well, I would think that a country is only as good as the quality of life that its working class is experiencing, but do you see yourself as a champion of the working class?*

ELVIS: No, I don't see myself as a champion of anybody. I've never stressed it enough that I write from my own point of view. I'm not writing for *anybody* else. What people identify with in the songs is their business. That's what *use* they make of the songs, the same way they make use of something they've read in a book or see in a film. I don't make any demands on the audience in terms of them seeing me as a spokesperson or a champion. I don't cast myself in any roles like those. I'm just an individual.

MUSICIAN: *I think the atmosphere in the U.K. makes for a much more vital rock scene. In America the scene is so diffuse.*

ELVIS: When you live in a spread-out country, you can't have it any other way. Still, you've got little close-knit creative cliques in particular towns and cities, like the New York community that gave us Talking Heads and the Ramones—that's an unusual scene that can spawn *both* those groups, even though they're both very arty in their way. But I don't put the vitality over in England down to class. Class is a depressing element of this society and I don't think it has any positive aspects except that it gives you something to kick against. And, of course, there's currently a much larger middle class—at least in their own minds—than there's ever been in this country. But in truth there're only three types of people in the world: people who work, people who are not allowed to, and people who don't have to.

MUSICIAN: *Speaking of your own work, does it bother you that you haven't had any hit singles in the States?*

ELVIS: (pensive) I don't know. It obviously bothers me that we seem to be able to have a degree of success, and the hit single is the key to a larger market. If reaching a larger market means that you have to sound like Christopher Cross, then I'd rather stay the way I am. I'm not going to make a record which I think is consciously intended to get the desired effect of a hit in America, a hot single which is gonna break us through so that we then are up there with Bob Seger and all the good ol' ones. I want to reach there when it's on the terms of making good music. Coincidentally, quite a lot of the people who are held in almost obscene reverence in America, like Bob Dylan and Van Morrison, don't sell that many records.

MUSICIAN: *What are your feelings on the music video boom and its relative importance to your group?*

ELVIS: We've done one video for this record and we'll probably do another. We've done loads of them but you won't see them on MTV—except only at three o'clock in the morning. I don't think we're a particularly visual group, which is a drawback, but we've made some quite good videos over the years; at least one for each album since *Armed Forces*. They're fun, but usually trite; the current English school of the "mysterious video" genre is to wear trenchcoats on them and walk through dry ice smoke—you've got to look like you're in *Murder on the Orient Express*. Or was that last year? God, I can't take them seriously. I think it's a big mistake to interpret the twenty-four-hour record company and its bored-brat indulgence in the shape of rock videos as some kind of innovation—that's very self-congratulatory. Actually I think it's a retrogressive step. It takes a lot of music out of it all, so you see what ugly, boring bastards most rock chaps are. I'd rather that you waited all week with some feeling of anticipation for one program that was genuinely great, in which you saw good bands that were exciting, than have twenty-four hour access to a load of idiots with too much money and not enough sense. I'm afraid that's the standard of most of the videos that I saw when I watched MTV. That's not indicative of the idea; it just shows the paucity of imagination and genuine inspiration, and of the vanities of a lot of the groups.

MUSICIAN: *Say, were you modest and well-liked as a kid?*

ELVIS: (laughter) Oh, I never thought, "My God, I'm so much brighter than everybody else." Or (dreamily), "I knew from an early age I was special"—one of those kinds of remarks, or "I used to see things other people didn't." I did average work at school—but I don't think that's a reflection of intelligence.

MUSICIAN: *I'm only curious if you had close companions with whom you could really confer as an adolescent.*

ELVIS: I don't have very many friends, period—let's put it that way. I just don't choose to have many. I had few friends then and few now, meaning a few I value a lot rather than a lot I don't value at all. I don't worry about how sophisticated the relationship is, I just worry about whether it matters to me. It can be quite *inane*, because a lot of things that matter to you are not often sophisticated. In fact, the things that matter to you generally are things that *lack* sophistication, or what we laughably call sophistication—which is our ability to drown our real feelings in the *cologne* of sophistication. There you go! There's a good one! They're rolling off the tongue today, folks!

MUSICIAN: *Getting back to music: what role does keyboardist Steve Nieve play in shaping songs?*

ELVIS: I think it would be unfair to the other two Attractions, Bruce and Pete Thomas, to say that Steve has a greater say overall. Obviously, he has the most scope with his instrument because he's the main melodic interest on most tracks, and from the nature of his instrument he has more range than the bass or the drums. But I think overall it's a fairly even input. On the last album, we had songs which he arranged for outside players, as in the case of "....And In Every Home" and "Town Crier." That's a different matter. He contributed quite a lot to "...And In Every Home" because I gave him the song, said "give full vent to your imagination," and he gave it this deranged setting. It's marvelous that he has the technical, musical ability to write things down, that he can communicate complicated ideas to players that can only work with written music. I don't have that ability. I don't write or read music at all. I have to describe things to people if I'm working with a writer or arranger; I have to communicate by humming the lines, which can get very tedious.

MUSICIAN: *Still, that's a great rock 'n' roll and R&B tradition.*

ELVIS: I suppose it is. I wrote all the main horn refrains on this new album. I sang, "da da da da," and the phrasing and the harmonies of it were worked out between myself, Steve, Clive Langer, Alan Winstanley and the horn section. Other punches, turnarounds and modifications came from a communal effort. With the song, "The Greatest Thing," we left a huge gap where we just vamped from E to C sharp minor in the middle of the song and said that when we did the backing track, we'd put some sort of horn bit in there. We just cannibalized a well-known Glenn Miller tune and threw in a bit of Kool & the Gang for good measure. You can do it literally like that, have fun, instead of thinking, "What are people going to think of this?" or "What's the *significance* of this?"

MUSICIAN: *Is there an album of yours that you believe was the turning point, in terms of your doing the work you'd hoped to hear yourself doing?*

ELVIS: *Get Happy!* was it. I'd written about half the songs on it during the 1979 *Armed Forces* tour, which had ended in a lot of disarray both personally and professionally, for various reasons which I think have been well-covered elsewhere. I took quite a lot of time off to recover physically and emotionally, and

"I think rock videos are a regressive step. It's a load of idiots with too much money and not enough sense."

I went off and did a bit of production, like the Specials' first album. Meanwhile, I had earlier been writing material for the next album and we rented a studio.

We put about two tracks down and I realized right away that the arrangements we'd worked out on the tour were going to come out sounding very cliched, like a parody of ourselves. The sound we'd developed was rather a rootless new wave sound; it sounded like the very things I criticize modern rock music for, yet it didn't relate to glitter rock, nor any of the modern trends, nothing at all. It completely stood alone. Some of the music for the album dated back to 1975; it was really ancient and the arrangements lacked the character that the songs required. I re-wrote a few and others we just rearranged—to varying degrees of success—after I'd gone out and bought some fifty soul records to refresh what I'd liked about that style and the strength of the vocals. If you have a love for the style, the song will often carry it along. You could cast "Many Rivers To Cross" as a country & western song and it would stand up—providing the singer matches the commitment (smirking slyly). Or you could do a Linda Ronstadt on it and fall flat on your—oh, no, I musn't get into attacking her again!

MUSICIAN: *Despite your wisecracks, I get the distinct impression from both* Punch The Clock *and this conversation that you are taking yourself more seriously as a singer—and hope others will too. The growth is there. Is the intent there also?*

ELVIS: Maybe I'm getting better as I get more experienced.

Sometimes my intentions would blind me to some of the effective subtleties of singing. Before, I'd be singing with a tremendous amount of conviction, but sometimes it would come out sounding very hectoring. There was usually a lot of feeling there but I hadn't considered how best to express it, so some of the songs sounded rather like rants. I've learned I can get a point over by using more tonal range.

In the studio, I used to put the vocal to the fore when I was more involved in my own production. This time around I wasn't involved in production decisions beyond being asked my opinion, and I wanted the discipline of that to help shape the arrangements and the structure of the overdubs. The band had its usual arrangement meetings but then Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley came along and they had their say as well, aiming to give us a more concise approach.

MUSICIAN: *Is that kind of power and involvement on their part unprecedented in your recording history?*

ELVIS: It was completely unprecedented, certainly, compared with the last album, where I took every blessed idea I had, more or less, to a logical or illogical conclusion, and the job of Geoff Emerick, who produced *Imperial Bedroom*, was to try and make some sense out of my efforts. A lot of times I was pleased with the results, because you got a dense, sometimes conflicting, sometimes contrasting array of instruments and vocal devices which repay many listenings. But in some cases I buried the songs in a maze of contradictory musical ideas and even emotions.

MUSICIAN: *Your music is intensely emotional, and thematically it often dissects or critiques relationships. I'm still intrigued about your personal perspective on sexism and the current quality of the female-male relationships you encounter.*

ELVIS: I tend to treat each person or situation I've observed solely for the individual value, rather than have some preconceived idea about the larger scheme of things when it comes to women and men. I don't think I'm wise enough to make broad statements because I'm still finding things out myself. Chronologically some people might say I should be old enough to know better through experience but I don't necessarily think I am. But I think the things that bring us to grief are plain to see: jealousy, lack of faith, lack of trust. I'm not a great believer that there are deeper secrets behind the distance between us that are locked up somewhere waiting to be discovered. Generally, I don't think people talk very much, regardless of who they are. They might say more words these days but whether they're talking to each other is another matter.

MUSICIAN: *In your experience, do you find that people our age currently are more or less guarded in their relationships?*

ELVIS: Personally *I'm* much less guarded, not just in the sense of my professional relationships but just generally. I have an interest in being much more open—(smiling) as a result of exhausting the opposite possibilities. It's as simple as that. But I don't think in large schemes; I'm very much absorbed with the moment. I think it's more important to deal with life as it comes along than sit around pondering one's personal philosophy. You'd be dead before you ever had a chance to implement it! What useful things you find out in this world, you invariably find out on foot, on the move. You can't *wait*.

MUSICIAN: *Do you have any bitterness about the manner in which you've been dealt with in the press, whether it be the Bonnie Bramlett-Ray Charles incident and your resultant* mea culpas *or your overall reticence of the recent past?*

ELVIS: No, but I eventually was concerned with explaining myself, and I do feel that I did in that case. On another front, I think it's one of the conceits of the business that the record companies worry about what you think of them, and the music papers worry about what you think of them. I don't sit around in my house worrying about those things at all.

My main interest in this business is *music* and if I'm not concerned with the making of my own, I'd much rather just be thinking, "God, this other person's record is great" and enjoying it for what it is. I don't think, "What am I getting out of this? How is this changing my life?" One of the greatest joys I've yet found in life is to listen to Bobby Bland—it doesn't have to have any further point than that, unless I want to tell someone else they should perhaps check him out for themselves. Framing all the great music out there only drags down its immediacy. The songs are lyrics, not speeches, and they're tunes, not paintings. Writing about music is like dancing about architecture—it's a really stupid thing to want to do.

MUSICIAN: *Oddly enough, you seem totally accessible to me as a person, not at all the crusty character everyone else describes. I wonder if your new, more cordial relationship with the press is merely due to the fact that you've finally become more adept at dealing with them?*

ELVIS: No, I think it's because I've done enough work that there is something to talk about, rather than conversation just based on one press release. In the beginning, I did a few interviews and I didn't feel they went very well, so I just stopped doing them. Why be a conspirator in this nonsense they're writing?!

MUSICIAN: *You mean, say, the corporate formation of a public personality?*

ELVIS: Yeah! In the beginning there wasn't enough work there to really talk about, and no substance to the articles, so why should I be involved? They're going to write this nonsense anyway, so why be a party to it? It's as simple as that; I chose to stop doing it. And then when the time went by, and I felt there were some things that were perhaps necessary to explain, I changed my mind again.

MUSICIAN: *What new artists have excited you?*

ELVIS: Funnily enough, the group that's suporting us on the U.S. tour, Aztec Camera, I like a helluva lot. I heartily recommend you go and buy their album *High Land, Hard Rain* right now. I quite like Prince, though not all of his stuff, and I think Paul Young has got a great voice and his *No Parlez* album is terrific. I really like the Style Council, which Paul Weller formed since he left the Jam. I like a group that's called, would you believe, Prefab Sprout. They've only got one single out, called "Lions In My Own Garden," which is excellent. There's another group on Rough Trade called the Smiths, and I like Robert Wyatt, obviously, having worked with him. Rough Trade, I must say, has put out the best records of the last two years. I also like "You're In My System" by Robert Palmer—a brilliant record. Recently Johnnie Taylor and Lamont Dozier have gotten their courage back to make great soul records and not conform to the less imaginative end of the disco market.

MUSICIAN: *Every artist and group that hopes to enjoy longevity must go through a continual process of reinvention. You've got to remain close to what made you want to make music in the first place and let that be your motivation.*

ELVIS: Quite true. Look at Aretha Franklin—a singer of enormous stature who now largely just sings riffs, and although she's incapable of bad singing, she does what Otis Redding often did, harrying the phrase and so forth. Luther Vandross' production of her has only helped her in terms of setting, not reinvention. You know, Dusty Springfield recorded one of my songs last year, "Just A Memory," which I wrote with her in mind three years ago but made no attempt to get to her because she hadn't been recording. I'd dreamed in the back of my mind that she'd one day make a comeback and record it and last year she did on her *White Heat* album. Unfortunately, the production left a lot to be desired and the vocal treatment was bland; it wasn't what it could have been if I'd produced it. We've all gotten used to the politeness of overdubbing as opposed to *captured* performances in the studio.

MUSICIAN: *So what helps you to plug into that?*

ELVIS: For me, it takes time and that's difficult because the longer you record, the harder it gets. I went past a few things on the new album and had to leave them for a couple of weeks

and then go back. There are some cases of songs I've *never* gotten right on record, like "Clowntime Is Over," which is now an integral part of our live show. A fast version was on *Taking Liberties*, but we never truly finished the song in the studio. A good version of it doesn't exist on record because I insisted on cutting it live in the studio and wouldn't overdub. To make one of the less flippant comparisons that come to mind, that song was supposed to be our Impressions song, that was to be our "Keep On Pushing"; it was very important for me to get it down, and yet I failed.

In some instances, I've found that what I know to be the important songs of an album, the *weight* of an album, have been the hardest songs to record. I knew that "Kid About It," "Pidgin English" and "Man Out Of Time" were the crucial songs to *Imperial Bedroom*. They also posed the most problems and are the most ragged and incomplete recordings. The arrangements and the vocal direction that I took destroyed "Kid About It," which is five times the song live, because I sing more honestly and don't fool around with different octaves and affectations. In the studio I was trying too hard to avoid sounding like a white soul singer, a Michael McDonald. Not to knock him; I think he's a very good singer.

MUSICIAN: *Have you ever thought about working with a classic soul or R&B producer?*

ELVIS: I did approach Allen Toussaint to arrange the horns for our shows at the Albert Hall last Christmas. The previous year, I'd done a show with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Albert Hall—an enjoyable, nerve-wracking, on/off experiment that had mixed results. I wanted Toussaint and his people to take us in a new, less grandiose direction, but their pace of working proved to be too slow to make it come about and so I had to pull out. It proved to be fortuitous because it could have only worked in the *friction* between his and our arrangements, since Toussaint comes from a part of the world with very different musical criteria. What ultimately came about was that I stuck with the idea of horns and sought out the best players I knew of in this country, the TKO Horns. Because they're English and we share the same relationship to R&B, it worked. To expand on something I alluded to earlier, I find that many contemporary American musicians have a peculiarly patronizing attitude toward R&B, as if it happened a million years ago, whereas to us, Tamla-Motown is *folk music*, not a museum piece. You still hear it played regularly on radio here.

Elements-wise, I worry that Americans might see some of *Punch The Clock* as a novelty, and it isn't—it's dead serious, *alive* music. With the presence of the TKO Horns we're developing a sound, and the tour is an exploration for us. On our first tour of America in 1977, we learned so much about how to play—it was our first experience of a wider audience outside of British clubs—and the same will happen again because now we're effectively eight pieces.

MUSICIAN: *You're nothing if not a risk-taker. The risks just need to be germane ones.*

ELVIS: I've decided not to go in for lucky-bag approaches like we did with country music on *Almost Blue*, where I threw myself in with Billy Sherrill, not knowing what was going to come out of it. The best things that came out of it were the frictions, not the complementary stuff. Americans generally dismiss that record as being an insult to the music (grinning), but it's just heartbreak drinking music; it's not that mysterious.

The fact that most of the songs come from a particular geographical area makes no difference to me. As for my claim to emotional authenticity, if you compare my record to any of Barbara Mandrell's, I think we might come out better. *Almost Blue* isn't made by a gifted amateur—it's a sincere, genuine record. The fact that we don't have the geographical credentials to make it is completely irrelevant. If you really want to split hairs, most of those songs are ripped off from English, Irish and Scottish folk songs anyway, so you haven't got a leg to stand on! (laughter)

MUSICIAN: *In rock 'n' roll, enthusiasm and focus can almost always transcend technique and environment. But sometimes you can stumble into a marriage that's too eager, too neat. You're in it for all the wrong, external reasons. Zeal can overshadow instinct.*

ELVIS: I understand what you're getting at. Let's pick it apart. Peter Green, say, is a great blues guitarist; it doesn't matter that he wasn't born in Mississippi. Quite a lot of other white players who have been lionized, like Eric Clapton, don't hold up as well. The best intentions are the unconscious ones. One of the reasons I'd be reluctant to work with a classic soul producer is that I think whereas there was something to be had from the friction in country music of working in an alien environment, I suspect the orthodox soul attempt would wilt from the lack of it.

Also, you've got to bear in mind that I'm not making records only for America. If I were only making them for America perhaps I would go and do a record in New Orleans with Allen Toussaint and aim it at the tasty, semi-middle-of-the-road FM market. But I'm not dead and buried here yet; I haven't finished with the English public. I think it's important if you write in one country to keep up a relationship with that native audience.

There's a lot of rubbish that goes in this country but a lot of good things too. I would rather be involved with the good things than desert the country. Five years ago, I could have chosen to leave for financial reasons and been a much richer man. I've elected to remain here not for any patriotic considerations but because it's a more interesting place musically than any other I know of.

STEVE RAPPORT/RETNA

Elvis at the Albert Hall with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra: "enjoyable but nerve-wracking."

MUSICIAN: *Well, I think you appreciate the organic dynamic tension you find in the U.K., although it might not necessarily exist here for another artist.*

ELVIS: It's here for others, but it's not here for those insubstantial people who'll come and go. I'm here because I *choose* to be. It's a marriage, as you put it, that's working because I'm in love with the music—not with the marriage. Ⓜ

ELVIS & THE ATTRACTIONS' CLOCKWORKS

Elvis writes the book every day with the help of a '54 Telecaster, '58 Strat, Jazzmaster, Epiphone Riviera, Gretsch Chet Atkins, Gretsch Country Gentleman, Martin and Guild acoustics and a '56 left-handed Strat that's strung right-handed to give him, he chuckles, "extra bass end." Chairman of the keyboards **Steve Nieve** employs an Emulator, Prophet 5, Fender Rhodes, Synclavier, Casio 247, Bosendorfer grand piano, Fairlight CMI, and Vox and Hammond organs. **Bruce Thomas** uses a Fender Precision bass and a custom-built Electric Wal bass guitar, and **Peter Thomas** keeps time on Gretsch drums and Sabian cymbals.

Hey fella... you wanna step outside and say that?

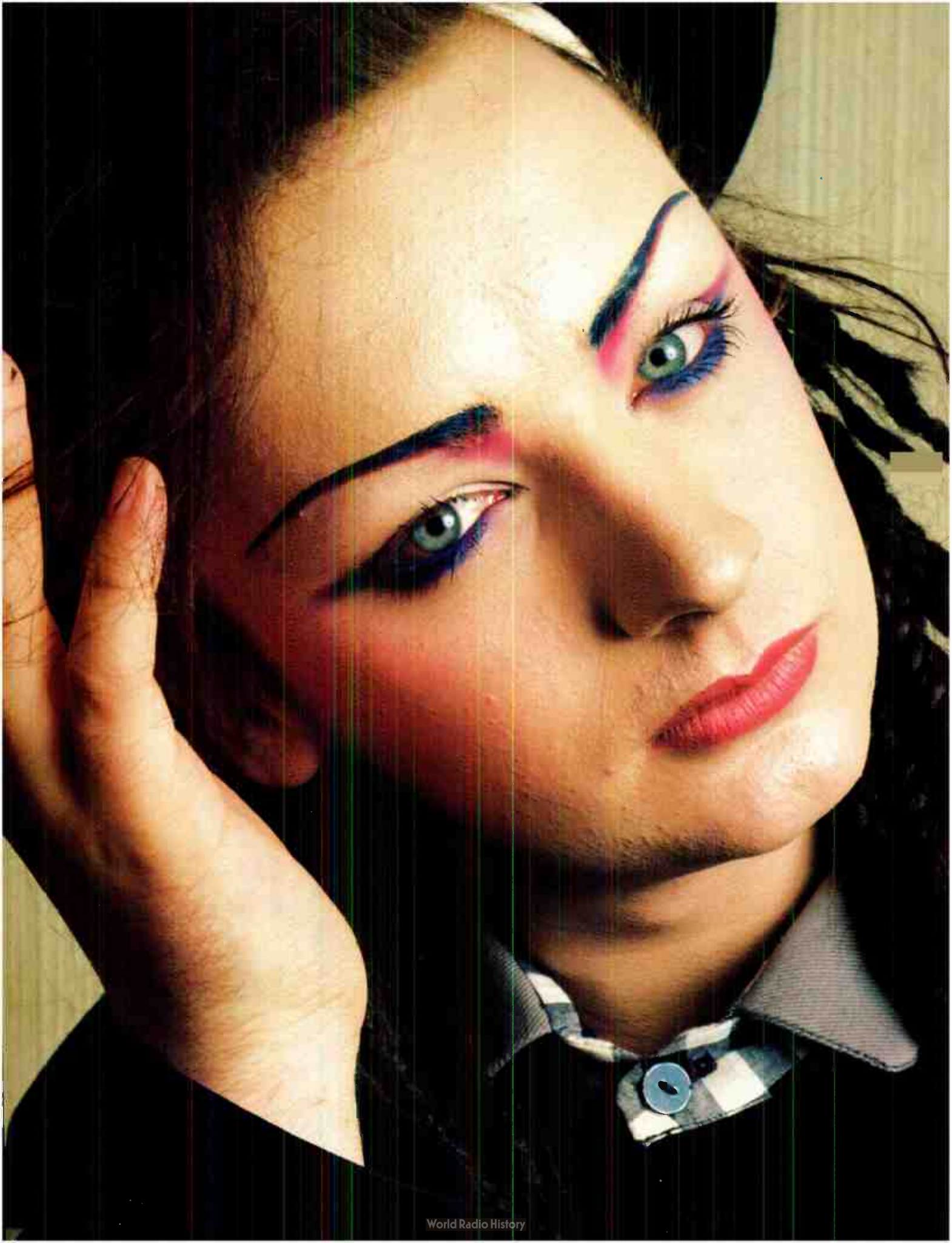
Boy George and Culture Club aren't what they seem.

BY GEOFFREY HIMES

"I think people think of me as very feminine," muses Boy George of Culture Club, "but I'm very masculine. I can throw a good punch. I'm taller and bigger than people expect me to be; I'm sure they expect a little fairy wearing dandelions. When we went to L.A., all these women were saying, 'My God, you're so big,' as if they expected this midget to get out of the car."

George *is* big, with large bones and an athletic build. He's not the least bit coy or soft-spoken; he pounces on people and subjects them to his loud, machine-gun fire of ideas and opinions, punctuated by raucous laughing. Still, one might not be blamed for wondering: in his room at Manhattan's Plaza Hotel, George is decked out in pale blue and pink eyeliner and thick red lipstick over his white powdered face. His dark braids

Photo by Deborah Feingold



spill out of his high, Hasidic bowler and fall over his shoulders. He is wearing an enormous, Mondrian-like print black shirt that comes down to his knees, resembling nothing so much as...well, a dress.

"I'm constantly being asked," George confesses, "if my image fits in with the traditional forms of music we play—will we sell to hamburger queens and truckers' sons all over the West? Yet the way I look at it is very obviously contradictory to that. I think this is very good; I like contradictions. There's a line from 'Do You Really Want To Hurt Me?' that says, 'Everything's not what you see,' which is basically what I believe. It's kind of boring when things are just what they are, don't you think?"

"George is a great lover of contradictions," chuckles guitarist Roy Hay, lounging back in his armchair sipping Burgundy.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

"I like to change people's opinions about me. It's boring preaching to the converted."

"That's his thing. I like nice chords, he likes contradictions." Hay has the Anglo-aristocratic look of an extra from *Brideshead Revisited*, his tan hair neatly combed back.

"George likes to confuse sometimes," adds bassist Mikey Craig. "He also likes to argue. Not necessarily with us, although he does that, too, but with anyone. He likes positive arguing about the things that are important to him." Craig, Culture Club's black member, sports a combed-out Afro restrained by a black headband. Playing on black/white symbolism, he also wears black and white quilted pants and a buckled white bib as he sprawls on a bed.

Culture Club aggravates contradictions by using many similar symbols, including crosses, Stars of David, gender signs, lightning, Oriental calligraphy, etc. "It's a good way of presenting symbols without meaning anything specific," explains drummer Jon Moss, his thick dark eyebrows pointing down at his nose, reinforcing the intensity of his stare. "In Culture Club, we use *everything*. We're saying, 'These things are interesting, and you should take what's good about them, but don't take just one symbol and let that represent you. That's a fascist thing to do.' So we use all sorts."

"The thing is," summarizes George, "you *can* break down all that crap and prejudice. I do it all the time. I like to chat at shows, because I like people to look at me and say, 'I don't know about him,' and then change their opinions. It's boring preaching to the converted all the time."

Just as they play on contradiction and confusion, so is Culture Club's sound built on an astute mix of musical influences. Mikey Craig supplies the Caribbean "heavy culture": the reggae beat on "Love Twist"; the calypso rhythm on "I'll Tumble 4 Ya." Boy George brings his love of Philadelphia soul to nearly every vocal as he purrs romantically on "Time" or gives a gospel shout on "Man Shake." His enthusiasm for catchy pop pays off in the hummable melodies he invents for the band. Roy Hay's longtime passion for Steely Dan has generated jazzy chords and multi-layered arrangements. Jon Moss' time served in punk bands lends a hard push to the band; his jazz-rock and soul tastes reinforce the groove.

"Jon and Roy listen more to the rock side of things," says Craig, "while I listen more on the ethnic side: reggae, calypso and other Caribbean musics. They fuse together in a nice way. The melodies usually come from George, and there's a lot of R&B and contemporary black sounds going through him. It comes out in the way he phrases lines, the way his voice sounds. George is a white soul singer basically."

The band's diverse influences mesh so well because the band doesn't believe there are any important differences between black and white musics. "The differences don't exist to me," Hay asserts, "because they nick each other's ideas so much. There's so much similarity between classic rock songs and classic R&B songs that it's pathetic to say a white man can't do soul or a black man can't do rock. The barriers are breaking down slowly, and I'm proud that Culture Club has contributed to that, because that's what we're about."

Boy George was baptized George O'Dowd twenty-two years ago. He grew up in a large Irish Catholic family in the London suburbs, but soon left home after being kicked out of school at fifteen. While working as a model for the trendy Foundry boutique and as a make-up artist for the Royal Shakespeare Company, he experimented with his own look and soon became a notable face in the London nightclub scene.

"Before I started Culture Club," he explains, "I didn't have any money whatsoever, so I thought, 'Well, I'll have to become very well known so that I can chat my way into everything for free.' So I went out of my way to be the most outrageous person in the world. I'm quite tame now compared to what I used to be like. I used to go out with fruit on my head; I used to be really loony. It's a pretty good thing; it's gotten me this far.

"You see, in England, it's quite different. You can be a celebrity there and have nothing to sell. You have a lot of minor celebrities there who don't really do anything; they just have weird haircuts and nice clothes, and people put them in magazines. In America, it's based more on how much money you have and what kind of car you drive. In England, young people up from the gutter can become famous. I used to get in everywhere for free."

Boy George's modeling agent was the girlfriend of Bow Wow Wow's Mathew Ashman. At the end of 1980, Ashman told Boy George that Annabella Lwin was leaving Bow Wow Wow and he should audition for the lead singer job. He got the job, but it turned out that Lwin wasn't really fired; she was just being tested by manager Malcolm McLaren.

"I didn't know it at the time or I never would have gone along with it," George recalls, "but they basically got me into it to frighten Annabella and buck her up. Malcolm had this idea that she would be the sexy little Lolita of the 80s, but she was very young and very naive. She wasn't really committed to singing; she had visions of being an air hostess or a waitress in a delicatessen. So they got me in to frighten her, and it worked, though I only found that out later.

"My first-ever appearance onstage was in front of 3,000 people at London's Rainbow Theatre. I just walked out and sang 'Cast Iron Arm,' a rockabilly song by Peanuts Wilson. It went down very well." Svengali McLaren then decided to turn Bow Wow Wow into a kind of Motown revue band backing up both Lwin and George, whom Malcolm dubbed Lieutenant Lush. After weeks of rehearsal though, McLaren got cold feet and set his sights on putting together a whole new band for Lieutenant Lush. George naturally grew suspicious at this point: "I said, 'This is bullocks! I'm leaving.' After Malcolm rode me out of Bow Wow Wow, I visited him on several occasions and he hid behind a curtain and wouldn't answer the door. He's pathetic in a lot of ways."

"I think Malcolm found he couldn't twist George the way he could the others," ventures Mikey Craig. At this point in George's dramatic career, Craig became a major player. "I read about him in the music press," recalls the twenty-three-year-old Craig, "and decided to meet him." Though Craig had learned bass at age sixteen and jammed with friends, he had never been in a band: "I wanted to be, but I wanted it to be something interesting. I saw a picture of George, and he

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Speaking in tongues: bassist Mikey Craig, drummer Jon Moss, crooner George O'Dowd and guitarist/keysperson Roy Hay.

looked *quite* interesting.

"You get to know George quickly. Initially, there's this: 'GOOD GOD!' Then there's this: 'Hmm, must find out more.' Then you talk to him, and he talks real fast and you figure it's okay. So I said to George, 'You and I could probably get it together ourselves.' There was another guitarist involved at first, but most of the ideas were coming from George and myself. It was very difficult for us, because neither of us had played in a band before. Then Jon came along. He'd been in a lot of bands, and he started to stabilize things and give direction to us. Things started to happen from there."

Moss, now twenty-five, was indeed an old pro. He'd gotten into his first band when he answered a blind ad in 1976: "This guy had this really dirty Clash T-shirt on, and he said, 'We're a really big band, but I'm not going to tell you who we are.' I said, 'You're the Clash, aren't you?' He said, 'How'd you know?' Anyway I played with them for three months before they made any singles or did any shows. I did a little art film with them and a bit of recording that never came out. I loved the music; I thought it was great. But I didn't get on with Mick Jones; I didn't like his stance. It's one thing to be political and to be really into it, but it seemed like empty sloganeering to me, and I just ended up arguing with them.

"I knew when I met George that we might not be successful, but we'd get noticed."

"So I joined the Damned in 1978, and it was much the same thing: beer in your face and screw you. I took a lot of speed and drank a lot and had a terrible car crash. The Damned were good fun, but you'd get into the mini-bus at nine o'clock in the morning with a crate of lager, and by ten o'clock, everyone's drunk out of their minds. It was very rock 'n' roll and let's-all-kill-ourselves-before-we're-too-old. We smashed up this restaurant once, smashed the whole thing to bits, and when we came out, I thought, 'Why did I do that? Is that what I'm here to do? I don't want to do this anymore.' Plus I had the car crash and no one came to see me. So I left."

After the Damned, Moss and Lou Edmunds formed the Edge in 1979, which became the house band at Stiff Records. Unfortunately, they became so much of a session band, Moss says, that they lost track of their own career. When Adam Ant decided to experiment with two drummers, he asked Moss, who played on "Kicks" and "Car Trouble" on *Dirk Wears White Socks*, though he never got credit. "I thought he and Marco Pirroni were really talented," Moss concedes, "but I didn't want to get into another situation where I was in a band just as a drummer." He turned down an invitation to join the Ramones for the same reason.

"So I got out of the business for a while," Moss recalls. "I'd been in a lot of bands, and I hadn't made much headway. I found that most people in bands didn't really want to do anything. They just wanted to get laid, get pissed and take a lot of drugs. After three or four years, you get bored with that." Boy George, who knew of Moss through a mutual friend, asked him down to a rehearsal. "It was awful," Moss recalls. "There was nothing happening at all. Yet there was something about it; it was such a crazy scene. I thought, 'This is just what I'm looking for.' They obviously had no experience and wanted to do something. They needed me, and I needed them. Plus they weren't cynical; they could work and have fun too."

The band's line-up was completed in July, 1981, when Roy Hay, now twenty-one, was added on guitar (he now plays piano as well). Like Craig, Hay's first band was Culture Club. "I knew when I met George," Hay notes, "that we might not be successful, but we would get *noticed*." He and Craig laugh loudly. "George and the whole set-up of Culture Club seemed a bit special. It was obvious that we all wanted the same thing musically and were prepared to work very hard to get it. We didn't gig for six months.

"Our music was a backlash. We thought the synth thing had been overdone. Jon's a very traditional drummer; he likes to play good beats. Mikey likes the bass; I like the guitar. It was also a backlash against those post-punk bands who had this ethic of trying to not learn too much about the music, because it might take the feel away. We didn't buy that punk rubbish that knowledge is bad. You don't have to be naive to write great pop songs. We all want to learn more about our instruments so we can get more out of them. Even George now realizes that his voice is an instrument like my guitar is an instrument. He's going to singing lessons."

"I didn't want to be another Bryan Ferry or Bowie," studious George insists. "I didn't want to be another great white hope with an angular voice going, 'Ooh-woo-woo!' in a really affected way. I'm not interested in that crap. They may be good entertainers, but they're not good singers, and being a good singer is really my main thing. I wanted to be more like Rod Stewart or Marvin Gaye or Smokey Robinson, or even like Sting. All those people have distinctive voices, and they're the people that you remember.

"None of us knew how to write songs, so we really learned together. The band is a democracy; the songs are credited to all of us. When we write, we fight. We call each other useless; we tell each other how awful we are; a lot of abuse flies. But at the end of the day, I think we all want the same thing, so we really work well together. Everyone makes the same amount of money, regardless of what they do."

George onstage modeling the latest in men's shirts.

PAUL NATKIN/ PHOTO RESERVE

When they first got together, the band played a lot of favorite songs: disco, reggae, Philadelphia soul, hard rock, top forty pop. Having picked these songs apart, they began to put their own songs together, but the sources were still evident: "I think Culture Club s the most honest form of modern plagiarism in music," Boy boasts. "We just take things. Plagiarism is

"My main thing is being a good singer. I didn't want to be angular and affected."

acknowledging the similarity between 'Church Of The Poison Mind,' and, (he clicks his fingers and sings in a falsetto) 'Baby, everything is all right. Uptight!' A lot of musicians claim they're very original, which I think is very boring. You're not born with a stock of nformation, so you are what you pick up. Bowie has always, always avoided the subject of where he gets his ideas. But I say, 'Yes, we take from other people.'"

"'Do You Really Want To Hurt Me' began with George's lyrics and this semi-melody he had for them," Hay explains as an example. "We said, 'Yeah, George, let's do it as lover's rock,' a light reggae thing. We got this rhythm box and started to play around with different tempos and chords. The melody was originally just a G-major progression right through, but you have to embellish what he gives you. We made an arrangement, so it goes up to the C and then to the A-minor. Once we got the melody down, Mikey put down his crucial bass line, and I added guitar afterwards. We all argued a lot and then blended it together. It's a vibe.

"'Time' was written from a totally different approach. That song came from me and Mikey getting some music together, and George getting excited and putting lyrics to it. At first, it was horrible, really bland. Then Mikey had this idea to use a staggered beat. I said, 'Yeah, let's do it with the Moog.' So we did that, got the great snare sound and it came together.

"'I'll Tumble 4 Ya, the third American single, was a complete lyric and melody idea of George's," Hay acknowledges. "We just wrote the backing for it. Jon got that calypso beat; I worked out the chords; Mikey put the bass down, and it came together." "Lyrically," adds Craig, "it's dealing with the fact that there were so many bands around at that time that were obeying what the record companies told them. We didn't want to be one of those bands. George was the man who was going to lead us away from all that. If you listen to the lyrics, he's saying, 'I'll be your baby./ I'll run the gun for you/ And so much more.' In other words, he'll lead us into the promised land."

The band credits producer Steve Levine, a CBS studio engineer for years, with introducing them to a lot of modern technology, such as the LinnDrum and the Fairlight. "At first he was a big influence," concedes Craig, "because he knew all of the technical aspects, and we were learning. Now, on the second album, he's more like an ambassador. He directs things in the studio to make sure that people don't clash and things run smoothly. He's quite good at that actually. Apart from the good sound he gets, he doesn't really interfere very much now with anything else."

When Culture Club first came to America last spring, the quartet brought along four support musicians: singer Helen Terry, keyboardist Phil Pickett, saxophonist Steve Grainger

and trumpeter Terry Bailey, all of whom had guested on the records. All of them will be on the fall American tour and on the second album, *Colour By Numbers*, that should be out in October. Pickett co-wrote a couple of tunes on the new album, but he more often plays keyboard parts onstage which Hay has already worked out in the studio. The band credits Terry, though, as an important influence. Terry, who sang the "Doot-doot-de-doot!" on Lou Reed's "Walk On The Wild Side," has years of studio experience with Heatwave, Mott the Hoople and more recently, Thunderthighs and Church.

"The second album is far more digestible," Craig suggests. "The first album was young and raw; it was full of ideas and energy. Those ideas are better executed on the second album. It might open another audience to us, perhaps an older audience. It's still pop, but it's a lot easier to take in."

"One of the tracks on the new album," continues George, "is very country-sounding. I want to write songs that apply to everyone. That's really hard to do. One of the things I hated about punk rock was that it was all young people with problems, locking themselves in their bedrooms with tennis rackets. We've had airplay on black stations in America. We sold to so many housewives in England that I was voted the housewives' 'Personality of the Year' in front of Lady Di. I'm quite proud of that, because Lady Di is the housewives' bread-and-butter."

"We haven't got one particular sound," Jon Moss emphasizes. "We're not a new romantic band or an acid-rock band. When we were forming the band, George, Mikey and I were talking about how London is full of different cultures. You can't avoid being assaulted by twenty different cultures as you walk down a main street. I'm Jewish; George is Catholic; Mikey's black, so I thought Culture Club would be a good name."

Such paeans to pluralism are underscored by the Club's fundamental scorn for "white boys," a symbol of the universal dullness of the common WASP. "The whole concept of 'white boy' is based on that kind of empty-headed person," explains George. "White to me means transparent. White is a milk-shake. White is someone who's thick, who's like a bottle of milk, someone who is born, gets fat, has lots of kids, dies, and his sons are like him. It happens with a lot of people.

"The song 'White Boys Can't Control It' sums up that feeling: society is like a conveyor belt. It says, 'You hold out on thinking. You beat people's heads in, drink a lot of Budweiser, piss on people and are just a real asshole.' Basically, those are the people I hate."

"White boy isn't actually about white boys and rednecks as such," adds Mikey Craig. "A white boy can be a black boy with a thick attitude. A white boy is any person who's not colorful."

Cultural Clubs

Mikey Craig: I have two Music Man basses: a fretted and a fretless. I like them because the tone is quite wide. I might have a custom bass made by a company called J&B, because my fingers are a bit short and the Music Man neck is very wide, which makes it difficult to play very fast.

Jon Moss: I've always used Gretsch drums, because I find they're the best drums; they're the Rolls Royce of drum kits. They have a really unique sound. I also use a Simmons electric kit. In the studio, I program the LinnDrum, and we use a tape of it onstage.

Roy Hay: I used to play an Ibanez guitar, but I just bought this new Stratocaster. Onstage we use a Prophet 5 and a Roland Juno; they're very cheap but we get great sounds from them. In the studio we use an OBA, a Minimoog and a Fairlight floppy disc computer keyboard with pressure sensitive keys. It's incredible the things that the Fairlight can do; it's frightening actually. We also use the Fender Rhodes and acoustic piano a lot. M

BY NELSON GEORGE

STANDING IN THE SHADOWS OF MOTOWN

THE UNSUNG SESSION MEN OF HITSVILLE'S GOLDEN ERA

They are simply some of the greatest records ever made. "Standing In The Shadows Of Love." "Stop! In The Name Of Love." "Signed, Sealed, Delivered." "The Way You Do The Things You Do." "Ain't Too Proud To Beg." "I Heard It Through The Grapevine." "Twenty Five Miles." These songs and so many more were written, arranged and recorded at 2648 West Grand Boulevard, a modest row house in central Detroit that housed Motown Records' Hitsville

recording studio from 1959 to the early 1970s.

We all know the big names...child prodigy 'Little' Stevie Wonder...the sepia Barbra Streisand, Diana Ross...the mercurial Marvin Gaye...pop's finest wordsmith and suppliest singer, Smokey Robinson...Temps, Tops, Martha, Mary...the architects of 'the Motown sound,' Eddie Holland, Lamont Dozier and Brian Holland...the designer of the 70s soul epics Norman ("Papa Was A Rolling Stone") Whitfield. And, of course, Berry Gordy, Jr., the aggressive, reclusive capitalist from Detroit who made it happen.

But what of the musicians? The key roles played by the Motown session men have only been sketchily documented, seminal contributions by drummers Benny Benjamin and Uriel Jones, guitarist Robert White, band leader/keyboardist Earl Van Dyke, keyboardist Johnny Griffith and bassist James Jamerson. The gala Motown Twenty-fifth anniversary television version of Hitsville in May saw fit to include appearances by Linda Ronstadt and Adam Ant, but neglected to even mention these quintessential members of what was once the best band in America. Even in their heyday, they rarely received songwriting or arranging credits on their records. While their Memphis counterparts Booker T. & the M.G.s became darlings of the music world, the men of Motown toiled in anonymity. Although it is hard to imagine contemporary bass playing without James Jamerson, I was only the second person in twenty years to interview him at length.

"You could compare our rhythm section to anything else happening at that time and we were just better," claims Johnny Griffith, who during the 1960s often played sessions in New York and Chicago. "The Motown thing was so much tighter. When we locked into a groove it was hellacious. The key thing was that we all grew up together and had this Detroit way of approaching music."

DETROIT'S NATIVE SONS

From the 1920s through the early 1960s, Detroit was one of America's boom towns. Its growth was fueled by the assembly lines of the auto industry, as the city's residents worked around the clock to satisfy our thirst for the mobility and affluence that cars represented. Detroit attracted poor and working-class families from around the country, a large percentage of them Southern blacks. In the days before the landmark 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision and the dawn of the civil rights movement, the assembly line certainly beat sharecropping. Berry Gordy's family came from Georgia to the Motor City as did Johnny Griffith's from Mississipi, James Jamerson's from South Carolina and Earl Van Dyke's from Kentucky.

With the discretionary capital that the Detroit gas-fueled economy provided, the parents of musically inclined youngsters were able to buy instruments, often pianos, and get professional training as well. The large, segregated high schools of Detroit also offered musical training for black youths. Jamerson was introduced to the bass by a teacher at Northwestern High in 1954 "because I had long fingers and big hands.... I went through the books, learned how to read and was helping students in class after three months." Northwestern, one of Detroit's biggest black high schools, produced a number of other key Motown personnel, including Smokey Robinson.

Bebop was challenging and enchanting the city's young musicians in the 1950s and the future Motown session players were caught up in its spirit. Jamerson recalls, "When I was in my teens I used to play jazz at this place where the musicians hung out. Barry Harris, the piano player, was the leader of us guys. As we got older we started playing in clubs like the Minor Key and at all the college dances. At this time I started playing with the heavyweights like Dizzy Gillespie. Different musicians from New York would come in and jam."

For Griffith and Van Dyke, bebop and Harris were also important. "Musically he was the man," says Griffith. "The young players would all hang out at Barry's house, because he was the only guy who knew all the hip bebop changes. We'd all be learning together, just exchanging ideas."

"Detroit musicians back in that time weren't in competition, but just out to help one another," adds Van Dyke. "I remember the hardest tunes for me to get were 'Cherokee' and 'Lush Life.' Hank Jones taught it to Barry Harris. Barry Harris taught it to me. I taught it to somebody else. That was the Detroit way."

Despite the inspiration of bebop, many found the best way to eat and still play was through R&B. Van Dyke played with obscure R&B guitarist Emmett Sheigh ("I was one of the Sheigh Riders") before graduating first to Lloyd Price and then to Aretha Franklin in the early 60s. Jamerson was gigging around Detroit, doing session work for local Detroit labels such as Golden World. Griffith also did sessions in Detroit and Chicago. All of this activity proved a prelude to the most important musical experience of their lives: Motown.

From 1959 to 1963 Williams 'Mickey' Stevenson, Motown A&R director and producer, and Berry Gordy recruited musicians, mostly Detroit natives, for the house band. Jamerson joined in 1959 after playing on a session at the studio of Raymona Gordy, Berry's first wife. Van Dyke was lured back to Detroit after tiring of life on the road. Griffith cut an album on Motown's jazz label workshop before playing on Motown sessions in 1963.

James Jamerson: "We were doing more of the job than we thought we were doing and didn't get the credit."

Business at Motown began early, at least for the record business, with sessions starting often at nine or ten a.m. They also started late at night. Producer Clarence Paul, the man in charge of 'Little' Stevie Wonder's recordings, enjoyed cutting late, feeling that recording at three or four in the morning brought out the best in musicians. Often after Earl Van Dyke & his Funk Brothers (basically the Motown band) ended their nightly set at the Chit Chat Lounge, Motown staffers, including Berry himself, would stop by and get the musicians to accompany them back to Hitsville to record. Levi Stubbs recorded the vocals to "Baby, I Need Your Loving" between two and

eight a.m. one summer morning after Brian Holland told him about the song at the Twenty Grand Nightclub.

Griffith remembers those days quite vividly. "We'd get lead sheets from the producer and they'd hum lines out to us. After a while it got more sophisticated and more detailed. By 1965, the producers were getting much better and started to use strings heavily. It forced them to get more specific about what they wanted because you had to write for the string players they'd recruited from the Detroit Symphony. Later the producers would draw the outline and we'd work out the harmonies among ourselves."

Despite the almost constant recording going on at Hitsville, the number of Motown releases was always kept to a relative trickle, reflecting Gordy's philosophy of quality over quantity. Many now claim that the Motown vaults are overflowing with material that Motown's quality control committee felt was either uncommercial or too experimental. Van Dyke says his favorite Motown album, a William Stevenson/Ivy Hunter production featuring Marvin Gaye singing over Latin-influenced tracks "never hit the street. There was a lot of stuff like that they rejected." Unreleased Motown music from the 60s still turns up on current albums, including Smokey Robinson's 1979 hit, "Cruisin'" and Stevie Wonder's "All I Do" from 1980's *Hotter Than July* LP.

Van Dyke also feels the genesis of several songs on Wonder's epic *Songs In The Key Of Life* was in old Motown sessions: "Motown would always change the titles and sometimes words after the tracks had been cut. If you read the liner notes on *Songs* you see the names of all the Motown musicians right in there." For years musicologists have been trying to get Motown to release some of this unrelated material, but so far Motown has resisted the idea

FORMULAS AND FUNK

Billboard's Adam White best described the Motown sound: "The elements: a bedrock bass line; an emphatic beat accentuated by tambourines; pounding percussion and piano tracks; saxophone-driven brass charts; shrill *femme* backup vocals in the classic call-and-response mode of gospel performances; and those swirling, riff-reinforcing strings of the Detroit Symphony."

These elements were built into almost all of the classic Motown hits of the 1960s. The mechanistic, most stereotypically Motown records were products of the Brian Holland-Lamont Dozier-Eddie Holland team. During the same period two other producer/writers, Smokey Robinson and Norman Whitfield, developed personal approaches that differed markedly from Holland-Dozier-Holland. Robinson's productions, based on the graceful gamesmanship of his lyrics, made for a varied, eclectic output. Norman Whitfield made Motown's funkiest records, first in answer to Stax's Southern soul and later in response to Sly Stone's bodacious psychedelic soul.

Holland-Dozier-Holland, all former singers, were united by Gordy as a production and writing team in 1963. Their early records, such as Martha & the Vandellas' "Heat Wave" and Marvin Gaye's "How Sweet It Is To Be Loved By You," were above average, but still musically standard R&B pop of the period. In 1964 their music grew more sophisticated as they arrived at a very efficient division of labor; Eddie Holland was the chief lyricist; Lamont Dozier wrote music and supervised the horns, strings and background vocals; and Brian Holland wrote music, worked directly with the session musicians and ran the actual recording sessions.

With the Supremes' "Baby Love" (1964) they hit upon one of the most successful formulas in musical history. The leanness of these melodies and heartfelt banality of the words was balanced by arrangements that grew increasingly dense and dramatic. "By 1967 and 1968 you could really hear the influence of classical music on their work," remembers Griffith. "Brian had sat down and studied classical music to some degree. This really changed their style. You hear it on 'Standing In The Shadows Of Love,' 'Bernadette' and 'Reach Out I'll Be There.'

"H-D-H had everybody come on in to the studio at the same time, like it was one big party. They'd give us four or five chords on a piece of paper and we'd start studying and get the feel of the tune. Brian Holland would walk around and whisper little patterns in your ear. With each player he'd give them one or two patterns to try."

H-D-H had to have the cooperation of Motown's musicians to make their formula work, but once established ("I Can't Help Myself," "It's The Same Old Song," "Sugar Pie, Honey Bunch"), it only required fine tuning from record to record. In contrast, Robinson's more free-form style demanded more creative input from the musicians. "Smokey always would start with a rhythm section of four pieces," says Griffith. Robinson developed arranging and rhythmic ideas with these small groups by adding additional instruments as the song came together.

With the aid of the studio musicians, Miracles' guitarist Marv

An early photo of the late Benny "Papa Zita" Benjamin.

"When someone would give Benny some lip, he'd say, 'Look, I've been in this snake pit many a year. I've seen them come and go.'"

Tarplin, members of his group the Miracles, and the Motown staff writers, Smokey shaped his wonderful lyrics into compelling music: the Miracles' "Ooo Baby Baby," "I Second That Emotion," and "The Tears Of A Clown"; the Temptations' "The Way You Do The Things You Do"; and the Four Tops' "Still Water (Love)" reflect the range of Robinson's productions and his ability to maintain a consistent musical personality while drawing upon a variety of collaborators.

Norman Whitfield's records lack the aural textures of H-D-H, nor do they have the variety and charm of Robinson. Instead, Whitfield's records have something people don't normally associate with Motown: funk. In fact, bassist Jamerson says, "Norman didn't just want funk, he wanted monstrous funk." After starting as a paper pusher in the A&R department, Whitfield graduated to production in 1964, introducing a raw soulful edge to Motown music with the Marvelettes' "Too Many Fish In The Sea," the Temptations' "Ain't Too Proud To Beg," and both Gladys Knight & the Pips' and Marvin Gaye's versions of "I Heard It Through The Grapevine."

However, Whitfield didn't become an innovator until 1968. "He came into the studio one day and said, "I wanna do something different. I wanna do something fresh," says Uriel Jones. With the Temptations providing the voices and longtime collaborator Barrett Strong ("Money") the words, Whitfield revolutionized Motown with three kinetic, uptempo hits ("Cloud Nine," "Psychedelic Shack," "Ball Of Confusion") and the haunting "Papa Was A Rolling Stone." All these songs were based on riffs improvised to a large degree by Whitfield and the musicians in the studio.

FASCINATING RHYTHM

But for all the production magic, the core of the Motown sound was its distinctive rhythm. Berry Gordy believed in a hard, emphatic beat, one often accentuated by either handclaps or, his favorite, tambourines. Often guitarist Robert White's metallic down strokes would also land on the beat as on "Dancing In The Street."

Underpinning all these extras was Benny Benjamin, known around Hitsville, U.S.A. as "Papa Zita" because he resembled a dark Cuban and enjoyed peppering his speech occasionally with obscene Spanish phrases. Like his co-workers, Benjamin's background was in jazz, reflected on the Miracles' "Shop Around," Motown's first national hit in 1960, when he used brushes instead of sticks. In fact some other early Motown hits ("My Girl") have the feel of brush drumming even if Benjamin actually didn't use them.

Stevie Wonder fondly recalled, "Benny would be late for sessions, Benny'd be drunk sometimes. I mean, he was a beautiful cat, but.... Benny would come up with stories, like, 'Man, you'd never believe it but like a goddamn elephant, man, in the middle of the road, stopped me from comin' to the sessions, so that's why I'm late, baby, so (clap of hands) it's cool!' But he was ready. He could play drums...you wouldn't even *need* a bass, that's how bad he was. Just listen to all that

THE BERRY GORDY FACTOR

"...the creative thread that wove the whole Motown sound together."

Tom Noonan was a marketing executive with Motown for five years in the late 60s and early 70s. Here he recalls a few highlights of the Motown system, designed and run by the indespensible Berry Gordy, Jr.

"The operation that Berry Gordy set up was completely unique for its time—and frankly, it's still unique today. With most labels, one producer would be assigned to an artist and would handle everything. At Motown, there was a kind of rotating system of production, based on what they called "A&R blockouts." There would be a memo saying that the Temptations or the Supremes would be coming off the road and would be in Detroit for a week. If you were a producer, you'd look at that schedule, and would go into the studio in advance to cut tracks. You might cut one for the Temps and two for the Miracles. Sometimes they had no lyrics at all: the staff writers would then write to these tracks, which was unheard of in those days. So the Supremes would come to town and on Monday they'd record with Norm Whitfield, and the next night they'd possibly go in with Hank Crosby, then on Wednesday maybe Holland-Dozier-Holland. So you had the producers competing with each other to get their songs released; the creative juices were flowing like crazy. Who knew where the magical link might occur?

"Then there were the singles meetings, in which we'd listen to new product and decide what to release. These sessions included A&R people, writers, producers, arrangers, markeing people, even some of the artists. I'll never forget my first meeting. I had just come from Columbia in 1968; there we'd hear fourteen singles at a meeting and we'd release every one. At my first Motown meeting, we heard sixty-eight, and wound up releasing one! I almost died.

"Berry had a policy to teach discipline to his staff: if you were not at the meeting by nine o'clock, even if you were Smokey Robinson, the door was locked and you were not allowed in. Picture these sessions: I was a new guy in town, and white to boot. On your right would be Smokey, on your left would be Norm Whitfield and behind you would be Lamont Dozier. Berry would play the song and then ask everyone to put up their hand if they thought it was or wasn't a top ten hit, or if they didn't know. Then he'd ask you why you thought what you did, and you'd have to stand up and face the producer, artist and writer of the cut and say why you thought it was a dud. You couldn't bullshit. Berry would never say what he thought until the end of each discussion. Then he'd go into a discourse about that record, which was like going to school. He'd dissect each cut. Sometimes we'd be there until ten at night.

"There's no doubt in my mind that the creative thread that wove the whole Motown sound together was Berry Gordy, Jr. There was no number two, no committee. Berry could be in France or Italy and still about four or five in the afternoon you'd get a call from him and he'd want the stations who'd added the records or the new sales figures. He was in the studio all the time; he'd pop in every night. Sometimes he'd really get in with both feet, but always working with the producers. He'd never dominate them—he was highly respectful of creative people. Of course, nobody could dress you down like Berry if he was upset with you. He'd do it in front of a crowd and you'd feel like two cents, but then the next day he'd make up some pretense to get you up and praise the living heck out of you for an hour and you'd walk out on cloud nine.

"As a writer, Berry himself was fantastic. Before he started Motown, he'd written numerous hits for Marv Johnson and Jackie Wilson. He wrote a lot more than we at Motown know; you'll see phrases on the records like 'written by the corporation,' 'produced by the company' and he's part of that. He'd never put his name down, so he'd form these cumulative titles.

"I remember in particular one singles meeting in which someone had put on a record and suddenly Berry stopped the whole session and began critiquing the lyrics. He discussed the song's atmosphere, its subject, saying, 'You wouldn't say that to a woman, would you?' Then he walked outside with the writers, and spent about twenty-five minutes with them. Then they returned and played just the instrumental track and sang a whole new set of lyrics over it. The song turned out to be "Love Child"; we all flipped out and said, 'That's it!'" — *Jock Baird*

Robert White, Dan Turner, Earl Van Dyke, Uriel Jones and James Jamerson, the core of the Motown session band.

Motown stuff; the drums would just *pop*!"

"Oh, man, (Benjamin) was my favorite," adds James Jamerson joyfully. "When he died I couldn't eat for two weeks, it hurt me so bad. He and I were really the ones who tightened up the sound, the drum and the bass. We didn't need sheet music."

Along with providing the beat, Benjamin was the spirit of the Motown band musicians as well. Whenever singers got out of line, feeling too big for the music or musicians, it was Benny Benjamin who cut them down to size. "They always used to fall out with Benny, probably because he used to lip a lot," says Van Dyke, chuckling. "When someone would give him some lip, he'd say, 'Look, I been down in this snake pit many a day and many a month and many a year. I seen them come and seen them go. And I'm still here.' That was the way it was with him and it was the truth. We did see many of them come and many of them go. That was all the way from Tony Martin to Billy Eckstine to Sammy Davis, Jr. and we were still there getting our little money."

In contrast to his studio precision, Benjamin was undisciplined in his private life, including ever-growing alcohol and drug addictions. "As Benny started deteriorating in the studio, which everybody noticed, they brought in two drummers," Van Dyke recalls, "Uriel Jones and Richard 'Pistol' Allen, to fill that one man's shoes. Yes sir, two drummers. Gladys Knight & the Pips' 'Heard It Through The Grapevine' in 1967 was about the first time they used two. Uriel Jones was playing the time and Benny was playing the pickups. Benny had gotten so he couldn't keep time."

Uriel Jones, however, has a different memory. He claims that young Stevie Wonder suggested using two drummers sometime in 1966. "Stevie could play drums and one day came in with a drum part he wanted us to play. He tried me and I couldn't play it. He tried Benny and he couldn't play it. So then he split it up between us. He sat us both down and said, 'Well, you do the foot in this part. You do the cymbal in this part.'"

Benjamin's death by a stroke in 1969 marked the beginning of the end for the Motown sound. Wonder sang long and passionately at his funeral. Little Steveland Morris had long idolized Benjamin, regarding the personable drummer as a second father. Appropriately, Stevie's drumming on many of his best records is pure Benny Benjamin.

Bassist James Jamerson was one of the first Motown staff musicians, working for Gordy and company from 1959 to 1973 following a gig in the band of another gifted Detroit native Jackie Wilson. Jamerson remembers the early Motown years clearly from twenty years' distance: "Holland-Dozier-Holland would give me the chord sheet, but they couldn't write for me. When they did, it didn't sound right. They'd let me go on and ad lib. I created, man. When they gave me that chord sheet, I'd look at it, but then start doing what I felt and what I thought would fit. All the musicians did. All of them made hits.

"I'd hear the melody line from the lyrics and I'd build the bass line around that. I always tried to support the melody. I had to. I'd make it repetitious, but also add things to it. Sometimes that was a problem because the bassist who worked with the acts on the road couldn't play it. It was repetitious, but had to be funky and have emotion.

"My feel was always an Eastern feel. A spiritual thing. Take 'Standing In The Shadow Of Love.' The bass line has an Arabic feel. I've been around a whole lot of people from the East, from China and Japan. Then I studied the African, Cuban and Indian scales. I brought all that with me to Motown.

"I picked things up from listening to people speak. From the intonation of their voices, I could capture a line. I look at people walking and get a beat from their movement. I'm telling you all my secrets now."

And on what tune was Jamerson's bass line formed by the sight of someone walking? "There was one of them heavy, funky tunes the Temptations did.... I can't remember the name, but there was this big, fat woman walking around. She couldn't keep still. I wrote it by watching her move."

Jamerson now says his favorite bass parts are on the Four Tops' "Reach Out," "Bernadette," "Standing In The Shadows Of Love," Marvin Gaye's "What's Goin' On" and Stevie Wonder's "Signed, Sealed, Delivered." "There was also this semi-jazz album Marvin Gaye did that had a version of 'Witch Craft' that I liked," Jamerson adds.

The pleasure of his Motown memories is diminished by his feelings that "in certain ways" he and his fellow musicians were exploited: "There is also sometimes a tear because I see

"There is also sometimes a tear because I see how I was treated and cheated. Everyone, as time went on, got sort of strange."

now how I was treated and cheated. I didn't see that until I got a little older. Everybody, as time went on, got sort of strange. Especially after Motown moved out to California. If they see you, they're glad to see you. They just change their phone numbers so much. I don't believe in changing mine. I don't believe some of them know I'm still alive."

Health problems have frustrated Jamerson's efforts as a player and producer in recent years. When we talked he was resting in a suburban Los Angeles hospital from a recent illness. Still, he wants everyone to know, "I'm ready, willing and able. Just give me a call."

Despite Jamerson's feeling of being exploited, though, Earl Van Dyke insists the pay was pretty good: "If you didn't come out of Motown with some money or some property, it wasn't Berry's fault. In 1965 I made $60,000. In 1966 I made close to $100,000, which included some outside work. In that time it was rare that a musician could own his own house, but I did. Everybody there was buying Cadillacs. Everybody had some money." In 1962 Van Dyke was offered $135 a week to join Motown's staff, but by the mid-60s studio musicians were taking home as much as $3,000 a week. Musicians were paid $52.50 for the first three hours, $52.50 for the next hour and a half, and $52.50 for every additional half hour. They were often awarded bonuses by the producers for performing on a particularly successful date. Defying the threat of a fine if caught, many Motown staffers also did outside work.

"I hold no grudges against Motown," asserts Van Dyke. "I hold grudges against myself because the opportunities were there to do more and I didn't take advantage of them. I just got locked into the fact that I was playing music and making a living. It was not what I wanted to play, but it was good. My children went to private school. It was grand."

Jamerson, however, feels some bitterness: "We were doing more of the job than we thought we were doing and we didn't get any songwriting credit. They didn't start giving any musicians credits on the records until the 70s." Did he complain about it? "I always asked. No one ever said anything. It did make me sort of mad, but what could I do?" Did he ever speak to Gordy about it? "Yes, but they felt that as long as you got paid your name didn't have to be on the record.... I wrote some tunes, and they cut some of them, but they just put them on the shelf. They never got out."

EPILOGUE: GONE HOLLYWOOD

Berry Gordy had always admired the movie moguls. In fact, he saw himself an heir to the legacy of people like Samuel Goldwyn, who had pulled himself out of the ghetto through grit, determination and vision. The famed Motown charm school approach to artist development was also based directly on the Hollywood star system, so it wasn't surprising that he was inexorably drawn to it. Since the mid-1960s Motown had a Los Angeles office and by 1970 Gordy was spending considerable time there, laying the groundwork for a shift of all Motown operations to the West Coast and negotiating with Paramount Pictures to distribute *Lady Sings the Blues*, the critically-acclaimed Diana Ross vehicle. By the time Gordy had realized his life-long ambition of directing (the dopey *Mahogany* in 1973), Motown had settled into a skyscraper on Sunset Boulevard and purchased a studio in Los Angeles.

Back in Detroit the musicians who worked for Motown knew that the good old days were ending. H-D-H had left in a flurry of lawsuits. One by one the stable of Motown acts grew smaller as the Isley Brothers, Gladys Knight & the Pips, the Spinners and the Four Tops jumped ship. During the transitional years the Detroit musicians were flown out to Los Angeles for key sessions such as the early Jackson Five singles ("I Want You Back," "ABC") and Marvin Gaye's "What's Goin' On." Other tracks, cut by musicians in Los Angeles, were sent back for overdubbing. But it soon became apparent that if they were to continue their relationship with Motown, a move to Los Angeles was in order.

"Yeah, he (Gordy) said we'd have a job if we came out there," recalls Van Dyke, "but at the same rate of pay that it was here (in Detroit). I didn't think I could survive in Tinseltown on that kind of money the way I could in Detroit. We negotiated, but there was no agreement over increased wages, and soon after they moved out there the contract with all the Detroit musicians ended. But even after that I did work for Motown on a premium wage scale."

Motown's relocation to Los Angeles had a profound effect on black music. Following Motown's lead, top R&B musicians from Chicago, New York, Memphis, New Orleans, Atlanta and later Philadelphia, migrated to L.A., since that appeared to be where the action in black music was now centered. In the process, much of the regionalism in black music was lost. The 'Detroit sound,' the 'Chicago sound,' the 'Memphis sound,' all became part of the current state-of-the-art studio perfectionism of Los Angeles-based black pop.

Jamerson and other Motown musicians remained in Los Angeles; Van Dyke, Griffith and Jones disliked California living and returned to Detroit. Much to their dismay, the Motor City just wasn't the same. With Motown's departure fewer outside record companies traveled there to record. A coterie of musicians working at United Sound and led by George Clinton were formulating a new Detroit sound, one that made Norman Whitfield's "psychedelic" experiments positively old hat.

Detroit was no longer a city of hope, but an angry, disillusioned landscape of crumbling buildings and racial unrest still simmering from 1967's violent riot. By 1973 the Motown sound wasn't Diana Ross, but the sound of gunfire as Detroit was saddled with America's highest murder rate. As a result, the once vital nightclub scene that had nurtured a generation of Detroit musicians was dead.

Still the musicians survived. Van Dyke worked as a sideman and conductor for numerous performers, including a ten-year stint as musical director for another Detroit native, Freda Payne. Griffith had an instrumental hit on RCA Records, "Grand Central Shuttle," in 1973. Later he served as music director at Detroit's WGPR for four years. Griffith now produces radio commercials via his own production company.

Jones has put a lot of time into developing his interior decorating business, though he has never given up drumming. In fact, last summer Jones and Van Dyke did a series of free concerts sponsored by Detroit's Parks & Recreations Authority, performing instrumental versions of Motown hits.

Despite Detroit's sad state, Griffith thinks there is still musical life in the old city. "The musicians, the singers, the producers are still here, but there isn't a support system anymore. Even if Motown didn't sign you, they were a sign that it could happen for you, even in Detroit. Now after you reach a certain point you have to leave. You can only go so far here now. It's a shame, but it's real. It is like what they say around Detroit now, 'We used to make cars here.' And great records." M

On August 2, 1983, James Jamerson died of complications from a heart attack at U.S.C. Medical Center in Los Angeles.

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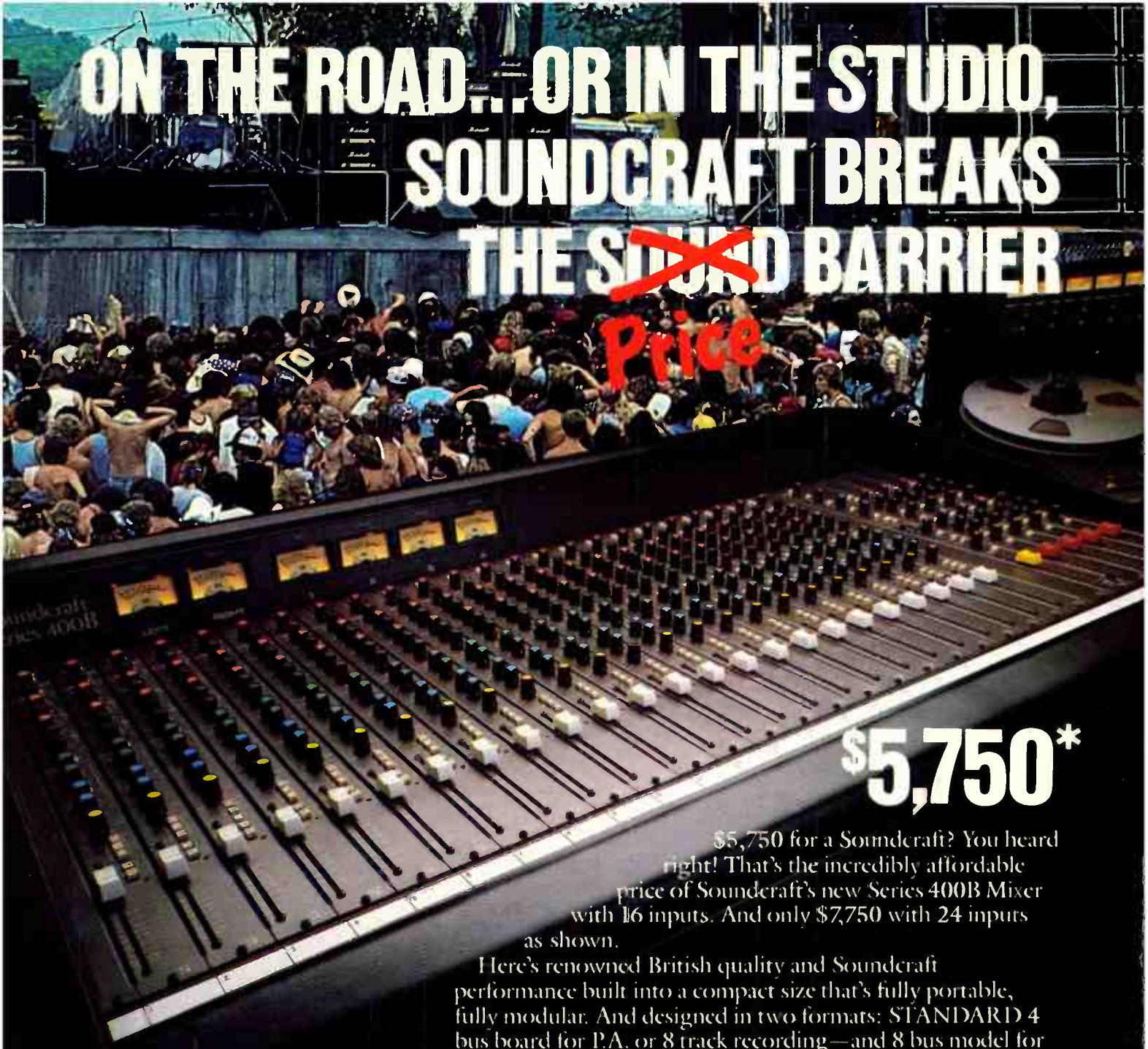

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The Prophet T8 is equipped with Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) back-panel connectors. MIDI is fast becoming a widely accepted standard format for interfacing microprocessor-based electronic instruments with each other and with personal computers. MIDI doesn't just mean that the T8 will interface easily and effectively with other drum machines, sequencers and synths. It also means the T8 will interface with the future.

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Telex: 12721 SQNTI.

Printed in U.S.A. 8EC0609M

SPECIFICATIONS

Keyboard:	76-key A–C wood keyboard with weighted-hammer action.
Touch Response:	Independent pressure and velocity per key.
Pressure:	7 selectable destinations. Fully adjustable sensitivity.
Velocity:	Approximately 30 dB envelope dynamic range.
Programmer Section:	Two programmers: Left and Right. Each programmer stores 64 presets (user programmable).
Voices:	8-voice polyphonic in single mode, 4 voices for the Left programmer and 4 voices for the Right programmer in Split or Double mode.
Voice Layout:	VCO's (2): Sawtooth, Triangle, 0–100% Pulse. Sync on OSC A. VCF: 4-pole lowpass (24 dB per octave). Variable resonance Fully variable keyboard tracking. NOISE SOURCE: One white noise generator. ENVELOPE GENERATOR: Two ADSR-type. Full velocity control. ADR mode. Dual programmable release times.
Power Requirements:	Domestic: 110 volts ± 10% 50/60 Hz. Export: 220 volts ± 10% 50/60 Hz. Power Consumption: 50 watts.
Back Panel:	AUDIO OUT: Mono, Left, Right (1k unbalanced line level). MIDI Jacks: In and Out. FOOTSWITCH Jacks: Sequencer, 2nd Release, Unison/Track (switch-closure type). TAPE IN/TAPE OUT. RECORD ENABLE SWITCH.
Standard Accessories:	Dual pedal.
Sequencer:	670 notes. Single or Loop playback mode. Includes velocity information.
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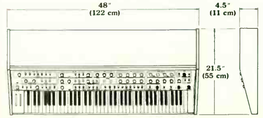

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RESPONSIVE TO THE SUBTLETIES OF TOUCH.

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The eight voice Prophet T8 offers a choice of four keyboard modes: single, double, unison or split. In single mode, the same basic sound is played across the entire length of the keyboard. In double mode, different program patches are layered on top of each other so that two sounds are triggered by each key. In unison mode, all eight voices can be assigned to a single note, creating a very full, bold sound. The split mode is particularly useful in performance because it lets you play different sounds at different ends of the keyboard. The location of the split point is programmably adjustable.

RESPONSIVE SOUNDS— PROPHET FROM EXPERIENCE

The Prophet T8 retains the characteristic sound and versatile voice layout that made the Prophet 5 the standard for professional performing and studio musicians.

The fully programmable T8 comes with 128 pre-programmed patches, including a variety of very workable original sounds as well as impressive orchestral, percussive and keyboard timbres. The new acoustic piano patch is so persuasive, you may decide to leave your electric acoustic at home.

Four keyboard modes—all instantly accessible. For split or double, punch in two patches simultaneously with the "Link" control.

A new "ADR" switch on the front panel dispenses with the "Sustain" phase of the "Attack, Decay, Sustain & Release" (ADSR) envelope to provide quick access to more natural percussive effects.

Like the Prophet 5, each voice on the T8 consists of two voltage controlled oscillators ("Osc. A and Osc. B"), a voltage controlled amplifier, a noise source, and two four-stage ADSR envelopes which determine the final shapes of the sound waves. Triangle wave capability has been added to oscillator "A". This additional feature enhances the distinctive, harmonically pure sound previously available only in oscillator "B" on the Prophet 5. The low-pass filter provides an adjustable tracking control so that a given program patch will have the same character and apparent volume anywhere on the keyboard.

The popular and very versatile Poly-Modulation section has been expanded and improved. In addition to inter-acting with the new velocity-sensing keyboard, Poly-Mod is now capable of generating inverted waveform envelopes, effectively multiplying a creative player's opportunities for generating new sounds.

Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) lets you interface with personal computers and other MIDI-equipped electronic instruments.

RESPONSIVE IN PERFORMANCE

The Prophet T8 was specifically designed and engineered to meet the practical demands of live performance.

Unlike pushbutton synthesizers, the Prophet T8 utilizes rotary-controlled potentiometers which permit artists to quickly feel their way to the proper sounds, instead of having to compute them. Because the T8's control pots are "live" at all times, all it takes to alter a setting is to turn the appropriate knob. By contrast, it takes at least three moves to program new values into switch-based synths.

The new Prophet T8 has a built-in, non-volatile 670 note real time sequencer capable of remembering all keyboard velocity information. Tracks needed for composition or performance can be carefully laid down in advance at a fraction of their intended speed and later replayed as much as four times faster.

more →

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The Instruments, The People, The Process

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Who is this man and why isn't he smiling? Well, he's Greg Hawkes of the Cars, and he and his music may be funnier than you think. Freff explains.

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JOE WALSH GOES BACK TO BARN-STORMING

Joe Walsh and the Eagles never were really made for each other. Other than their manager Irving Azoff and record label Elektra/Asylum, they had precious little in common, least of which was a sense of humor. While Walsh was merrily

trashing hotel rooms with a custom-built chainsaw, mounting a lunatic campaign for the presidency and releasing albums with cryptic titles like *The Smoker You Drink, The Player You Get*, big birds Glenn Frey and Don Henley were getting bent out of shape over a goddamn softball game with *Rolling Stone*.

But they managed to come to a comfortable arrangement. Walsh would learn to play every song note-for-note every night, just like on the records, and they would learn to lighten up a bit. And it worked, if only for the last two albums, *Hotel California* and *The Long Run*.

To this day, Walsh regards *Hotel California* as his finest hour. "Thing I'm proudest about," he says, "was to be in the Eagles and have a power base to make a valid artistic statement for the generation I represent," a reference to that album's sensitive, articulate probe of the decadence and desperation of Southern California culture. "It was a special album for a lot of people, including me, to be able to affect that many people on the planet and to feel that album was good enough to justify being rich.

"You know, Mozart and Beethoven never got royalty checks. Forty years after Beethoven died, they found a trunk of his stuff in somebody's attic and said 'Who *is* this guy? He's amazing!' They couldn't even find where he was buried. I'm glad I had a chance to make a mark while I'm still around."

With the Eagles grounded, no longer will the world have to wait three years between albums while they make sure the drum sound is just so and the lyrics appropriately profound. Which is fine by Walsh. With his new Warner Bros./Full Moon release *You Bought It—You Name It*, he has embarked again on a full-time solo career that first started in 1971 with *Barnstorm*, his post-James Gang debut. Walsh has little negative to say about his former associates. "I don't think either Henley or Frey by himself is equal to the essence of 'em ganging up together," he shrugs, about as critical as he'll get on the subject. But it does not require much reading between the lines to see *You Bought It*... as Walsh's reaction to the Eagles' terminally fastidious recording habits, even to his own records like 1981's rather bloated *There Goes The Neighborhood*.

"I thought to myself after that last album, 'What am I doing?' I realized that coming out of the Eagles, I was all caught up in this lyrical/intellectual/melodic substance idea; it was inevitable because that's what we did as a band. But I also realized that my job on this planet is to play guitar for the folks and I'd kind of lost sight of that.

"The other thing I decided was, look, we have all this technology to fix the music later. You know, 'Don't worry about that—we'll fix that in the mix. We'll Dolby it, put a noise gate on it...' But what about the music? I didn't want to go into the studio and 'cut some tracks.' I decided to get a mobile truck, find some place to go, set up with sixteen tracks—just like the old days [*Yeah, the early 70s.—Ed.*] —no Dolby, 15 IPS, right? Roll the tape and let's play!"

The first order of business was a reunion with producer Bill

BY SAMUEL GRAHAM

EBET ROBERTS

"It became an incredible burden to figure out what intellectual statement to make. Now I just want to make music that speaks for itself."

Szymczyk, a friend and collaborator since the first James Gang LP fifteen years ago. Szymczyk, Walsh recalls with a laugh, was 'ess than enthusiastic about Joe's intention to make a seat-of-the-pants album. "He said, 'You can't do that!' I said, 'You're fired.' He said, 'Well, maybe we *can* do that.'" With that decided, Walsh rounded up long-time cohorts Joe Vitale on drums and George "Chocolate" Perry on bass, along with fellow guitarist Waddy Wachtel, and dug in for three weeks of sessions in a ballroom on Catalina Island, California. Six of *You Bought It*'s ten tracks came from these sessions; the other four were done at Santa Barbara Sound.

While engineer Jim Nipar worked the controls in the rented Record Plant mobile truck Szymczyk sat in the ballroom, mixing the live monitors used by the band and communicating with the truck via live radio and closed-circuit cable television. The equipment, according to Szymczyk, was not exactly state-of-the-art. "We used an old API board, which is a good workhorse board, and an old 16-track 3M machine that had definitely seen better days—it had a nice little quirk where it would just drop out of the record mode for no apparent reason. It was probably their third-line truck, but that sort of fit in with what we were doing anyway. We weren't out to make a 24-track, Dolby, 30 IPS recording. We were there to be old rock 'n' rollers. Joe's instructions to me were, 'Once I start playing, record whatever you get—I'm not gonna sit here and listen to quarter notes on a snare drum for five hours.' It was basically a plug-in-and-go situation, which kept everybody on their toes."

Adds Walsh, "There was no splicing things together, no over-dubbing the lead on later, and it was wonderful. I played totally differently. With two keyboards, or three guitars, you

can't just go for it—you have to play real structured, like 'I gotta stay out of this part,' or 'Okay, here's my lead part.' Waddy and I played something different every day and it progressed over a period of four or five days as we worked on a tune. It made it harder, really, because I'm not used to that. I don't *have* to do that," he grins. "I'm too rich."

Hardly a *Sgt. Pepper* and not quite *Never Mind The Bollocks, Here's The Sex Pistols, You Bought It—You Name It* is pretty much a success by Walsh's new standards: unpretentious, entertaining rock 'n' roll with sufficient variety to save it from monotony. On tracks like "I Can Play That Rock 'N' Roll" (the proof is in the searing overdubbed slide solos) and "Told You So" (with ex-Eagle Don Felder contributing extra axe-grinding), the guitars crackle with a relaxed, good-humored aggression and plenty of good old-fashioned volume.

Walsh's sense of humor—a loopy irreverence that's long been one of his most refreshing traits—remains intact. Few musicians would have the temerity to write a song called "I Like Big Tits" ("I like big tits for lunch/Big Tit Attack..."), actually record the damn thing and later whisper conspiratorially, "What do you think of 'I.L.B.T.s?' I'm gonna get killed for that! And I don't care." The Clash may rage against bourgeois imperialism, the Police can allude to Homeric myth, but Walsh is sorting things out in his own way in "The Worry Song": "I worry 'bout big business, and if they tell the truth/I worry 'bout the the Commies, undermining all our youth."

"I'm happy if people recognize my sense of humor," Walsh says. "But I hope I don't come across as a clown or court jester. Ten years from now, in the history books or something, I'd like to be remembered as the Mort Sahl of rock, instead of just a joke. For instance, there's an underlying message in 'Life's Been Good' (from 1978's *But Seriously, Folks...*): this lifestyle looks so glorious to everybody, but just to make music, I have to go through a lot of really stupid things.

"See, the thing that eventually became an incredible burden for the Eagles was trying to figure out what kind of intellectual statement you're gonna make about something. I was trying to get 180 degrees away from dwelling on anything, and just make music that would speak for itself."

As a guitarist, Walsh has his own incredible burden to bear—that of genius. "America's most accomplished rock guitarist," proclaims his record company biography. "He has a tremendous feel for the instrument," raves Jimmy Page. "He's one of the best guitarists in some time," adds Eric Clapton. Given record companies' inclination for hyperbole, that's all a bit hard to swallow. Walsh is a nice fellow and certainly a fine player. He's one of the rare guitarists still carrying on the blues-rock bottleneck heritage of Duane Allman and Lowell George. But an innovator? Even Walsh doesn't think so.

"As far as I can tell," he says, "I do have the respect of my peers. I don't know why, but I realize that it's important to some people that I do what I do. I met Christopher Cross and he told me that he had heard Barnstorm play a concert one night somewhere and that was his whole foundation for starting his own group. I couldn't believe it. I didn't know what to say, I was so embarrassed. I really can't comprehend why I should be complimented by Eric Clapton or Jimmy Page, because every lick I know I stole from them!" Current favorites include Leo Kottke, James Burton, Albert Lee, Amos Garrett, David Lindley and everyone's heavy metal player of choice, Eddie Van Halen. "When he gets a little older," Walsh says of Van Halen, "he'll slow down and really play. He can play circles around me now, but Albert King can blow him off the stage."

That's Joe Walsh, essentially a guy who prefers feel to technique, who would rather go to church than go to school, as he puts it. As a vocalist, he is "finally at peace with my throat, after

continued on page 86

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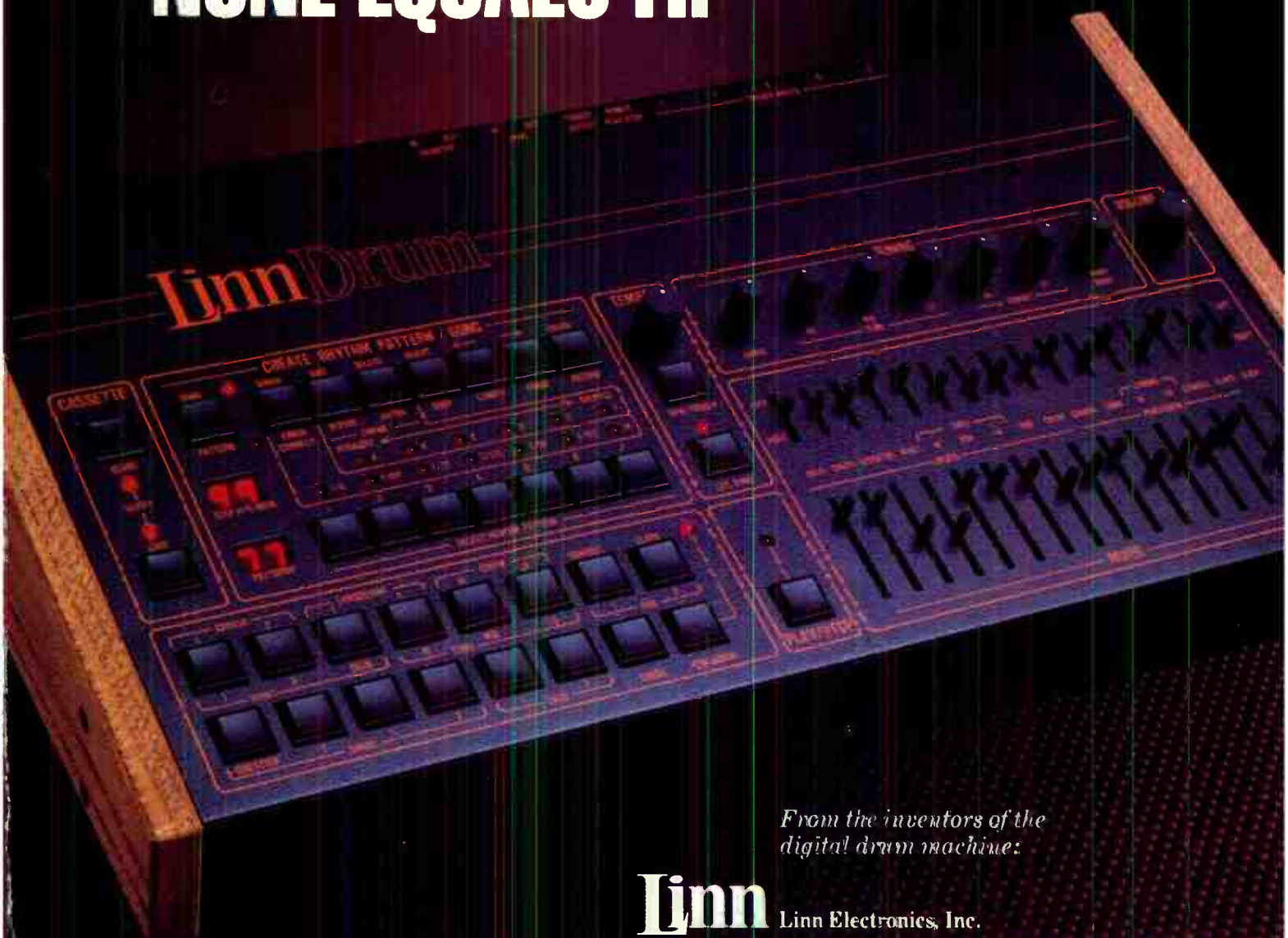

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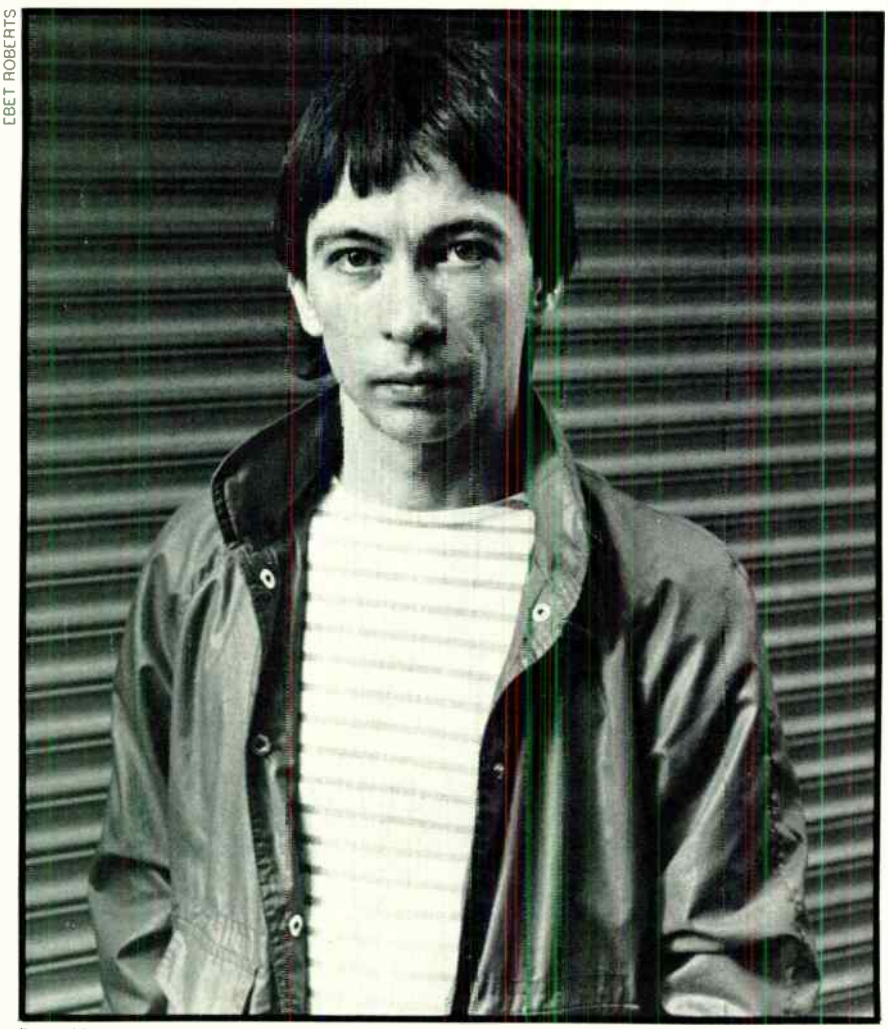
P R O D U C I N G

GREG HAWKES' SERIOUS SLAPSTICK

The Cars' Keyboardist Cuts Up

BY FREFF

EBET ROBERTS



Greg Hawkes practicing the straight-man part for his electro-dance epic, *Niagara Falls*.

Don't take my word for it; dig up any photo of the Cars you can find and pick out their keyboards and sax man, Greg Hawkes. It's easy. He's the incredibly dour-looking one. Straight, serious, sobering, utterly glacial. A face to freeze jokes at eighty paces.

Like hell. Is this the man who named his first solo album *Niagara Falls*, not because of the tourist attraction, but because of the Three Stooges routine? The man who spent one entire Cars tour checking into hotels under the name *Clive Davis*? I submit to the world that what we have here is a jester with a poker face, hiding slapstick and snap under a thin gloss of normality. And the album's the proof.

It's essentially all instrumental—Greg himself admits that the vocals "are kind of throw-away"—and the record's label, Passport, would have you classify it as electronic dance music, perfect for break-mixing, cross-fading and rapping over. It is that, right enough, but it's a good deal more. Careful listening pays off, revealing subtle, snakey twists of timbre and melody. What it really reminds me of, at least in attitude, is a kind of sparse rock/electronic Erik Satie. There is humor in every cut, obvious or otherwise, from the pseudo-oriental sparkle of "Ants In Your Pants" to the blatantly silly "Voyage Into Space." Sometimes the humor comes from the fact that the music won't admit that it's humorous—that's very Satie. The entire lyric of "Jet Lag" consists of the repeated phrase "Jet lag/Is a real drag," echoed through a Vocoder over the relentless march of drum machine, angry guitar and turbofan whoosh, neatly slamming tour burnout to the mat with a self-deprecating nod.

So who is this fellow Hawkes, anyway, and why isn't he smiling? Born in Arlington, Virginia and raised in Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C. ("Sort of where Columbia is now. There wasn't any such place then"), Greg had a typical suburban musical childhood: boring piano lessons and a clarinet chair in the school band. That changed around fifth grade, when the Beatles broke America wide open. Greg relegated the piano to mere basement doodling, switched to guitar and played rock 'n' roll in cover bands until the end of high school, when he headed north to study composition at Boston's Berklee School of Music.

"Flute was going to be my main instrument, but as soon as I got there I found out that they don't really have flute majors. They have sax majors who double on flute. So I kind of shifted into sax at that point. My first was a soprano, which I got interested in from records like Zappa's *Hot Rats*. By the time I left, two years later, I'd worked my way down the line to a baritone. What was best about the place was that it got me to the point where I could read and write music at a fairly rapid clip."

It was right after leaving Berklee that he met Ric Ocasek and Ben Orr. "They were doing a demo project in a studio out in the suburbs, and needed sax parts for a song. I knew the engineer. He introduced me to them, I played on the demos—as a matter of fact, it was my first playing session!" Over the next year he stayed in touch with them and worked on more demos, until finally it got to the point where they just threw in together as a band. That team-up, calling itself Richard & the Rabbits, "kind of dissolved," and Greg found himself changing from Rabbit to Fabulous Furniture when a one-night saxophone fill-in gig with Martin Mull turned into a whole year as Mull's invaluable "porch-swing man."

From rock to jazz to el mundo humoristico wasn't actually that big a change. You can know somebody by their heroes. Ask Greg his and you're as likely to get Laurel & Hardy as the Beatles,

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

IN THE LAND OF THE LONG DELAYS

Tape Looping Goes Digital

BY CRAIG ANDERTON

Lexicon PCM-42 includes a metronome pulse output to synchronize to the delay's rhythms.

If there was a top ten of signal processors, digital delays would probably be number one right now. Their popularity is attributable not only to musical usefulness, but also to the lower prices caused by advances in the computer memory technology on which digital delays are based. These lower prices have also allowed the creation of a new breed of delay line which features extremely long delay times; in fact, it is now possible to economically produce four, sixteen, or even sixty-four seconds of delay.

While you might suspect that these ultra-long delays are the product of a "technology for technology's sake" mentality that thinks more is better, long delays can actually provide many valid musical tools, including digital recording, solid-state tape loop effects, live multi-tracking, and pseudo emulation...as we'll soon discover.

Typical controls

Long delays (which we will define as those in excess of four seconds) are based on the same general principles as shorter digital delays: signals appear at the input, travel into the delay line's memory, and are pulled out of memory a few seconds later, thus giving a delay. A long delay line will have either a range switch for setting the "broad delay" coupled with a second control which sets the delay more precisely, or push-buttons which accomplish the same effect. Also, to produce multiple echoes instead of a single repeat, long delay lines—like standard delay lines—provide a feedback control which mixes some of the output back into the input.

Some delays include ways to modulate (subtly vary) the delay time, which can give effects from a chorus-like shimmer to detuning effects (remember Duane Eddy?). But one of the most important controls on a long delay line is an "infinite hold" (or infinite repeat) switch. This switch lets you "freeze" and repeat whatever is stored in memory.

Where long delays vary most are in convenience features. For example, because these long repeats occur so far apart, they impart very little sense of rhythm (this is not a problem with shorter echoes, which occur rapidly enough to imply a rhythm). Since an echo may occur only every one or two measures, some delays provide a metronome click on each beat so that you can easily play in time with the echo period. Some delays even have programmable metronomes, or produce output pulses (sync signals) which allow you to synchronize drum units, synthesizer arpeggiators and other electronic gear to the delay time. For example, if the echo time is equivalent to one measure of a song, then any drums being driven by the delay's sync signal will synchronize one measure of drums to the echo time. This insures that the drums and echo unit will be in perfect synchronization.

So what are long delays good for?

Consider tape loops, once a popular technique in avant-garde electronic music. Tape looping used to involve tape recording a sound and splicing the end of the tape back to the beginning, thereby creating a loop. If you took a sample of sound—say, one second of a printing press—and looped that, you could have a rhythmic printing press that could serve as a rhythm track. The only problem with this technique is that tape recorders were not intended to play back loops; so, sometimes you had to have someone hold a pencil shaft in a strategic place to serve as an additional tape guide, and occasionally, despite semi-heroic efforts, the tape would get chewed up by accident. But a long delay line, with its infinite hold feature, lets you create instant tape loops: just play a sound into the delay, and use the infinite repeat to store and then repeat that sound. Unlike a tape loop system, there are no moving parts; the only disadvantage is that the sound will be lost as soon as the AC power goes away (the memory used in these delays cannot store sounds permanently). Incidentally, once the sound is stored in the delay line, you can usually transpose it electronically using the delay time control ...which brings us to the next application.

Many of you have heard of "digitizing" keyboards such as the E-Mu Emulator, Fairlight CMI, PPG, 360 Systems and so on, which analyze a sound, store it and then transpose that sound across the entire keyboard. For example, if you sing an A-440, the keyboard will use that note as a model to synthesize the rest of the keyboard notes. (Note that the timbre changes as the sound is transposed; the usual solution is to take multiple samples for various points on the keyboard. This insures that the sampled sound will not have to be transposed too far from its original frequency.)

Transposing sounds stored in a delay line simply involves varying the delay time control, thereby varying the period of the sampled sound. A shorter period compresses time to pack more cycles in a shorter amount of time, giving a higher pitch. A longer period stretches out time so that there are fewer cycles per second, thus creating a lower pitch. Most delays are set up so that the only way to vary pitch is with a knob, which means that if you want to play a melody line you need pretty talented fingers. However, in most cases a simple modification is possible which lets you change pitch from a custom keyboard. While the results would never be confused with a multi-thousand-dollar digital keyboard, this technique is nonetheless musically

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P L A Y E R S

L. SHANKAR'S EAR FOR VIOLIN

Indian Classical Meets Western Jazz

BY CHRIS DOERING

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Shankar's virtuosity has been put to good use by McLaughlin, Zappa, Gabriel and Collins.

For most children taking violin lessons is about as much fun as taking castor oil. But the young L. Shankar could not get enough of them. Born into a family of classical violin virtuosos in India, he was already singing ragas at age two and playing the violin at five. But as the youngest son, his musical development was considered secondary to a proper education.

"So my parents used to lock my violin in the closet," Shankar remembers. "But my friend had a violin, so I used to cut school and go over to his house and practice. It took a long time, but I eventually derived my own style which helped me along the way."

That style, the flawless way Shankar executes the microtonal slurs of Indian music with liquid precision even in the highest octaves where fingering is difficult, has enabled him to travel freely between the worlds of Eastern secular and religious music and Western pop. A major recording artist in India where his albums of classical Indian violin music frequently top the charts, Shankar has also recorded with Frank Zappa, John McLaughlin and Phil Collins (a gold record he received for his string arrangements on *Face Value* hangs in one corner of his New York apartment).

More recently, Shankar appeared on Peter Gabriel's highly dramatic contribution to the *Music And Rhythm* compilation, an electrifying neo-Indian excursion entitled "Across The River." (A live set that he, Gabriel and Police drummer Stewart Copeland performed at last year's Gabriel-organized World of Music Art and Dance festival in Britain is in the can.) He recently contributed to the expansive psychedelia of British band Echo & the Bunnymen's *Porcupine* LP. And on Talking Heads' current art-funk masterpiece *Speaking In Tongues*, the evocative whine of Shankar's violin pierces the steamy party fervor of "Making Flippy Floppy."

"A lot of my albums have been number one in India. I made a lot of money and had a fantastic career," he admits. "But I wouldn't want to settle just for that for the rest of my life. I've always loved classical, rock and jazz music. I want to try different things. That's why I came to this country."

A Wesleyan University graduate with a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology, Shankar was working as a teaching assistant and concertmaster of the school's chamber orchestra at the same time he began meeting jazz musicians like Ornette Coleman, former John Coltrane bassist Jimmy Garrison and guitarist John McLaughlin. While his first Western recording was a solo album written and produced by Frank Zappa, Shankar came to the attention of the American pop audience with McLaughlin's acoustic band Shakti in the late 70s. And he insists Shakti's unique synthesis of Indian classical music and Western jazz was very much a collaborative effort.

"John gave me a lot of jazz lessons," he says, "and I gave him a lot of Indian lessons. Even now he has a tape of exercises he carries with him. What would happen then is that with Shakti, he might suggest an Indian idea and I might suggest a Western idea for a song.

"John and I are very different in a lot of ways," Shankar adds. "John loves to jam and he loves to practice and play. I always practice in my mind. As I work on a composition, I'm hearing it in my head so when I pick up the violin, I'm already familiar with it. I never work that hard on the violin. I work really hard on music, but it's mostly composition and thinking about it.

"Intonation, you see, comes from the ear. You have to hear it before you play. In my mind, I know how it should sound and what the fingerings are. As you go higher and higher, the fingerings become smaller in terms of space. I worked on that a lot when I was young and developed my own fingerings. In a way, you have to have even more technique than a Western classical player because you can't play a piece over and over again to get the bowings and fingering shifts right. You can't worry about playing it because the music will be affected."

Shankar's vision of pan-cultural musical synthesis reached an important peak last year with his debut solo album for ECM *Who's To Know*, a genuine *tour*

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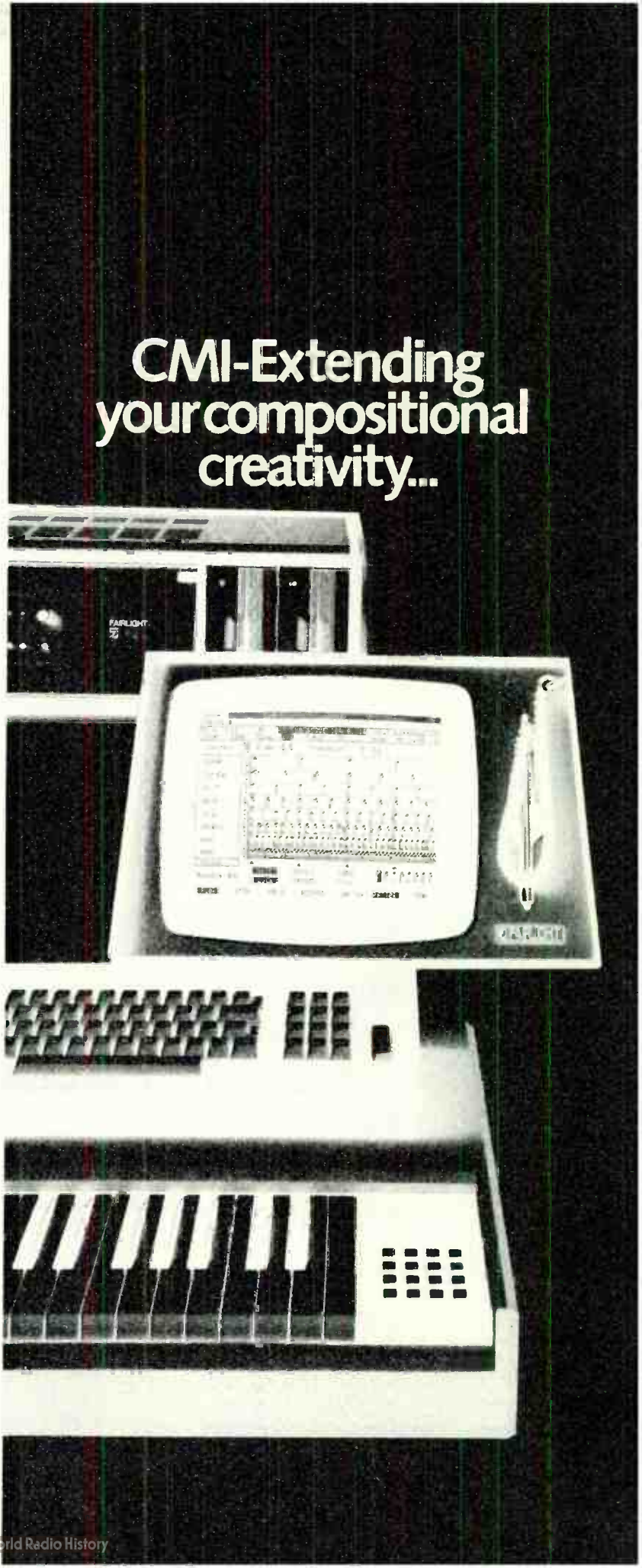

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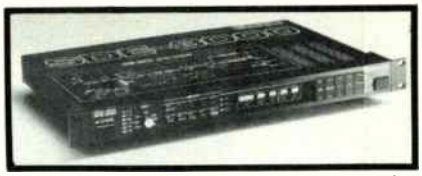
Delays from pg. 76

useful and a lot less expensive.

So far, we've talked about applications involving stored sounds. But simple long echoes also have their uses, particularly for the "Frippertronic" music popularized by guitarist Robert Fripp. This type of music is a refinement of an electronic music technique that involves using two tape recorders to create extremely long echoes. The two recorders are set up side by side, often separated by several feet, with the tape being supplied from the supply reel on the first machine and taken up by the takeup reel on the second machine. The sound is then recorded at the record head of the first machine, travels over to the second machine, and plays back from the second machine's playback head. The amount of delay (up to several seconds) depends on the speed of the tape and the distance between the recorders. As you might imagine, though, this technique is not super-reliable, especially if the distance between the tape units is substantial. Long electronic delays give these echoes without the associated mechanical problems; another bonus is that, as mentioned earlier, many units include some kind of metronome pulse so that you can easily play in time with long echoes.



Roland SDE-3000: 8 presets, 4.5 sec. delay

Turning up the feedback (also called regeneration) control with long echo times produces multiple echoes instead of a single repeat. For example, if you strike a chord on the first beat of a measure (and the delay time is the same length as a measure), then you will hear the first echo exactly one measure later, a second echo two measures later, a third echo three measures later, and so on. With lesser amounts of feedback these echoes will eventually fade away, but it is possible to "tweak" the feedback so that the echoes maintain their volume level as they repeat. This resembles multi-tracking—you play a phrase, it repeats, you play another phrase on top of that, the combination of phrases repeats, and so on. Once you've laid down several of these "tracks," you can generally go into infinite repeat to store the whole mess as a background against which you can practice or play leads. If the delay line generates pulses which drive electronic drum units, then you can have drums playing along in sync with a stored rhythmic background. With a programmable polyphonic synthesizer, drum machine and appropriate delay, one person can create a very full sound.

What's available?

There are several long delays available, with more slated to appear. The granddaddy of the genre was the Echo/Digital Recorder, made by Imaginearing Audio (since out of business). This unit was way ahead of its time, offering 16.777 seconds of delay, keypad entry of delay time, reverse echo and reverse hold as well as standard echo and hold, metronome output, voltage controlled delay time, and digital recording capabilities. Unfortunately, the bandwidth was only about 5 kHz; however, I understand that a company called Software Applications bought out the remainder of the Imaginearing Audio line, and has a 10 kHz bandwidth retrofit available.

The Roland SDE-3000, slated for full production during the last quarter of 1983, offers 4.5 seconds of delay along with 8 programmable presets for $1295. You can footswitch through the presets for no-hands selection.

Lexicon's PCM-42 was one of the first, if not *the* first, long digital delays to give a programmable metronome pulse output which related to the delay time. The standard 2.4 second delay lists for $1395; an optional memory expansion unit is available for $250 that brings the total delay out to 4.8 seconds. The PCM-

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PLAYERS

BRAZIL'S NANA VASCONCELOS

Percussion's Many Voices

BY MICHAEL SHORE

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Doing the Nana Vasconcelos Thing; definitely foreground, decidedly modern.

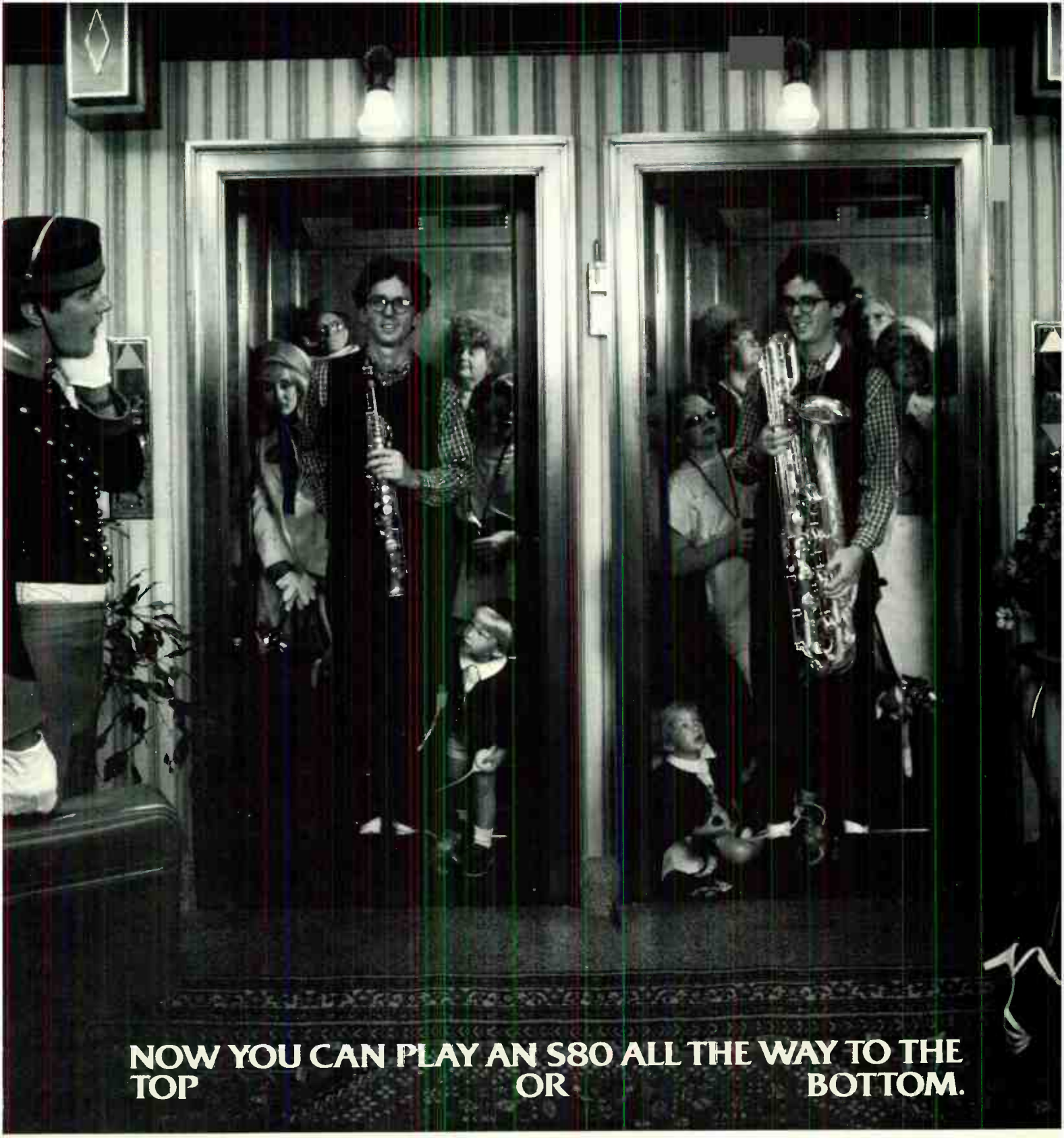
What do you think of when you hear the term "Brazilian percussionist"? A funky, noble savage strolling out of the jungle, a cornucopia of noise-making exotica spilling over his arms? An "auxiliary" kind of guy, ready to add just the right shake, rattle or roll of cross-cultural window dressing to the music of some jazz-fusion heavy? Well, Nana Vasconcelos is neither noble savage nor background flavor, and is just the guy to make sure people never again take for granted the idea of a Brazilian percussionist. He's a *musician*, and a great one. And if your hyperbole detectors are lighting up, consider the fact that I was thinking of beginning this story, "I have seen the future of global music and it is Nana Vasconcelos." Yes, he's *that* good.

If you're an ECM fan, you're probably already familiar with Nana's work on guitarist Egberto Gismonti's lovely mid-70s effort *Danca Das Cabecas*, or more recently as one-third of the exploratory free-world music trio Codona with Collin Walcott and Don Cherry. If you're a Milton Nascimento aficionado, maybe you've dug up some of the first records that he made with Nana in the mid-to-late-60s when Nascimento's fluid, flighty, aggressively sensual Afro-European/samba/bossa nova fusion revolutionized Brazilian popular music. Maybe you're a Pat Metheny freak and have heard Nana's restrained, atmospheric work on *Offramp* and *As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls*. Perhaps you're even hip enough to have Nana's own superb ECM solo album *Saudades* or his new release on the Europa label, *Zumbi* (611 Broadway, Suite 214, NYC, 10012).

Still, of all this recorded evidence, there's practically nothing—save for *Saudades*' "*O* Berimbau," maybe—to prepare you for the solo Nana does onstage before a live audience. He will start simply by strolling out, an armful of organic gadgetry, his brown eyes large and soulful over a huge, friendly grin creasing the bushy black beard and mustache that cover half of his face. He will say something in greeting; you won't understand it, but it will sound like an extremely musical version of "hello." At that point, you may begin to realize that *everything* Nana does is musical. He's that kind of musician.

Then, he will take out his *berimbau*, a one-stringed bow (as in bow and arrow) with a small calabash gourd at the bottom as a resonator, played by holding the bow with the left hand and striking the string with a long, thin stick held in the right hand, which also holds a bell-shaped wicker shaker. At that point you may think you're in for the usual jungle stuff. Uh-uh. Nana can make that thing sound like a guitar, using a small, flat, smooth stone held delicately in the left hand to stop the string. Thus two or three different notes are possible—not much, but ah, what he does with them. As he sets up a galloping ostinato, it begins to sound more like a strummed flamenco riff; quicksilver melodies leap out, and then Nana lets loose with auto-echoed vocal sounds: hisses, whoops, howls, shrieks...all in perfect rhythmic counterpoint.

It begins to get very deep and dark,



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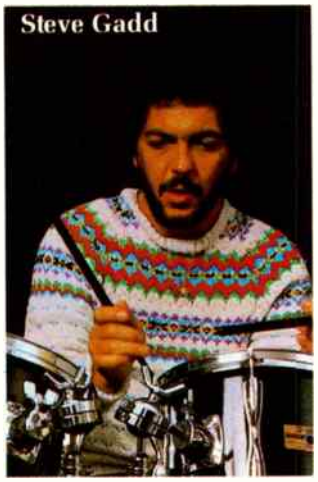
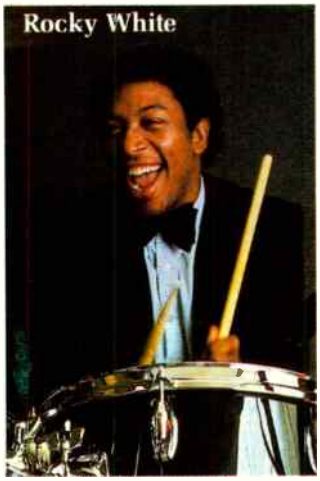


Because I've always been very concerned with the quality of sound in a drum, I use the Recording Custom Series drums, with these beautiful all-birch shells and a black piano finish. They give me a very controlled resonance with a lot of tone. They let me relax with the music, so I can adjust my touch to any volume requirements. Yamaha drums are very sensitive, and there's always a reserve of sound.

I've always tended to go for simple equipment like the Tour Series snare drum with eight lugs, because it's easier for me to get the sound. Same thing goes for my hardware, which is why I like the 7 Series hardware. I don't require really heavy leg bracing so the lightweight stands are just fine; very quiet, too.

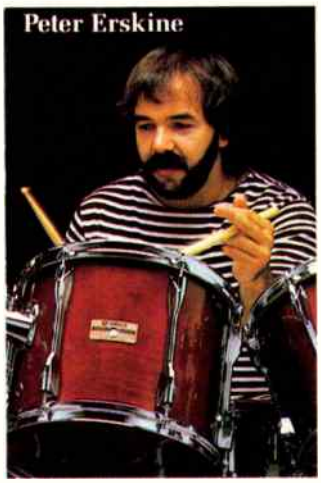


With some drums, there isn't too much you can do to alter the sound. Some will give you a real deep thud, and others are real bright. With Yamaha, I can get both sounds, they're just very versatile. Mostly I like a deep round sound with tight definition, since my concept is that a drum is a melodic instrument like anything else. I can hear drum pitches, and Yamaha lets me achieve that without a lot of constant re-tuning.

As far as their hardware, the snare drum stand and boom stands are very well thought-out. They feel like they were designed by a drummer, and they're not limited at all. The 9 Series snare drum stand's ball tilter is fantastic; you can get the perfect angle for your playing posture. And the boom stand tilter can double as two stands because it doesn't have a long handle. So the boom slides right inside the rest of the stand if you don't need it. All in all, Yamaha is the perfect set of drums for tone quality, sound, and ease of set-up.

I'd been playing the same set of drums for ten years when I met up with the Yamaha people during a tour of Japan with Rainbow. I told them that if they could come up with a kit that was stronger, louder and more playable than what I had, I'd play it. So they came up with this incredible heavy rock kit with eight ply birch shells, heavy-duty machined hoops and a pair of 26" bass drums that are like bloody cannons. And since I'm a very heavy player who needs a lot of volume, Yamahas are perfect for me. And the sound just takes off—the projection is fantastic so I can get a lot of volume without straining.

There isn't an electric guitarist in the world who can intimidate me, and I've played with the *loudest*. Yamaha drums just cut through better, like a good stiletto. They have the fattest, warmest, most powerful sound of any kit I've played and they can really take it. For my style, Yamaha is the perfect all-around rock kit.



Yamaha makes professional equipment with the professional player in mind. They're just amazing-sounding drums, and the fact that their shells are perfectly in-round has a lot to do with it. The head-to-hoop alignment is consistent; the nylon bushing inside the lugs are quiet and stable so Yamahas tune real easy and stay in tune, too. I have a 5½" snare and it's good as anything out there. It speaks fast, with a really brilliant sound and a lot of power. When you hit it hard, the drum just *pops*. And the throw-off mechanism is quick and agile, with good snare adjustment—it's a basic design that works.

And Yamaha hardware is really ingenious, every bit as good as the drums. I like the 7 Series hardware because it's light and strong, especially the bass drum pedal, which has a fast, natural feel. What can I say? Everything in the Yamaha drums system is so well designed, you want for nothing. Once you hook up with them, you'll stay with them.

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like some sort of Delta blues—from the Amazon delta. Glottal grunts and bird calls—the *berimbau* riffs still shaking an elastic money-maker—give way to a beyond-language sing-song in a voice of startling range, clarity and power. He'll let a riff and a song stop and echo into the deathly silent air, then drop right back into the pocket of that string-driven thing that could be Balkan, Celtic or God only knows what.

Later Nana will tell me of how he perceives the innate connections between percussion and voice. "In Africa and some parts of Brazil, they always use the drums to send messages, or tell stories, like a voice."

Nana has many such voices at his command. He can lead a crowd in call-and-response, playing it like an instrument in camp-counselor/emcee style. He'll play *corpo*—that is, his body—slapping and patting his arms, chest, hips and thighs in a delightful hand-jive. Then he'll produce a *cuica*, a Brazilian percussive device that looks like a small silver tom, but inside is a thin wooden stick the tip of which pokes through the single skin on the drum. The *cuica* is played by rubbing a small cloth over the stick while depressing its button-like protrusion in the skin. The drum shell acts as a resonator. Nana makes it sound like a cello, or like James Brown giving his bad self a very funky Heimlich maneuver—*a-huh-a-huh-a-hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo, a-huh-a-hunh!*

Call it the Nana Vasconcelos Thing, if you can call it anything. Nana is around thirty years old, and he's been doing his Thing most of that time. He was born in Recife, in northeast Brazil, not far from the Bahia region (Bahia being the most deeply African of Brazil's more than twenty states). Bahia is where the *Candomble* cults practice their ur-voodoo rituals, and where the deepest, darkest rhythms that infect Brazilian music have their source. Nana began banging on things early in life and first played percussion in his father's cabaret orchestra at age twelve. Shortly after his father's death a few years later, Nana took up kit drums, and became a full-time member of the Recife Municipal Orchestra, which played all sorts of native and international music on their own and behind visiting celebrities.

In his late teens, Nana emigrated to Rio de Janiero, where he was in immediate demand as a percussionist. "There were millions of drummers there, but few percussionists," he explains in his heavily accented, broken English, "and with my experience with Bahian ritual I became very busy, very fast. They were attracted to that ritual thing. It was exotic

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Walsh from pg. 72

years of hating my voice." As a guitarist, "the only chance I've got to be valid is to play from the heart, with soul.

"Look," he concludes, "I'm famous. I'm rich. I have a swimming pool. I'm not set for life, even though Frey and Henley are. But you have to go through some emotional extremes to create. You can't be happy, in fact, and also rich and successful. You have to testify—you have to experience your emotions. So there are some variables here. I'm a father now and while I worry about things as the grown-up parent Joe Walsh, should I dwell on this stuff as an artist? What about the music?

"I've decided on music. Roll the tape and let's play." ◻

He Bought It, He Names It

Joe Walsh's current guitar set-up while opening arena shows for Stevie Nicks includes two Les Paul Standards (a completely original '60 and a '59 with Seymour Duncan pickups), and a double-necked Gibson, with both necks fitted with six strings—one set in E tuning for bottleneck (only a glass Coricidin bottle will do for a slide) and the other in standard tuning. The double-neck is wired for both mono (for "In The City") and stereo. Walsh also uses two Japanese Stratocaster copies: a Fernandez with two Seymour Duncan "stack-Strat" pickups (with the coils on top of one another rather than side-by-side), and a Tokai with one small Gibson humbucking pickup, two Duncan "stack-Strats" and a Floyd Rose-type tremolo unit.

Walsh's onstage amplifiers include a Roland JC-120 (with the stereo chorus effect), driving two Peavey 4x10 speaker cabinets instead of its own enclosed speakers; a Mesa Boogie Simul-Class combination amp, also driving two Peavey 4x10 cabinets: and another Mesa Boogie combination driving its own 12-inch Celestion speaker, as well as an extension cabinet also containing a 12-inch Celestion. He plugs directly into an Ibanez MM 1000 digital delay.

When it comes to effects, Walsh doesn't much care for "all this stuff that was thought up by physics majors using a slide rule and blueprints...If any of them ever had to plug this stuff in and play in front of an audience, they'd put it in the nearest trash compactor." On "Rocky Mountain Way," he used a custom-built talk box driven by a Roland Cube amp; a Cry Baby wah-wah pedal is used on two other tunes. Walsh's stage manager, Alan Rogan, says "A lot of the up-and-coming players use everything in the world. Guys like Joe who've done it longer tend not to use so much gear."

Hawkes from pg. 75

Bowie, and Bach ("Bach would've loved drum machines—all his stuff sounds like it was done on sequencers, anyway."). Here, at last, was an outlet for his sense of the absurd. "It was my first exposure to the show business aspect of things. In a rock group, if you say anything at all, it's the name of the next song. With Martin, I not only played sax, clarinet, flute, bells, harmonica and whatever else was demanded, I had to be part of the staging and dialogue. It was great putting on a *show*."

Only a few weeks after that gig ended, Greg joined up again with Ric and Ben, and a couple of new guys, Elliot Easton and Dave Robinson. They called themselves the Cars. It was not a situation that dissolved. Anything but.

Now, five years later, comes *Niagara Falls*, Greg's advent as a one-man band. When the first Cars record was recorded, he was using three keyboards: a Mini-Korg (the first synth he ever owned, and one he still uses at home and in the studio), a Yamaha electronic piano, and an ARP Omni. Time and success have changed all that. Now his primary axes are a LinnDrum, a Prophet 5, a Roland Jupiter 8 interfaced with a Micro-Composer, and the studio itself, Syncro Sound, the Cars' own one-of-everything-under-the-sun 24-track sonic parking garage, drive-in and body shop.

"Originally the album was going to be called *Systems*, and each piece was going to be a "System" followed by a number. I had five compositions that were the original basis for the record, and none of them even changed chords. They were four or five minute pieces that had a lot less structure than they do now. Almost pure texture. But the only one I ended up using was the one that became 'Ants In Your Pants.' The rest I created by playing around with sequencers and drum machines and finding little repeated patterns that I liked, then building chords and melodies up from there, composing in the process of recording.

"Everything except 'Llamas' has got drum machines in it. In 'Ants' the bass drum and snare are the Linn, the rest is Roland CR-78, and there are even a few *tick-tick-ticks* from a Roland 808. I could just have easily done a whole side with no drum machines, but I really love them. It's like...Instant Groove. I love that perfect beat.

"And anything I can synch in with that, and not actually have to *play* the part—if you know what I mean—I like that too. With something like the Micro-Composer I can get very precise about my pitches and time signatures, and concentrate on what's being recorded and how well it's being recorded, instead of worrying about my performance. There are still going to be little melodies that

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THE SOUND OF THE PROFESSIONALS... WORLDWIDE

are easier and better played by hand, and I'll play them that way; I'm still a musician, not a programmer. I'm just a musician who happens to use certain computer-based things that let me be even more musical."

His Berklee music-writing skills don't get a lot of exercise these days. Everything is built up, layer by layer, in the studio (or at home on a four-track), playing his synthesizers directly into the board. "I just like the sound of synths direct. It's easier, and I have more control over them. I don't care whether I get a realistic 'room sound,' because there are so many effects you put on through the board anyway, working things out. I used flanging a lot on the album, an Eventide and especially a Marshall Time Align. And lots of different tape delays, everything from bouncing signals through a two-track machine to a Roland Stage Echo.

"Until I got the Micro-Composer halfway through the project, the sequencing was archaic. We had a Sequential Circuits 800, which would only hold one part and lost its memory every time it was turned off. I even used the little Roland Bassline unit. Andy Topeka, the studio's chief technician, rigged up some amazing boxes for me, so we could do things like link old CR-78s with LinnDrums while triggering the Prophet and gating a few other things, all at once."

In these days of widespread high-technology, it's getting harder and harder to detect different personalities behind the machines. Greg Hawkes hasn't got that problem. The gleam in his eye, the one you'll never find in the photographs—that comes through *Niagara Falls* just fine. M

Shankar from pg. 78

de force of instrumental virtuosity. The idea, he says, was "an album of Indian classical music, but one that Western audiences could understand." To that end, Shankar worked eighteen hours a day preparing the music for the album, including a piece which takes up all of side one called "Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi," a form which is considered the most difficult of all ragas. He devised his own *tala* or rhythmic cycle for the piece in a compound meter so complicated he flew his father over from India for the recording session to keep time for the tabla players.

"When I wrote it, I didn't think I could play it," he says of the piece. "I had to figure out ways to do it without altering the music which was written. I ended up working eighteen to twenty hours every day for a month." The practice payed off because most of "Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi" was recorded in one take, as was the LP's entire second side on which Shankar mixes Baroque counterpoint, jazz-like key changes and blues riffs into the raga form.

Who's To Know also introduced the unusual instrument Shankar has been playing for the past few years. Built by Stuyvesant Music in New York to Shankar's specifications, it looks like a double-neck violin with a severely cut-down plexiglass and chrome body. With the special strings made for it by LaBella, the instrument covers the entire orchestra range from contra-bass to violin. Although the traditional violin tone chamber is completely gone, the Barcus-Berry pickup gives the instrument an amazingly pure acoustic tone.

The biggest problem in designing the instrument was arranging the two necks so that either or both of them could be played with the proper bowing angle. Shankar sometimes uses one of the necks as a sympathetic set of drone strings, but he can also employ dramatic register jumps within the same passage. In concert, the plexiglass body allows him to get the acoustic sound "as loud as I want" or to use an amplifier and electronic effects for a more rock-oriented sound.

Shankar has been increasingly turning his attention to rock music with his Phil Collins, Peter Gabriel and Talking Heads collaborations. But he has taken a more drastic and controversial step with his own band Sadhu, for which he

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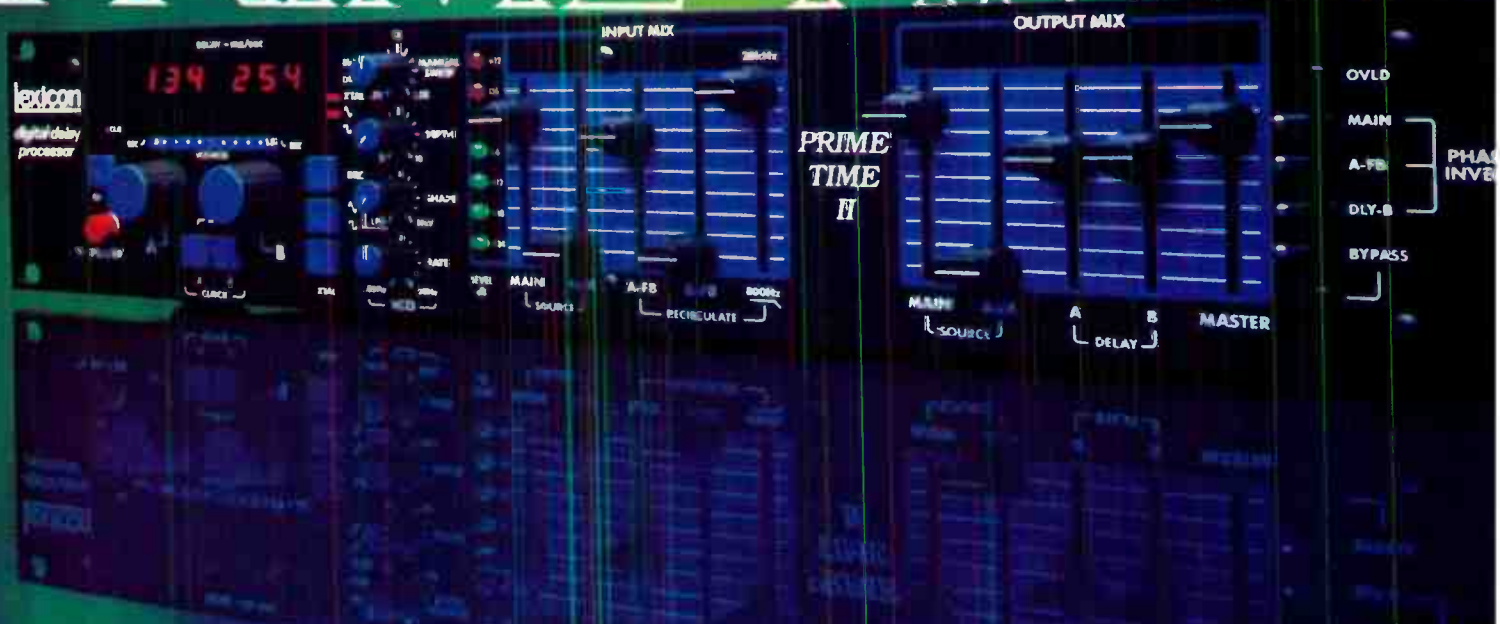
PRIME TIME II



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Shankar from previous page

has written all the music and lyrics as well as singing. After auditioning 250 players, he chose bassist Matthew Gallagher, drummer Jerry Cuccurullo (brother of guitarist Warren Cuccurullo of Missing Persons), keyboard player Robert O'Hearn (*he* is Missing Person Patrick O'Hearn's brother) and singer Caroline Morgan. "It's all modern danceable music, pop songs," Shankar says of the band's sound, "but we have completely new beats. There's so much variety in 4/4." Shankar's double-neck violin is the lead instrument played with a digital echo which allows him to use backwards echo, repeats and tape loop effects to create a psychedelic blizzard of sounds.

He also insists the vocals are appropriate since "all the ragas have lyrics. In India, all of my albums have lyrics and people sing them." Sadhu may strike fans of Shankar's classical works and fusion experiments as heresy. They will soon have a chance to compare the two as Shankar's future releases include not only a forthcoming Sadhu EP but a new ECM solo effort, *Vision*, featuring Scandinavian jazzmen Jan Garbarek on sax and trumpeter Palle Mikkelborg. Yet Shankar insists it is all part of a slowly emerging world music. "I really believe," he says sincerely, "music is one thing no matter where you come from." ◼

Delays from pg. 80

42 also includes convenience features such as optional foot control of feedback and straight/delayed blend.

Electro-Harmonix has two long delays, a rack-mount, 64-second unit that lists for $2495, and a 16-second floor box model that lists for $675. The latter accepts an optional six-function foot controller ($125 list). At the longest delays the bandwidth of both units is limited, but they are still musically useful (in fact, the 64 second model claims minimum 12 kHz bandwidth at 8 seconds of delay). Both units also include click track facilities, although the 64-second model is more sophisticated in that respect.

By being specifically optimized for long delays (from a quarter second to four seconds) and ignoring shorter delay functions such as flanging and chorusing, the DeltaLab Echotron is one of the least expensive long delay rack-mount units currently available. Listing for $699, it includes metronome click and LEDs, pulse output for driving electronic rhythm units in sync with the delay, hard or "soft" (restricted bandwidth) feedback, and several other features.

Finally, Audio Digital will soon be introducing a 6.5 second memory expander (projected price: under $350) for their

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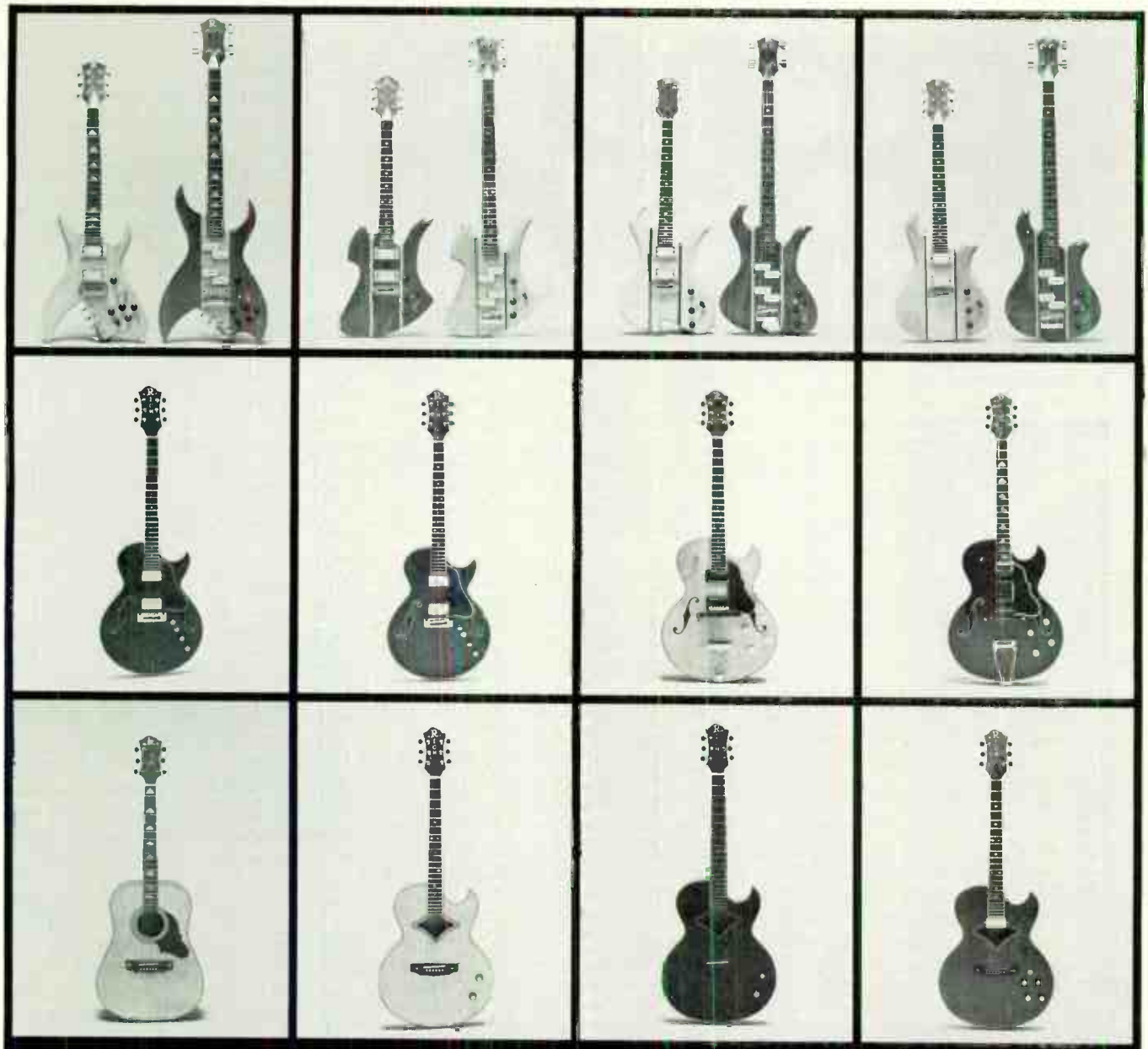

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RECORD REVIEWS

Graham Parker

The Real Macaw (Arista)

Graham Parker is one of the very small handful of artists who make me care that rock 'n' roll is still here. I had pretty much reconciled myself to the idea that he would remain a scowling yowling paranoid and that I (who once had ambitions to be a scowling yowling paranoid myself but fortunately failed to make it stick) would continue to love his limited music in an unlimited way. Oh, I know Costello's cleverer, Springsteen's a better poet, Van Morrison's a wider spirit (just to mention some people he resembles), but no one projects himself into a song more honestly and intensely than Parker. And although he's done a pretty good job of concealing an unusual intelligence beneath obviously compensatory machismo, it informs his music continually, guaranteeing the authenticity of the emotions, seeing through shit till he breaks through to brick or daylight, refusing to let go until he's shaken his subject by the spine. Okay, so I like him. Shoot me.

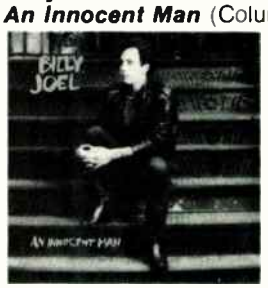
What makes this album so startling and such a lift is not just that he's regained his velocity after parting ways with the Rumour, but that he read the writing before it reached the wall, cracked the mask, scrapped the pose and walked on into life a perceptibly freer man. The album's first and probably best song "Just Like A Man" ("Flexing his muscles and not really using them / Carrying a picture and seeing in the negative") tells you that he knows in some detail what a jerk he is, and the conclusion, surprising in Parker, "forgive him," is for me a plea carried forward by the music into a world of new possibilities. (Must mention somewhere the superb guitar work of Brinsley Schwarz; why not here?) The first side moves on, Parker dismantling himself without lapsing into self-hatred or -pity; he's after a better target. The album moves from irony to affirmation. The man who thought you couldn't be too strong, too hard, too tough, too right, too wrong, and who marred his earliest discs with particularly nasty put-downs of women, here celebrates the emotional glass jaw that humanizes him and the woman who knows how to sock him there—typical Parker battle imagery still. He also knocks off his best dig so far at the dumbocracy of the music industry, "Passive Resistance, " and the closest thing to a dud is one slack eight-bar segment of "You Can't Take Love For Granted," not at all a bad percentage for this guy. The side ends impressively with a song of inner struggle and a vow to win.

Side two is an overt celebration of a happy marriage, one quarrel included, a subject that traditionally has meant certain death to rock 'n' roll but doesn't here. People have been wondering aloud for a while now if it's possible to rock out after thirty, forty, or whenever it is you part company from a protracted adolescence, and the music has generally wimped out, copped out or otherwise answered no—isn't it odd that a music predicated upon a struggle for freedom has almost never known what to do with freedom when it's found some? It's surprising that Graham Parker, whose music has been superprototypically rooted in misery, irony, rebellion, and the mentality of struggle and revenge, should be maybe the first (I know I'll get letters citing other examples, but let me talk) to turn the corner without losing his edge. Parker's the wrong scale to be a masterpiece 'n' epoch maker—sometimes he's something better—but for the same reasons he started his fight for a whole human life against the given odds, declined the disfigurements of punk or a blanket irony that might have let off some of the pressure, he has woken up, remembered who he was, seen that he was caught in the trap of his own projections and taken a very clean axe to the works.

I find it kind of thrilling. The album will almost certainly get slagged in England and maybe here, but there's a fine new energy blowing through it, and its enlarged perspective retrospectively improves his earlier work, makes it sound braver, more intelligent, infinitely more precise. *Squeezing Out Sparks* seems particularly changed. *Macaw* ends with a joke very funny in context; almost its only lyric is "Too late the smart bomb," but it sounds like the smart bomb hit Parker right on schedule. I look forward to further adventures. — ***Rafi Zabor***

Billy Joel

An Innocent Man (Columbia)



The late 1950s and early 1960s were an era in America when one scarcely existed unless she or he was capable of summoning up the courage to fill in the blanks. The heyday of Eisenhower's slow fade and Kennedy's face-off with Cuban missiles was an age in which genuine, unequivocal emotion shone like a talisman in an abandoned wind tunnel. For the young and radio-riveted, the crummy, day-to-day tyranny of mediocrity was often challenged by a gut-level genius-of-the-spirit evinced by Prom Night spelunkers like the Tymes, Little Anthony & the Imperials and the Four Seasons.

Growing up in Hicksville, Long Island during this dunderheaded period, Billy Joel evidently had a sure sense of alacrity about keeping JFK and Khrushchev's lamest crap off his Cuban heels, while maintaining a wide-angle perspective on the possibilities beyond the local greasy spoon and the sun-baked Chevy dashboard. *An Innocent Man* is an evocation of all that Joel and many others lived through—from "So Much In Love," to the grimiest frost of the cold war; from Flagg Brothers and Lee Harvey Oswald to the famished innocence of "Rag Doll." Yet there is none of polished blandness or trite exultation of slick nostalgia here; on the contrary, there is so much energy, joy and affection in the canny re-interpretations of the various genres of bomp-rock's first golden era that such songs as the title track, "Easy Money" and "Uptown Girl" stand on their own terms as top-ranked

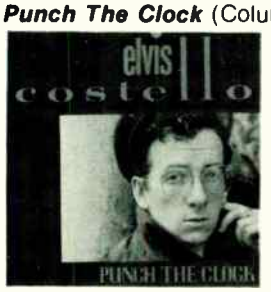
car radio blasters.

The album's near-soaring magnetism, however, derives from the mettle in Joel's singing. He's never cut loose with more power or facility, and you can't help but cheer him on as he conquers a half-dozen quirkily histrionic vocal modes of yore with a sinewy sense of purpose. Billy provides a stimulating glimpse of exhilirations gone by, yet invests these artful re-takes with a new grist. There's even yet another Joel standard neatly sewn into the semi-sentimental quilt-work: the Tin Pan Alley-tipped "Leave A Tender Moment Alone."

Granted, the often blindly ebullient Billy Joel remains an acquired taste, but it's a kick to see someone so skilled having so much fun with the time-honored pop vernacular.—***Timothy White***

Elvis Costello

Punch The Clock (Columbia)



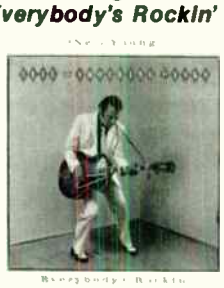
Many of the writers I know are having trouble with Elvis' newest offering. Oh sure, they manage to swallow it eventually and some have even come to love it a little, but these are not the first instincts of a functioning critic. After all, Elvis has turned his highly charged confessional into a damn Stax/Volt revue, complete with fat horn section and two black female singers (known, in the pun of the year, as Afrodiziak). We're talking *airplay* here, folks. Elvis himself anticipates the critical dismay when he asks in the very first cut, "Have we come this fa-fa-fa to find a soul cliché?" (All of the Otis Redding fans out there will enjoy that one.) Well, soul much of *Punch The Clock* may be, but cliché it is not, thanks not only to slippery, smart chord changes and highly skilled arrangements, but, more importantly, to the lyrics' stubborn refusal to sweeten and trivialize.

The dominant theme of *Punch The Clock* is also sure to give any self-respecting anger-monger a headache: Elvis explores the happiness and hell of domestic bliss, announcing his basic enthusiasm for the concept ("Isn't this the greatest thing?") even as he sees the danger of being permanently housebroken ("Men made into mice") and forever compromised into political passivity ("I was committed to life and then commuted to the outskirts"). Mind you, this version of marriage is a shifting one, with attack ("It's a fight to the finish, let there be no doubt...everyday will be boxing day") and retreat ("I wish I'd never opened my mouth almighty") and the possibility of Elvis' being ultimately untamable ("Trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's arse"). Still, there is an unescapable tenderness to many of the songs on *Punch The Clock*, especially the Smokey Robinson ("Being With You") and Stevie ("Looking For Another Pure Love") touches on the lovely single "Everyday I Write The Book" and the sheer singability of "The Element Within Her." Elvis softens his raspy, bittersweet voice into a haunting, tuneful intimacy and mixes it further back into the warmth of the instruments; yes, Virginia, the man not only has a heart, but a voice as well.

Musically, the fine production polish of Langer & Winstanley (Madness, Dexy's) must further enhance critical discomfort. The LP divides into horn-centered tracks, which do tend at times to sound like Stax Spam ("T.K.O.," "The Greatest Thing," "Invisible Man" and "The World And His Wife"), the middle ground of pop invention, (the reggae-ish "Charm School" and the neo-classical "King Of Thieves" are highlights) and two brass-knuckled views of British society that most will find the LP's best tracks. "Pills And Soap" is a remake of an election-campaign single Elvis released under the *nom-de-plunder* The Imposter; its sparse, uncomfortable keyboard accompaniment thrusts bitter images of sacrifice on the altar of sugar-coated pills and squeaky clean hypocrisy (including a wonderful characterization of Charles and Lady Di as "Lord and Lady Muck"). The transition from this searing dissection into the transcendently superficial beginning of "The World And His Wife" takes the breath away. The second masterpiece in miniature is a ballad that Elvis and co-producer Clive Langer penned for singer Robert Wyatt, "Shipbuilding." This achingly beautiful rendition finds Elvis' voice (kissed by Chet Baker's trumpet) softly describing the dilemma of feeding a family by building armadas for the Falklands War, "diving for dear life, when we could be diving for pearls." For many, critics and otherwise, the pearls of *Punch The Clock* will have to be dived for, but their value will be all the more increased for it. — ***Jock Baird***

Neil Young

Everybody's Rockin' (Geffen)



Why? Why why why why why? Because it's there. After dedicated and concerted study, that seems to be the only logical answer to the question of why Neil Young does the things he does. I mean, I don't know about you, but I can't think of too many other performers who put out a new album in the middle of a tour, let alone a new album of carefully crafted oldies and pseudo-oldies in the middle of a tour extolling the virtues of floppy-disc technology, video and the other trappings of what the more technically minded of our musical friends tell us is the future. But this fazes Neil not: he merely tacks on a second set to his high-tech show, a set in which he and the "Shocking Pinks" come out and do the material from *Everybody's Rockin'*.

Not that the new album is yet another paroxysm of neo-primitivism, at least not completely. A little logo on the cover and label says "Digitube," a concept I'm not familiar with, but which probably means that Neil's discovered a way to use digital recording techniques to simulate exactly the sound people like Sam Phillips and Jimmy Reed got with primitive tube technology. Seems to me that's the long way around the block, but nobody's ever gotten anywhere trying to talk Neil Young out of anything that I've ever seen.

All of which leaves us with this latest bit of reportage, which is, after all, what most Neil Young albums are. It's not as if the world is crying out for yet another letter-perfect version of "Mystery Train" or "Bright Lights, Big City," but they are details in the story that Neil is trying to get across. Mind you, the story is a bit confused in places, and I'm not certain that I'd even like to go on record as saying that it's all here, but a feeling, a sense of rightness, comes off *Everybody's Rockin'*, especially when played next to *Trans*. Perhaps a bit of it is also in *Trans*' cover painting, with the futuristic car picking up the digital Neil and the buck-skinned Neil getting picked up in the '56 Eldorado convertible, going different ways but the same guy.

Just as drugs were the story in *Tonight's The Night*, punk the story in *Rust Never Sleeps*, death by technology and government the story in *Reactor*, and better living through technology the story in *Trans*, the evanescence and permanence of America's roots rock 'n' roll seem to be the story here. He intersperses the real oldies with brand-new self-written oldies like "Kinda Fonda Wanda" and "Cry, Cry, Cry" and comments on the whole thing in two clumsy numbers, "Payola Blues" and the title cut, which has Nancy and Ron cutting the rugs in the White House. In other words, the spirit is the thing, but when it's sold to you as fad (as this record is), you have to take the crap with the gems.

It's not a major document, Neil Young-wise, but it is a lot of fun. Unfortunately, the good people at Geffen Records have decided to sock you for $8.98 for something like twenty-four minutes worth of music. Back in the old days, you'd sometimes buy records with similarly short running times but they cost $3.98 for mono and $4.98 for stereo. That fact may be Neil Young's irrelevant nostalgic

vision, but it's asking a lot for his 1983 fans to swallow it without asking, "Why?" — ***Ed Ward***

Big Country
The Crossing (Mercury)

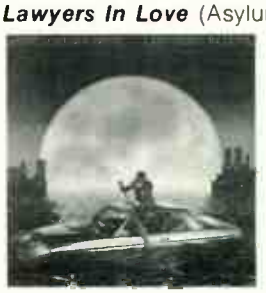
On *The Crossing*, the first American release by new Scots pop warriors Big Country, you hear everything that has been missing from current British music—stirring shout-it-out choruses; songhooks that storm up behind you and brusquely scoop you up by the shirtcollar; and *guitars*. God, yes, whole truckloads of guitars, not pressed into fuzzy trash-compactor chords but orchestrated with sharp articulate riff motifs and the occasional Frippertronic glaze into soaring epiphanies that often sound like a whole choir of the Edges. Guitarist-singer Stuart Adamson first forged this inspirational roar five years ago with pioneer Scots punk band the Skids, often twisting those guitar lines around with lively highland jig rhythms. But here, with fellow guitarist Bruce Watson and a tight rhythm section with heavy London session experience, he gilds Big Country's guitar tornados with a bright pop edge that together with the band's economical songwriting sucks you straight into their euphoria.

"In A Big Country," the band's signature song, opens the album like a call to arms. Drummer Mark Brzezicki sets up a furious martial roll, the guitars alternate between feedback cascades and nervy slalom riffing, and Adamson leads the band with hosanna vocal harmonies into a highly-charged cheer. "Pull up your head off the floor and come up screaming," goes Big Country's politics of the soul. "Cry out for everything you ever might have wanted."

The Crossing does not always maintain that same breathless pace, but the passion and desire glowing from these songs never flags. A slow simmering march, "Porrohman" moves with the heavy fortitude of someone groaning bravely under a heavy load. In "Close Action" and "Lost Patrol," the band battles back with crunching circular guitar riffs, bulldozing waltz and jig beats and in the latter song the hearty cheer of "Waa-ee-oh!" to trigger the chorus. But the clincher is "Fields Of Fire" (a recent U.K. hit) where all of the above are boldly rolled into one exhilarating anthem of spirit and determination.

If nothing else, *The Crossing* demonstrates exciting new guitar possibilities in the face of synth-funk domination. But more importantly, Big Country champion a commitment and emotional energy in their rock 'n' roll fight songs that is now in desperately short supply. Their future in America is as big as the country itself. — ***David Fricke***

Jackson Browne
Lawyers In Love (Asylum)



Jackson Browne's ongoing progression from placid, innocent beauty to confident, compelling punch places him on the Mt. Rushmore of mainstream adult rock along with such luminaries as Springsteen, Petty and Seger. All four share moral conviction and musical content, with special emphasis on the significance and endurance of simple truths and perennial themes. It's not exactly the sound of growing old gracefully; perhaps a kinder description would be the process of marking time meaningfully. And while some maintain that "adult" and "rock" are incompatible terms, each of these mainstream Mt. Rushmore rockers is rocking harder as his career progresses.

Lawyers In Love, Jackson's seventh LP and his first release since 1980's *Hold Out*, is streamlined by a more aggressive, direct attack than Browne has previously deployed. A steady, sup-

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Ed Schilling: "In actual testing, we found that the 12" speakers delivered a solid low-end, while the high-end potential of the Superdome tweeters wasn't even tapped by instruments such as the guitar or mandolin."

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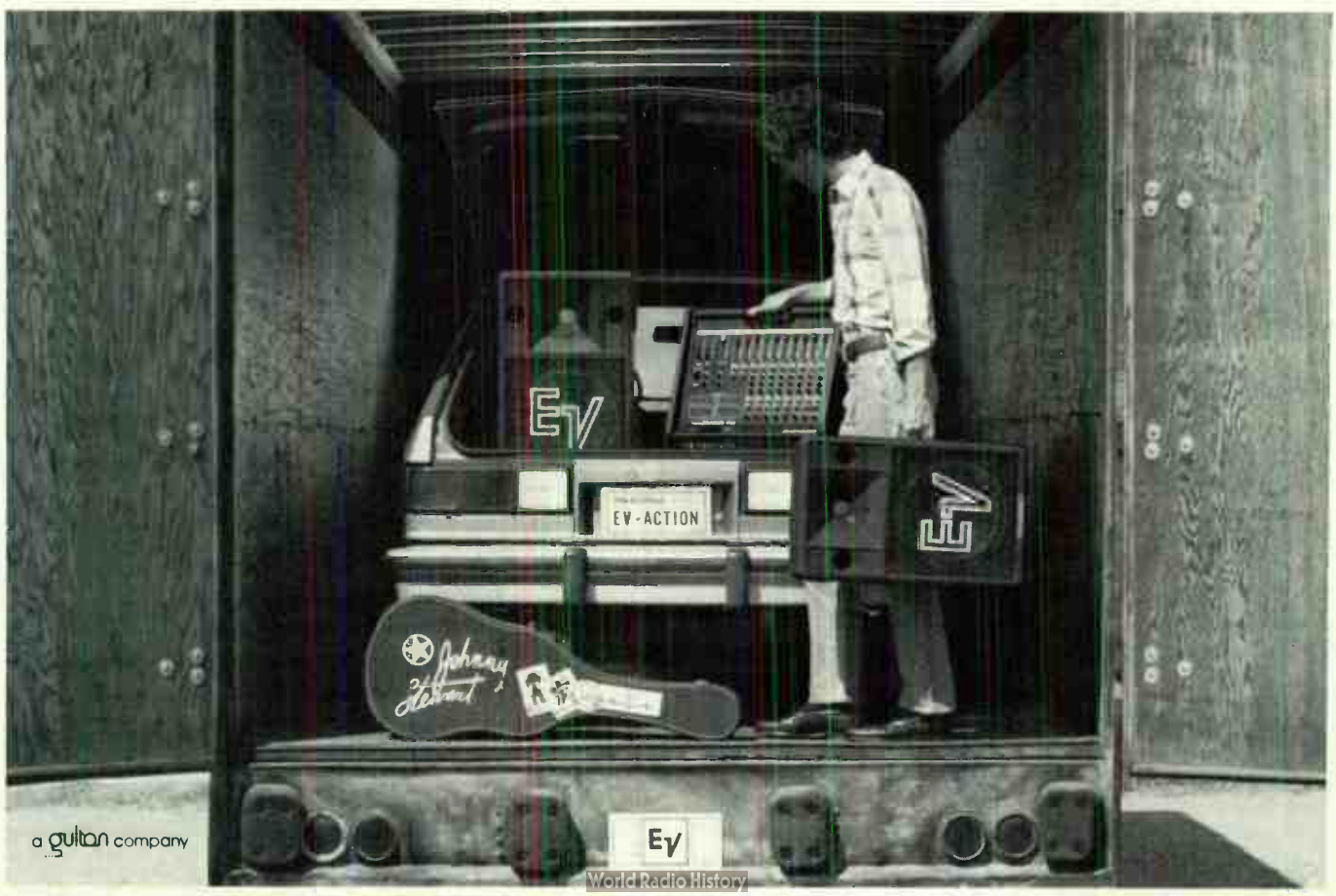

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ple ensemble (guitarist Rick Vito, keyboardists Craig Dorge and Doug Haywood, bassist Bob Glaub and drummer Russ Kunkel) delivers sparse, dynamic new songs. Particularly striking are the pair of "Big It" numbers: "Cut It Away" is an obsessive plaint, the "It" being an itching in his heart that he can't scratch; "Say It Isn't True" is a sincere plea for global sanity, including these utopian lines: "And you would think with all of the genius/ And the brilliance of the times/ We might find a higher purpose/ And a better use of minds."

Lawyers In Love also has its more reflective moments. "Tender Is The Night" is a visit to Bossland, offering vivid, Springsteenesque images of darkness and desire. "On The Day" is a look-out-for-your-love sermon punctuated by fervent "yeahs" and dramatic, evocative playing, while "Knock On Any Door" creates a curiously moody trance, dominated by the refrain, "Knock on any door/ Look through any window/ Walk on"; it's Browne's equivalent of Neil Young's "Ain't Got No T-Bone" from *Reactor*.

"Lawyers In Love," "Downtown" and "For A Rocker," the uptempo excursions, are not as distinguished. The title cut is one of Browne's lesser efforts, hook-wise but word-weary, which takes easy shots at some tacky totems of our times: designer jeans, TV dinners, *Happy Days* and the Russians ("can't trust 'em"). "Downtown" is a pedestrian outing which recalls Greg Kihn, of all people, and briefly quotes from Petula Clark's urban anthem.

Browne's new approach risks being somewhat less engaging as his subject matter travels further from his self; it offers professionalism in the place of personalism. But on the whole, these songs are fine, modest accomplishments. *Lawyers In Love* may not be a truly vital album, but it's filled with minor pleasures and sturdy, adult rock. —***Lou Papineau***

Keith Jarrett
Standards, Volume 1 (ECM)

I've generally liked Keith Jarrett best at his least portentous, and this album by a state-of-the-art modern trio playing some fine old tunes with vigor, affection and elan—sorry, no Reagan jokes here, nor any sober discussion of conservatism in jazz, horseman pass by—is a particularly welcome object. Jarrett's accomplices are Gary Peacock and Jack DeJohnette, so you know what to expect, and you're not disappointed. He hasn't tried to re-invent

the trio in his image for the date, but he has, as he did years back, opened the Bill Evans continent to personal horizons and lovely offshore keys, and the tunes give him a chance to play off his obvious originality against conventions not his own; to take a chosen piece of material and find his own unexpected image in it; to invent, create, subtilize, startle, awake.

I expected the moments of privileged sensitivity on the ballads—there are more of them in the rhythmically ambiguous version of Bobby Troup's "The Meaning Of The Blues" than on the more conventional take of "It Never Entered My Mind"—which may help to explain why the uptempo reading of "All The Things You Are" is my clear favorite on the disc. Jarrett plays the head *rubato*, then vaults into a solo that alternates Rollinsish ritards with impeccably poised virtuoso runs—for chorus after chorus the solo goes on, without a single cliché in the thing and plenty of harmonic superimposition and surprise, and when DeJohnette puts down his brushes and picks up his sticks to parry and thrust with Jarrett note for note, the music soars to an exhilarating height. It's been awhile since I've heard someone play so unpredictably on changes, and it's more than a little refreshing. Less happily, this is also the cut on which Jarrett's singing, never before so clearly miked, most painfully intrudes on the music. On slower tunes he sounds like some genial geezer leaning on the piano with his third whiskey in his hand trying to sing along, but on "Things" it's as if an aged goat were being horribly tormented with a sharp stick in his privates. The rest of ECM's digital recording is excellent, though the bass sometimes seems recessed. Maybe it's Peacock; it's hard to say.

Side two has a spry "The Masquerade Is Over" and a "God Bless The Child" ingeniously set to a slow, sexy funk on which DeJohnette is wonderful but Jarrett only parades his gospel stuff at length—he is a method actor all right but he does not always own every role. The "Volume 1" of the title strikes the ambitious and political note probably inescapable in a Jarrett project, but the music doesn't, and another two volumes of this sort of thing would go down easy.
— ***Rafi Zabor***

Robert Plant
The Principle Of Moments (Atlantic)

Perhaps the most thankless task facing any successful rocker is having to reinvent a signature sound. Led Zeppelin wasn't just the standard by which all other heavy rock bands were measured, it was a sonic presence that went beyond mere style, and the more firmly the band became established, the more difficult it was to separate the component parts from the well-known "sound." That was Robert Plant's problem when he recorded his first solo album, *Pictures At Eleven*, and the solution he found then was ingenious enough, using the traditional Zep architecture to support a new cast of players.

The Principle Of Moments, however, takes the crucial second step of emphasizing differences, not the similarities, between Plant's old band and his new one, and in so doing establishes Plant as a major artist in his own right. That's not to suggest that Led Zeppelin was entirely the creation of Jimmy Page, or even that Plant's singing with that band hasn't already earned him a permanent place in rock history; a cursory listen to most post-Zeppelin heavy metal ought to demonstrate just how clearly Plant's vocalisms set the rules. On the contrary, what *The Principle Of Moments* marks most clearly is how Plant has expanded upon his musical identity without losing it, and it's these new aspects of his sound that are truly worthy of notice.

Although Plant has maintained many of his best-known vocal mannerisms, he

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avoids repetition by applying them in new ways. "Other Arms" uses harmony vocals to flesh out the sound at the end, with Plant singing chopped phrases in stuttering counterpoint; it's an idea similar to what he used to do against Jimmy Page's massive boogie riffs, but by changing the textures, Plant can sing with greater subtlety while generating the same excitement. A similar shift of context occurs in "Thru' With The Two Step," in which Robbi Blunt's guitars sail off into the stratosphere as Plant's vocals peak, allowing the song its emotional climax without forcing Plant into histrionics. As a result, it's possibly his best ballad performance ever.

Nor is the growth entirely Plant's. The band sound on this album is remarkable, with Blunt's guitars as singularly identifiable as Page's were, yet bearing only the slightest stylistic debt. Although the guitar's tone is thin and largely unadorned, the instrumental tracks are kept dense and richly detailed through an astute application of Jazz Woodroffe's keyboards and Phil Collins' busily melodic drumming. Particularly in the case of Blunt and Collins, the fills and ornamentation are entirely their own, so that on the whole the temptation to compare *The Principle Of Moments* to, say, *Houses Of The Holy* barely exists.

Best of all, the prospect for further growth is more than evident. Perhaps the most striking cut on this album is "Stranger Here (Than Over There)," which uses unexpected dissonances and a surprising sense for textural detail to create a sonic *tour de force* far beyond even the most rabid fan's expectations. And when Plant follows that minor masterpiece with the Ennio Morricone-styled guitar line that opens "Big Log," it becomes quite clear that this is indeed just the beginning. — ***J.D. Considine***

Sam Rivers' Winds of Manhattan

Colours (Black Saint/PSI)

If Sam Rivers' compositions for his ten-piece woodwind ensemble remind you of works by Anthony Braxton, Muhal Richard Abrams, the members of the World Saxophone Quartet, and even Roscoe Mitchell, it's because certain forms, techniques and attitudes have become common ground. But Rivers' playing and writing are distinctive. I love many things on *Colours*—the contrasts, the lush voicings, the raucous counterpoint, the top-notch readings. It's a pity, though, that in order to include all six of his compositions, Rivers was forced to edit out all solo improvisation. With this omission,

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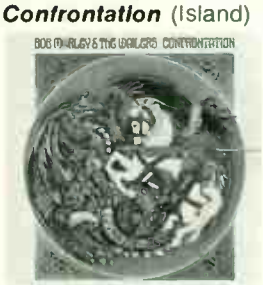
he's lost some of the emotional content central to almost all of his small group work as well as his earlier large ensemble recordings. A piece like "Revival" is based on the same premise (overlapping patches of atonality suspended over a *very* tonal bass clef vamp) as "Tranquility" (from *Crystals*, 1975), but powerful soloing made "Tranquility" a more vibrant piece of work. Solos might also have broken up the dense horn voicings that get caught up in too much parallel motion, and the interlocking harmonic parades that move to an abstract but predictable cadence.

For all of that, "Lilacs" is a gorgeous collage of inspired melodic ideas (it's the only recent composition; the others were written in the early 70s), while "Colours" and "Matrix" explore interesting concepts of juxtaposition and polyphony. But I have a feeling that if Rivers had decided to retain the solos—even at the cost of releasing *Colours* as a double record—it would have elevated this very solid date to a rarified place indeed. — ***Cliff Tinder***

Bob Marley & the Wailers
Confrontation (Island)



It's not generally known, but Bob Marley had always intended what has proven to be his last LP to be part of a trilogy that began in 1979 with *Survival*, followed by *Uprising* in 1980, and now concluding with *Confrontation*. The first album was to be an assessment of the agenda for the Apocalyptic battle between his brethren and Babylon, and it had all of the incendiary might of a don't-look-back manifesto. Whether exhorting the faithful to "Rise yeh mighty people!" in "Wake Up And Live," or endorsing the revolutionary struggles taking place in the Third World in "Zimbabwe" and asserting that "The preaching and talking is done!" in the title track, *Survival* was a fierce call to arms.

Uprising was an inspirational work, intended to offer reinforcement and even solace to the assembled ranks as they hastened to set their spiritual houses in order and begin drilling for the impending clash with the fearsome forces of inequity. The song titles said it all: "Coming In From The Cold," "We And Dem," "Real Situation," "Work," "Zion Train" and the fervent "Redemption Song," a quietly searing assessment that the campaign will be a long one, with wrenching sorrows along the route.

The serenity of so many of the selections on *Confrontation* may come as a

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surprise for those anticipating—if only from the information just offered—that Marley would want to wind things up before the Last Judgment by spitting fire and kicking ass in the best shantytown tradition. Indeed, there are moments of great intensity on the album, especially during the raw, plaintive "I Know," where Marley gives himself over to an exploration of an aching self-doubt. But the song concludes with the grateful admission, "Ain't it good to know now/ Jah will be waiting there." Clearly, this is a war whose toughest, most heated battles will be fought within, as everyone confronts the presence of good and evil in their own soul.

The central thrust of the collection is a poignant one, in that it is the most personal and sagacious musical documentation of the fated Bob Marley's determination to come to terms with himself that we are likely to get. Detractors may argue that there are no gut-grabbers here like "Concrete Jungle" or "No Woman No Cry," and no rockers' reggae party soundscapes like "Lively Up Yourself" and "Is This Love"—and they're absolutely right. On most of the songs, the rhythm section is spare, precise, occasionally even delicate in a rather acute way. There is little, for instance, of lead guitarist Junior Marvin's customarily stunning grandstanding, and the interplay between the I Three's organ-like backing vocals and Earl Lindo's articulate keyboards is often so lullingly seamless as to be indistinguishable. In short, little darts out of the fabric of the compositions to startle and jolt. Yet if listeners can seek out the quiet place in themselves that Bob was apparently gravitating toward, the vivid tapestry of unequivocal bridge burnings and devout soul yearnings that informs this album begins to fire the heart and the imagination in a way that the slum scorchers and Nyabinghi bombshells of yore did not.

On the cover of the album, Bob Marley is depicted as an Ethiopian horseman (complete with the traditional thong stirrup—a reference to the deadly cancer that began in Bob's toe) who's been transformed into St. George slaying the storied, satanic Dragon. It's a grievous faceoff between Good and Evil and Marley wields his lance with his eyes wide open. At the high end of religion—the non-dogmatic end—it can sometimes give individuals the courage to act on hope and perform feats they would never have had the strength to manage otherwise. But Rasta or not, surely faith in oneself is the most difficult and rewarding faith of all, and *Confrontation* succeeds as powerful evidence of the inestimable value of that ultimate struggle. — ***Timothy White***

Delays from pg. 90

$1095-list TC-2 digital delay. The TC-2 includes a number of interesting features, such as auxiliary taps for multiple outputs, digital remote control option, voltage controllable delay time, and a method of letting the relative pitch of the incoming signal modulate the delay time.

The future

Memory costs are only going to decrease in the future, meaning that delays will become even less expensive, include more delay and offer better sound quality. In fact, it's not that much of a step from storing 64 seconds of sound, to storing 4 minutes of sound, to storing more than one "track" of sound, to the point where we'll have a digital multi-track recorder with no moving parts. In the meanwhile, the existing generation of long delays is facilitating new rhythmic and muscial techniques, and it will be interesting to see what kind of music results from this new technology in the years ahead. Ⓜ

Nana from pg. 85

to them in Rio. Most of the Brazilian popular music at that time had little to do with all the more traditional Brazilian things that I had learned, so to them it was exciting. Most of the exciting cultural movements in Brazil—the bossa nova, the *tropicalismo*, *Cinema Novo*—they really come out of Bahia."

Nana played percussion with some of the heavies of Brazilian pop: Joao Gilberto, Gilberto Gil and then Milton Nascimento. He was next approached by Argentine jazz saxophonist Gato Barbieri, with whom Nana recorded and toured for a couple of years. At a New York recording session with Barbieri, Nana met "players like Lenny White and Lonnie Liston Smith...these guys were like heroes to me. I had always listened to American jazz records whenever I could. So I began to see that there is a whole lot more of the world than Brazil, but maybe New York scared me a little, no?" So after a European tour with Barbieri, "I decided to stay in Paris, because she very nice for me." (Nana has this charming way of personifying places and things as women. This includes his instruments, so that a description of the art of *berimbau*-playing begins to sound more like a courtship rite.)

"In Paris," Nana continues, "I was all alone. I began to see it is just me and my music. So I just sat in my room and stared at *berimbau*. This was a very important period for me, when I began to take *berimbau* away from traditional rhythmic things and did more melodic

continued on page 114

ROCK SHORT TAKES

By J.D. Considine

Translator

Yaz

The Cure

Diana Ross

Translator — *No Time Like Now* (415/Columbia). Translator has shown almost exponential growth since their debut, developing their folkie guitar attack into the most impressive Byrds fixation this side of Tom Petty while simultaneously broadening their sound with saxophone and more adventurous rhythmic ideas (e.g. the tongue-twisting rap in "L.A., L.A."). Yet the best thing about this album is the songs—not only are they melodic as hell, but Translator may be the only rockers left who are capable of writing love songs that are neither clichés nor abstractions.

Yaz — *You And Me Both* (Sire). The give-and-take between Vince Clarke's dance-floor technology and Alf Moyet's bluesy emotionalism is far better balanced this time out. Though that may have deprived us of another workout as steamy as "Don't Go"—"Nobody's Diary" is close, but no cigar—it pays off with a consistency which eluded the debut. In other words, this is a team effort, and one that can't be savored through singles alone.

Asia — *Alpha* (Geffen). With their bloated harmonies, pompous arrangements and formulaic virtuosity, it finally becomes clear that these guys aren't failed art rockers—they're just Toto with more ego.

The Animals — *Ark* (I.R.S.). Even without the blues covers, this is a good old-fashioned Animals album, right down to the painful pun of the title. Granted, Eric Burdon's voice shows a bit of age, but the updated approach evens things out nicely, with the Animals' new-found reggae coming off even tougher than the original boogie. What was that about old dogs and new tricks?

Kurtis Blow — *Party Time?* (Mercury). Rap's reigning intellectual didn't just find a new layer of irony while tapping into D.C.'s go-go scene—he also came away with a tough percussion boost to his own delivery, and his best single since "The Breaks" in the title track. This EP rounds out the hit with some tough commentary, but if you'd rather dance than think, stick with the 12-inch.

David Thomas & the Pedestrians — *Variations On A Theme* (Sixth International). David Thomas has always treated his freakish helium-falsetto as a sort of stylistic pratfall, and that's what gives this album its cartoonish charm. From the Bill Haley-meets-Heckle & Jeckle bop of "Bird Town" (abetted by the fluid guitar of Richard Thompson) to the garbage-can march cadences of "The Rain," Thomas' wacky inventiveness runs amok with delightful results. This may not be art, but it sure is fun to listen to. (Distributed by Rough Trade, 326 Sixth Street, San Francisco, CA 94103)

Various Artists — *Attack Of The Killer B's* (Warner Bros.). This collection of B-sides and non-album tracks is a blessing to every fan who hopes to complete a collection without paying fanatics' prices. Of particular interest are "Love Goes To A Building On Fire," the auspicious debut of Talking Heads; "You're My Favorite Waste Of Time," a delightful demo proving that Marshall Crenshaw is his own best producer; and Laurie Anderson's rough-draft "Walk The Dog."

Herbie Hancock — *Future Shock* (Columbia). With Material's Bill Laswell and Michael Beinhorn on hand, Hancock finally gets a funk rhythm section sophisticated enough to keep him on his toes, yet commercial enough to earn him hits. Plus, it's great to hear guitarist Pete Cosey again, even if on a song as muddle-headed as the title track. But why does the hit, "Rockit," always sound better when I'm fighting mid-town traffic than when I'm just listening?

Arthur Brown — *Requiem* (Republic). *Requiem* is an end-of-the-world concept album that comes on with a bang, not a whimper, and may well be the best thing that Arthur Brown has ever done. It's got all of the sonic excess you'd expect from the man who gave us "Fire," but Brown's ornate art-rock tendencies are invariably backed up with enough visceral punch to make them marvelously affecting, not merely affected, while producer Earl Mankey handles the electronics well enough to maintain an unusually high level of interest and detail. A remarkable album, and well worth writing away for. (1200 So. Congress Avenue, Austin, TX 78704)

DFX2 — *Emotion* (MCA). Ignore the seemingly technoid name and listen to the raw, Stones-like passion of the music, then ask yourself if this EP isn't the best straight-ahead rock debut of 1983.

Violent Femmes — *Violent Femmes* (Slash). Busking hasn't been much of a starting point for rock 'n' rollers, but it's done wonders for the scaled-down wit and sound of this Minneapolis trio. It isn't the oddly portable sound of guitar, acoustic bass guitar and snare that marks this band so much as the flexibility that street-playing has given their music. Did I mention that it really rocks?

continued on page 110

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JAZZ

By Francis Davis

SHORT TAKES

Steve Lacy — *Prospectus* (hat ART, available from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012); **Roswell Rudd, Steve Lacy, Misha Mengelberg, Kent Carter & Han Bennink** — *Regeneration* (Soul Note/PolyGram Special Imports). Well into his second decade of voluntary European exile, sopranoist Lacy has the satisfaction of hearing his epigrammatic compositions performed by a sextet which, without one iota of fanfare, has gradually become of the finest units anywhere in the world. The coiling polyphony between Lacy and fellow saxophonist Steve Potts, the animating pentatonics of pianist Bobby Few, the unholy matrimony Irene Aebi ministers between *sprechstimme* and scat, and the buffering presence of added starter George Lewis' trombone all conspire to make this hat ART double one of the group's most expansive and enjoyable outings on record. Only "Cliche's" meanders, and even there, a children's percussion section helps keep things in perspective. The Soul Note release celebrates another of Lacy's periodic reunions with his partner from the Band That Played Monk and Only Monk—Roswell Rudd, a great trombonist who goes for the jugular, but in a jocular vein. Three tunes apiece by Monk and Herbie Nichols ensure there's never a dull moment, and the emphasis on what is, after all, piano music gives Mengelberg every opportunity to indulge his dry whimsy.

Danny Zeitlin & Charlie Haden — *Time Remembers One Time Once* (ECM/PSI). These clinging duets not only enable you to hear Haden, the most commanding of post-Mingus bassists, up close, they also make an eloquent case on behalf of Zeitlin, a psychiatrist and avocational musician who has miraculously blossomed into a vigorously lyric, tonally compelling pianist.

Tim Berne — *The Ancestors* (Soul Note/PSI). Altoist Berne has put out a number of good records on his own label, but it's his first Soul Note that announces his emergence as a writer and soloist to watch. His compositions are bold and highly flammable, and the members of his sextet (including trombonist Ray Anderson) have the wisdom to realize that the best means of igniting them is to approach them with cool heads.

Hank Crawford — *Midnight Ramble* (Milestone). The goal was to rekindle the sanctified fervor of the altoist's Ray Charles-era Atlantics, but were those early Atlantics really *this* good? Crawford testifies like the very definition of Soul and Inspiration, and Dr. John's piano adds precisely the right droll note. Highly recommended.

Joe Turner & Roomful Of Blues — *Bluestrain* (Muse). A while back, I wished aloud that someone would record Turner with Roomful, and look at this—(my wish is the industry's command) someone has! Yet (you can't please some people), I wonder now if the singer wouldn't benefit from backing just a touch more dapper than these ham-fisted R&B revivalists are able to supply. Still, Turner is a wonder of nature—the whale that swallowed Jonah, and Jonah hasn't shut his mouth since—and I'll gratefully accept every opportunity to hear him bellow.

Andrew Cyrille — *The Navigator* (Soul Note/PSI). I miss David Ware and the way his tenor diced with Ted Daniels' trumpet along the front line. But Daniels is still on hand, and this time around Sonnelius Smith's piano adds a rumbling undercurrent of lyricism to Cyrille's quartet, a band as purposeful and well-organized as bands led by drummers always seem to be, somehow.

Rova — *Invisible Frames* (Fore 80, from Daybreak Express, Box 250, Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn, NY 11215). The inevitable comparison is to the World Saxophone Quartet, but this saxophone quartet's detonations are more implosive, its landscapes strewn with the waste-land philosophies of the post-Webern classical avant-garde. It's pebbly music, tough to get used to, but the three long pieces here propose tangential relationships between composition and improvisation in a manner that is stimulating, at times even thrilling.

Jimmy Giuffre — *Dragonfly* (Soul Note/PSI). Giuffre's first in over half a decade suffers from his sudden interest in electronics, but where else are you going to hear clarinet playing this adventurous or this idiosyncratic (not to mention tenor this lazy and Lester-inspired)? And even on the electrified cuts, he's sometimes the beneficiary of beginner's luck.

Jameel Moondoc — *Konstanze's Delight* (Soul Note/PSI). I could do without Ellen Christi's Jeanne Lee-derived vocal tracery, but there are striking moments here from trumpeter Roy Campbell, vibist Khan Jamal, and drummer Dennis Charles, as well as from the leader, an explosive altoist who uses early Coleman as his launching pad.

Art Farmer — *Warm Valley* (Concord Jazz). The flugelhornist is on a winning streak, with yet another airy and melodious album and a band (Fred Hirsh, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Akiri Tana, drums) as diverting as any he has led since his great early-60s quartet with Jim Hall.

Gerald Wilson — *Jessica* (Trend); **Ed Palermo** (VHR, 229 West 26th, New York, NY 10001). The Big Band Sound of Today—the mid-70s. But seriously, I like Wilson a lot. The West Coast veteran's parading orchestrations of three Ellingtons, one Earth, Wind & Fire, and two originals clear plenty of room for such talented soloists as Harold Land and Oscar Brashear to strut their stuff. Palermo's band is the resident Monday night attraction at 7th Avenue South. While his charts are trimmer and more intricate (more judiciously "contemporary") than Wilson's, the solos arising from them (by Randy Brecker and Edgar Winter, among others) strike me as pedestrian.

Buddy Tate — *Quartet* (Sackville). When people talk about the Texas Tenors, one of the things they're alluding to, whether they know it or not, is the lingering influence of Buddy Tate. This unhurried session with a fine Canadian rhythm section captained by pianist Wray Downes is a perfect introduction to a decisive figure who has never really gotten his proper due.

Buck Hill — *Impressions* (Steeple-Chase). July 11 and 12, 1981 at the North Sea Jazz Festival apparently were not two of the bountiful Washington, D.C. tenor's better nights. Still, his endless

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Rock Shorts from pg. 106

Wham! U.K. — *Fantastic* (Columbia). Ah, to be young, trendy and vapid! This pretty-boy duo is the latest thing among post-disco Britons too young to know the disco records that Wham! rips off, and too shallow to care about the band's chronic lack of depth. Fortunately, we Americans are too smart for that—aren't we?

Bernard Edwards — *Glad To Be Here* (Atlantic). While Nile Rodgers' solo album was a real stepping out, Edwards' effort is just a Chic album in disguise. Not that I'm complaining, especially since "Don't Do Me Wrong," "Hard Loving Man" and the title track are the best Chic songs in two years. I just wish there weren't so much difference between Edwards' originals and his cover of Smokey Robinson's "You've Really Got A Hold On Me."

The Cure — *The Walk* (Sire). Despite the fact that the Cure are basically a sound-effects outfit, they do come up with a great song every now and then: "Killing An Arab," "Jumping Someone Else's Train" and, on this one, "Let's Go To Bed." But the reason to buy this EP instead of the 12-inch single is that the sound effects collected here sound more like songs than ever, and "The Dream" is almost as good as "Let's Go To Bed."

Mari Wilson — *Show People* (London). This is the classic Dionne Warwick sound, only without Bacharach & David's writing or Warwick's voice. A real conceptual triumph, as you might imagine.

Bad Brains — *Rock For Light* (PVC). The hook here is supposed to be the fact that these Rasta Washingtonians play reggae and hard core, not mixed together but placed side-by-side. But though their hard core is phenomenal—not just full-tilt aggro, but melodic and heavily chops-intensive—their reggae is so mannered as to seem semi-parodic. Guess Jah works in mysterious ways, too.

New Horizons — *Something New* (Columbia). Like all Roger Troutman's productions, this album rides the same groove that gave us "More Bounce To The Ounce" and the rest of the Zapp liturgy. What sets New Horizons apart, however, is that they have figured out how to use four-part vocal arrangements to further the beat as well as fatten it. So instead of just a half-hour's worth of groove, we get songs, too. What'll they think of next?

The Doobie Brothers — *Farewell Tour* (Warner Bros.). I was all for the added technical proficiency until they added funk to "Black Water" and removed the rock from "China Grove." Then I remem-

bered everybody hates long goodbyes.
Diana Ross — *Ross* (RCA). Having farmed out her production to the immensely able Gary Katz and Ray Parker, Jr., Lady Di continues her campaign to cross over from R&B to mainstream pop. Trouble is, when Katz is at the helm the sound may be top forty, but the songs are forgettable; while Parker's cuts, though catchy, are mainly R&B and represent the, uh, *minority* interest on the album.
Men Without Hats — *Rhythm Of Youth* (Backstreet). "Safety Dance" may be a novelty dance hit, but this is no novelty band—their sound is too consistent for that. What a pity its consistency is largely manifested in being dependably boring. Ⓜ

Jazz Shorts from pg. 108
string of variations on the Coltrane line and the punctilious piano solos of Reuben Brown are enough to make me envy listeners in the capitol, who presumably get to hear this stuff all the time.
George Kawaguchi & Art Blakey — *Killer Joe* (Storyville); **Dizzy Gillespie & Arturo Sandoval** — *To A Finland Station* (Pablo). Jazz International, Part I. The addition of a Japanese drummer to the Messengers just results in more of the same. But you know as well as I do that the same means some pretty heady stuff. Wallace Roney, Slide Hampton and Branford Marsalis are the horns delivering the Message this time. Together with a Finnish rhythm section, Cuban trumpeter Sandoval prods Gillespie to some of the zestier playing he's done lately. There's only one Dizzy Gillespie, to be sure, but there are passages here when it's difficult to tell which joshing trumpeter he is.
The Ganelin Trio — *New Wine...* (Leo); **Anatoly Vapirov & Sergey Kuryokhin** — *Sentenced To Silence* (Leo, from N.M.D.S.). Jazz *Internationale*, Part II. The British label Leo is providing an invaluable service to listeners everywhere with its *sub rosa* releases of improvised music from the U.S.S.R. But *New Wine* is simply a beautiful record regardless of origin. The most remarkable thing about the Ganelin Trio (pianist/composer V. Ganelin, drummer V. Tarasov, and howitzer saxophonist V. Chekasin) is that their music sounds not at all derivative, though American ears like mine can count off any number of obvious influences. Their originality announces itself most audibly in the outrageous musical puns which salt this agitated album-length performance, and in the precision which makes such moments of levity possible in the first place. The other new Leo features pianist Kuryokhin's somber solos and his quarrelsome duets with Vapirov, a saxophonist imprisoned by Soviet authorities for "private enterprise." Ⓜ

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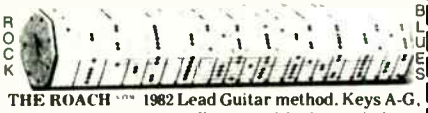

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Nana from pg. 105

thing with it." The start of the Nana Vasconcelos Thing? Nana took his *berimbau* and did his thing with it in the streets of Paris for anyone who happened by. One man who happened by was an expatriate Brazilian running a small record company. He offered Nana a one-off recording contract, which resulted in an obscure, now out of print, self-titled solo percussion album.

Another man who happened by ran a clinic for psychologically disturbed children in a chateau on the outskirts of Paris. He invited Nana to the clinic as an artist-in-residence and all-around instructor. Nana accepted, and in working with the children for almost three straight years—during which he did no concerts or recordings—he found that "music could be anything and everything...I learned as much from the children as they learned from me. We did breathing exercises, things like that. That all comes from this time. Mainly I realized important things, like that I become the *music*, not just the musician. And that silence is as important as sound. As a musician, I came to feel that I play most when I *don't* play, ha, ha..."

Next Nana met guitarist Egberto Gismonti, fresh from a Vienna conservatory stint. They recorded *Danca Das Cabecas*, after which Nana returned to Paris and played with Jean-Luc Ponty and Dollar Brand, recording an unreleased session with Brand, Johnny Dyani and Don Cherry (Somebody find it and release it, quick!). Then he went to New York to begin a U.S. tour with Gismonti, during which he met Cherry again, decided to stay in New York, and then worked on his own solo album as well as the two Codona records with Walcott and Cherry.

Which brings us up to the present, and what may be the most exciting aspect of the Nana Vasconcelos Thing yet. Several months ago, through a New York community service project, Nana met a young South Bronx gang of break-dancers (the ghetto variant on gymnastics and Russian *kyzatzky* where, to the accompaniment of rap music, kids execute what seem to be literally break-neck tumbles and spins on their shoulders, as well as integrating street-corner signifying and 70s robot-dancing into a vital new form of spontaneous urban choreography). Once again, the kids and Vasconcelos got along famously. At a Village Gate performance, Nana played *berimbau* and *cuica* and shakers and gongs and talking drum and thunder sheet and voice *and* an Oberheim DMX drum computer to accompany the break-dancing of the Magnificent Force. He pushed a few buttons, set a few sliders, and out of that box came some rhythms so ferociously funky, so dynamically polyrhythmic yet right on the one, that they'd enhance any hot New York indie street funk record. Spontaneously programming rhythms as the dancers broke into their whirls and tumbles and the crowd roared, Nana conjured a syncopated second line stretching from the jungle *clave* to the street-corner handclap, building killer snake-hips funk rhythms that perfectly balanced the burbling liquid splash of Brazilian rhythms with James Brown's "new-new, super-heavy funk."

Nana will be working his percussive magic on several upcoming projects: a film soundtrack for Italian television and Brazilian *Cinema Novo* director Carlos Diegue; accompaniment for a modern ballet troupe to be named later; and a solo tour which you really should see. *Zumbi*, Nana's new Europa LP, is also something you really should hear.

Hopefully, Nana will also tour with the break-dancers, so that the rest of you out there can feel the joy of becoming once more like children, dancing to the singing rhythm of a very different drummer. When I told Nana how remarkable the meeting of Brazilian natural-primitive with post-modern urban electronics seemed to me, he just laughed and said, "Yes, but the break-dancing is like a big city version of the *capoeira*!"

Right. Like I almost said back at the beginning: "I have seen the future of world music, and its name is..." ◻

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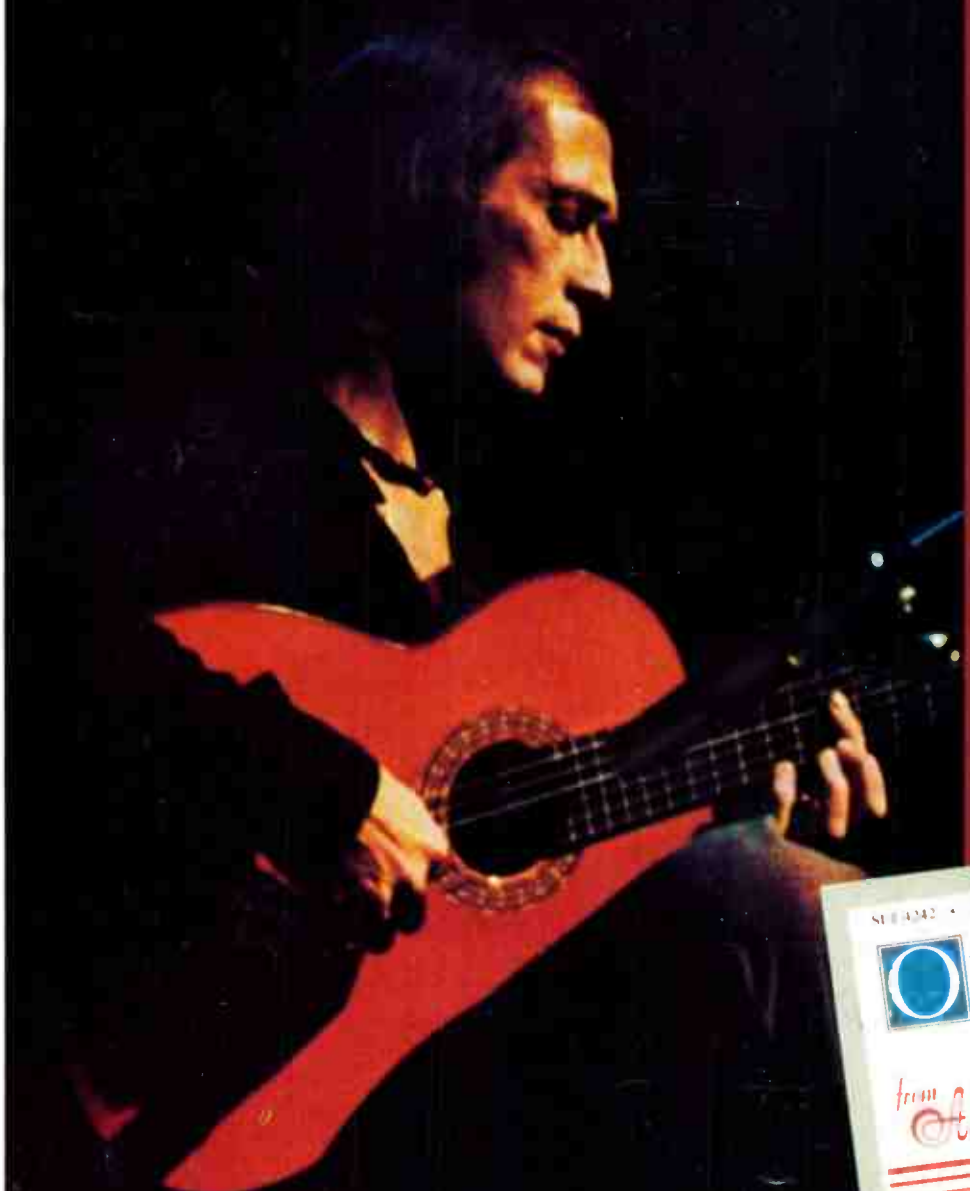

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