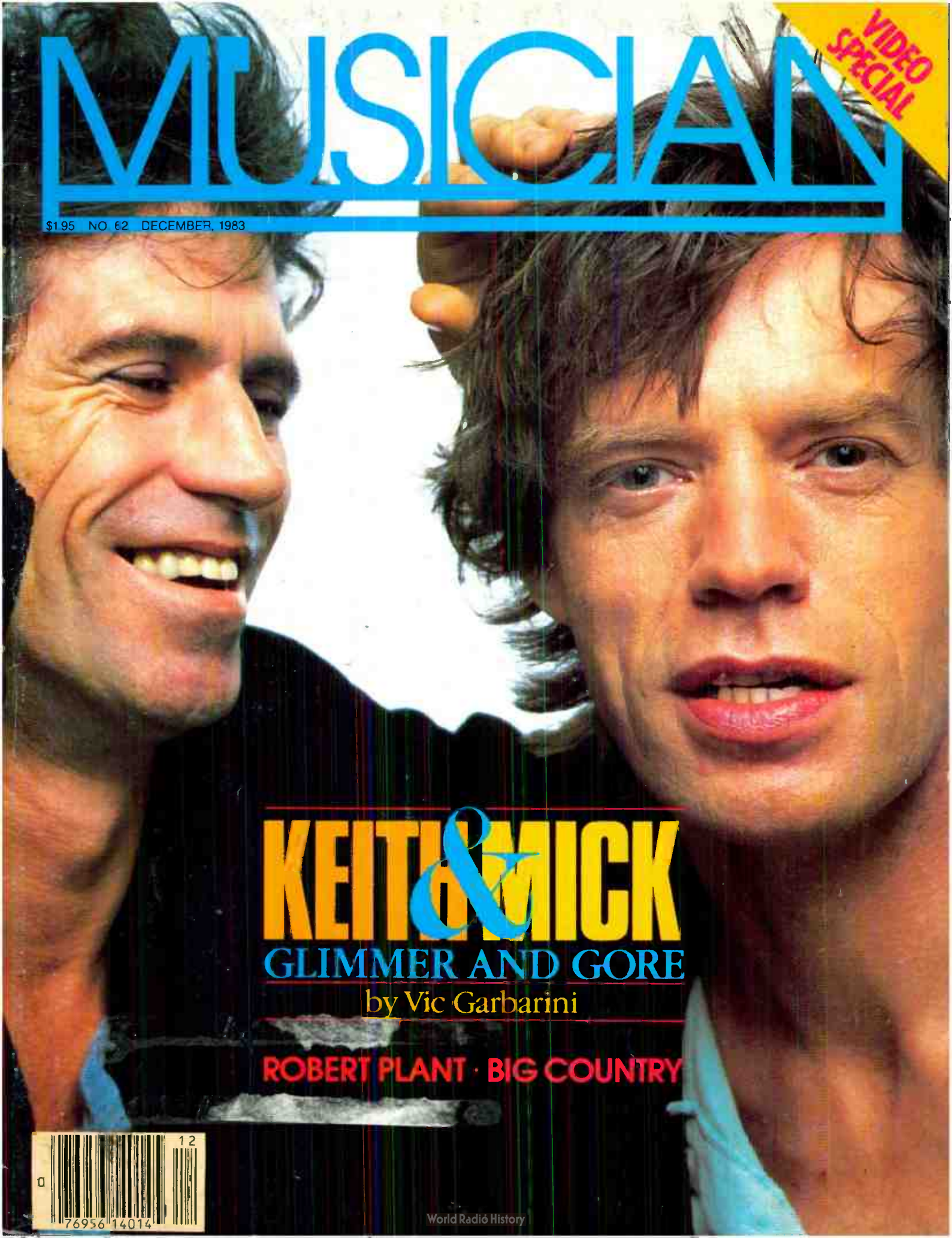


MUSICIAN

VIDEO
SPECIAL

\$1.95 NO. 62 DECEMBER, 1983



KEITH & MICK

GLIMMER AND GORE

by Vic Garbarini

ROBERT PLANT · BIG COUNTRY



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MUSICIAN

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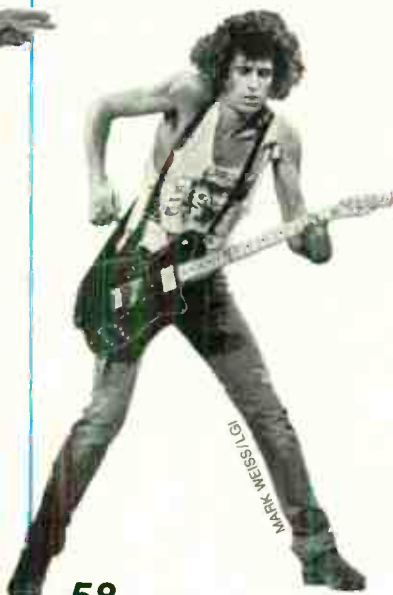
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By Vic Garbarini



LYNN GOLDSMITH

WORKING MUSICIAN

VIDEOSYNCRASY

77. A special edition of the *Working Musician* takes a broad look at contemporary rock video, including a look at two of the most tasteful big-budget producer/directors, Godley & Creme, the poop on how to bring in a broadcast-quality video for under \$10,000, a case study of dark horse MTV stars, the Slickee Boys, instructional tapes, a video resource you may have overlooked, and some advice on how to set up your own home video studio.

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WHEN STEVE SMITH RIDES HIS ZILDJIAN, YOU'RE IN FOR AN EXCITING JOURNEY.

Steve grew up just around the corner from The Zildjian factory. Of course, for the past few years he hasn't been around all that much, what with his touring with Jean Luc Ponty, Ronnie Montrose and of course the enormously successful group, Journey. However, recently Steve took a break in his wild schedule and had a chance to sit down and talk with us.

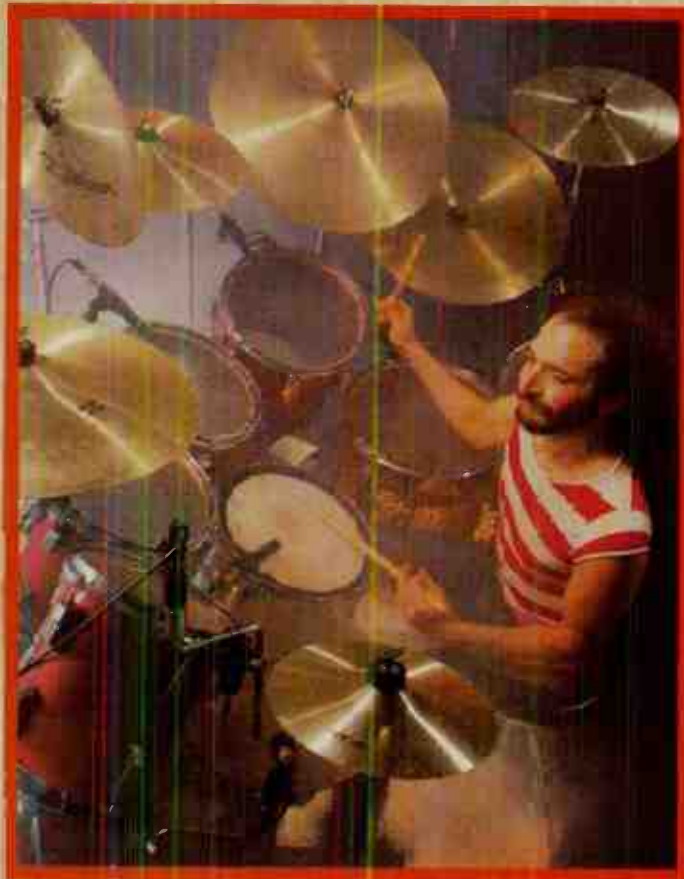
On Starting Out.

"I started out playing in the fourth grade when I was nine years old and had a really good teacher. When I was in high school I got serious about playing and I got a job as a paper boy to save money to buy cymbals. My teacher used to bring me to the Zildjian factory so I could go in and pick out my own set of cymbals."

On Rock and Roll. "After college I had a lot of experience playing jazz and fusion and I had virtually no experience playing rock and roll professionally except for some high school rock things. I really wanted to follow that direction because

nowadays a drummer has to play rock and roll as well as jazz in order to be well-rounded as a musician."

On Zildjians. "The kind of music we play with Journey demands a lot of power. I've found that the cymbals in the Zildjian rock line are the only ones that can



Flying high with the success of Journey, Steve Smith is one of the most versatile and talented drummers in music today.

really do the job for me — that can carry the big halls and not sound thin. Zildjian cymbals have extraordinary projection but at the same time they have this wonderful, full musical tone. I also particularly like the Ping Ride — I got my first one back in the eighth grade and I've been playing one ever since."

On Career. "You know if you should get into music. It's something you can just feel. If you have to ask yourself the question, then don't bother. Being a musician isn't just a career it's a way of life.

"I find that most successful musicians don't think about success as much as they think about being a good player or songwriter.

To try to focus on success is a little too contrived and usually just doesn't work."

If you're a serious drummer, chances are overwhelming that you, like Steve, are already playing Zildjians. Zildjian: a line of cymbals played by drummers on six continents — a line of cymbal-makers that spans three centuries.



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Letters

HEAVEN CAN WHITE

Oh, I just don't know where to begin... I didn't think *Musician* could get any better, but Timothy White's in-depth interview with Elvis Costello has sent me into subscriber heaven. E.C.'s red shoes are safe. Now the angels want to read my magazine!

Dena Buckmaster Andrews
Little Rock, AR

I guess it goes without saying that Timothy White does excellent interviews. He asks original, intelligent questions and makes the readers feel like the artist he's interviewing is leveling with him. His article on Elvis Costello was a treat.

Tina Scopacasa
Santa Barbara, CA

INSIDE INSIGHT

Finally, after twenty years, it was *Musician* who had the insight to write an article about the session men of Motown. And it took someone like Nelson George to actually paint a realistic picture of how the Motown sound really came to life. (Good work, Nelson, this is much better than those quarter-page news clips you're so well known for.) When Motown moved and relocated to "Tootsville," U.S.A., it was not only disaster and devastation for Detroit, but it was also a determining factor of why the present Motown sound is shallow and lacks creativity and originality.

Mr. Gordy, please come down off your throne and pick up October's issue. Read it and experience it, okay?

Brenda J. Hughes
Jackson, MS

PRINCE AU NATUREL

Excellence: even this word cannot adequately describe Barbara Graustark's article on Prince. Her honest and natural approach gave the reader everything from Prince's full name right down to what's under his legendary purple trenchcoat and everything in between; this lady doesn't miss a single thing. Robert Hilburn's brief blurb on the music was equally noteworthy. Thanks, Prince, for being honest, not only about yourself but also of the music. Whether we care to admit it or not, you, Prince, represent how the world is today. That is more than

just a little frightening.
Sheila Standish
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Finally, someone has looked into the man instead of the image. In Barbara Graustark's interview, she has presented this unique individual—Prince. Since his first album through the present, Prince has proven to be more than just a dionysian being. While others try to catch up to Prince's efforts and live performance, they will always remain years behind him in every way.

Clare Koeppel
Peoria, IL

MINORITY FANATICISM

Mark Rowland's article on NRBQ in your October issue was nothing short of sensational. My only criticism is that it was too short! If NRBQ could only get more exposure, I'm sure more music lovers would be as fanatical about the group as I am. As it is, they remain the secret of a select few. That's too bad for the majority.

Robbie White
Silver Spring, MD

OF FLOCK & FLAK

My congrats to Jock Baird and Charles M. Young on their great stories on AFOS and Joan Jett & the Blackhearts. These two articles were the finest articles on rock 'n' roll that I have ever read. Wow! Finally, a rock magazine that tells the truth.

Lou Manza
Staten Island, NY

You probably won't print this letter because you can't afford to take criticism as you so foolishly hand it out. I'm writing in regard to the article on A Flock Of Seagulls, one of the best groups to enter the new wave music scene. Your article was one with no class or style, or is that just Jock Baird's style of writing (where did he get his degree, out of a Cracker Jack box)? Why criticize Flock for expanding and experimenting in new styles when you yourself should expand your style (but first you have to acquire one). Why should the Seagulls' songs be about issues of literary or political importance? Isn't there enough of that already? And what you said about Paul Reynolds was highly uncalled for. Were you just being spiteful because you were the "Hemophilia Foundation's poster boy"? And I do mean boy, because anyone who would be so childish with their work doesn't deserve the title "man," or "human being" for that matter!

Diana Williams
Pittsburgh, PA

BEACHY KEEN

Thanks so much for the thoughtful and engaging profile on the Beach Boys. It's about time they were shown for what they are—a sensitive and engaging band that's been trapped into relying on its nostalgic charms because so few of us have been able to keep up with them. My only gripe is that author Himes so quickly dispenses with unsung masterpieces *Surl's Up* and *Holland*, two LPs so full of warmth, imagery, vitality and (of course) harmonies, that we "real" Beach Boys fans use them to gauge everything else they do against.

Jim Lipson
Tucson, AZ

SHORTS SHOTS

Kate Bush is just another "over-ambitious chanteuse"?! Have you taken leave of your senses? Was this written on your day off? Were you just having a bad day? Ms. Bush has to be one of the most underrated artists in music today. If she is too esoteric for you (and most people with "pop" tastes), too bad. For those who enjoy her as an artist with a distinct style, you do her an injustice. In all actuality, she should get priority over someone like Joan Jett or Prince. Now straighten up, guys!

Jay Mazur
Brooklyn, NY

Does Francis Davis have an inkling of what a good pop record is? Those of us who do think Jay Hoggard's *Love Survives* is just fine.

Michael Reading KWAV-FM
Monterey, CA

SOAP & VIOLENCE

Concerning that lie about me in the Music Industry News: I performed with the Waitresses, that little combo, several times before walking out and a brilliant job it was, I might add. Press and fans agreed. Phonogram, cut the crap. I've got my own career to think of. What a soap opera. You may print this. I can't afford a lawyer but I can a stamp.

Thanks, *Musician*.

Holly Beth Vincent
Artist and go-go girl
New York, NY

Q. Who are the Femmes, and why are they Violent?

A. The Violent Femmes is a band from *Milwaukee* that gets violent when they read otherwise. Give credit where credit is due. That "street" sound did not come out of Minneapolis.

Karen Kennedy
Milwaukee, WI

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MUSIC INDUSTRY NEWS

MUSICAL CHAIRS

A wave of big-time rock divorces hit the headlines this month, led by Mick Jones' abrupt dismissal from the Clash by Joe Strummer and Paul Simonon for "drifting apart from the original idea of the Clash." Jones, who disclosed he had been canned without so much as a conversation, went right to work with two English Beats-on-the-lam, Dave Wakeling and Ranking Roger. While journalists scurried about trying in vain to explain the breakup of rock's best hope, Asia sacked its lead singer/bassist, John Wetton for more musical differences. Insiders say that the band (and especially Steve Howe) was "sick of doing three-minute pop tunes." Wetton's chair was promptly filled by—surprise—Greg Lake of Emerson and Palmer fame; this was especially fortuitous for Lake since he was rumored to be near bankruptcy. Wetton will carry on undaunted, still managed by Asia's Brian Lane.

As if this weren't enough to keep the scribblers scrambling, Peter Wolf left the J. Geils band (for some months there had been talk that Geils himself was thinking of packing it in). Then Annabella Lwin, Malcolm McLaren's third-world teen queen, departed Bow Wow Wow for a solo career and Chris Stamey left the dB's just as they were about to begin a new LP for a new label, Bearsville. Must be something going around....

The long-awaited rehearing of arguments before the Supreme Court on the Betamax case left many handicappers giving a slight edge to

Sony's attorney Dean C. Dunleavy over two Universal Studios and Walt Disney Studios' Stephen Kroft. At a surprise pretrial press conference, Dunleavy gave his impression of the first hearing: "It was like coming in to teach college physics and having to end up teaching two and two are four." Despite this glowing assessment of the high court's legal acumen, Dunleavy made some headway in getting the justices to accept the realities of the situation; Justice Thurgood Marshall at one point asked, "Do you think the home taper is going to get rid of his machine and throw it away? If so, dream on." Still, several justices were noticeably unconvinced by Dunleavy's argument that a recorder is a "staple article of commerce," and thus exempt from restriction. No immediate decision is expected. And if you're wondering what all this has to do with music, take note: Justice Byron White asked Kroft, "Do you think copying a sound recording is also an infringement?" "Off the cuff," the studios' attorney answered, "I'd say it's the same as movies."

In other legal action, New York promoter John Scher changed his plea from not guilty to *nolo contendere* in a case accusing him of violating the Sherman Anti-trust Act. Scher gave up his defense because the prosecution had a "smoking gun," a letter signed by Scher agreeing to divide up the cities of upstate New York with fellow promoter Cedric Kushner. Scher faces a maximum of three years in jail and a stiff fine, but since no price-fixing was alleged and Scher had no idea it was illegal, the book may not be thrown at him.

PolyGram, still negotiating a complex merger with Warner Bros., is offering the huge music publishing entity Chappell Music up for sale, with a record asking price of a hundred and fifty million. CBS won't be nibbling; they just paid seventy million

for United Artists Music earlier this year.... Rumors that Abba's financial empire was in tatters and the group disbanded were met with a detailed rebuttal by manager Stig Anderson. While Anderson admitted they'd lost five million in the oil spot market, he put their current worth at about seventy-five million and predicted a reunion in early 1984. Talk about corporate rock....

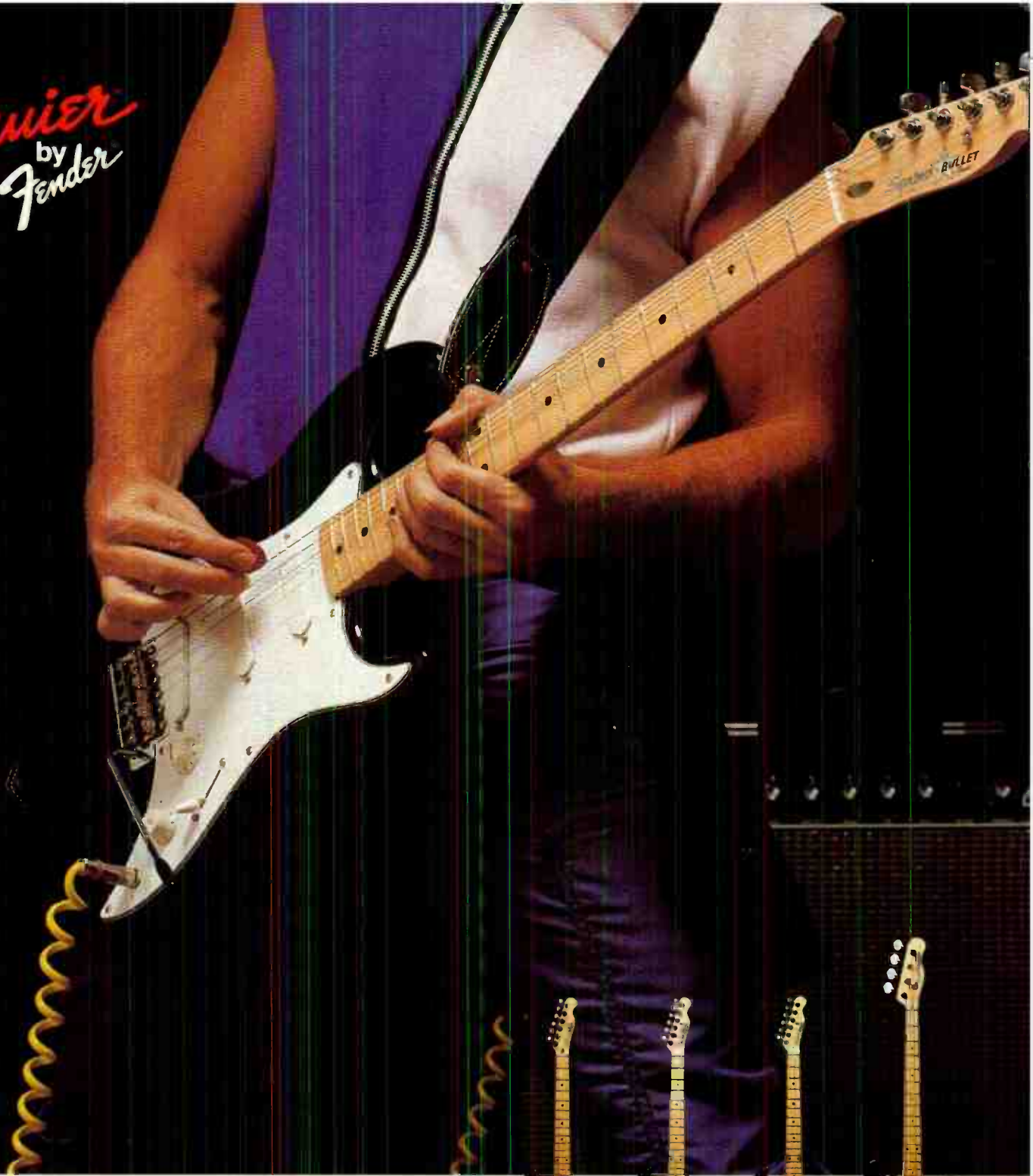
Michael Jackson's *Thriller* has broken all CBS records for domestic (8.5 million) and world-wide (14 million) sales. Buoyed by this budget, CBS is producing the Most Expensive Video Ever of the title cut—for \$500,000. (The biggest LP ever was *Saturday Night Fever* at 25 million, if anyone ever asks you.) With that kind of bullishness about, the majors are launching their Christmas blitz, including new studio LPs by John Cougar Mellencamp (he took back his real name), the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder and Lionel Richie. Other arrivals include the Pretenders, Thomas Dolby and Culture Club's latest as well as Paul Simon's *Hearts And Bones*, which was originally slated as a Simon & Garfunkel LP.

Iron Maiden hired an American model to crack a whip and dance around lead singer Bruce Dickinson in Buffalo, New York. Dickinson apparently got so carried away, he tore the model's top off, to the great delight of 7,000 fans and the model's attorney, who sued for \$350,000 alleging Dickinson had "willfully, wantonly and shamelessly" exposed her. Nasty, Bruce, nasty.... **Todd Rundgren** fell and broke his right arm doing a stunt for his *Ever Popular Tortured Artist Effect* video special for British TV.

Chart Action

The Police coasted on at the top of the *Billboard* charts, even as Michael Jackson and *Flashdance* hung loose (*Flashdance* was meanwhile breaking video sales records in another incarnation). Def Leppard finally gave up its death hold on #4, giving way to Billy Joel. Newcomers to the top ten, Quiet Riot and Bonnie Tyler followed at #5 and #6, while the Fixx continued their surprise top ten romp at #8. Stevie Nicks, Air Supply and Robert Plant battled below. Asia dropped into the teens after showing signs of chart macho, as did Jackson Browne's newest. The Stray Cats came on like drag racers, though, as did Linda Ronstadt and Spandau Ballet. And Pink Floyd's *Dark Side Of The Moon* just jumped a point to #147 after a scant 488 weeks.

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SHALAMAR

A CROSSOVER SUCCESS IS THREATENED BY THE DISTRACTIONS OF FASHION.

NELSON GEORGE

This should be a happy time for the three members of Shalamar, the youthful, energetic vocal group who have demonstrated, with the aid of producer Leon Sylvers, that it is possible for a mainstream black band to synthesize the rock-funk of Prince, Michael Jackson and Thomas Dolby into a crossover style (and crossover sales). Up until its stridently new wave single "Dead Giveaway" and *The Look* album, Shalamar had found white acceptance elusive, despite being one of pop's most musically consistent vocal groups since 1980. Shalamar's Howard Hewett, Jeffrey Daniels and Jodi Watley epitomized "the Solar sound," a slick, high-gloss, melodic approach to post-disco black dance music conceived by Sylvers for

Solar (Sound of Los Angeles Records), a spunky little black-owned label founded by promoter Dick Griffey. Hewett's impassioned tenor and tortured phrasing, Watley's long, sexy legs and tart vocals, and Daniels' rubbery, slithery *Soul Train* shuffles made Shalamar a joy to hear and watch.

So when "Dead Giveaway" cracked several AOR playlists, ranked near the top of the *Village Voice's* critics poll, and (wonder of wonders) won its video a place on MTV, it should have been cause for celebration. Alas, the taste in the mouths of many near the group is a touch salty, as a rift developed between Hewett and Daniels—not over Shalamar's new musical direction, but over Daniels' commitment to it.

To understand the roots of the conflict we have to go back before the founding of Shalamar to a Los Angeles recording

studio in the mid-1970s where ex-Motown producer Freddie Perren was working with a family group called the Sylvers. There the oldest boy, Leon Sylvers, tinkered with his bass and absorbed Perren's Motown lessons in pop craft. Co-producer of the Jackson Five's landmark singles "I Want You Back" and "ABC," Perren concocted similar bubble gum fare for the Sylvers, including the aggressively cute "Boogie Fever" and "Hot Line." From Perren Sylvers learned techniques he's since incorporated into his own productions: lyric simplicity and an eye for clever analogies; use of bright guitar and keyboard figures to highlight the melody; and busy, compulsive bass lines.

After an ill-fated stab at producing his siblings, Leon Sylvers talked Dick Griffey into letting him produce for Solar. Griffey, a self-styled second generation



B.B.C./RETNA

Lead singer Howard Hewett, Jodi Watley and the presently AWOL Jeffrey Daniels during happier days.

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World Radio History

Berry Gordy, was still seeking an identifiable sound for his label. Ironically, his first real success came with *Disco Gardens*, an album of discotized Motown standards by a studio group he named Shalamar.

To give Shalamar an identity, Griffey recruited two fine *Soul Train* dancers, Jodi Watley and Jeffrey Daniels. Daniels, tall and sexy (he had a brief, tempestuous marriage to singer Stephanie Mills) and a dedicated follower of fashion, symbolized a fresh, flashy L.A. image. However, Shalamar didn't become a real vocal group until Hewett, a working class survivor from Akron, Ohio joined as lead singer. Along with his

close friend James Ingram, Hewett had come West seeking stardom. A pragmatist and self-conscious vocal craftsman, Hewett wasn't caught up in L.A. hoopla.

By mating Sylvers' neo-Motown production values, Daniels and Watley's stylish stepping and visual image, and Hewett's midwestern grit, Shalamar quickly begat an impressive string of hits, from "The Second Time Around," to "Make That Move" to "I Owe You One," culminating in their best overall album, last year's *Friends*.

Though sales were modest in the U.S., *Friends* became a huge best seller in England. "It's a matter of geography," Hewett mused recently in his Los

Angeles condo. "In England you can hit the whole country with one TV show and be a sensation. Just like that. When we went to England with Jeffrey, who has gone totally new wave, they ate the whole thing up. They really get off on image in England." Daniels' enthusiasm for new wave garb (gone was his H-bomb Afro, replaced by straightened hair on his right side and a partially shaved scalp on the left), and the number of Anglo-funk bands succeeding in the U.S. caused Hewett, who now co-produces Shalamar with Sylvers and writes much of their material, to re-examine the group's musical direction.

"When we were preparing the album I stressed that we'd established an identifiable vocal sound," says Hewett. "So we could stand up and take a chance. Why *can't* Shalamar experiment with our music, utilizing some of the radically different musical elements on the scene today?" The result: "Dead Giveaway" and *The Look*.

"We got flak from some people in the black community about it," Hewett admitted. "But once they hear the album they see, 'Oh, that was just one of many concepts.' We didn't totally abandon our Solar sound, but we did begin moving to another place. Everything must change."

Unfortunately, Shalamar changed too. While shooting the "Dead Giveaway" video in London, Daniels became not just a new wave follower, but a fanatic. Tired of the non-conformist conformity of L.A. star life and truly enraptured by the peacock profiling of London, he decided to settle there. Hewett saw this, quite justifiably, as a threat to Shalamar's future. To him "new wave" was a marketing tool, not a way of life or a philosophy. They clashed. Daniels "quit" and, so far, has stuck by his decision. "We have some personal problems within the group," says Hewett. "Some things we have to iron out, but I think we can get it done."

Nonetheless, the scope of those problems can be suggested by Hewett's commentary on the English scene Daniels has embraced. "You can go over there and sing a whole evening of bad notes—your music can be totally off—but if you have a great image you can get over," he charges. "While I realize that England is a very important market," Hewett adds, "I also realize that you can put the whole country inside California and still have room left over."

One hopes they get back together. Shalamar's mix of vocals and visuals make them perfect candidates for superstardom, especially in an era when Anglophile hordes with cranked up syn-drums and blow dryers are overrunning our own shores. Hewett, Daniels and Watley complement each other so well, they've come too far to self-destruct on the verge of something great. ☐

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TOM WAITS

CANDID CONVERSATIONS FROM L.A.'S FINEST DINERS

SAMUEL GRAHAM

You'll never mistake Tom Waits for Wayne Newton. When you think of Tom Waits, you picture a self-made derelict, a poet-musician for the post-Kerouac age. You figure he's a guy whose preferred residence is a place where it's always nighttime, and the local human detritus—the hucksters and whores, the desperate and depraved, the lost and forsaken—usually convene in some diner that serves great, greasy barbecue. You expect to meet Tom Waits only on the seamy side of the street—and maybe you're half-right.

We agreed to meet one sweltering afternoon at a restaurant in the Echo Park area of Los Angeles. "It's called the Travelers Cafe," he said. "You shouldn't have any trouble finding it—it's the only Travelers Cafe on the block, even though it may not be the only Filipino-Chinese-American joint. Just look for the place right across the street from the liquor store with the giraffe on top of the sign."

The Travelers turned out to be an unobtrusive, reasonably pleasant place, empty that afternoon save for a couple of employees, some hideous plastic chandeliers and the blare of bad daytime television. It was an appropriate choice—a bit removed from the mainstream, like Waits himself.

When we first met, he was wearing his customary loose-fitting black jeans, pointy black shoes, T-shirt and short-brimmed lid, frequently stroking the neat little soul patch 'neath his lower lip. But if one can safely pass judgment after just four or five hours of face-to-face conversation, then I'll risk concluding that Waits is a man of contrasts and contradictions, not unlike most folks. He won't be mistaken for a model from the pages of *Gentleman's Quarterly*, but he isn't slovenly, either. He may tell a few jokes and parody a few stereotypes, but he's careful not to offend anyone—from the Hollywood film community to other musicians, from the string arranger on his early albums to Barbi Benton, who once covered a Waits tune; that is, I think he was serious when he called Barbi

"one of the cornerstones of American music." He might give your question a flip response—but he'll make sure the tape recorder is working and positioned properly and the background noise isn't too intrusive.

"I get some amusing correspondence," Waits was saying. "This little kid, who's like six or seven years old, got into trouble for taking my record to school. It was *Small Change*, I think; he said it was his favorite record. He took it in on a Wednesday, when you bring something to class and show it, and he wanted to hear 'Pasties And A G-String,' but he got temporarily suspended from

school. Then he wrote me a letter, saying how he wanted me to talk to the principal.

"I didn't know how to handle it, you know? I didn't know if I wanted to get involved with the school board and all that. I did write him a letter back and told him that it's okay, and that I appreciated his patronage."

And, perhaps, his patience. *Sword-fishtrumpets*, Waits' latest album and about the most varied, ambitious work he's ever done, was actually completed in the summer of 1982. It probably would have been released long before now, but for complications that led to a switch



Between acting, scoring and the cinematic texture of his new LP, Tom's gone movie-mad.



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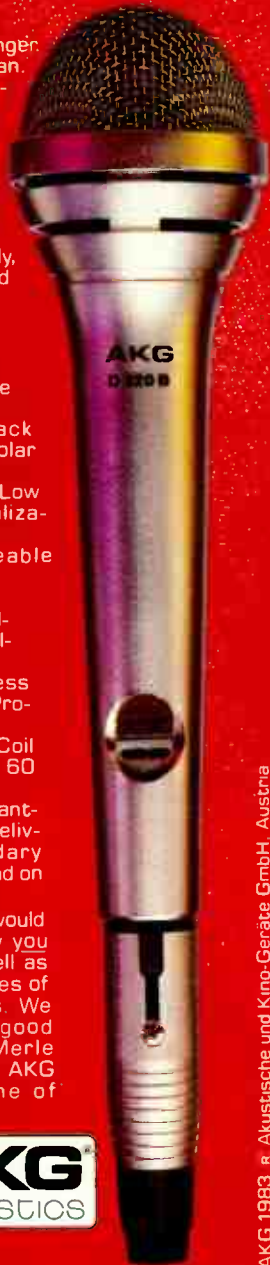
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of record labels from Elektra/Asylum to Island. (E/A, Waits said, thought the album was "eminently drinkable," but what he called "a big shakedown at Gimbels"—i.e., some major policy and personnel changes at the label—made him "a little nervous" and led to the move.) Partly as a result, *Swordfishtrombones* is Waits' first new album in nearly three years, not including his "One From The Heart" soundtrack collaboration with Crystal Gayle. It's also the first album he has produced himself.

"I'm motivated primarily by guilt and fear," he deadpanned. "I was actually terrified to produce the record, but I couldn't find anyone I felt confident with, so I decided to go ahead. This was my maiden voyage, which takes a tremendous amount of concentration—there are a lot of decisions you have to make. I really had to skull it all out, but that was good for me."

Working with engineer Biff Dawes, Waits allowed himself to take more chances. "I kind of staggered through my other records," he confessed. "This is the first one I ever took a firm, active role in. For me, the writing process always felt like the nuts and bolts of the whole apparatus—what you go *in* with is everything. This time, I allowed for certain things to take place within the studio—certain feels, certain time signatures, certain ways of dismantling a song and pushing it around—instead of taking care of all of it in the early writing stages."

Waits broke his own mold in a number of ways with *Swordfishtrombones*. For one thing, he played less, handling piano on just three tracks, harmonium on two and Hammond B-3 on one—"I didn't necessarily feel that I had to be president of each committee," he explained. He went for a harder sound, eliminating strings ("Strings get like linoleum after a while—it's easy to clean and all, but...") and saxophones ("I consider that to be a personal victory"). In their places came loud, flatulent guitars, bagpipes, bell plates ("a piece of steel that you slam with a hammer"), automobile brake drums, chairs, metal *aunglongs* ("tuned Thai bells") and bass marimbas, played by seasoned studio musicians like Victor Feldman, Fred Tackett and Stephen Hodges. And instead of indulging his old "superstition" about limiting overdubs, he went in for a good deal more "repair work." The result is an LP at once less and more produced than Waits' previous records.

"I'm making an overt attempt to let myself wear different hats," Waits said. "What happens is, you do something, and you know you do it well; you can continue to do that, or you can find different aspects of your identity that maybe you're more timid about exploring publicly. I made a few strides in that."

To say the least. Consider some of Waits' own descriptions of some of the material. There's "Underground," a "theme song for a German nightmare—or maybe an anthem for a mutant dwarf community," featuring an instrumental track you might expect from Captain Beefheart. There's "Down, Down, Down," a "pentecostal reprimand." There are "16 Shells From A 30.6" and "Gin Soaked Boy," both as black and gritty as a Howlin' Wolf blues shouter, with a vocal delivery to match. "In The Neighborhood," offered in a turn-of-the-century waltz time, has "a little Fellini band kind of sound—tuba, trumpet, trombone, snare, cymbals—like when the TV's going off the air." "Just Another Sucker On The Vine," an instrumental, matches trumpet and harmonium to paint a picture of "two Italian aerialist brothers in torn leotards, having a domestic argument during a performance." And folks, that ain't even the half of it.

Waits seems to adopt to a new vocal sound for every tune. The cracked croon, the guttural rasp, the beatnik half-whisper, the stentorian bark: he may have used all of these voices before, but certainly not on a single slab of vinyl. "It's like playing a character in a story," he said. "I'm trying to use different characters and attitudes and stances, and let the song dictate what it needs, rather than simply saying, 'Well, these are the kinds of songs I write.'"

Any dedicated Waits-ophile will tell you that his song catalog is littered with miniature aural movies. Now, after scoring Francis Coppola's *One From the Heart*, Waits has learned to imbue even songs as disparate as those on *Swordfishtrombones* with a "filmic quality" that reveals itself after repeated listenings. The lonely sailor on "Shore Leave," for instance, ("I'd left all my papers on the *Ticonderoga*, and I was in bad need of a shave...") wonders "how the same moon outside over this Chinatown fair could look down on Illinois and find you there"; two songs later, the setting is "Johnsburg, Illinois," home of "my only true love." Waits throws in a eerie, organ-laced instrumental called "Dave The Butcher"; in a subsequent tune, he includes a little aside that "Lionel and Dave and the Butcher made three."

Subtle stuff, that—but no big deal, to hear Waits tell it. "I like characters and things that re-occur," he said, "but it's not a real song score. The songs have a feeling of existing within the same aquarium—that's all. There's just a little more caulking compound involved this time."

Typically, however, Waits largely avoided detailing the sources which inform this music. He mentioned Dock Boggs, a black banjo player whose "grainy sound" is echoed in "Down,



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Down, Down" and "Gin Soaked Boy." And he noted that his listening habits include "Oriental music, opera, Mongolian music and some African stuff—just to find a different beverage every now and then"—along with Monk and Mingus. Clearly, though, he has tried to make the process of absorbing and then regurgitating various influences more natural and intuitive.

"I'm getting to a point where what goes in *here* comes out *there*," he said. "You put it in this end of the box, and by the time it comes out it looks more like that.... At the time you write the music, it's a chemical thing, not a self-con-

scious one. You try to organize an unusual compendium of sources, but it has a lot to do with *who* you work with, not just *what* you work with. All those choices are very delicate."

Indeed, Waits apparently doesn't make many choices indelicately—including his choice of words in interviews. Two days after our session at the Travelers Cafe, he wanted to get together again, in part to clarify certain subjects. We met at Al's, a coffee shop on Sixth Street across from the Robert Taylor Car Wash, whose marquee still announces the site where *Car Wash* was filmed. As Tom and his wife of three

years, Kathleen, have come to call the joint "Big Al's," a reference to the proprietor's physical proportions, but "Al doesn't call it that," Waits warned, "and neither does anyone else when he's around."

While I consumed some of Al's flapjacks and scrambled eggs, Waits nursed a cup of tea. Two days earlier, he'd had a single bottle of beer in two hours; at no time did a cigarette cross his lips. But when it was pointed out that he seems to be living the clean life these days, he bristled. "Now, is *that* what your angle's gonna be—that I've quit smoking, and I drink tea? What do you mean, you *heard* that I was living the clean life?"

Considering the tales that have been spun about Waits's earlier life—the squalid hotel rooms, the drinking bouts and so on—a few discreet inquiries about his apparent cleaning up are understandable. According to myth (and, for once, fact), he was born in a taxicab in Pomona, California on December 7, 1949. As he grew up his family lived in such disparate locales as Florida, Mexico City, Kansas and Seattle; his father, a schoolteacher, now works in a high school in Los Angeles.

Waits himself developed an iconoclast's love of beat poets and pop songwriters (Cole Porter, Johnny Mercer, the Gershwins) while the other teens were rockin' 'n' rollin'. By 1969, he was performing his own songs at L.A.'s Troubadour, and three years later he recorded his first album for Asylum, *Closing Time*. Produced by ex-Lovin' Spoonful member Jerry Yester, the LP was a lot softer around the edges than *Swordfish-trombones*—but it still made clear that Waits wasn't just another fresh-faced, singer/songwriter, earnestly strumming odes to love and peace.

"Yeah, I know what they say about me," he laughed, at times struggling to make his low-pitched, rasping voice heard over the numbing blasts of some pneumatic drills outside. "'You'll never get invited to the governor's mansion looking like that. When you gonna take a shave, get a new car, take care of yourself and assume some responsibility in life? For chrissakes. Wear a clean shirt and show up on time! Grow up!'" Yes, but where did it all come from, this persona of "the type of guy who'd sell you a rat's asshole for a wedding ring," as he once put it? Waits did once live in a squalid room at the Tropicana Motel in West Hollywood, so it can't be a total put-on.

"Well, you know," he said after a pause. "It's pieces of yourself, pieces of other people.... And when it comes to sticking your neck out, especially with the press, you're better off having a certain veneer or facade, in order to provide yourself with adequate protection.

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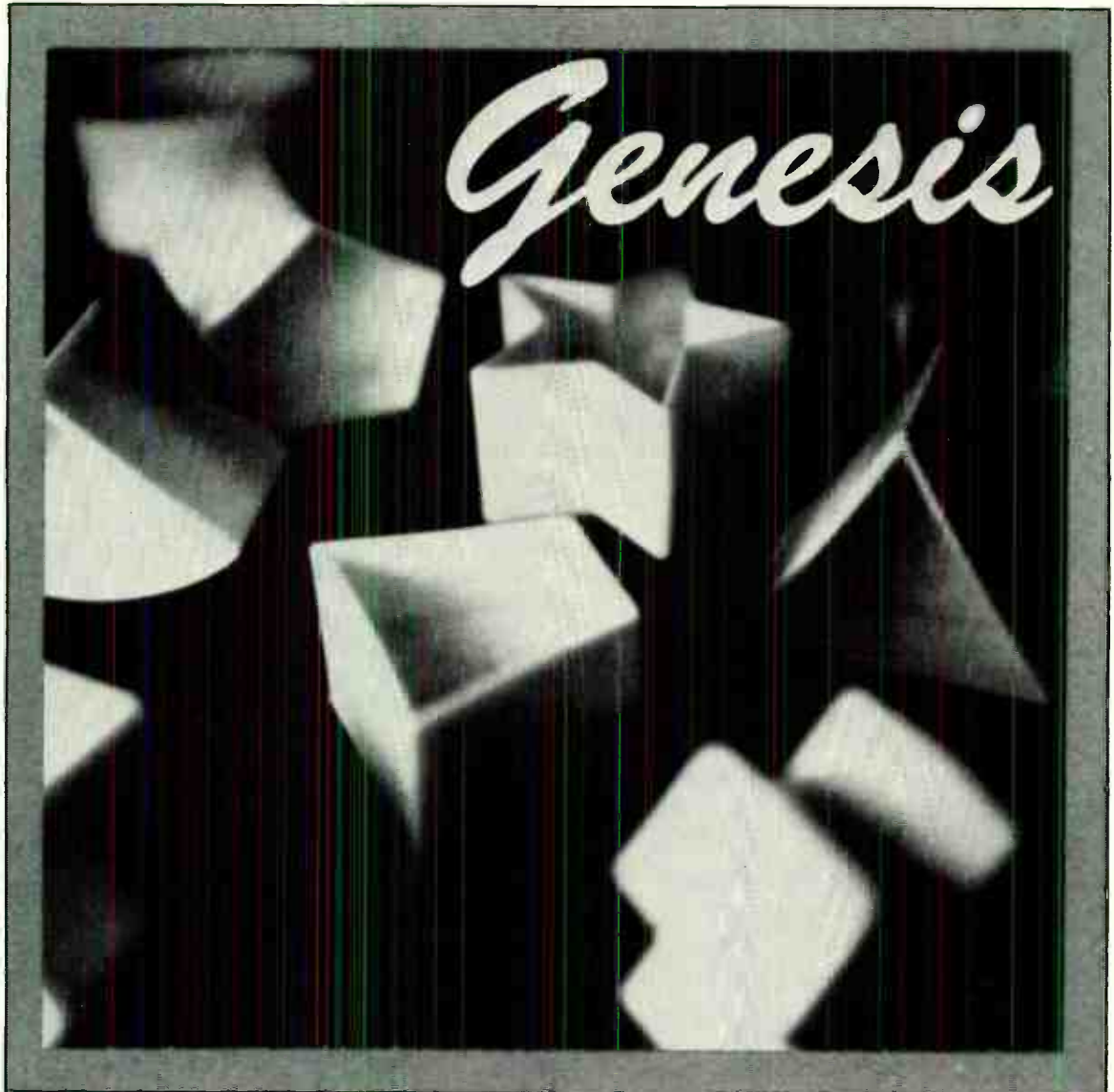
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"But basically, I think that at any level of public life, where you're being scrutinized—either through the music rags, or in clubs or whatever—you're kind of a mixture (of myth and truth). As to whether I live a complete double life, I'd have to say, 'Bally-hoo.' I made the mistake of giving out my old address at one point, and I got a lot of very twisted mail and some bizarre visitors. I'm a little wiser now; I'm a little more private now. The place where my private life and public life overlap is more difficult to find. In the long run, I guess the best thing to do is send somebody else out there for you, while you're laying out at La Costa with a Manhattan and a couple of dames. That's the way I want to do it."

Waits has taken his act out of the recording studio and off the concert stage lately. He had parts in two Coppola movies, *The Outsiders* and *Rumblefish*; and in late July he headed off to Montana for a few days work on *The Stone Boy*, starring Robert Duvall, Fredric Forrest and Glenn Close ("Yeah, I play Nelson, the Petrified Man—I turned down the role of the attorney"). Of course, this movie routine isn't entirely new to him. Waits' *One From The Heart* song score did receive an Academy Award nomination, and on the big night he rented a tux ("thirty-five bucks,

including shoes") and came out to rub shoulders with the celluloid elite. "I thought it would be silly to stay home," he said. "And it was an interesting sociological event—all these women in 1959 prom formals, staggering around on the shag-pile carpet. It's really something to see."

Coppola had apparently hired Waits after hearing "I Never Talk To Strangers," a sly, funny duet with Bette Midler on *Foreign Affairs*. He was given an office on Coppola's Zoetrope Studios lot, where he proceeded to turn out some of his most accessible and coverable material, tunes like "Old Boyfriends," "I Beg Your Pardon" and "Broken Bicycles."

"I had to get up in the morning and shave, read the paper and go to work," Waits recalled. "That kind of discipline was very attractive to me at the time. I had this little office, a piano, memos under the door, that whole feeling of almost being in school."

Waits wrote both the tunes and the orchestral scoring material for the film, likening his job to "sewing buttons on a sportshirt that consumed acres of fabric." Bones Howe, producer of the soundtrack album and every Waits LP except *Closing Time* and *Swordfish-trombones*, said in a recent interview

that Waits, Zoetrope and Columbia Records had agreed that the record would be eighty percent songs. As the LP's release date loomed nearer, however, Waits grew unhappy with that formula. According to Howe, Waits then unleashed "a tirade" at Coppola, who agreed that the record should be "a real representation of the movie." It was pulled from Columbia's release schedule; by the time the album was finally put out nine months later (complete with orchestral material and "sound montages"), the film itself had stiffed.

Waits himself commented sparingly when questioned about the *One From The Heart* fiasco; "It's history," he noted simply. As for Howe's allegations, he said, "Some days I was happy with the album, some days I wasn't—it was like any other project. But yeah, I thought the record should have songs and some connecting tissue that added to the overall shape of the score."

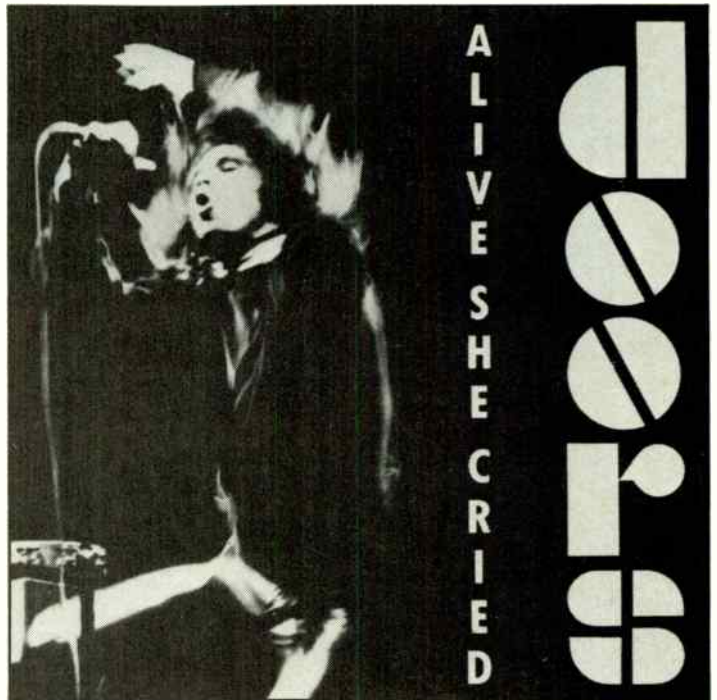
Waits' personal life is not one of his favorite topics either; his one-time relationship with Rickie Lee Jones remains strictly off limits. Still, he'll admit that he doesn't plan to end up like a character from one of his new songs, a fellow named Frank who "hung his wild years on a nail that he drove through his wife's
continued on page 118

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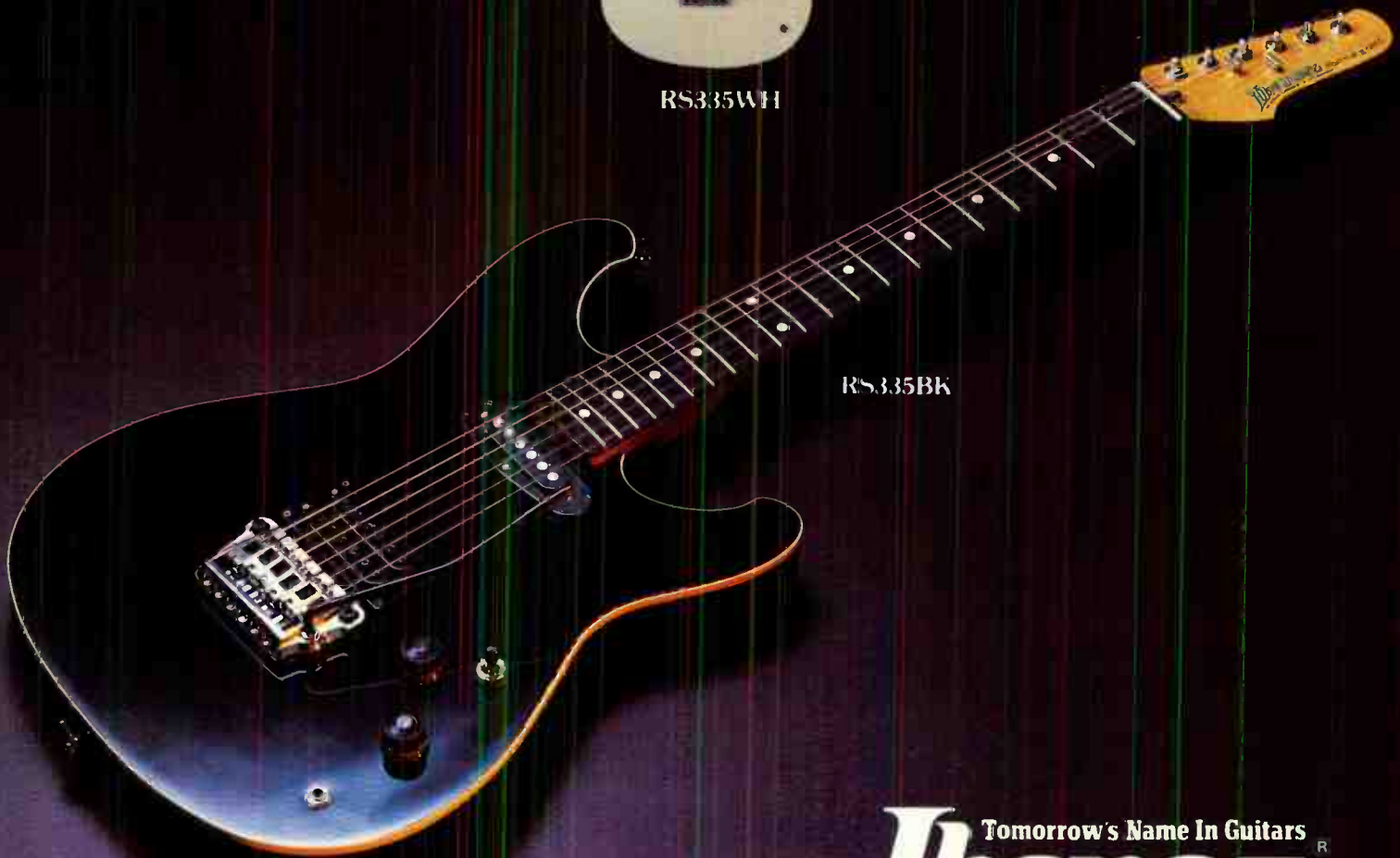
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"GOOD AFTERNOON, MADAM. My name is John Hiatt, and this is my new recording—it's called *Riding With The King*. Much time and care was put into it—the finest quality playing and singing. I believe this is the finest example of rock & rhythm & blues songwriting available, and, just before your husband died, he ordered this copy—embossed with *your* name. Of course, this is the special \$20 version..." That's how John Hiatt would sell his new album door-to-door, according to joking comments in a recent interview. But *Riding With The King* has a pitch all its own—with Nick Lowe production on one side, Ron Nagle/Scott Matthews production on the other and a list price of \$8.98. On Geffen...

OH BRITANNIA... With two "whaps" and three "thunks," it's *Construction Time Again* for Depeche Mode, England's premier electro-pop band. Mode fans "Just Can't Get Enough," but the group's new Sire LP, an upcoming U.S. tour and the single/video "Everything Counts" should help... And, the Gang Of Four finally is. *Hard* is the latest LP from this U.K. threesome, who have added drummer Steve Goulding (ex Lene Lovich) to the line-up for a North American tour. Everyone loved the Gang's "...Man In A Uniform," now consider the single question: "Is It Love" or is it just *Hard*?



THIS IS Advertising

**John Hiatt Pitches,
English News Snitches,
Kid Creole's Tales,
Laurie Anderson's
Males And More!**

MACHO IS PERVERSE, per August Darnell (a.k.a. Kid Creole), explaining that Kid Creole & The Coconut's latest album is called *Doppelganger*; that a "doppelganger" is the ghostly double of a living person; and that "The Kid is the perverse side, the macho side of August Darnell." Oh. Explanations aside, K.C.&T.C. are known for their rock/R&B/jazz/Latin/so-you-can-dance music, and the single "If You Wanna Be Happy" drives that point home. Try to catch the Kid, Andy Hernandez and the voluptuous Coconuts in concert; be sure to catch them on Sire/ZE records...

"I LOVE THE WAY HE YODELS," says Laurie Anderson of Peter Gabriel, who appears alongside Adrian Belew of King Crimson on Anderson's new 4-song disc, *Mister Heartbreak*. "All the songs on it are about love in some way," she says, citing Thomas Pynchon, William Shakespeare, Betty Boop and Cuban rhythms as current influences. *Mister Heartbreak* (specially priced) is Anderson's first work since the completion of *United States*, the performance piece that gave birth to the album *Big Science* and the hit "O Superman..."



BLACK SABBATH HAS BEEN BORN AGAIN, and we're not talking baptisms. Vocalist Ian Gillan, lately of Deep Purple, is the new voice of Black Sabbath, and drummer Bev Bevan (ex ELO) is joining the group on tour. The heavy metal sound of Black Sabbath is heavier than ever—on *Born Again*, they're hitting below the Bible Belt.

"ONE AND ONE-HALF WANDERING JEWS/Free to wander wherever they choose/are travelling together/In the Sangre de Cristo/The Blood of Christ Mountains/Of New Mexico" So begins the title cut of Paul Simon's new album, *Hearts And Bones*. From the surrealism of "Rene And Georgette Magritte With Their Dog After The War" to the seeming simplicity of "Cars Are Cars" to the driving force of "Allergies" ("But my heart is allergic/To the women I love/And it's changing the shape of my face"), Simon has created some of his finest songs to date, songs that jump effortlessly from simple motifs to genuine insights. Don't miss this record.

IT'S A VINYL JUNGLE OUT THERE... "This Is Advertising?" has been forced to return your checks. We can't sell you records, although all items mentioned here should be available from your local record store or one of several national mail-order clubs. We've even heard about a new phone-order service (1-800-HOT-ROCKS) that's open 24 hours a day and guarantees one-week album delivery. What'll they think of next? Of course, you can still drop "TIA?" a note (and small, unmarked bills) at P.O. Box 6888, Burbank, CA 91510.

ROSCOE MITCHELL

THE ART ENSEMBLE'S SAGE SAXIST BRINGS ORDER OUT OF IMPROVISATORY CHAOS.



Farmboy Mitchell prefers structure to his space.

FRANCIS DAVIS

Now that the charges of willful primitivism and novelty-for-novelty's-sake have been dismissed as groundless, and now that the shock waves of its influence have been registered in hemispheres some distance removed from the territorial boundaries of jazz, the Art Ensemble of Chicago is generally conceded to have been the signal jazz band of the 70s and to remain one of this decade's vanguard outfits. But the Art Ensemble's high standing as a unit has tended to overshadow some of its members' individual accomplishments—those of Roscoe Mitchell in particular.

A cogent soloist and a distinctive ensemble colorist on any of the numerous reeds and woodwinds he plays, Mitchell makes more telling use of accent and space than any saxophonist since Sonny Rollins, and his odd fingerings, "off" intonations and broad, slightly flattened vibrato recall African music in an oblique, non-proselytizing manner. But perhaps even seasoned listeners sometimes find it difficult to distinguish Mitchell's wry voice from that of the more voltaic Joseph Jarman, the Art Ensemble's other all-purpose multi-reed and -windsman. (Difficult on record, at any rate. Live, it has never been a problem telling them apart: Mitchell is the one wearing neither costume nor warpaint.) Or perhaps—the more compelling explanation—Mitchell's most ambitious writing for the Art Ensemble (most notably on the epochal 1969 *People In Sorrow*) subsumes itself so completely in group improvisation as to seem to have five authors instead of one. Mitchell's structuralist sensibility so dominated the Art Ensemble in the group's formative years that, when all is said and done, it is easier to pinpoint the elements of street corner theatricality, gallows humor, pan-African tribalism and percussive tintinnabulation brought to the band in varying measures by Jarman, trumpeter Lester Bowie, bassist Malachi Favors Maghostut, and percussionist Famoudou Don Moye than it is to isolate the more deeply ingrained values of group purpose and order instilled by Mitchell.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Let us not forget here that the Art Ensemble of Chicago evolved out of what was originally the Roscoe Mitchell Quartet.

According to Roscoe Mitchell, necessity mothered the bewitching tribal percussion passages that became the trademark of the Art Ensemble sound, and it was necessity that forced the Roscoe Mitchell Quartet to go co-op. "The original members of the mid-60s quartet were myself, Lester, Mal and Philip Wilson on drums. When Philip left the group, we doubted that we'd ever be able to replace him, because most of the drummers who were equipped to play free music were very heavy-handed, and we required someone who could play more sensitively. A lot of the so-called avant-garde music coming out of New York around that time was, like, triple fortissimo all the time, and the music we were playing was more delicately shaded than that. So we decided to investigate percussion ourselves, playing little, sometimes homemade percussion instruments behind each other, and that seemed to work out fine."

Joseph Jarman, who had played with the Mitchell Quartet off and on throughout the 60s, became a full-time member in 1969, and Famoudou Don Moye, a drummer who met the unit's exacting specifications, came aboard during a European sojourn a year later, by which point the Roscoe Mitchell Quartet had evolved into the Art Ensemble of Chicago. "It was my band, right? But I wasn't working enough that I could afford to pay those guys what they deserved, and expect them to be there whenever I called. Plus, even though I was still doing most of the band's writing back then, a lot of my pieces called for collective improvisation, so everybody was shouldering an equal amount of responsibility. We became a co-operative unit in order to remain committed to one another and in order to survive.

"I tried painting my face once like some of the other guys, but I started sweating when I got out onstage, and when I wiped my brow, the paint smeared all over my hands," Mitchell confides one spring morning over breakfast in a diner across the street

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from the midtown hotel where he has set up temporary quarters for the two weeks he is scheduled to play New York (with the Art Ensemble at the Village Vanguard, and with his own group at the Public Theatre). A small, tidy man in his early forties whose soft brown eyes sharpen when he discusses music, Mitchell lives with his pre-teenage daughter on a 365-acre farm about 30 miles from Madison, Wisconsin. An early riser, he repeatedly voices dissatisfaction with the late hours and fast pace expected of a musician on the road.

"So for me, the paint is not all that practical. Plus, I worry what the long term effects are, of filling up the pores of your skin with makeup. But the makeup reflects the concern some members of the Art Ensemble have for tradition and theatricality. When you see the Art Ensemble in concert, you're conscious of witnessing a ceremony with certain people enacting certain roles. You're right about the blend of musical personalities, by the way. Jarman has definitely incorporated concepts related to theater and politics, and it's true Malachi is well-versed in African custom. There generally is a streak of humor to the things Lester does, and, yes, I do insist on structure.

"Because, look, even if you just start right off improvising, it'll end up having some kind of structure, if you're doing it

right, because the same rules apply to composition and to improvisation. Say you and I are improvising together, and you're developing a very intricate motif, and—BAM—here I barge in playing something that's not very provocative in itself and isn't even an acceptable counterpoint to your line. To a perceptive listener, it's going to sound the same as if we were playing a piece of *written* music that you're reading correctly and I'm not.

"As a composer, you never really have that much control over what happens to your piece once the part you've written comes to its conclusion and the solos begin. All you can hope for is that the improvisers will be having a good night and stay within the guidelines you've provided. Usually, that doesn't happen, especially in free music. Cat's playing, and you don't know *what* he's playing! It may be a fine solo in terms of its own vocabulary but not relate at all to the piece you've written. To me, this is a sign of immaturity, both as a player and as a human being. You can't even suppress your ego long enough to concentrate on the task that's placed before you."

While Roscoe Mitchell was growing up in Chicago in the mid-50s, "music wasn't divided into categories the way it is now, with one age group listening to this and the next age group listening to

that, and so on. I liked what my parents liked—Nat Cole and other pop singers as well as Charlie Parker and Lester Young. You were exposed to all kinds of music on the radio in those days, and when you became a musician, it was just a matter of deciding which kind of music you wanted to play."

As a fledgling musician, Mitchell was "into a conventional style of playing—Wayne Shorter, Blakey-Messenger tunes like 'Moanin,' the kind of thing that was popular then, around 1959 or 1960. I enlisted in the army right after high school and that proved to be a mind-opening experience. The three years I served in the army, music was a twenty-four-hour obligation. I had the luxury of being a full-time musician, with none of the petty distractions you have in civilian life. I was stationed in Heidelberg, Germany, and there was a club there called The Cave, where I was exposed to some very interesting European musicians like Albert Mangelsdorff and Karl Berger. Plus, I heard Albert Ayler for the first time. Albert was in one of the military bands, and I remember everyone was putting him down, because we were all so obsessed with playing correctly. But at this one session, Albert led off with three of four choruses of the blues and then went off into his own thing, with that awesome sound he had, and everything became clear to me. I had already heard

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Ornette Coleman on records and couldn't quite grasp what he was doing. But hearing Albert live was an enlightening experience. I went back and listened to Ornette and to things like Coltrane's record of 'Out Of This World,' and Dolphy's solos on Max Roach's *Per-cussion Bitter Suite*, and all sorts of possibilities seemed open to me."

Returning to Chicago following his discharge, Mitchell located another source of strength in pianist/composer Muhal Richard Abrams. "I was taking music education courses at Wilson Junior College, studying the classical literature. No college had a jazz curriculum then, but every Monday, there was a free period and I would jam with guys like Malachi, Henry Threadgill and Jack De-Johnette. And every day after classes, I'd go over to Muhal's house. I certainly think I learned more from my sessions and discussions with Muhal than I learned in school. Muhal is about ten years older than I am; he had come on right at the end of the bebop era; he had several compositions to his credit; and he had chosen to continue exploring music from a creative perspective. There was a great wealth of musical information passing back and forth among all the younger musicians in Chicago around that time, but Muhal was the one who had all the practical experience and organizational skills, the one we all felt we could count on and respect."

Abrams' philosophies regarding creativity and economic self-determination—together with the passing of a restrictive nightclub entertainment licensing act that threatened to make the professional musician an extinct species in Chicago—ultimately led to the formation of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (A.A.C.M.), an organization which was to have profound and lingering effects far outside Chicago. One immediate benefit of the A.A.C.M., however, was that the spirit of solidarity it fostered among its members gave talented young Chicagoans like Roscoe Mitchell reason to forego the once obligatory move to New York.

On the basis of his writing for the emerging Art Ensemble of Chicago, we can applaud Roscoe Mitchell for intuiting, long before most of us, that stamina and inspiration could not always be counted on to sustain lengthy free collective improvisations. The advances made on behalf of improvisational self-expression and rhythm section independence were crying out for similar bold initiatives in the areas of compositional forethought, development of motifs, stage presentation, and inner-group dynamics, lest solipsism and chaos inevitably reign. Mitchell's minimalistic, incremental sound collages (beginning with "Little Suite" in 1967 and continuing up to the present) have had a profound effect on the think-

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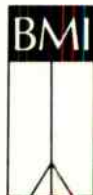
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ing of fellow Chicagoans Braxton and Leo Smith, and—via Smith—the still-emerging New Haven school, which has already spawned such promising young players and writers as George Lewis, Dwight Andrews and Anthony Davis. "Tkhke," Mitchell's pioneering anti-virtuosic 1968 solo alto improvisation, pointed the way for Braxton, Steve Lacy, and the European *tabula rasa* "instant composers." In addition, Mitchell is one of a handful of Chicago saxophonists responsible for retrieving the bass saxophone and the curved soprano from the dustiest recesses of the jazz past.

One can also mount a convincing argument for Mitchell as an innovative figure based on current activity. During the Art Ensemble's increasingly protracted layoffs, he fronts three provocative bands; the first is Space, an epigrammatic post-serialist trio with low reed player Gerald Oshita and singer Tom Buckner; the second is Sound, an endlessly versatile, endlessly vital quintet with guitarist A. Spencer Barefield, bassist Jaribu Shahid, percussionist Tani Tabbal, and either trumpeter Hugh Ragin or his replacement Michael Mossman; the third is Space and Sound, trio and quartet co-mingled. He also performs solo saxophone concerts and composes ambitious works for ensembles of virtually every size, configuration and musical persuasion.

Like many other contemporary com-

posers, Mitchell has devised his own systems of "scored" improvisation. The tools for Mitchell's "cut out" method (illustrated on *3X4 Eye* and *More Cut Outs*, both reasonably easy-to-find Italian imports) are the mental equivalents of scissor and paste. "You take the specific materials the composition is based on and rearrange selected elements of them for the improvised situation that follows, placing them on a score sheet each improviser can refer to when needed—the conceptual equivalent of chord changes, almost."

He views his improvised solo concerts as "staged improvisation. I often play *practiced* solo improvisations. The point of playing solo is to prove you can sustain a structure for longer and longer periods of time, so I develop exercises to increase my powers of concentration, starting off with small sections at first, and while I'm doing that, I'm also working on technique—things like circular breathing and fingering. It would be nice if every time you started playing, all of a sudden the light comes down from the heavens, and you can do no wrong. And you *reach* that point sometimes—but not every night. So there's always at least a germ of a thought I start off with, even on a completely open improvisation."

Mitchell's intellectual immersion in composition often results in music that strikes most ears as cold and forbidding, and can leave even the gamest listener

groping in vain for an easy way in. A rationalist in a world that wishes its composers would surrender themselves over to rapture, Mitchell readily admits most of his pieces are tabular and non-impressionistic, "about" nothing save their musical coordinates and variables. Consequently, his is the kind of writing that is often more rewarding to contemplate than to actually hear. But last year's *Snurdy McGurdy And Her Dancin' Shoes* (Nessa), with its emphatic invocations of twenties' jazz and its premonitions of a kind of heavy-bottomed abstract expressionist R&B, seemed to signal an unexpected turn to the sensual in Mitchell's music, and "Jo Jar," (on *3X4 Eye*) took the Mitchell Sound Ensemble even further in that direction. "Jo Jar" rocked out harder than anything this side of Ronald Shannon Jackson, even though it was played totally acoustically (and, in part, satirically). And though it rolled on the doo-wack-a-doo rhythms of vintage jazz and pop rather than on the polyrhythms of 80s funk, it had some of the randy propriety of Jelly Roll Morton's music, some of the structural implacability of Ornette Coleman's "Ramblin'."

"There are references to Morton there, that's right. I was trying to make the statement that there's a lot of strong music back there that no one knows about, and everybody will be discovering it after they've exhausted bop. But

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now I wonder if that kind of thing is worth my time, frankly. I feel like I take a step backwards when I play certain kinds of music. I remember once after the Art Ensemble had established ourselves as the more avant-garde musicians of the day, we'd sometimes go out and play nothing but jazz standards for our first set. But that first set was enough. It wouldn't have proven anything, and it wouldn't have been fun, to go on doing that all night.

"See, I feel like I'm back in the point on the circle where I can start learning again, where I can go without sleep for days and still be on top of the situation. Sometimes I think I push myself and my musicians too hard in demanding that we learn an infinite amount in a finite amount of time, and I know I risk bad performances that way, but what else can I do? I see cats folding up all around me, retreating into conventional modes of playing and writing, and I think, 'Is this the time for me to push on my creative button or what?' Because five years from now when those guys look up, or whenever it is that they look up..."

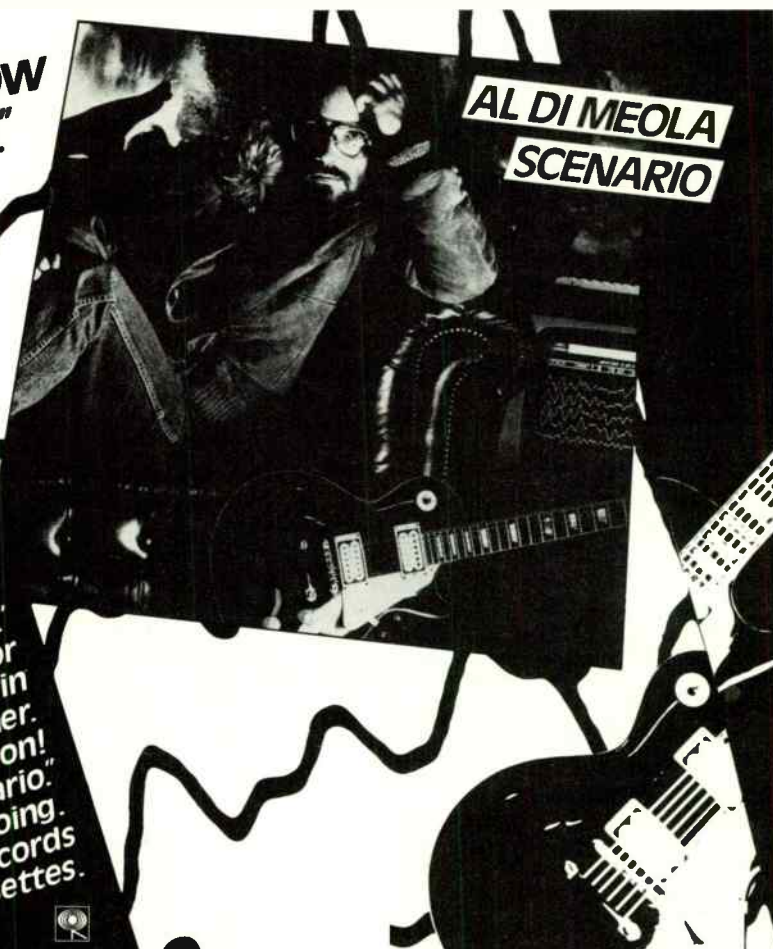
If Mitchell had his way, he would probably spend most of his time writing in his Wisconsin farmhouse. "I don't see myself spending this next period of my life running up and down the road like I have, always feeling too wiped out to

write. I'd like to reach the level where I don't have to be physically present in order for my music to be performed. I'd like to walk to my mailbox and get a check from some ensemble that was performing one of my compositions, and all my energy would be focused on the work that still lies in front of me.

"There are some great people in the music department at the University of Wisconsin. I've been commissioned to write a piece for the Windmer Ensemble there, and I had hoped to have it finished before I rejoined the Art Ensemble, but I just couldn't do it. I told them I'd have it ready in the fall. Then I got a call from Chicago asking if I could have an orchestral piece in the mail by June 24. I couldn't turn that down, because who knows when I'll ever be offered an opportunity like that again?"

It would be a pity if the vivacious *Snurdy* proved to be no more than a brief time-out in Roscoe Mitchell's quest, an even greater pity if his outside activity made him odd-man out in the Art Ensemble of Chicago, a band which will always bear his mark. Still, one wishes Mitchell luck in his efforts to break free of the shackles of jazz. A revolutionary who knows the taking of the palace means the struggle has only begun is always worth giving the benefit of the doubt. **✶**

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"I didn't jump on anybody's bandwagon with this record," insists Herbie Hancock, who has climbed aboard more than a few in a career which has spanned avant-garde and progressive jazz, electronic funk, pop, soul, R&B and soundtrack music. His latest album, *Future Shock*, finds him joining co-producers Material, those ever-malleable New York sidemen extraordinaire, Bill Laswell and Michael Beinhorn, for a platter geared to the current sounds of the city, turntable scratching, Latin beat, Oberheim DMX drum machines and tropical riddims with a cast featuring Daniel Ponce, Sly Dunbar, Pete Cosey and

Grand Mixer D. ST. Herbie's even got an MTV video directed by Anglo-whiz kids Godley & Creme. Enough to make some a tad suspicious about Herbie's motives.

"My fans don't get upset about me doing different kinds of music," explains the talented multi-instrumentalist, who started on classical piano as a seven-year-old prodigy. "The only people who object are the critics, who judge *me* rather than my music."

Actually, Herbie Hancock's current "new music" direction, as he calls it himself, does not stray far from his own eclectic roots in synthesized funk or his pioneer-

ing use of Vocodors in pop/R&B. Still, it took a few of Herbie's more streetwise buddies to play him the latest groups, stuff like Talking Heads, Duran Duran, Culture Club, the Police and Simple Minds, all of whom he claimed to like. It was Malcolm McLaren's "Buffalo Gals," though, which particularly caught Hancock's fancy, with its jolly use of turntable scratching, the wah-wah sound one gets when a record is manually spun back and forth under the phonograph needle.

"I thought it was fantastic," he enthuses. "I never heard anything like it. It was free, crazy and clever, too. Malcolm used simple, everyday sounds, things that were common and ordinary, like the DJs rapping."

At the same time, Laswell

and Beinhorn had submitted a series of rhythm tracks for Hancock to consider as a prelude to Material collaborating with Herbie on his next record. One of those skeletal demos included the Grand Mixer D. ST. scratch track which eventually became the hit 12-inch single, "Rockit."

"I hear a melody in this music, textures which express warmth and organic emotion. I hear a lot of changes going on from moment to moment," says Hancock. "It's similar to the new wave music they're playing in the dance clubs, which means it's a little less disco, but a lot wilder and more surprising than the disco I was doing just a few years ago. I don't think this record is like anything else out there."

Except for "Buffalo Gals," and how ironic is that? Yes, another Englishman turns an American on to his own black culture. "We can learn not only from our own experiences, but other people's too," answers the man who's been a Shoshu Buddhist for over ten years. "I wasn't even turned on to jazz for the first time by black people. The guy who taught me how to improvise and play jazz and the blues was a Jewish kid in my high school named Don Goldberg. The rest I got from listening to George Shearing records. And he just happens to be an Englishman, too...."

— Roy Trakin

GREEN ON RED

DOIN' THE DOG PADDLE

When Green On Red played L.A.'s now-defunct Starwood in their former incarnation, a still wet-behind-the-ears band called the Serfers, their folky-punk set was greeted by a deathly silence just this short of getting gobbled by their audience. Three years later they've matured into a jangling, impassioned, neo-psychedelic band. Which is not to say that they've switched to playing in Ben Franklin glasses and love beads; vocalist/guitarist Dan Stuart, bassist Jack Water-son, keyboardist Chris Caca-

vas and drummer Alex MacNichol still come off more like a drunken, sweat-soaked garage band. In fact, the guys kind of rankle at being lumped together with other Los Angeles 60s revivalists like the Bangles, Dream Syndicate and Rain Parade. "I love the term 'psychedelic,'" says Stuart, Green On Red's founder and chief songwriter. "But we don't do 60s covers and we don't wear paisley. We wear onstage whatever we wake up in."

Although MacNichol (formerly of Lydia Lunch's



gloomy 13.13) hails from New York, the others met in hometown Tucson, Arizona. After exhausting the town's limited venues, they moved to Los Angeles. Several desultory gigs later, the band sunk into a despondent, poverty-ridden year-long hiatus during which time they drank, took drugs, changed their name ("...the Serfers sounded like a bunch of Huntington Beach assholes...") and occasionally borrowed equipment to play. "We were like these bizarre studio musicians," says Chris Cacavas. "Once a year we'd go into the studio and make a record."

The products of those annual sessions were two twelve-inch EPs, the latter produced by Dream Syndicate's Steve Wynn and released on his Down There label. It proved successful enough to propel them back into the smokey depths of local clubs. "We were de-bourgeoisied," says Stuart. "We stopped feeling sorry for ourselves." The renewed exposure eventually got them signed to Slash/Warner Bros., which recently released their first album, *Gravity Talks* (produced by Flesheater Chris Desjardins).

The new LP's squirrely keyboards, melodic edge

and straining vocals are offset by a deliberately conceived back-to-basics sound. "Anything that could have been sweet or nice we tried to make human," says Stuart. "I sang like a *cucho*, like the devil possessed. I'd like to think we're Little Feat on LSD."

It's not coincidental, for instance, that all the tracks begin with guitars and end with a sustain; Green On Red shares an unswerving devotion to stumbledrunk spontaneity and ultra-prolific songwriting. "It's a party-type scene," Stuart explains. "We don't rehearse, we just play, 'cause certain types of music sound better that way. I mean, we can be a real headache. We do songs at gigs that we just wrote an hour before. Sometimes we're all screwed up."

Understandably, Green On Red's live shows are as inconsistent as spin art: either sloppy confusion or, when they come together, an emotive, driving intensity. More often than not they pull it off. How? "I don't know," says Stuart. "We just try to stay above water. Ya know, if rock 'n' roll bands were named after swimming strokes, they'd call us 'The Dog Paddle.'" — **Margy Rochlin**

ADRIAN BELEW

TWANG BAR MENAGERIE

Everybody knows Adrian Belew can make funny noises with his guitar. Trumpeting elephants, lonesome rhinoceroses, shrieking dive-

bombers, Flash Gordon hiccoughs—you name it, it's popped out of Belew's amp at one time or another. In this respect, he is truly a Twang

Bar King.

Consequently, when he and his band showed up at the Wax Museum in Washington, D.C., there were fans in abundance eager to pay homage to the guitar whiz, and his circuit-box of tricks was greeted with enthusiasm. Some cheered, some chuckled, others merely goggled incredulously. Even Belew seemed slightly amazed. "I don't think there's anything from the records I'm not doing, really. I surprised myself, because I didn't think I could do the rhino sound, and I thought I'd have a lot of problems with 'Big Electric Cat.' Turns out we're doing everything."

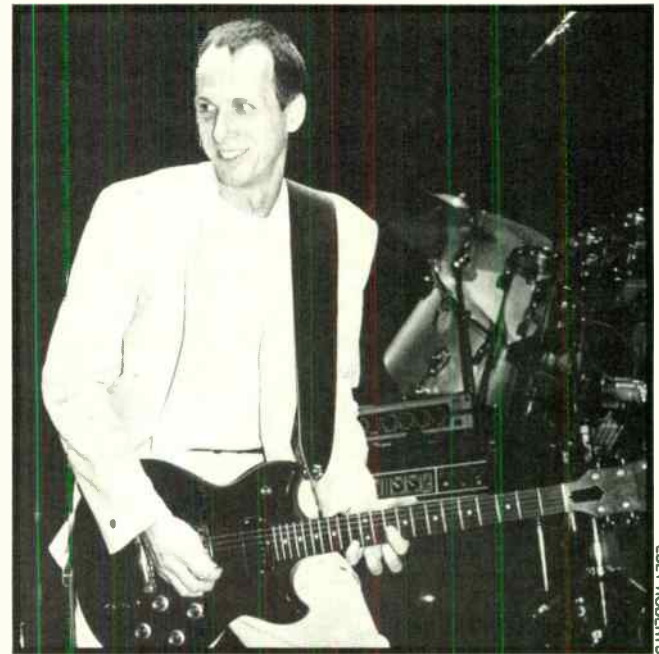
Belew is referring, of course, to his effects, but as it turned out, he might as easily have been talking about the entire performance. On album, the songs that make up *Twang Bar King* seem shallow and gimmicky—too little meat with too much seasoning. The flashy arrangements came off as camouflage for limited inspiration, and it became tempting to suggest that without some sort of musical funny business, Belew was just a fish head out of water.

Onstage at the Wax Museum, though, the cohesion and drive of the band's playing managed to obscure the musical machinery altogether. The songs came together as wholes, not patched-up

parts, and it was possible to appreciate Belew's cleverness in context instead of at the expense of the music.

"I would say we're better live than in the studio, yeah," Belew admitted. "There's another level of excitement that we've only reached through that interaction that you have onstage."

To hear Belew tell it, much of the credit for this transformation falls on the massive shoulders of drummer Larry London. With credits including a mountain of hits as part of the Motown house band, ten years on the road and in the studio with Elvis Presley, and a fair number of years in Nashville, London plays with both authority and directness, giving the rhythm a supple energy. Yet what most excited Belew was the ease with which the two communicate musically. "He just has so much taste that it's perfect for me," Belew enthused. "I never really had felt that I'd find someone who was right for my music, and that's always been a big thorn in our side, particularly as a live band." (Some of you may recall that Gaga, Belew's last band, used tape-recorded drumming by Belew himself.) "So you know how chemistry is—when somebody walks in and you start playing together, you know that it's working or it isn't. At least I do, and this was immediate, from the minute we started playing."



Belew has big hopes that this band will establish him as more than just a dealer in sonic exotica. "This band is only four weeks old now," he said, "so actually it's young and fresh. It's a new experience. This tour was put together as a 'get your feet

wet, see how the band interacts' kind of thing, and I'm extremely pleased. I can only say that everything so far has been very good, indicating that we could easily go on and make a name as a band. "That's what I'd like to do." — **J.D. Considine**

LOVE TRACTOR

WEIRDOS IN HEAT

M. LUCIE CHIN



I love it when weird bands make good.

Take Love Tractor, for example. No synths, subdued Georgia dirt-track vocals (where there are vocals at all), a squeaky metal clarinet and pure southern bass and guitar lines that still, somehow, remind you of Good Ole Boys like Tom Verlaine, the Ventures, Robbie Shakespeare and Pat Metheny. But it works. Love Tractor's debut album was the first premiere to make a profit for Atlanta-based DB Records. Their second, *Around the Bend*, has spawned an Elvis Presley-style farmboy-makes-good video for "Spin Your Partner" that's making waves on MTV. And when the band came to New York's Danceteria, armed with only aging instruments and engaging smiles, the full house didn't give a damn about whether or not the music was ideologically pure. They just knew it was fun and bopped or waltzed (or both).

The members of Love Tractor themselves can't quite decide how to describe what they do. Guitarist/bassist Mark Cline calls it "straight pop." Immediately lead guitarist Mike Richmond inter-

rupts—"I wouldn't call it straight." Armistead Wellford, who trades off on bass and guitar with Cline (as well as adding some uniquely beaten-up clarinet work) prefers the capsule comment of the writer who labeled it "psychedelic porch funk."

Blame it on the college scene in Athens, Georgia, home of the B-52's, Pylon and R.E.M. Hoardes of students with nothing else to do in the blistering summertime but form bands and play at each others' parties; a few kegs of beer, the heat, guitars twanging, the heat, drums bashing away—the heat—and nobody giving a damn about what musical style was mixed willy-nilly with another as long as you could dance to it. That's where Love Tractor started three years ago, when Mark Cline and his across-the-hall neighbor, drummer Kit Swartz, started jamming together. (Swartz played on both of the band's LPs, but has since split to study film in Sweden; his replacement is Andrew Carter.) Wellford and Richmond joined in soon after, the name Love Tractor popped up—"Mark," says Wellford, "was into putting two unrelated words together at that

point"—and fame, fortune and recording contracts were only a thousand sweaty frat parties away.

Of course, that leaves out the high points, like lack of equipment and transportation. Without any kind of P.A., Love Tractor became a mostly-instrumental band by necessity, not choice.

What makes Love Tractor unique among the Athens bands is the sheer amount of musical territory they cover. "Sometimes it's like four different styles in one song," says Cline. "The rhythm guitar might be funky, the bass jazzy, the lead melodic and the drums pure rock—or maybe switched around some other way."

Wellford is into what he

calls "hollerin' music," lots of folk stuff and bagpipes, and is only now beginning to like pop on the radio. Cline's an opera buff, in particular a sucker for Verdi and Puccini. Richmond goes for James "Blood" Ulmer, Neil Young and New Order. In fact, in all of popular music the only things they completely agree on are Roxy Music's *Avalon* and anything by Kraftwerk. Put all of these different bags into one, mix with several perverse senses of humor ("and the heat," adds Wellford), season with arguing until it all clicks together, and you get Love Tractor.

Give a listen. If anyone's going to write a "Telstar" for the 80s, it's these guys. —

Freff

ART BLAKEY

TALENT SCOUT STRIKES AGAIN

Where others busy themselves defending bebop, Art Blakey is extending the music, keeping it vital and surprising, and, in a miracle of personal renewal and growth, playing better than ever well into his 60s. And, as his extraordinary concert at Entermedia's Jazz Forum premiere demonstrated, his fiery new band of young upstarts rivals any group of Jazz Messengers Blakey's ever led.

That's a pretty audacious claim when you consider that a Jazz Messenger roll call will muster up everyone from Clifford Brown, Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard, Cedar Walton, Horace

Silver, Jackie McLean, Wilbur Ware and Jymie Merritt to Keith Jarrett (that's right), Chuck Mangione (yeah, him too, and in the same band no less), Bobby Watson, James Williams, Charles Fambrough and Wynton Marsalis. But Art Blakey has consistently scouted the strongest young players because he's never played like a sideman; he's always prodding and counterpunching, setting up a groove and then subverting it by breaking up the time, force-feeding the soloists on raw polyrhythms and supercharging their lines with the melodic overtones of his kit. Which is why his Jazz Mes-

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DARRYL PITT

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JOHNNY VENTURA

THE DEPUTY OF MERENGUE

FRAN VOGEL



Merengue is hot. It's not new music, of course; merengue is the traditional dance beat of the Dominican Republic. But for the past couple of decades, Dominican artists have been modernizing their music, revving it up. Modern merengue swings on double time, with the vocalists doing a mind-twisting speedscat, and the saxes riffing on overdrive. With its high energy level and infectious groove, merengue is the perfect party music for today's fast-lane Caribbean.

Merengue has its superstars and none is bigger than Johnny Ventura, the singer/bandleader known as "the black horse" and, since his election to the Dominican Republic's Chamber of Deputies, "the son of the people" and "the Deputy." Ventura's band is razor-sharp. The Deputy and his backup singers do a spirited, well-synched, sexy dance up front (Ventura's pelvic gyrations make most funk/rock stars look klutzy), singing in the angelic close-harmony that is favored in the Caribbean. The saxes scat at a terrifying speed, and the rhythm section lays a mighty groove, the rasping sound of the gourd that makes your feet, sliding on the dance floor, feel like matches being lit. Ventura's voice is self-assured and clear-ringing, dyed in a rich, exotic hue.

Johnny Ventura is a per-

former; when he plays the Madison Square Garden Latin shows, he takes the gig by storm. And he's a heavy record seller, not only among his Dominican constituents, but also in New York and Puerto Rico, where he consistently scores in the Latin charts. His label is the New York/Puerto Rico independent Combo, which also releases Puerto Rico's legendary salsa band El Gran Combo. But lately there have been rumblings from the majors, who are looking closely at the profitable merengue market; some of them have their eyes on Ventura.

Meanwhile, the Dominican has been keeping an eye on his image. Realizing a congressman should not be such a scandalous sex symbol, he's toned down his dancing and his wardrobe; but judging from women's reactions at his performances, the fire is still burning.

If he's smooth and sexy onstage, the Deputy's just as suave when he steps down. At New York's uptown merengue club, Studio 84, Ventura mixes with his (mostly female) admirers, less the pop star or politician than a charming, old-fashioned guest of honor at a grand family gathering. He slips into club owner Jose Tejeda's office to talk about his party, the Partido Revolu-

cionario Dominicano (which is now in power), and its reformist policies. His syntax and vocabulary are formal—no jive talk from this pop star—but as his voice rises and falls, pauses and attacks, I'm mesmerized. A salsa band is playing outside the closed door and it's as if he were backed by it, except that he's not singing. When it comes to politicking, Ventura's a killer.

A handsome lady walks in, sits at the desk and starts tell-

ing me how she and Ventura go back a long way, when—what's this?—she discovers that she's sitting on a woman's scarf. The Deputy has been in the office for a while and... "Whose scarf is this?" she asks, holding up the guilty silk. And Ventura, without missing a beat, flashes his best African prince, Dominican Deputy, king of merengue smile and answers her in his cadent Antillean voice, "It's yours, mama." —
Enrique Fernandez

LINDA RONSTADT

NEW CLOTHES, FLATTERING FIT

Wearing a black, strapless prom dress, she sat in a crescent shaped moon above the stage and sang "Falling In Love Again." Beneath her was the cushiest safety net any singer could ask for: a forty-plus piece orchestra conducted by Nelson Riddle. While there were aspects of Linda Ronstadt's evening at Radio City Music Hall that smacked of Darla Hood in the Our Gang Follies, play-acting at chanteuse sophistication, there was considerable charm as well.

What's New, her album of mostly melancholy pre-rock 'n' roll standards, doesn't rival Riddle's 50s landmarks (Sinatra's *Only The Lonely*; Ella Fitzgerald's five-disc Gershwin tribute), but it contains some of Ronstadt's creamiest, most assured singing. Avoiding the emotional and syntactical intricacies of, say, Rodgers & Hart's "It Never Entered My Mind," she gets a

grip on nine forelorn, plaintive ballads. And if she has more of a handle on the songs' surfaces than their undercurrents, well, what else is new?

Onstage, aside from occasional stumbles (nervous lyric transpositions), she glided on Riddle's air current, opening with the Gershwin "I've Got A Crush On You"—*Muppet Show* fans will recall her singing this flirtatiously to Kermit—and continuing through the entire new LP. To vary the pace, Ronstadt tossed in a mini-set of novelty numbers ("Mister Sandman," "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie") with a close-harmony group called the Step Sisters: swell, and performed with a wink that stopped short of parody. For an encore, *What's New* depleted, she turned to a song by the Eagles. Not Elvis Costello, not Smokey Robinson, not Hank Williams. The Eagles. Does this make any

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GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA

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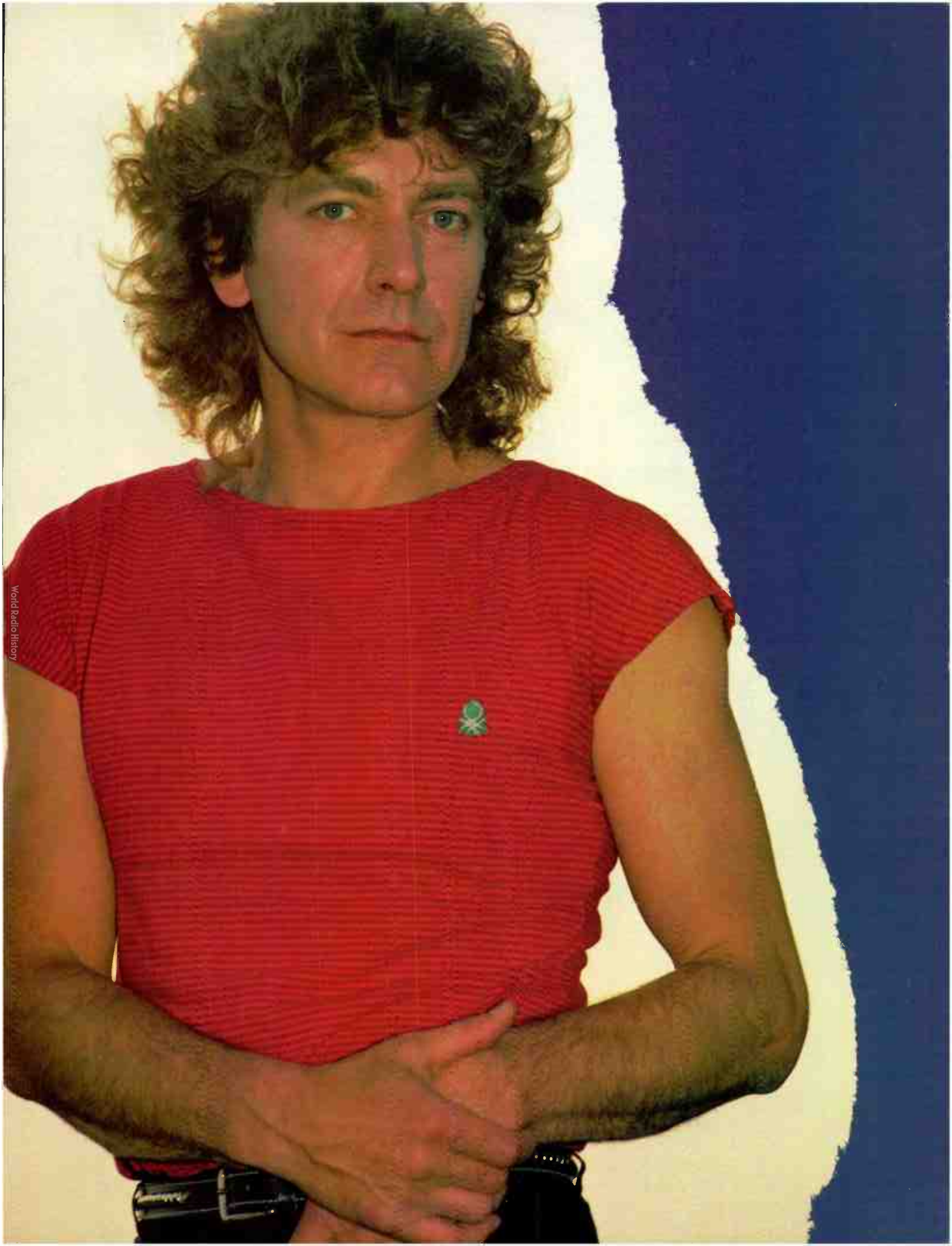
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World Radio History

ROBERT PLANT

LIFE IN A LIGHTER ZEPPELIN

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

“You’d think with 20,000 people every night that there would have to be some people screaming for ‘Stairway To Heaven’ or ‘Kashmir,’ but we haven’t heard it,” says Phil Collins, fidgeting happily.

The scene is a small room in the backstage labyrinth of the Philadelphia Spectrum. Collins is there to play drums for Robert Plant and about 18,000 fans, with the latter waiting noisily a few yards of concrete above us. As a “permanent member, for a couple of months,” Collins is happy to have the opportunity to join the former Led Zeppelin singer on his first solo tour, and as his gaze wanders about the room, past a Kaypro computer displaying several columns of tonight’s statistics and a television

PHOTOGRAPH BY EBET ROBERTS

These days I try to get it as melodic and sweet as I can on record. At the same time, I try to keep the attack and drive that are part of my waking and being. But it's far more scrutinizing now."

showing the Phillies game across the street, he talks about his surprise with how the tour has shaped up.

"I haven't heard any cries for Zeppelin. The vibe hasn't been like that onstage. The guys down in the front row know the words and you feel like a pioneer a bit." Collins is right—the vibe has *not* been what you might expect, particularly if you base your expectations on the reputation fostered by Plant's last stadium band. Just *how* different things are becomes apparent a few minutes after I finish my chat with Collins. Wandering out into the hall in hopes of figuring out where my seat is, I notice the band making its way out of the dressing room to take the stage. As they file past, guitarist Robbie Blunt, whom I had interviewed earlier in the evening, smiles and says hello. Plant turns to Blunt further down the hall, and then suddenly dashes back to where I'm standing. "Oh, look, sorry," he smiles. "I'm the fellow who's been keeping you waiting. But we'll have a chance to talk later tonight, eh?" Completely taken aback, I smile and fumble my way through an "Oh, sure, absolutely no problem." As he sprints back down the hall to join his bandmates, I stand feeling slightly stunned that Robert Plant, whose time I had worried about taking up, would go to the trouble of apologizing to someone he hadn't even met. I wander away muttering, "What a *nice* guy," and wondering what could have possibly started the rumors of Led Zeppelin's consummate arrogance.

But then, I should have figured that Plant's personal behavior would defy expectations, because everything else about his solo career thus far has. Instead of making the obvious move of serving up an album of insta-Zep, his solo debut, *Pictures At Eleven*, was both distinctive and successful in its own right. Even so, Plant would later confess that his greatest worry wasn't that the record wouldn't sell, but that it would sound *too much* like Led Zeppelin. For his second album, this year's *Principle Of Moments*, the Zeppelin association was even less of a problem, as Plant and his band moved still further away from both that signature sound and heavy rock in general.

Perhaps most surprising of all is that Plant has been able to manage this shift without alienating his audience. *Pictures At Eleven* debuted in the Top Ten, just one notch above the Clash, while *Principle Of Moments* has done even better, fielding a hit *pop* single with "Big Log." Tonight's crowd at the Spectrum is as rabid as any at a heavy rock show, even as Plant & Company unleash a decidedly un-guitar-like synth preface to "Thru With The Two Step," slip into a Bob Marley number in the middle of "Horizontal Departure," and bring "Wreckless Love" to a climax with a jam that sounds like an unholy union of Persian classical music and Southside Chicago blues. By the end of the show, most of these kids aren't sure where they've been, but they're sure as hell eager to go back there soon.

Later, after a band dinner in a spare room at Plant's hotel, he explains part of the difference in his new material as being the result of an intense concentration on melody. "I try to get it as melodic as I can on record," he says. "Sweet, if you like. At the same time, I also try to get the attack and the drive which are part of my waking and being. But it's far more scrutinizing now. Some people might say that loses a lot of the edge of the thing, but in the end, that's my whim, that's my choice, and I like to do

it this way."

Of course, doing it Plant's way takes some getting used to. As much as he desires control and precision in his own work, he encourages spontaneity in his bandmates. But given some of the influences he himself draws upon, that occasionally takes a bit of doing. It's typical of Plant that what he carried over from the Zep is the esoterica, rather than the clichés. While talking to Robbie Blunt, I asked where the Arabic bits in his playing on "Wreckless Love" and "Slow Dancer" came from, and he confessed that, "It just sort of popped out from somewhere.

"See, Robert has got a lot of Arabic music, and he sort of sat me down and said, 'Listen to a bit of this.' This was back during the first album, and like "Slow Dancer"—obviously, there's plenty of influence in that song.

"What's her name—Oum Lakoum or something? He knows more about it than me. She was very famous." Could he mean Oum Kouloum, the famous Egyptian singer? "Right. Something like that, anyway. The story goes that if anybody died in her orchestra, they were never replaced. Robert tells me her own funeral drew millions, more than the president when he died. Incredible," he says, shaking his head.

"Well, I mean, we had all that Indian phase in the 70s," he shrugs. "but some of that Arabic stuff, when you listen to it, is *amazing*, because they're using quarter tones, singing quarter tones. And Robert sort of uses that style at times."

It seems that, at one time or another, Robert Plant is likely to do most anything, which makes the question of "What next?" quite an interesting one. When I pose it to Blunt, he is frankly amused. "We may well do a rockabilly album," he says, laughing. "Honestly. We might put an album out with sixteen cuts on it. Who knows? It's his idea to be... to be *whatever*."

MUSICIAN: *It seems to be a thing among British musicians to absolutely never repeat what was on the last record; to be new and original every time out. Certainly, that was the case with Led Zeppelin, and so far that's the way your own albums have run.*

PLANT: It's the only way to survive.

MUSICIAN: How so?

PLANT: With yourself. You've got to keep fresh, to change. Don't be repetitious. Forget REO Speedwagon—it doesn't count. What it comes down to is, how do you live with yourself if one album is a success, and the second album leans too heavily on the first because of a lack of ideas? This is where you put yourself on the crucifix, tie yourself on and say, "I don't want to be a parody of a parody of a parody forever." I mean, the vocal tricks I use are mine, I enjoy them, but I try and change them all the time. So the structures of the songs must continue to be challenged.

That's why *Led Zeppelin III* was so different—it was different at the time. If *Led Zeppelin III* came out now, it wouldn't mean a thing. But at the time, it was an extremely logical step.

MUSICIAN: *You mentioned earlier that one difference in what you're doing now is that you think things out more, plan ahead musically, in a way. The impression I got of a lot of the Zeppelin tracks, by contrast, was that they were laid down, then structured later.*

PLANT: Well, they weren't done and structured afterwards—it

was just that the Zeppelin stuff, vocally, was far more immediate. If the feel was good and it was a little bit out of tune, flat or sharp, it didn't matter. We'd keep it just for the feel.

I ponder over the stuff now, and try and perfect it up front. I want to create more melody. I really would like to be responsible for songs which, apart from being exciting, are primarily memorable for their melodic content.

MUSICIAN: *Is this move to melody why you're almost under-singing now?*

PLANT: On record, I will not *under-sing*; I will sing the melody. I will make the lyrics clear, I will mix the vocal louder, I will let people know how I think and feel.

Onstage, then, my natural dynamics come out. I'll over-sing, but I'll play my role. That's why people who come to the concerts now are seeing an *extension* of the most recent recording material, and they're getting a different character to what they expected. Because I'm not just singing the song—I'm taking it onstage and expressing it more. I pull out more of the full-stops, semi-colons, exclamation marks here. Letting people know, letting *myself* know, that as a performer and as a singer, this is how it goes when you're in front of a crowd.

MUSICIAN: *Well, if your approach to recording keeps changing, moving towards the melody or in other directions, do you think that performing will then become the constant?*

PLANT: I don't know. It's just two different idioms altogether, and on record, I don't ever want to get a remarkably live feeling. I'd want the band to jell more and more, which they're doing; some of the fades on the tracks are becoming far more fluent. The band is enjoying playing together, they're getting conscientious rather than carrying on in darkness, wondering whether I was trying to press them into being clones of Led Zeppelin, which is not what I'm trying to do. Now they know, their identities come through, they're proud—and it comes across in what they do, y'know?

But as far as my performance on record, as I said, I want it to be very clean and structured. A problem with being over-the-top on record is that too many people aped me in the past, and ape me now, on record. If I start joining the rank and file, who's going to know that I was the guy who had it in the first place?

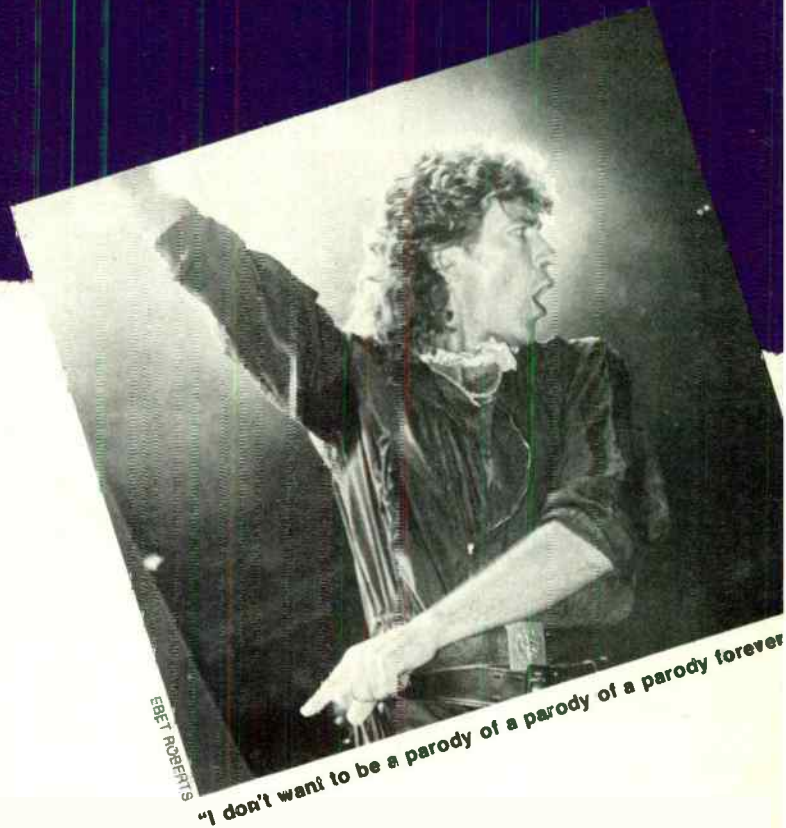
MUSICIAN: *How do you feel about being so widely imitated?*

PLANT: I was flattered originally, but now I find it a little tiresome. Guys, singers, come up and apologize, saying, "People have likened my style to yours, but of course, it's not true." Then I put the record on, and hear that they're like ninety-nine percent me. Except that they're ten years younger or fifteen years younger, and can't do it as well.

MUSICIAN: *Or in some cases, they're female. Personally, I've always thought that Ann Wilson does you better than anybody.*

PLANT: I know. I saw her do it during one of my periods of consternation, when I was waiting. I had just started with the Honeydrippers, and I went to see Heart. But I don't complain. Bless her, she's a woman, and I don't complain when a woman tries to do what I do. Somebody's got to take the active role, and somebody's got to take the passive role from time to time.

But there are a lot of these English, second-generation whatever-they're-called bands, the substance of which, and the sources from which they draw their influences, are no longer Howlin' Wolf and Robert Johnson—they're me and Steve Marriott. And not even Steve Marriott. There's a handful



of people they listen to and they don't listen to anybody else. They don't listen to Alf from Yazoo, or Oum Kouloum, or anything like that. They just listen to what's commercially successful, ape it, come over here, sell four million records, sell out four nights at the Spectrum, and bludgeon everybody's ears with something that has no representation of subtlety at all.

MUSICIAN: *Fair enough, but I can understand how kids who are seventeen or eighteen, and who missed it the first time around would fall for this rehashed rehash.*

PLANT: Absolutely, yeah. But I don't know whether it's maturity or old age or whatever you want to call it, it just leads me to think that if assaulting a crowd's ears with incessant racket with no let-up at all, and a soft passage every three numbers to represent subtlety and musical color, is what it's all about, then something's gone horribly wrong.

MUSICIAN: *You're undoubtedly aware that Led Zeppelin is seen by many as the godparents of heavy metal—do you think that what you do, or did then, could accurately be called "heavy metal"?*

PLANT: No. Take the first album—"Babe I'm Gonna Leave You." "Your Time Is Gonna Come," "How Many More Times"—that was not heavy metal. There was nothing heavy about that at all. You listen to "How Many More Times," which is really borrowed from the blues, anyway. The kind of dynamics in the middle of that, or Jimmy using the wah-wah pedal on some of the parts, or Bonzo aping him with the cymbals, or stuff like that—it was neat. Bonzo was twenty years old when he did that and it was neat. And it wasn't an insult to people's integrity and sophistication. It was *ethereal* in places. "Dazed And Confused," too. The musicianship was such that people could go off on tangents and create passages that were compelling. They were skul-crashing, in a way. But it wasn't through sheer, brute volume. It was the way it was played. It's a distinct difference.

MUSICIAN: *I'd have to agree with you there. In fact, I've always found it funny that the heaviest Zeppelin song, "Black Dog," was also, and perhaps by no small coincidence, the one that always screwed up the garage bands, that they couldn't get.*

PLANT: That's right, because you can't play it, yeah. Because it's got a beat that's a count of five over a count of four, and trips and skips and stuff like that. It was our prerogative and our joy to take what people thought.... We just wanted to see people try and move to it, and then miss the beat. And then still call it heavy. It was a trick, a game, and well within our capabilities to do. And it just stopped a lot of other people from doing the same thing, from copying it.

MUSICIAN: *If you look at the traditional analysis, the way the rock histories or family trees put it, Led Zeppelin was the next step from the Yardbirds. If so, then wouldn't it be fair to say that what you did was the most radical departure, given the fact that the Yardbirds was never a singer's band?*

PLANT: No, it was always guitar-oriented, and Keith Relf, what he was doing, really, was just filling in the role with a modicum of success. But I never looked at Led Zeppelin as a progression from anything.

Maybe to me, it was a progression from the Band of Joy. I suppose Led Zeppelin became more like the Band of Joy than the Yardbirds. Mainly because Bonzo and I were coming from the Band of Joy, and we were like (snaps his fingers). It was a natural extension of our American West Coast country-blues approach. That was where I was coming from.

MUSICIAN: *You started out doing mostly blues, right?*

PLANT: Oh, yeah, lots of rhythm & blues bands originally, and really, they kind of gave way to.... A little more self-expression set in after the first couple of years. Finding all this stuff—Bobby Park's "Watch Your Step" and all that remarkable catalog of stuff that had hardly been touched by white English musicians—when you get conversant with it, then you start having some kind of depth of feel where you can draw from one source, combine it with another feeling and develop it into a totally fresh view.

MUSICIAN: *It's funny you should say that, because frankly, the thing I like best about the Led Zeppelin blues style was the way you managed to create something new and distinctive by exaggerating certain elements of the original. What sparked that?*

Plant in his Zep heyday.



MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

PLANT: It was from out of nowhere, absolutely nowhere at all. I mean, it was one of those things where one minute I didn't do it at all, and the next minute I did it and I enjoyed it. It was completely off the top of my head. I don't know how it came about. I just know that while I was doing it, I was aware of the fact that I hadn't heard it being done before.

I just wanted to be a part of the band, and I knew that by just singing the song—because the band would change time signatures and do all sort of musically unlikely things—that if I wasn't careful, I would just be... perhaps some kind of grand commentator for the music. And it's exceedingly boring, when your mind is working and you're going with all the changes and you're listening to the whole thing, to just stand back and go, "I can't be a part of this; I am the singer." I would have had a very fruitless existence.

MUSICIAN: *Earlier you mentioned combinations of things forging new styles; tonight, when you were doing "Wreckless Love," you got into this thing where you were singing quarter-tones, sort of cross between some of the stuff I've heard in Arabic music and the way blues singers flat their notes. Not a likely combination, that.*

PLANT: No, but you see, I'm conversant with.... I'm one of many people who enjoys singing in the blues form. I don't know that I do it particularly well, but I don't think that anyone can ever say that they do anything particularly well when it's free form—it's just the heat of the moment, really. And my knowledge of Arabic music, although limited, is equally fanatical. Really, it just comes out off the top of my head. It comes out exactly as you hear it. Tonight's one night and tomorrow night will be totally different.

It is a nice way of melting one thing into another, but I don't even think about where it's coming from. It just appears and afterwards I go, "Golly, did I do that?"

MUSICIAN: *While we're on the subject, Robbie Blunt was telling me about your playing Oum Kouloum for him, and how he was both intrigued and bewildered. Obviously, that sort of thing has been a part of your music for a while—"Kashmir," "In The Evening," "Slow Dancer," "Wreckless Love." Where did your interest spring from?*

PLANT: Well, first of all, Jimmy and I went to Morocco in about 1975, with a view to spend three months there with tape machines, going into the Atlas mountains and recording Berber tribesmen. Like Jacques Cousteau might go and take pictures of fish, we went into the mountains of Morocco to try and record their equivalent of *The Rite of Spring* or whatever it was.

MUSICIAN: *You mean the Joujouka musicians?*

PLANT: No, it was further south than the Joujoukas. A different sort of civilization and people. What happened was, we couldn't get the equipment into the country, because of their import/export/customs situation. But what I did was, I had my ear to the short-wave radio nonstop, and I just picked up the atmosphere that Oum Kouloum was evoking. It was... remarkable, because you could listen to her records and even though you didn't understand a blinkin' word, you were im-



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ed Zeppelin had a perfect symmetry of musicianship, where we could just go off on a tangent, here, there and everywhere, and all come back together again. It was just the way we played—it worked perfectly.”

mediately transfixed with her power and versatility. Phenomenal

And that was it. Every time I went back there after that, I was just going and stretching out more and more, listening to the radio more and more, taping stuff, *crying* to it. Even though I couldn't understand a word of it. But then, I go to Japan, and people there like "Burning Down One Side" and "Slow Dancer."

In fact, Bulgarian music, too, is another interesting form because it's Eastern European, and it's straddled between the West and its next nearest neighbors, which I suppose would be Turkey and places like that. Their ability for quarter-tone singing, and also the fact that they sing in firsts and seconds, rather than firsts and thirds in their harmonies, is unbelievable. You listen to some of the songs...

There's a record on Nonesuch called something to do with the folk music of Bulgaria [*Music Of Bulgaria*, Nonesuch H-72011] by the Bulgarian Folk Music Ensemble, which sounds like a very crusty sort of title. If you're able to get it, or if this is printed and people don't want to listen to Def Leppard for one night, it's great. It's a real eye-opener. How *haunting* it is... I got in touch with a Bulgarian ethnic group in London and subscribed to have lessons, to try and learn how to get their intonations. What happened was, instead of that, I went to play soccer in the village soccer team! (laughs) I took the easy way out.

But I think I'm much too old to catch it now. It's one of those sort of things where if you don't sing like Robin Williamson when you're nineteen, you're never going to sing like Robin Williamson. Nonetheless, these things left great impressions on me, in the subconscious rather than any definite attempt to copy. And that's the best way, really, because then you get all sorts of things coming out.

MUSICIAN: *Too much schooling can stifle a musician.*

PLANT: Absolutely. I've seen Yehudi Menuhin and Stephane Grappelli, two violinists of great stature, play together. They played a free-form, 12-bar swing-jazz type thing, and Menuhin openly conceded that he was by far second-best. Because if you're schooled, your ability to express yourself is that much more limited. Whereas if it's coming off the top of your head, and everything you've ever heard in every cafe, bar or South-side Chicago blues club bubbles up, anything can happen. That is probably my principle, if you'd like. Anything can happen. Some nights, I don't even sing at all.

MUSICIAN: *That might disappoint the crowd.*

PLANT: Well, I do my best. But if I've got it in me, if I really am in the mood, to coin a phrase, then I like to please myself.

MUSICIAN: *Do you mind if I ask a couple of questions about some specific Led Zeppelin tracks?*

PLANT: Yeah, you can do that. I mean, we've obviously been talking about Led Zeppelin. (mock sarcasm) It's breakin' me up.

MUSICIAN: *Well, one thing I've always wondered is—how long did it take to mix "Whole Lotta Love"?*

PLANT: (Laughs) I can't tell you. It was done in New York. It probably took about an afternoon.

MUSICIAN: *Where did all that stuff in the middle come from?*

PLANT: The free-form section? Well, it's not free form really. It

came from, if memory serves, it came from just having a perfect symmetry of musicianship, where we could just go off on a tangent, just go off here, there and everywhere, and all come back together again. Jimmy had just discovered the theremin, that sort of "whoop-whoop-whoop," and it just sort of got into the groove, if you can use that term in 1983. And it worked perfectly. But that was the way we played. That was how we felt we expressed ourselves best, with all the emphasis, and then having the abstraction in the middle of it. It broke it up in order to turn people's heads.

MUSICIAN: *An off-beat favorite of mine was "The Crunge." What a funny track!*

PLANT: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's all about a model in an English newspaper, actually. She was a pretty cheek.

MUSICIAN: *What a great James Brown parody, though.*

PLANT: Yeah, even the vocal, the strained vocal. My voice was *shat* when I sang it. And as you say, it is a complete imitation, light-hearted but clever in some respects, especially with the bass and drums. You take your hat off to people, and it's not always Roy Harper.

MUSICIAN: *One final question: Given all that it has come to mean, especially here in America, how do you feel now when you hear "Stairway To Heaven" on the radio?*

PLANT: Still flattered; a little confused, because it was written with the best of intentions, and nobody ever expects anything like that. Anthems are things you don't even dream of—they just come along. I've always been proud of the song—but I can't really relate to it at all now.

MUSICIAN: *It's that removed from you?*

PLANT: Yeah. Because without those guys, and without the possibility of ever having to do it again, I would prefer to listen to "Kashmir." "Kashmir" was far more, to me, what it was all about. Or "Trampled Under Foot," or "Achilles' Last Stand"—things that haven't become threadbare yet.

MUSICIAN: *By the way, I take it there's no truth to the backwards-masking charges?*

PLANT: (Looks annoyed) I find that it's sort of an American pastime. There is what they call in America the College Circuit, where people can lecture on Clearasil, AIDS, homosexuality and the like and get paid \$5,000 a night. Somebody decided that poor, defenseless bands like Styx and E.L.O., who are indefensible anyway, and masters of No Comment like Led Zeppelin would be good, easy meat for a university tour. I think it just goes to show how sad the world is, that people actually allow themselves to become audiences to other people with nothing better to do.

To me it's very sad, because "Stairway To Heaven" was written with every best intention, and as far as reversing tapes and putting messages on the end, that's not my idea of making music.

It's really sad. The first time I heard it was early in the morning when I was living at home, and I heard it on a news program. I was absolutely drained all day. I walked around, and I couldn't actually believe, I couldn't take people seriously who would come up with sketches like that. There are a lot of people who are making money there, and if that's the way they need to do it, then do it without my lyrics. I cherish them far too much. ■

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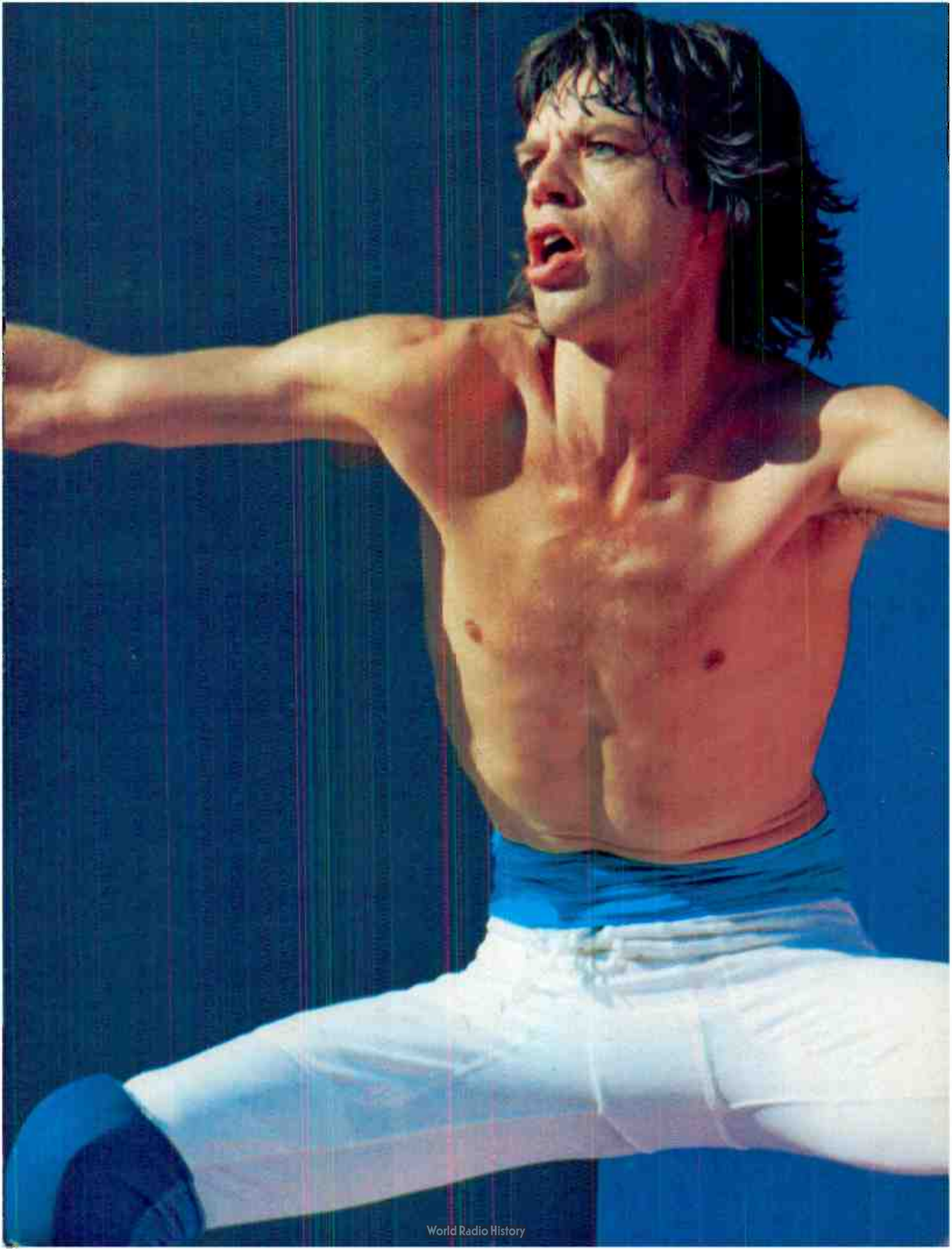
MICK JAGGER

by Vic Garbarini

SYMPATHY FOR THE DYBBUK

October, 1917. A small village
in the Ural Mountains.

It was just before sunset
when Father Sergei first heard
the hideous screams. "Not the
Strelnikovs again," he groaned
as he heaved his considerable
bulk out the door of the
rectory, pausing only briefly to
grab the massive silver crucifix
the old *starets* had given him.
Waiting for him by the door of
the Strelnikovs' ramshackle
cabin was the couple's idiot
son, Igor. Father Sergei winced
in anticipation of the spray
of spittle that inevitably



accompanied the terrified boy's babbling explanations. "Oh, Your Excellency, we try everything," blubbered the lad, "the Holy Water, the garlic wreath, the icons, the candles, but ...but...the thing...it will not leave!" Crossing himself in the Russian manner, the old priest pushed past the trembling boy into the cabin and began to survey the chaotic scene before him. Overturned tables, clothes and food were scattered everywhere. There was old Berel, cursing and wailing as he thrashed wildly with his woodsman's axe at something, while his fat wife Katyushka jabbered frenzied prayers before an icon of St. Cyril. The Creature was almost at the priest's face before he could react. "PLEEEEZED TA MEET CHA," it cackled as it whizzed by within inches of his nose, "HOPE YA GUESS MA NAAAAAMMEE!!!"

It was then that he first clearly glimpsed the bird-like thing, with its rolling bloodshot eyes, huge lips, lolling tongue and leathery little wings. This was no mere poltergeist, no household demon or forest sprite, surmised the priest. "Please, Father," screamed Katyushka, as the thing swooped into the cupboard, covering itself in white flour and dipping its bulbous lips into the red currant jam, "if we don't guess its name, it will destroy everything!" Grasping the huge crucifix before him, Father Sergei strode resolutely towards the center of the

DAVID GAHR



**I DID
KEEP GETTING
THESE RECURRENT
VIOLENT IMAGES,
AND I DON'T KNOW
WHY. IT'S A BIT
WEIRD."**

cabin. "YAGA!" cried the prelate at the startled creature. "AWWWWK! GIMME SHELTA!" squawked the Yaga, as it fluttered down from the ceiling and came to rest on the rough pine table, where it began preening its shiny little wings and nibbling at the borscht. "LET ME KEEEEEEL IT!" drooled the idiot son, wringing its neck till its eyes bulged.

"No!" thundered the prelate. "The Yaga is a special creature who comes rarely with messages of great import. There is much he can tell us, if we dare to ask."

"Fine," mumbled Berel, raising his axe menacingly towards the cowering Yaga. "Tell us what happened to Uncle Ivan's lost cow...." "And why I never win at bingo," whined his wife.

"Not those kind of questions," cried Father Sergei in exasperation. "Besides, no matter how hard you try, the Yaga cannot answer any questions directly. It comes with a message and a warning which even the Yaga itself doesn't understand, and we must heed it." "CAN'T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT," screeched the agitated thing, hopping from foot to foot.... "GET WHAT YA NEEEEEEEEED."

The old couple cautiously edged closer to the Yaga. "But is it devil or an angel?" whimpered Katyushka. "Neither," sighed Father Sergei, as he seated himself on the old bench before the hearth. "It's a Leo. They're into dramatization and externalization," he patiently explained. "Not ones for introspection. In fact, the Yaga is like the telegraph receiving station up at Uspensky village. He picks up vibrations and signals that ordinary folk cannot hear, yet are around us all the time. They're usually only the lower, grosser vibrations, so his arrival must mean that things have gotten pretty bad."

And so the Yaga spoke unto them of all kinds of mean and nasty things. There were massacres committed with magic saws, and men and women physically and mentally tormenting each other. There was hatred, fear, mistrust and ignorance. And blood. Too much blood. It was as if the room must explode under the weight of his vision. "Under Cover Of Night," shrieked the Yaga, as it rolled its eyes at the rising moon. "HUNG AROUND ST. PETERSBURG...WHEN I SAW IT WAS TIME FOR A CHANNNNNNNNNGE!" it crowed as it flew straight through the window and out over the frozen taiga in the direction of the Imperial Capitol. And they quaked in fear when they thought of what might be in store for the Czar and his ministers and the rest of the Romanoffs, especially young Princess Anastasia and everyone's favorite, little Prince Noodles.

"YOU SHOULD HAVE LET ME KEEEEEEL IT!" howled Igor, grabbing his club as he leapt from his seat.

"IDIOT!" bellowed Father Sergei. (For indeed, Igor was an idiot, as has been explained.) "Do you understand nothing? Why do you blame the Yaga when he is only mirroring what is in your own soul? Better to reflect and take heed of what he shows us, and prepare for the coming storm by seeking the light we've lost."

For one brief shining moment, the light of recognition flashed across Igor's countenance. Smiling blissfully, eyes brimming with tears, he raised his club and smashed himself in the head, pitching forward into the borscht.

MUSICIAN: *Having just heard the new album for the first time, I'm still in a mild state of shock over the lyrics. It's as if you've dredged up every image of violence, sadism, pain and depravity in the catalog and spewed them out. If I were your therapist....*

JAGGER: (cackling laugh) That's what Keith tries to be! If he were here, he'd be asking me questions like that. He thinks I went over the top on some of this stuff. But go on....

MUSICIAN: *Well, it struck me as an exorcism of sorts, perhaps mostly subconscious. It's as if you were trying to confront all the internal and external pain in the world and draw it out, expunge it in order to come to grips with it.*

JAGGER: Well, I don't know. That seems a very strong thing for you to say, an exorcism of something. Obviously I wrote many of the songs and words but I don't hear it as a whole yet, and I won't for quite a while.

MUSICIAN: *How did you react when Keith said it was "over the top"?*

JAGGER: I thought it was a natural response on his part because it is a bit weird. In fact, there were a lot more weird things we recorded that didn't get on the record, some because of time, some because of content...but I did go over the top a bit. But once Keith realized it was sincere and did have a meaning—whatever the meaning is, I'm not sure—he got into it. Besides, if you hear a track like "Too Much Blood" from the next room, you'd think it's dancey and nice, all you'd

hear are the drums going boom boom boom...so...you can dance to it.

MUSICIAN: *When you say you're not sure what all this imagery signifies, do you mean that all these images just pour through you as if you were an oracle?*

JAGGER: Yeah. It takes over, you know? I heard the album all the way through for the first time last night and I did keep getting these recurrent violent images but...there is a lot of violence...and I don't really know why.

MUSICIAN: *But can you turn around and face wherever all this imagery is coming from and see what's trying to be said? For instance, if I say that, to me, this album is the spiritual successor to "Gimme Shelter," that this is what we want to take shelter from, could you see that?*

JAGGER: No, I can't...shelter from the storm (laughs). But if you give me some concrete examples of the lyrics or something I could tell you. "She Was Hot," that's not particularly strange. That's a love-on-the-road type of song. I quite like that one.

MUSICIAN: *You want examples? Okay, let's pass by the obvious Texas Chain Saw stuff to this: "I was married yesterday to a teenage bride/ You said it was only physical, but I love her deep inside/ I still see you in my dreams in my kitchen with a knife/ With it poised over your head, now who you gonna slice?" Well?*

JAGGER: Violence? Nah, that's about when I was married to a sushi chef. (giggles) I mean, they're not *all* violent. "Under Cover Of Night" is a bit violent, but the next tune is a song about the road, "She Was Hot." Then there's "Pain Of Love," uh, "Too Much Blood"... "Must Be Hell" is the last one....

MUSICIAN: *Mick, this is not the work of a happily adjusted man, calmly settled down and looking forward to having a kid....*

JAGGER: (cackles) Well, my life is not calm at all...not so calm.

MUSICIAN: *What constitutes a challenge for you at this point?*

JAGGER: It was a challenge just to get this frigging record finished.

MUSICIAN: *I can see I'm not going to get any direct answers out of you.*

JAGGER: No, you will!

MUSICIAN: *I believe that you may be a medium for all this stuff, as you implied, with no more idea of what it's all about as the next guy. But can you stand back and look at it objectively and comment on it? After all, you're not a frivolous person....*

JAGGER: But I think I *am* a very frivolous person! That's why it's hard for me to talk about these kind of things. I don't print the words on the record; if you can't hear them it's too bad. I don't think they're great works of poetry. "Pain Of Love," for instance, is really just a playful song, I think. Just a kind of Lowell Fulson soul riff with a little smash of S&M.

MUSICIAN: *What is it about S&M that fascinates you after all these years?*

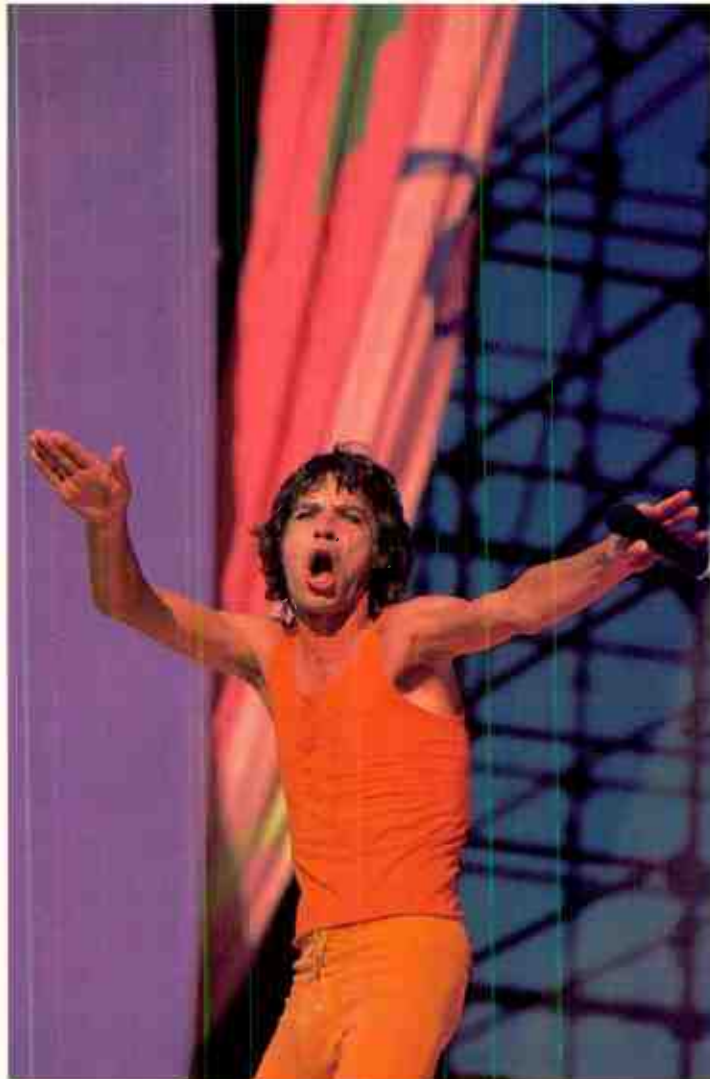
JAGGER: Well, love is painful sometimes, sex too...or you can make it painful if you want to. Lots of people are fascinated by it because everyone understands the pains of love and parting. But I'm not really an S&M freak or anything. If I were, I'd say so...and I'd get a lot of calls (cackles).

MUSICIAN: *I'll mention that you don't make house calls. Before we move on, are there any other insights about these lyrics you'd like to share with us?*

JAGGER: (thoughtfully) There are no cars on this album...no cars at all.

MUSICIAN: *"Waiting On A Friend" on Tattoo You made me think you'd begun to tune in to a more compassionate side....*

JAGGER: ...Just let me be cynical for a moment. First of all, it's really *not* about waiting on a woman friend. It's just about a friend; it doesn't matter if it's a man or a woman. I can see people saying, "Oh, we're all much older now, Mick's writing this much more compassionate stuff, must be about a real



LYNN GOLDSMITH

"AWWWWK!": Mick in the throes of aerobic exorcism.

person." But that's only in their perception of it.

MUSICIAN: *Still, it was a more vulnerable, gentle side of your image than what we usually see.*

JAGGER: Yeah! I'm macho like Burt Reynolds, you know.

MUSICIAN: *The resemblance is uncanny. In any case, you're both middle-class culture heroes of sorts. Do you feel that your middle-class upbringing and London School of Economics background is an important aid in grounding you, so you don't really go over the top?*

JAGGER: First of all, it made me a snob, especially since very few people in England get to go to college. So therefore you wind up with a feeling that you're okay intellectually, when probably you're a jerk. I mean, I was trying some math tonight and I couldn't do it (laughs).

MUSICIAN: *But it gave you a sense of cultural security?*

JAGGER: That's what I'm implying, but I'm not sure it's really true. It's probably bullshit...but yeah, it may have provided some insulation during the early years. It's a lot easier when you become successful when you're young if you have something to help you get through it.

MUSICIAN: *Especially since in this society we don't prepare and ground our artists the way we do surgeons or even engineers.*

JAGGER: Yeah, that's what Ravi Shankar says, and I think it would have been great to have been trained and centered for a long time. Ravi said they weren't even supposed to pick up their instruments in the early stages—but I'm sure they did on Sundays. Anyway, you don't want to burn out but some people do. That's part of show business, not everyone can handle it. Me, I want to stay together because I want to continue to work.

MUSICIAN: *In spite of the fact that you guys have the reputation for dancing on the edge at times, the only member of the*

Stones organization who went over the top was Brian Jones. What really happened with him?

JAGGER: He couldn't really hold things together, that's certainly true. (long pause) I wonder what he would have thought of this record? (smiles thoughtfully) It's funny, I thought about that the other day while we were mixing, whether he'd like it or not. Brian was... enthusiastic, insightful, intelligent, and a good musician with a very nice side to him. But I don't think he was really cut out to be famous. He hated to be misquoted in the papers, for instance, and all those things you have to get used to if you want to be famous, which he did. When he became famous, he realized he didn't like it, but by then it was really too late.

MUSICIAN: You once said that you wouldn't want to be forty and still singing "Satisfaction"...

JAGGER: Where'd I say that?! Chapter and verse? (laughs)

MUSICIAN: C'mon, you said it. So now that you're forty, is it really as bad as you thought it would be?

JAGGER: No, not really. I don't mind singing something like that off and on, but I don't want to be doing it for a living. The point is I don't want to have to go out there and sing it. I'd rather do new stuff.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of oldies, do you agree that those post-Exile, pre-Some Girls Stones albums of the mid-70s were less



SCOTT WEINER/RETNA

"I think I am a frivolous person."

coherent than....

JAGGER: ...No, I never listen to any of them, really.

MUSICIAN: Things like Goat's Head Soup, Black And Blue....

JAGGER: I don't even know what's on them.

MUSICIAN: You did say at the time though, that Some Girls was your best work in years. Was that mid-70s period a difficult time musically or personally?

JAGGER: It's just what comes out.

MUSICIAN: Let's try another approach: as good as Some Girls was, the production values were very rough, almost demo quality....

JAGGER: ...Yeah, it was a bit murky, wasn't it?

MUSICIAN: But Tattoo You was a quantum leap in production values. It sounded like it was mixed with cocaine in the vinyl.

JAGGER: (with mock outrage) Oh, I wouldn't say that...too damn expensive!

MUSICIAN: Nonetheless, it was a dramatic shift. Who or what brought that about?

JAGGER: That was done in the mix, you mix it brighter with more eq and much more drum kick and a high range on the high-hat. Then you screw around with the bass until it really tightens up. Obviously our engineer Chris Kimsey had some practical ideas for the sound, but that was influenced by what the band wanted.

MUSICIAN: And what influenced what the band wanted?

JAGGER: It's like journalism, you tend to be affected by your peers. For us, it's what we hear on the radio. We wanted the new record to sound very 1983, as opposed to something very period, like the Stray Cats. They're very good, but not what I'm after at the moment.

MUSICIAN: The Stones have a reputation for spending a lot of time composing in the studio. Do you ever prepare things in advance nowadays, and do you and Keith ever sit down and actually write together?

JAGGER: Yeah, this time I decided that I wasn't going to rely on studio composing. So before recording *Undercover*, Keith and I went into a little studio with four or five songs I'd done and some he'd worked up, and we played them to each other and he suggested tempos and various adjustments. After a week we had six or seven things to start with. I hate having to go in and teach the whole band in the studio. I'd much rather do it in rehearsal time.

MUSICIAN: When you bring the band an idea, how much of the arrangement input do you ask for from the other guys?

JAGGER: If I have an idea in mind before rehearsal, I'll first run it down with Charlie, or with Charlie and Keith, whoever is there. I'll play guitar if I've written it, or even if I haven't. Usually I'll knock my guitar out of the arrangement in the end, because two guitars are quite enough. But the first thing you want to get down is the time, and that's where someone like Charlie will help you with the arrangements. Say on "All The Way Down," I might have written it too slow, and I'm laboring over it a little. Charlie can give you an idea that you hadn't thought of that can change it around completely. Surprisingly enough, some of the ones I did with Charlie on this album came out exactly the same tempo-wise. "Under Cover Of Night," where Charlie was playing a big timpani and I was on acoustic guitar, is in exactly the same tempo now as it was when I wrote it.

MUSICIAN: Satanic Majesties was....

JAGGER: ...A COMEDY RECORD!!! (cackles loudly) It's not heavy at all, it's really just lightweight comedy. Somebody put it on the other day, and I thought it was hilarious. Didn't do well, though.

MUSICIAN: Do you feel you jumped into that psychedelic thing because of what the Beatles and Beach Boys were doing at the time?

JAGGER: Totally.

MUSICIAN: Was there rivalry between you?

JAGGER: No, we were just obviously out to lunch. I'm saying this because I just heard it recently and realized how much I liked it. What surprised me was the comedic feeling and all the jokes and things we'd never dream of doing now. There were comedic links and French speaking pieces that I took off the new album.

MUSICIAN: But why remove them? Is the climate that different now?

JAGGER: Oh, yeah. Completely different. It's much more serious now.

MUSICIAN: Do you feel more limited now?

JAGGER: No, it's more expansive now, but much, much tougher.

MUSICIAN: Including being on the road?

JAGGER: Concerts in those days were unfortunately a bit messy, terribly scrappily organized, not like now. It wasn't really an industry like now, and maybe a case can be made for the standardization of the industry. I don't know. I remember playing Memphis back in the "scream" age and if any of the twelve-year-old girls would get up and take an Instamatic flash shot, a uniformed policeman would beat her on the head with a nightstick and push her back into her seat. That was complete normality, or *normalcy*, as you say in Washington.

MUSICIAN: Having been at Altamont, I've always wondered what was going through your mind when things got out of hand.

JAGGER: I didn't feel very proud of myself when I saw the movie, I must say. No, I got into a terrible mess, relied on

continued on page 74



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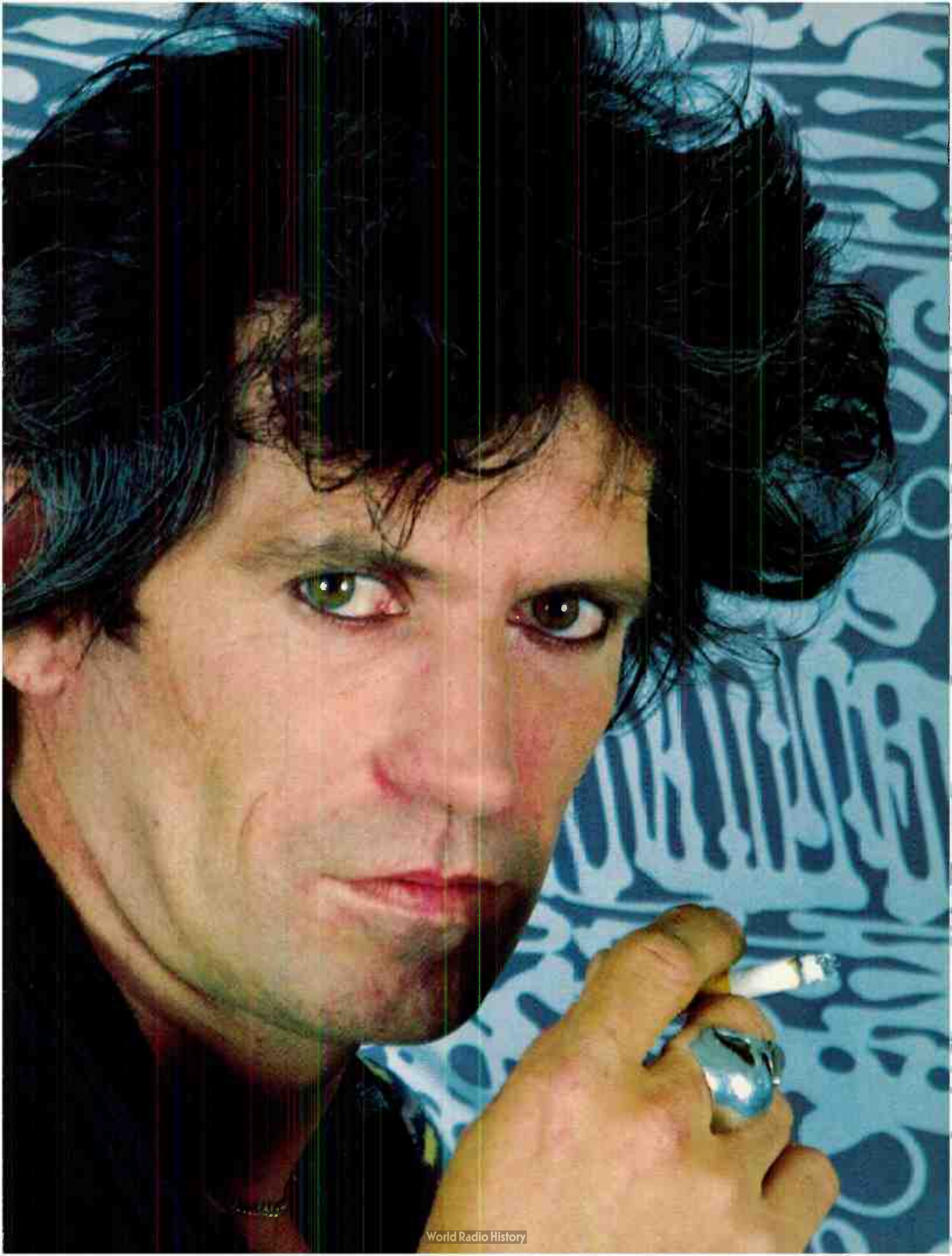
Photograph by Lynn Goldsmith

KEITH RICHARDS

by Vic Garbarini

THE HEART OF THE STONES

I mean, I've got to respect their point of view on this," says Mick. "After all, they're the ones who have to work it." Keith nods slightly as he reaches for the bottle of Jack Daniels on the desk before him and waits for Jagger to continue. "They had this problem with Robert Plant," continues Mick as he paces across the center of the room, hands stuffed in his pockets. "He insisted they release the single he wanted. His album is doing well, but the single is doing shit, and I said, 'Don't worry, we're not really like that. If that's what



you want then we'll put out 'She's So Hot' first and leave 'Under Cover Of Night' for later.' It's not gonna *kill* me."

"Mmm," agrees Keith, tilting back in his chair. "There's nothing worse than cracking the whip over people." The exchange between the two top Stones in the New York office of their record company has been friendly and relaxed, if a bit formal. Are they being slightly guarded because I'm here, or do they normally tiptoe around each other? Beats me. As you've guessed by now, they're discussing which track from their new album will be the first single released upon an unsuspecting public.

Undercover is not only their most musically adventurous album in over a decade, it's actually chock full of what ya' call yer "relevant social content." (Considering the violent, bizarre imagery employed, maybe "redeeming social value" is more apt.) Songs like "Under Cover Of Night" (Gabriel Garcia Marquez meets Fellini in hell), "Too Much Blood" (guaranteed to give Stephen King the willies) and "Must Be Hell Out There" (all the aforementioned people are living in your basement), pick up where "Gimme Shelter" left off. It's a profoundly disturbing piece of work, one that reflects, perhaps a little too vividly, the darker regions of the human psyche circa 1983. Musically it's all hardball rock 'n' roll, though the richness of the mix and spacing of the instruments reflect the influence of Sly and Robbie.

"I told them we'd get back to them in twenty-four hours," concludes Mick, heading for the elevator. "Let's talk about it tomorrow."

Watching him split, I can't help but contrast his antsy, kid-with-a-thyroid-problem extroversion with Keith's gentlemanly grace. Yeah, he may be the self-ravaged Prince of Excess, but he's also a *gentle* man. You get the feeling that there's someone *home* there, someone who's found a measure of inner peace and self-acceptance after a long and often painful apprenticeship. (I'm talking about the man's heart. God knows what his liver and nose think about all this.)

"I've been waiting for the left hook," says a wryly smiling Keith only moments after Jagger's departure. "And *that* was it. We wanted to put out 'Under Cover Of Night' as the first single, but Atlantic isn't going for it." So what's the difference, I wonder out loud. Mick played me both cuts and they're not so radically different. "Mick probably played you the *straight* version of 'Under Cover' which does not, uh, suffice," counters Keith, leaping out of his chair and heading for the stereo. "This is the re-mixed dub version that I want to put out." Richards goes into a rubbery dance as a blast of reverb drenched ... well, try to imagine standing in a massive tunnel while an express train driven by Sly and Robbie with the Rolling Stones strapped to the engine comes barreling towards your ass at 150 miles an hour. Get the picture? No wonder Atlantic balked. This thing could cause your local dance club to reach critical mass, but the AOR wimps are gonna find it hard to swallow. No wonder they opted for the more conventional (and less inspired) "She's So Hot." "That's the hotter mix I want to substitute for the one Mick played you," explained Richards. I respond that, for all his flamboyance, Mick strikes me as a conservative at heart. "Yeah," agrees Keith, "when it comes down to what you're going to put out, he goes for the safe mix. I'll say it to you because I said it to him, and he damn well knows it ... and if *that's* the case with this song, then this record isn't finished."

He pauses, reflecting on some inner dialogue, then emits a rumbling, bourbon-soaked chuckle. "And Mick, bless his heart, even agrees with me. He knows he has a problem from that point of view, and he's working on it. He's helped me often with similar situations when I've needed it." If it were totally up to you, Keith, how would the Stones' records differ from what we hear now? "I'm less inclined to go for the typical verse-chorus, verse-chorus approach," responds Keith. "I don't mind a five-minute intro, or knocking out a verse or some vocals. I go for the more aural excitement, whereas Mick very understandably sees most of his work go down the drain if we cut two verses." Another deep chuckle. Another pause. The man is rolling again.

"I mean, we're the ones who brought out our first album without a title, with two or three instrumentals, put out 'Little Red Rooster,' a real barnyard blues, when everybody thought it was time to bring out a smash pop hit. Why be conservative now?" Why indeed.

On the way out after our lengthy interview, I stop to thank the young driver from the limo service for waiting so patiently. "Oh, I don't mind waiting for Mr. Richards," he counters. "The other night I took him over to the studio for the first time. He came back out five minutes after I dropped him off and said, 'Hey, you must be really bored waiting out here. Why don't you come in and watch the band record?'" Needless to say, the driver did.

It's reassuring to hear that at the heart of the Stones is a Stone with a heart.

MUSICIAN: *When I tried to ask Mick about the orgy of blood and violence on Undercover, he admitted that even you thought he'd gone a bit over the top this time.*

RICHARDS: Yeah, I told him that on the phone one night because it was like an avalanche of those images, too much gore crammed on to one piece of tape. That was my first impression at the time, though it was totally different then ... there was *extra* gore at that point. It was his first bash at it, but through the process of making the record and editing, it got tidied up and I changed my

mind once it was finished. So maybe he listened to me a bit. ...

MUSICIAN: *But did you ever ask him why he was expunging all this stuff?*

RICHARDS: No, we never sit around and ask ourselves why we write a song, although now that it's done we join everybody else in trying to analyze why we did it. I think images just come out; you haven't that much to do with it. If you like an idea that comes along, you sort of carry on writing in the hopes that maybe you'll eventually find out why. There are no answers in the lyrics. They really just raise other questions, which is maybe the point of it.

MUSICIAN: *On one level, it all seems a reflection of the obvious ugliness we see around us today.*

RICHARDS: That was my immediate reaction to the thing. Look out your front door. Look at the news. You tell me. I'm sure Mick or I or anybody else would be happy not to be bombarded with some of these images, but we are supposedly living in a real world, after all.

In a way, this album is a brother to "Gimme Shelter," and maybe *Beggar's Banquet*, or a mixture of those two records. If we think about the late 60s, it's as if there's been an ... ah ...

MUSICIAN: *... Intensification?*

RICHARDS: Yeah, an intensification of that slightly unstable, mad atmosphere that was around then.

“ IF THERE'S
ANYTHING THAT'S
STOPPED US FROM
BLOWING OUR
LOUDSPEAKERS,
IT'S PROBABLY
EACH OTHER. ”

MUSICIAN: I mentioned the "Gimme Shelter" connection to Mick but he didn't really respond. That song would have actually made a much better overture for the 80s than the 70s. From what you're saying, I get the sense that you guys pick up songs from the other, like radio receivers.

RICHARDS: That's precisely my idea, my favorite analogy being an antenna. As long as you turn the set on and put your finger in the air, if there's any songs out there, they'll come through you. It's very easy to get hung up on just the simple mechanics and craft of songwriting rather than the more important thing that real master musicians like the whirling dervishes can tell us about: just letting it go through you and come out the other side.

MUSICIAN: Yeah, but if you ask those guys how to do it, they say that first you have to learn to ground and center yourself so you won't get burned out by the intensity of the current passing through you. So my question is, how does a band like the Stones, with a reputation for dancing a bit close to the edge, keep grounded?

RICHARDS: Maybe the answer is in the nature of the band itself. Maybe whatever energies we come in contact with ... that each person in the band in some way grounds the others. Look at someone like Jimi Hendrix. I mean, he had a couple of boys with him but they weren't a band in the way we've come to know each other over the years. If there's anything that's stopped us from blowing our loudspeakers, it's probably each other; this weird combination which, like the songs, is another thing we never wanted to dissect ourselves because if we find out how it works it might stop working (laughs).

MUSICIAN: I would imagine that Charlie and Bill are a key element in that anchoring mechanism.

RICHARDS: Yeah, in that they're both incredibly down-to-earth sort of people. Charlie, after twenty years, still can't stand the thought of having to do even the slightest thing that strikes a false note, like smiling at somebody if you don't want to. He'd rather give them a scowl, so at least it's honest. Bill and Charlie are very similar in that they keep you grounded because you can't really be around people like them and strike any false notes musically or personally, because you'll instantly get locked out of the room. I imagine that if we'd had a couple of totally different guys in their places, we could have collapsed in a very short time. Or Mick and I would have gone totally super-starish, God forbid.

MUSICIAN: In the past, whenever another guitarist would work with the band, you'd step back and play rhythm. But since Ron joined, the responsibilities seem much more evenly divided.

RICHARDS: For me, it's very similar to when I started playing with Brian Jones, though Ron is a lot more accomplished. In the early days, Brian, Mick and I worked out a way that we could weave our guitars together so you could never quite be sure who was playing what, rather than just dividing things into straight rhythm and leads.

MUSICIAN: But you and Ronnie play naturally in the same style. Do you ever trip over each other?

RICHARDS: The fact is Ronnie can play like me, but I can't play like Ronnie. He's uncanny in that if I was going to make a record by myself, most of what I would try to overdub is exactly what Ronnie would play in that situation. The fact that we've been working intensely together over the last two or three

tours has made an awful lot of difference.

MUSICIAN: What happens when you bring a song to the band? Are you open to their input or do you have a fixed arrangement in mind?

RICHARDS: When I walk in the studio, I never openly say I've-got-a-song-and-it-goes-like-this. In fact, sometimes I don't say anything because I don't have a song as I walk through the door (laughs). Probably over fifty percent of the time I walk in with absolutely no idea of what I'm going to do. So there we are with everybody just looking at each other... somebody's got to take the lead. So I don't let them know I've got nothing. I just start playing and I can always find one or two things back there. Usually, Charlie picks up on the changes and might come in with a totally different beat or rhythm. Before you know it, the song has written itself.

MUSICIAN: Is your approach different if you're working on somebody else's song?

RICHARDS: If it's my song, I'll usually show the band the basic rhythm thing first. But if I walk in the studio and Mick's

been running down a tune with Charlie and Ronnie for an hour or two, then I'll just come in and start weaving some lines over the top... because I usually can't figure out how the rhythm goes! (laughs)

MUSICIAN: Sting recently told us that the Police have begun recording with each member of the band in a separate room, which is something I couldn't imagine the Stones doing—or am I wrong?

RICHARDS: No, the whole band plays the basic track together. People think we're archaic, but we've always done it like that and that's the only way the Stones can do it. Sure, we'll play around with the overdubs and the mix later. But, as Duke Ellington said, "If it ain't got that swing..."

MUSICIAN: Let's focus in on one or two examples. "Start Me Up," for instance: how did that evolve?

RICHARDS: "Start Me Up" was a reggae track to begin with, totally different. It was one of those things we cut a lot of times; one of those cuts that

you can play forever and ever in the studio. Twenty minutes go by and you're still locked into those two chords... (laughs)

MUSICIAN: That archetypal "Brown Sugar" riff still hooks you in, eh?

RICHARDS: Yeah, that's exactly the point. Sometimes you become conscious of the fact that, "Oh, it's 'Brown Sugar' again," so you begin to explore other rhythmic possibilities. It's basically trial and error. As I said, that one was pretty locked into a reggae rhythm for quite a few weeks. We were cutting it for *Emotional Rescue*, but it was nowhere near coming through, and we put it aside and almost forgot about it. Then, when we went back in the can to get material for *Tattoo You*, we stumbled on a non-reggae version we'd cut back then and realized that was what we wanted all along.

MUSICIAN: There's little actual reggae on *Undercover*, yet the production values are very Jamaican. The deep reverb, the spacing of the instruments, the accentuation of the bass and drums and the obvious dub take on the extended version of "Under Cover Of Night"...

RICHARDS: That's it. A lot of Jamaican reggae interests me because they have a lovely, wide-open concept about recording, which the rest of us are slowly coming around to. For them, a console is as much an instrument as a drum or a guitar. They don't have any of the preconceived rules that we have



LYNN GOLDSMITH

ingrained in us from our earlier recording days: You *must* fade things out slow, very genteel. They'll just go WHACK! BANG! and drop out an instrument. Such a wonderful freedom from preconceived ideas. When we first started working with our engineer Chris Kimsey, we tried to turn him on to some dub records. He was interested but he didn't really get into it until we started working in Jamaica over the last few years.

MUSICIAN: Any particular Jamaican producers who've heavily influenced you?

RICHARDS: Lee Perry, for one. But there are some people you don't normally think of as producers, like Sly Dunbar, who are incredible. I didn't realize how good he was until recently when we were in the same studio in Nassau. He's become a real production whiz; it's a real drama watching him behind the board. Matter of fact, that's him doing percussion on Simmons Drums on a couple of tracks on the new album.

MUSICIAN: There's also an African feel on some of those tracks.

RICHARDS: We brought in a couple of guys from Senegal to get that percussive bongo sound. They brought in their own instruments, and an incredible array of primitive African hardware, so there's lots of great percussion throughout the album; a lot of work with rhythms.

MUSICIAN: Looking back, *Some Girls* was a quantum leap in quality over those mid-70s Stones albums. What happened?

RICHARDS: I ask myself this one sometimes. I think a lot of it was Chris Kimsey. We were also at a point where we asked ourselves, "Are we just going to do another boring Stones-in-the-dol-drums sort of album?"

MUSICIAN: So you felt that, too. I have a hard time going back to those albums and finding more than two cuts I can play.

RICHARDS: I know what you mean. First of all, they remind me of being a junkie (laughs ruefully). What happened was I'd been through the bust in Canada which was a real watershed—or Watergate—for me. I'd gone to jail, been cleaned up, done my cure, and I'd wanted to come back and prove there

was some difference...some...some reason for this kind of suffering. So *Some Girls* was the first record I'd been able to get back into and view from a totally different state than I'd been in for most of the 70s. We're talking about that post-*Exile* period; *Goatshead Soup*, *Black And Blue*, which was really an audition for a new guitar player, and *Only Rock And Roll*.

MUSICIAN: Besides your drug problem, what made that such a fallow period for the Stones?

RICHARDS: We were dealing with a whole load of problems that built up from being who we were; what the 60s were. There was the fact that we all had to leave England if we wanted to keep the Stones going, which we did, and then trying to re-deal with each other when suddenly we were scattered halfway around the globe instead of "see you in half an hour." Also dealing with a lot of success and a lot of money over a long period. We'd been working non-stop and then suddenly had to deal with a backlog of problems that had built up because nobody'd had time to deal with them. Then there was Brian dying....

MUSICIAN: Why didn't that special chemistry of the band you spoke of before sustain Brian?

RICHARDS: In the coldest analytical terms, Brian didn't foresee the necessity of having a certain inner strength. Because these guys are very strong, very tough.

MUSICIAN: When did you first notice there was something wrong?

RICHARDS: Well, we were all idealistic kids at the time, just wanted to play the blues. But I remember very vividly once, when we were still playing clubs, the Beatles came to see us. Then when they played the Albert Hall in London, Brian and I went to their show. It was one of their first big concerts. I think Del Shannon was top of the bill actually, although they obviously were going to steal the show. They were enormous already, as they started coming on. The place went mad, women screaming and it was astounding 'cause I'd never seen anything like it.

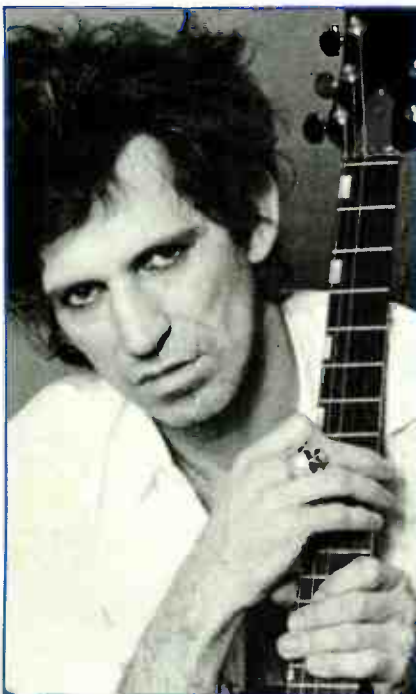
But I remember looking at Brian at that point and he was totally transfixed, absolutely gone. It was as if he was watching the crucifixion. And from that moment on, I felt that Brian wanted to be a star more than he wanted to be a musician. That's what he wanted, and that's what he got, and then he didn't know what to do with it. That hunger sort of took over all his other faculties.

MUSICIAN: And that type of hunger is never going to be satiated.

RICHARDS: No, never. And obviously standing out there in front of three thousand fourteen-year-old girls is NOT the answer to life, either.

MUSICIAN: Did you feel you were compromising somewhat when you switched from being blues purists to pop songwriters around that time?

RICHARDS: No, we were making the same mistake as most white kids who get hung up on the blues. We'd become elitist, although we used to despise the so-called purists. So we needed to reconcile all this with our own pasts and where audiences were at. And everything we've done since then has been a reconciliation, because even before Mick and I got together with the Stones we were big rock fans. Mick was in a Buddy Holly vein for a few years and I was roped into a weirdo country band for a while. I was real hung up on Gene Vincent. I used to have to play guitar for this guy who desperately wanted to be Gene Vincent, just to get a ride home on



his motorbike (laughs).

MUSICIAN: You mean you sold your soul for a lift home?

RICHARDS: (laughs) Well, I enjoyed it. It was "all right" at the time. But I'd do *anything* to get a ride home (laughs). But we were blatant out and out rock 'n' roll fans from the start. Little Richard was the first guy that really drilled Mick and I into the wall with "Good Golly Miss Molly." This wasn't pop, though.

MUSICIAN: Did you later find it satisfying to write more pop-oriented tunes like, well, "Satisfaction"?

RICHARDS: The truth is if I'd had my way, it would never have been released (laughs). We were recording in L.A. at the time at RCA and it just tripped off the end of my tongue, as it were, one night. We needed another track for the album so I threw it in as filler. I mean, the song was basic as the hills and I thought the fuzz guitar thing was a bit of a gimmick. So when they said they wanted it as a single, I got up on my hind legs for the first time and said, NO WAY! I really hadn't grasped what Mick and the band had done with it. You go through that all the time with tracks.

MUSICIAN: Time for the Cliché Question of the Hour. What comes first: the music or the words?

RICHARDS: The ideal thing, of course, is when they suddenly appear together. When there's only one phrase that fits and it says it all, and all you have to do then is fill in the gaps.

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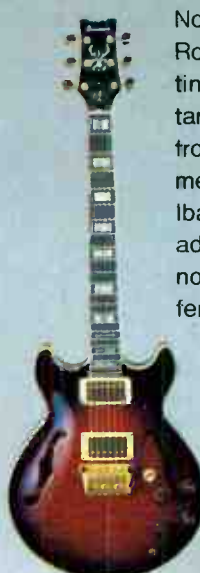
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But it's not often that it happens.

MUSICIAN: Can you think of any times it did?

RICHARDS: "Gimme Shelter" is a classic one. That I just slapped down on a cassette while waiting for Mick to finish filming *Performance*. "Honky Tonk Woman" is another. A lot of times you're fooling with what you consider to be just working titles or even working hooks, and then you realize there's nothing else that's going to slip in there and fit in the same way. So you're left with this fairly inane phrase (laughs). Before recording this album Mick and I went into a little studio in Paris together for the first time in many years to work together. We wrote "I Want To Hold You" with me singing and playing guitar and Mick on drums. Mick's a real good drummer but he doesn't play enough so every once in a while, he has to stop and take a break. After we'd written it he said, "Wow, this song is very early Lennon & McCartney." It's probably just the placement of certain instruments and the harmonies. In any case, there I was stuck with this working hook of "I Want To Hold You." Except that you can't find another hook that's going to fit, so I just went with it.

MUSICIAN: What about Ron? Is there an unspoken understanding in the band that nobody writes except you and Mick?

RICHARDS: Oh, no. Ronnie is the main instigator and part writer of "Pretty Beat Up." The chord sequence was his and I came up with the title and Mick added extra lyrics. I play bass on that one and Ronnie's on bass on "I Want To Hold You" and "Tie You Up," and Bill's on synthesizer on "Pretty Beat Up."

MUSICIAN: For years, there have been rumors that Bill might be kicked out of the band, rumors fueled by the things like him not playing bass on a number of tracks on *Exile*. Bill told me he had the feeling that you guys were not quite sure of him—not musically, but in the sense that he doesn't live your lifestyles.

RICHARDS: I can understand his feelings except that I'm sure he also knows that no one is expected to live any particular lifestyle. There are many diverse lifestyles and vicestyles in this band, and we all respect each others' space. True, Bill doesn't live the way Mick or I or Ronnie or Brian used to, but neither does Charlie, and that's the beauty of those guys. And Bill has come on like a ton of bricks in the last few years. After all the things he's been wondering and thinking about and keeping to himself, suddenly he's the busiest guy of the lot, out there making movies and becoming the only one of us who's had a hit record outside the Stones. There's probably nobody I've grown to appreciate more over the years than Bill Wyman. Charlie I've always appreciated, and Mick I've known since I was so young I can't even remember. But Bill is someone I've had to grow to appreciate.

MUSICIAN: What was the problem with Mick Taylor, then?

RICHARDS: I was going to ask you that (laughs).

MUSICIAN: Bill felt he left because he was demanding more of a voice in the songwriting and couldn't get it.

RICHARDS: Well, yeah, I guess that's pretty fair. After five years with the Stones you can understand how someone can get those frustrations, whether real or imagined.

MUSICIAN: Which was it? Did he only imagine that you were turning down his material?

RICHARDS: No, he never really wrote things, in spite of what he said. It's basically imagination. We all know by now that Mick hasn't done anything since he left the Stones that he couldn't have done in his spare time with the band. He just said he wanted to do his own thing. Mick Taylor is an admirable gentleman and a beautiful guitar player, but I don't really think he knew what he was good at and what he wasn't.

MUSICIAN: How was it working with him as a band member in his capacity as lead guitarist, as opposed to Brian or Ron?

RICHARDS: He was very reluctant to take any direction. I don't mean from the band, because we don't tell anybody what to play, but from the production end of it. Jimmy Miller used to go through reams of frustration, saying, "Tell the guy not to play there!" Meanwhile Mick is over there and he's just going to do what he's going to do. And so he did it.

New Grey Whistle Test

Back in the early 60s, the Stones were asked to rate current pop and rock records on the BBC's television show "The Old Grey Whistle Test." They claimed to hate everything they heard that night with one exception: their own new single. Twenty years later **MUSICIAN** asked Keith to give it another try. We played for him a selection of the material from the U.K. and U.S. charts and asked him to rate them on a scale of one to ten. Herewith are the results.

Aztec Camera, "Walk Out In Winter" — Nice guitar, white Scottish soul, like a forerunner of the Average White Band. Givin' 'em a good seven.

Graham Parker, "Life Gets Better" — Graham is it? He's got a nice presence to his voice, real *English* soul this time. Eight going on nine. Let's say eight and a half.

Juluk, "Ijwanasibeki" — I love it. You say they're half Zulus and half white guys? Those spacious African harmonies are great. The only problem with the record is the drum sounds; they all start to sound alike nowadays because there are only three or four standard boards you go through no matter where you record. I could have also used a little more Zulu and a little less of the white guys. Still, the Zulus can always teach you something. Let's give them a good eight.

Stevie Ray Vaughan, "Pride And Joy" — (drily) Classic white-boy blues, very proficient. He's got a good voice and he can play guitar, but there's only so far you can take that. Of course, you could stick us on doing "Black Limousine" and I could say the exact same thing. If you start talking choice of material, I'd give him a five, but sound-wise, it's fine. Make it a seven.

Paul Young, "Wherever I Lay My Hat" — Kid's got a great voice. This is an old Marvin Gaye tune, but the production sounds like he's already been influenced by "Every Breath You Take." Nice voice, but leaning on the Police a bit. I'd give it a seven and a half.

The Police, "Wrapped Around Your Finger" — Take it *off*... elevator music. I know it's the Police but it's a blind spot for me. Sounds like Christopher Cross. I like the Police but that track sounds like what they play in my dentist's office. (No rating.)

Shalamar, "Dead Giveaway" — Nice rhythm section, boring song. Soul Train. MTV material. We're going to get rough on the last lot now. I'll say four. I can hear them now (in a high, whining voice), "Should have played mine first, when he was being generous!"

Bananarama, "Shy Boy" — More MTV music, but a kind of nice, naive, dumb sort of feel about it. Sure, you could say they can hardly sing but since Caruso died, who can? It's more a question of: you have a voice, what do you want to do with it? They have as much right as anyone else. Five.

Joan Jett, "Handy Man" — Thanks, darling, I really needed that (laughs). No, she does a good job of it. I'd rather hear myself coming back at me through her than a bunch of guys dressed up funny. There's a genuine enthusiasm behind it; nobody's trying to be artsy-craftsy. Let's go back up into the eights for that one.

Culture Club, "Time (Clock Of The Heart)" — Boy George, yeah. He's good, *real* good. He understands how all the parts fit together, too. He deserves eight and a half...in the right place.

Big Country, "In A Big Country" — A bit studied, a little too self-conscious. But there are some nice sounds on there. Seven.

Talking Heads, "Home-The Place I Want To Be" — David Byrne. Very clever. There's nothing like a repressed white boy. I get the sense of somebody who's trying to feel something outside his brain, which for him is a big step. I'll give him an eight for breaking out.

Prince, "Little Red Corvette"—Prince trying to be Stevie Wonder... (angrily) take it off. I wish him luck. He's got a problem with his attitude and it comes across on record. Prince has to find out what it means to be a prince. That's the trouble with conferring a title on yourself before you've proved it. That was his attitude when he opened for us on the tour, and it was insulting to our audience. You don't try to knock off the headline like that when you're playing a Stones crowd. You'd be much better off just being yourself and projecting that. He's a prince who thinks he's a king already. Good luck to him. (No rating.)

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World Radio History

MUSICIAN: For years I went through a lot of frustration trying to get that ringing chordal sound you get on guitar. Finally, someone who worked with you told me the secret was that you used only five strings on your guitar and a special open tuning. What's the advantage of that kind of tuning and where'd it come from?

RICHARDS: The advantage is that you can get certain drone notes going. It's an open G tuning, with the low E string removed and there's really only three notes you use. My favorite phrase about this style of playing is that all you need to play it is five strings, three notes, two fingers and one asshole (general merriment). Actually, it's an old five-string banjo tuning that dates back to when the guitar began to replace the banjo in popularity after the first World War. It's called a Sears & Roebuck tuning sometimes because they started selling guitars then. The blacks used to buy them and just take the bottom string off and tune them like their banjos. It's also very good for slide work.

MUSICIAN: Are there only a limited number of chord shapes to work with?

RICHARDS: Obviously there's not as many shapes as in concert tuning, but there's an amazing number of augmented and diminished things you can do and basically still keep the same chord going and a lot of the notes ringing. It's roughly the same principle as the sitar without having the sympathetic strings, because you have the possibility, especially when you electrify an open G, of having those hanging notes that go through all the chord changes and still ring. (picking up guitar) See, if I remove this low E and retune from the bottom or fifth string, it's G, D, G, B, D.

MUSICIAN: Why'd you start using it—boredom?

RICHARDS: Yeah, in a sense. After playing just about every night for five years, I was no longer getting any "happy accidents." I knew my way around the guitar enough that I was

starting to get locked into playing like myself. So open tuning was a kind of therapy in which I had to teach myself the instrument again in a new way.

MUSICIAN: What was the first thing you wrote in an alternate tuning?

RICHARDS: I started precisely around the time of *Beggar's Banquet*. "Street Fighting Man" was an early one and just before that "Jumping Jack Flash" (plays riff on guitar, shifts it slightly into Chicago blues style vamp). The Everly Brothers got "Bye Bye Love" from working with that kind of riff, too.

MUSICIAN: Are there any young bands in the United Kingdom that really impress you today?

RICHARDS: Mick and I picked up on the Stray Cats before anybody else did and tried to sign them to the Stones' label. Brian Setzer's an excellent player and they're all nice guys. The Police are good old hands; I mean, Andy's from the same era as I am. I thought their reworking of "Stand By Me," "Every Breath You Take," was a beautiful record. The basic thrust of the song is real Drifters, a classic pop sequence with an extra twist thrown in. And "Roxanne" was one of our big favorites during the 1978 tour.

MUSICIAN: What about the Clash, who've been compared to the early Stones in terms of raw energy and approach, but who were quick to say they don't want to wind up like the Stones?

RICHARDS: I don't know. I mean, I wouldn't want to end up like the Rolling Stones. Then again, I don't want to end up like the Clash, either. But the Rolling Stones haven't ended up yet. And we've never kicked anybody out of our band for ideological reasons. If that's the way they think, they should go back to the Politburo. That's my beef with the Clash. I don't really listen to them because I can't stand that kind of pseudo-intellectualism being wound into music. It's got nothing to do with essence.

MUSICIAN: It's a shame that they may wind up spoiling

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something special through their self-righteousness, I agree.

RICHARDS: You can even see people doing the opposite. Look at Jerry Lee Lewis. Here you're talking about a very religious man, a guy who grew up in church, and worries if he's the guy who took the left-handed path to show everybody how not to do it.

MUSICIAN: *The tragic thing is that he doesn't realize that many spiritual musicians from Asia and Africa consider rock and jazz to be some of our most effective connections with the sacred in mankind. With that premise in mind, what do you, in your heart, believe the role of the Stones to be in the greater scheme of things, if anything. What do they stand for, what contribution do they make?*

RICHARDS: That's a good question, and one I don't know if I can really answer. Looking at it over the years, I suppose that the Rolling Stones somehow reverberate to some currently universal vibrational note. And the basic thing is for us to respond to it and therefore have the response come back to us. It's difficult for those of us in the band to say what the Stones mean, because our view of the Stones is the most unique you can get. We've never really seen ourselves play; we've never been able to sit back and say, "Ah, let's go see the Stones." Or even just buy a Stones album, and hear it fresh, 'cause we'd just sit around and say, "We should have done this or that."

MUSICIAN: *But do you see yourselves mirroring society at some level?*

RICHARDS: Yes, but something gets processed through the machinery of us being the Rolling Stones, of being thrown into the arena as public figures.

MUSICIAN: *One of the hazards of being a public figure for you seems to be getting punched out by Chuck Berry.*

RICHARDS: Oh, yeah, he gave me a black eye backstage in

continued on page 130

Stones Age Implements

Keith started out on Gibsons, but switched to Telecasters around the time of *Exile On Main Street*. "It's a real comfortable guitar for me, nice size and weight. And with the right one I can get the range I want because electronics have become some sophisticated today." The "right one" is usually his black '75 Custom Telecaster, which Keith claims the Meters' guitarist turned him on to in San Antonio. "He took me to this music store and there it was, a real gem amid all those late CBS models and Fender copies. It could have been made by Leo himself." He and Ronnie Wood have also gotten into using ESP Navigators, "because the balance between the nut and the bridge means you can really waggle 'em and they don't go out of tune." But his current fave is a brand-new, leather covered custom job by Joseph Giselli. "He's an incredible craftsman," enthuses Keith. "The leather may seem a bit rockish, but it's not gonna take scratches or ruin like wood." There's also a slew of black Les Pauls from the 60s, a blonde '54 Telecaster and some Ted Newman Jones and Dobys by Doug Young in the arsenal, as well as a few old Martin acoustics and Gibson Hummingbirds. "I've actually been using the Les Paul Junior more lately," he adds, "the three black Les Pauls being in the shop." Strings are Ernie Ball Regular Slinkys ("Sometimes in the studio I'll use a heavier gauge to get that nice, beefy tone for chord work"). Effects are by MXR, principally the 100 Phaser and analog delay ("for that rockably feel"). Keith goes wireless onstage via Nady, with those crazy signals eventually emerging from Mesa Boogie amps. (Or, as Keith calls 'em, "Mesa BEW-gies.") Mick Jagger plays Adams acoustics and early 60s Gibson SGs and Les Paul SGs.

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BIG COUNTRY



BY FRED SCHRUERS

*Scotland's
Guitar Heroes
Play in
the New World*

What comes with the territory, riding in a little elevator with the band called Big Country, is lots of manic, chattering energy. Methodically stooping and circling around a stack of box lunches that won't come untied Scotsmen Stuart Adamson and Bruce Watson are imitating the sounds of American audiences "Whooh! Whoop!" Tony Butler, who combines West Indian lineage with a Cockney accent, is working on the flat, nasal Yank pronunciation of the word "strange." And Mark Brzezicki, whose father was born in Stanislaw Poland, is putting on a brogue. "We'll be goin' out in the street noo—watch the traffic...."

NEW TURE



This eight-legged, quadrophonic Tower of Babel spills through a revolving door onto Seventh Avenue and makes for Central Park, pausing briefly to look over a shop window filled with gleaming knives and again lingering before a display of amber whiskey. Stuart's countrymen had already casked in oak before he picked up his first guitar. As they tread uptown, glancing left and right, Adamson's and Watson's flannel shirts and baggy denims hang so loosely over pipestem limbs that the two guitarists look like praying mantises.

But there's nothing dainty or pretentious about these boys. A neckerchief and scuffed red leather boots are as close to flash as Adamson's accessories get, and his sharpest charismatic weapon is a sly, warm, squinty-eyed smile. His working man's *bonhomie* suggests that of New York's David Johansen: give him a butt, a shot, a beer and the floor, and he'll keep you entertained, as long as

PHOTO BY MIKE ROBERTS

you don't mind a little taunting. In place of Johansen's wry, brainy cynicism, Adamson offers hopeful platitudes—but they're barroom brothers under the skin.

Onstage, Adamson and guitar partner Watson reel and buck from the hips, not unlike Appalachian clog dancers or their own jigging countrymen. Their movements, combined with now-churning, now-skying guitars, can set an audience reeling to and fro en masse. Their sound is less base metal than alloy, full of Celtic strains. Like the bagpipe marches, retreats and strathspeys it resembles, this is music to keep people's chins up.

It was probably no mistake they'd arrived to plant a flag in the States at a time when U2 were back in Ireland woodshedding and the Clash were in disarray—like it or not, Big Country knows they're targeted right at the guitar-hungry ranks who find Foreigner too obvious and the heavenly, haircutty synthesizer bands merely silly. At first, Big Country was hard to embrace wholeheartedly. While their twin guitar attack was indeed stirring, it flirted with bombast and repetitiveness. Those energetic, circling riffs seemed too much of a good thing, like riding for an hour with your face stuck out the car window. And the words, often quite inspiring, might ultimately add up to a grandpa overdose. As English critic Steve Sutherland put it: "*The Crossing* is a rousing vision frustrated in its search for songs."

Stuart Adamson's lyrics, like his band's music, do show a remarkable evenness of tone. The iconography—wind and mountains, fire and shining eyes, black queens, sun and flowers—is at once powerful and familiar. His poetics never get much worse than "The houses were burning the flames gold and red/The people were running with eyes full of dread"; they never get much better than: "I wouldn't want to stay out/With news like this/ All the engines too loud/All the pavements hiss..."

To separate Adamson's words from his music is to sometimes find them so sophomoric as to be opaque. But married to his band's pealing dual guitars and solid, but springy rhythm section, they make for one of the better rock LPs of 1983. And at the age of twenty-five, Stuart has the time—and the moxie—to get even better.

As we camped under a shady oak a hundred yards into Central Park, Adamson fastidiously wrapped a torn shopping bag around his beer. "Why is it," he asked, "you've got to cover up your beer in New York? Christ, ya can walk through Dunfermline pissed out of your mind squeezin' a whiskey bottle in your hand. In fact it happens quite a lot." Despite the attendant difficulties, Adamson would make his way through the better part of a cold six-pack as he nibbled at his lunch, fielding questions with grace and speed (and a slightly selfish omnivorousness; while Stuart gave conversational ground to the reticent Watson, he tended to trample into and over Butler's and Brzezicki's responses).

I knew the "four hundred miles" of the refrain to "Fields Of Fire" were a reference to the distance between his home town and London. Why had he remained a commuting rocker?

"I've always based my work in Scotland 'cause I just don't like London very much; I think the people there are really cold and selfish." In fact, he's steered well clear of the London scene even while gigging there. "We're definitely not a media-made, or fashion-made, group. What we have we went and worked for on our own, at a time when there were far too many



"We're definitely not a fashion-made group. We stood against all that."

GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA

groups lookin' over each others' shoulders, just copying each other for the sake of having hit records.

"We stood against all that. Those kinds of groups don't occupy the same world as I do at all. The things I sing about are human things, they're not about settin' off on a jet to lay on some silvery, sunny beach. There's nothing particularly glamorous about life. I think the only glamorous thing is the feeling inside people. The place where I live, there's nothing fantastic about it."

Dunfermline is a city of 50,000 that sits on high ground three miles north of a long North Sea inlet, the Firth of Forth, where the British Navy docks its nuclear submarines. Adamson's a pacifist, but his town misses the shipbuilding that once stoked its economy. In recent decades, Scotland's unemployment rate has been twice as high as the rest of Great Britain's and Dunfermline, long a religious center and the burial place of seven Scottish kings, has become a place where both recreation and hopes of escape lay mostly in two pursuits—soccer and music.

"The traditional industries are all dyin' out, and no one's done anything to replace them," Adamson explains. "So you've got all these thousands of people on the dole with no hope of any decent future at all." Adamson began playing in bands when he was fourteen. "I'm not sure if I saw it as a way out, exactly. Music's always been important to me. It's very close to the hearts of Scottish people. You grow up with it. People always seem to be having get-togethers, just to sit and sing old songs and stuff. Basically, it's a form of entertainment workin' class people don't have to pay for."

I'd been warned that Bruce Watson planned to cosh the next interviewer who asked him how he got his guitar to sound like that traditional Scottish reed instrument of exultation and mourning, the bagpipes. But Adamson answered with great civility, "I think it's in the melodies that Bruce and I play, rather than the sounds themselves, which are basically just rock guitar." Still, the duo has made a cult of their tools of choice. Each owns a Yamaha SG-2000 and a Fender Stratocaster, which they mix and match to obtain particular sounds. The Yamahas, says Adamson, "ring longer"; the Strat sound is "cleaner and bell-like." So the Strats come out for the spacious, soaring riffs on "In A Big Country," while "Fields Of Fire," which roils and reels along, is powered by the Yamahas.

This highly melodic, twining guitar style was refined through long effort by Watson and Adamson, but its inception goes back to Adamson's work with the Skids, a seminal Scot band that released an EP and three albums on Virgin Records between 1978 and 1980. Skids lead singer, Richard Jobson, had shared with Adamson an affection for expansive, almost martial songs, themes reflected by their album title *Strength Through Joy*. As Jobson's wife told a British writer, the two headstrong leaders "used to have terrible rows...but when they meet they have a close love for each other." Still, "It was always his sound and band," Jobson said recently of Adamson—a point which sheds new light on critics' frequent comparisons between Big Country and U2. "I don't mind at all, because Edge learned to play guitar from listening to old Skids records anyway," Adamson declared. "I used to be one of his heroes; he used to tell me the Skids' 'The Saints Are Coming' was one of his favorite songs. But if we have similarities now, I think they're from the standpoint of emotional input"—

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Adamson gives one of his mischievous, crinkle-eyed grins—"and from the Edge nicking my riffs."

As Adamson and Watson grooved their sound in Dunfermline, Tony Butler and Mark Brzezicki were hooking up theirs in London. Tony had placed an ad in *Melody Maker* for a "Phil Collins style" drummer. "So I said, 'Yes, that's me,'" recalls Mark. Brzezicki is tall and big-boned, the son of a Polish emigré who was raised by nuns in the Carpathian mountains and flew in the Polish Air Force during World War II before settling in England to raise what Mark calls "The Flying Brzezickis"—a family full of musicians, disco operators, puppeteers and one frustrated opera singer (Dad himself).

Mark struggles to get his story out despite Adamson's friendly tyranny. "My family's like a circus," he begins.

"Yeah, they're all fookin' clowns," says Stuart.

"I wanted to join the RAF..."

"But he couldn't grow a moustache."

"So I got a job as an aircraft fitter, workin' on Harrier jets..."

"The same ones that strafed the Argentinians," says Stuart accusingly.

"Naw," says Mark. "The ones that kept ditchin' in the ocean for no apparent reason."

Butler had warned Brzezicki he'd received plenty of applications for the drumming job, but Mark showed up anyway, lingering outside the audition room for four hours until he'd memorized the songs as each aspirant attacked them.

"You can't throw somebody like that out, can ya?" says Tony. "It wasn't his playin' I liked..." In fact, the deft, cagey bassist and disciplined basher Brzezicki made a good team. Though the band they formed with Simon Townshend, On The Air, didn't get too far, it did tour with the Skids. Later, when the Scotsmen needed a rhythm section for their "Fields Of Fire" demo, they tapped Tony and Mark (then doing studio gigs as Rhythm for Hire) and everyone was happy with the results.

"Their current fashionability," wrote a welcoming reviewer in *Sounds*, "is based on an anti-fashion reaction." Elsewhere Adamson had already fessed up that *The Crossing's* "Lost Patrol" (with its images of "death and rank decay") was a swipe at the fashion crowd. But he won't be lured into making things any more explicit. Typically arch, he hands the lyric sheet to Mark (who proudly proclaims he doesn't know the words to most of the *auteur's* songs) for interpretation. "It's about," Mark says after serious perusal, "quite a pointless exercise by lots of people finding themselves all going the same way for no reason."

Now Adamson chimes in like a pleased schoolmaster: "For no reason at all. It came out of this feeling I got that these people were getting far too involved in style over content."

That's not Big Country's problem. Each member sports the kind of haircut frugal fathers used to give their sons on Saturday mornings, and their clothes are neither chic nor as ostentatiously rag-taggy as those worn by Dexy's Midnight Runners.

But some of Adamson's favorite lyrics from "In A Big Country" roam perilously close to greeting-card verse: "I'm not expecting to grow flowers in the desert/ But I can live and breathe/ And see the sun in wintertime..."

"That's the way I feel about things," he says simply. But divorced from its context, a song which begins with drums fit for dervish dancers and the exhortation to "Come up screaming" simply sounds

too romantic. "Not romantic," corrects Adamson, "a depressed optimist."

"Inwards," by contrast, was written in a London hotel the day the Skids broke up. As Adamson sat brooding in his room, his wife Sandra phoned to tell him his grandmother had died. "I pull everything inward," sings Adamson, as the beat whirls concentrically, "but everything's loose..."

"1000 Stars" is Adamson's vision of the nuclear conflict he fears is inevitable. Partner Watson worked in the Firth of Forth, scrubbing out nuclear subs, and his wife supported them for a while by working in the Scottish Defense Command bunker a half-mile from Dunfermline. But the song came out of an American general's statement on BBC-TV to the effect that the U.S. government would rather fight a limited nuclear war in Europe than go for an all-out conflict. "I thought, 'That's really fookin' nice,'" Adamson recalls. "I mean, go crap in yer own nest."

"The Storm," which begins by sounding like a bagpipe waltz and gives way to skipping acoustic guitar, contains some of Adamson's preferred instrumental passages. His favorite guitar break, though, is from a track left off their album (but on the import cassette) called "Angle Park." Big Country's music is in general informed by a love for over-revved, careening motorcycles and such; this gives the record an undeniable momentum, but makes their "In A Big Country" video, with its plethora of trike, bike and jet-ski joyrides, seem a bit juvenile.

"Harvest Home" is reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*, but it's based on an incident, two hundred years ago in Scottish history, when the government systematically deported potentially rebellious Highlanders to Australia and America. Adamson equates that situation with the current disenfranchised state of Scotland's jobless. He thinks the government's malfeasance most evident in the war for the Falklands, a subject addressed in "Fields Of Fire." "Bruce and I used to travel to London a lot, by train, and we'd see the servicemen traveling to various camps. In all the patriotic fervor at the time of the Falklands there were peoples' lives getting lost, and I just kept thinking that guys I'd been on the train with, sat next to, went to that war and got blown away just to satisfy someone's lust for power."

Like his counterpart in U2, Bono Hewson, Adamson retains a crusader's streak, and he's unapologetically self-assured about his band's manifest destiny. His diversion of choice is beer ("I think any musician who glamorizes drugs to young kids should be taken out and properly whipped.") and his band's upcoming stints on the road hold no real terrors for him: "You call this a job? It's not like any job I've ever had. To me a job implies something you hate doin' just for the sake of money."

But what about later today? A trip to Poughkeepsie by bus, the long ride home, then back-to-back nights in a sweatbox club in front of media reps who've been sharpening their knives for a week? "We always deliver one hundred and ten percent," says Stuart, "even when our gear screws up, because we love what we're doin'. When you care deeply, it's never bad. I think that groups that have bad nights must just not be interested."

What about the pressures if you have a hit? Playing to big, sometimes hostile crowds for example? "To a group like us, the biggest hall can seem like the smallest club," Adamson insists. "We've



GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA

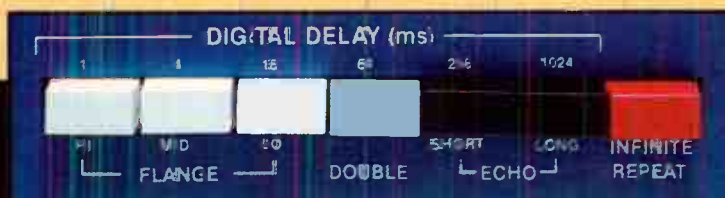
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Dueling Guitars

Stuart Adamson and Bruce Watson both alternate between Yamaha SG-2000s and Fender Stratocasters. Stuart runs through an H/H VS Musician amp, using effects which include an MXR pitch transposer, a Roland Space Echo and a distortion pedal. Bruce runs through an Ibanez chorus, a Roland Space Echo and an Amdek distortion unit into an old Marshall head and a 4 x 12 cabinet. Watson also has a '67 Vox Phantom 12-string he gets very sentimental over, and has recently been seen playing a new Fender Elite Telecaster.

Bassist Tony Butler uses an Aria with light gauge strings to get that "scratchy, tippy" sound he prefers. His amp is an Ampeg SVT. Mark Brezezicki plays Paiste cymbals, a Ludwig snare and a basic Pearl kit. He has lately been trying a Yamaha kit.

Jagger from pg. 56
other people when I should have... well, a lot of time has passed, so you have time to throw the blame on other people, and time to be guilty as well.
MUSICIAN: *On a somewhat lighter note, English artists like Bowie and Ferry told us that they dress up onstage as a defense mechanism to hide their fear of*

performing. What's your excuse?

JAGGER: I just love dressing up in silly clothes. That's what people in the theater do, really. If you don't like dressing up and putting makeup on your face, don't get on the stage. You have to want to dress up in your prettiest dress and have a wonderful time, otherwise it's a bore. That's why I love seeing introverted people like David Byrne start to get into it. I saw him recently at Forest Hills, and he's obviously having a better time.

MUSICIAN: *If you could only take one Rolling Stones record with you on a trip, which would it be?*

JAGGER: The new one.

MUSICIAN: *Spoken like a true London School of Economics grad. How about a cassette of other people's material—what would you choose?*

JAGGER: The top twenty of 1958, probably. Plus a few symphonies, Bach and Mozart. But I wouldn't really include any Rolling Stones records. Can we wrap this up? It's getting kind of late.

MUSICIAN: *Sure, just one more little question. Looking back, any major regrets?*

JAGGER: (giggles) Aw, Gawd, what an interview! I can't be bothered with that... I can't be that serious. I think Keith definitely should have been here for this. I hope you ask him all the same bleedin' questions (laughs). ■

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78 GODLEY & CREME

Two part invention from a pair of 10 cc survivors who jumped from music to video.

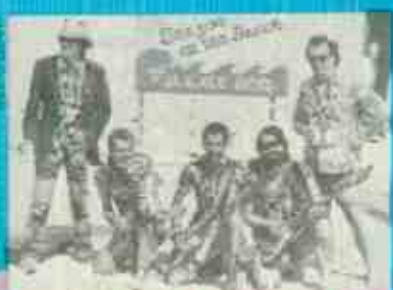
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GODLEY

TWO FOUNDING FATHERS OF 10 CC BRING THEIR BIZARRE VISION TO ROCK VIDEOMAKING AND CHANGE CAREERS.

Every scion of Western culture under thirty—oops, better make that forty—with an ounce of sentient fiber in their noodle wants to be a pop star. Except, of course, for pop stars—they all want to be in movies. The pretty boys want to preen on camera, and the sharpies want to direct.

Now, thanks to the apparently irresistible lure of musical videos, the dream is at hand. Pop stars of all stripes and sizes can, will, must, do seize the moment.

But is it art?

"Basically," says Lol Creme with even resignation, "it's a marketing tool."

Culturally significant then?

"Most likely," Kevin Godley opines, "there'll just be more room for it on television and a lot of crap will go on."

BY MARK ROWLAND



CREME

At least satisfying for its own sake?

"Listen," says Lol Creme, "there's *no* point in doing videos for the sake of it. This had better lead us to a movie or we'll die."

Meet Godley & Creme, reigning *auteurs* of contemporary rockvid. Perhaps you've already met them, back when they were but two cogs in that mischievous melange of British art-pop called 10cc. Perhaps you even followed the trail of their subsequent solo career, which began, inauspiciously enough, with a self-produced triple album (*Consequences*), and coasted casually into obscurity from there. Good records though—witty, personal, provocative, idiosyncratic—like Asia, y'know? Always wondered why they didn't sell.

Anyway, Godley & Creme are back. To watch MTV you'd never know it, only because rock 'n' roll telly hasn't yet come

around to listing director's credits. If they did, you'd now be soooo familiar with the surnames behind Herbie Hancock's "Rockit," the Police's "Every Breath You Take," "Wrapped Around My Finger" and "Synchronicity II," and Elton John's "Kiss The Bride." Creme and Godley also put together the notorious "Girls On Film" for Duran Duran, but you'll have to tag along to your local mud wrestling club to catch that one. At least the unexpurgated version.

Toronto, Canada is a city so squeaky clean you could probably eat off the sidewalks, but unlike New York nobody tries. Instead, they traipse to smart little quiche joints like the one where our *auteurs* can be found discoursing sleepily over 'lunch.' In fact, on this day, Creme and Godley are too tired to even eat, having edited a Police concert film for sixteen hours

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HODGSON-STAPLETON

each of the previous five days; they anticipate an additional non-stop thirty-six-hour haul to get the thing done by deadline. Kevin's eyes are squinting, while the physically slighter Lol, who plays Jeff to Godley's Mutt, is holding up one corner of the lunch booth with his shoulder. Together they look like two sizes of rumbled bed. Ahh, the glamor.

"The form of music videos is very limiting," Kevin declaims with admirable candor. "You're dealing with musicians, who, nine times out of ten, couldn't act even if you wanted them to act, which is not very often."

"We want more money, I might add," says Lol.

"We basically want to direct with people who talk and move *with* music on screen," Godley explains. "That's what we're interested in. But we don't have dialogue, so we use the jukebox...."

This is the story of two talented and adventurous lads, best friends from youth, who grew up in merrie Manchester, England. Cut. Always intrigued by the visual image, they made their first 8mm film together while still in their early teens, later studied graphics at art college (Birmingham for Lol, Stokes for Kevin). Cut. Flashback. Played in rock 'n' roll bands through high school. Freeze frame. Fast forward. "We really got involved with Eric Stewart and Graham Gouldman at the time when Strawberry Studios was just coming together," Lol notes. "We did a backing track for 'The Neanderthal Man' and it became a hit, and suddenly we were just in a situation of, 'Well, let's do music for a while.' We figured we'd stay with it as long as we enjoyed it, and as soon as it felt frustrating we'd put ourselves in a new situation. Exactly what we did, in a nutshell."

After leaving 10 cc in 1976, Kevin and Lol wrote scores for films and television commercials, and published an off-the-wall rock memoir titled *The Fun Starts Here*. They also began augmenting their music career with a series of relatively crude but conceptually innovative videos, notably for 10cc's "Feel The Love" and their own "Englishman In New York." The latter utilized the kind of surprising visual juxtapositions and twisted humor which informs much of the duos subsequent work, including

MICHAEL HODGSON



Lol and Kevin's hit videos draw heavily on their mischievous, twisted sense of humor.

such outré set ideas as a big band staffed by mannequins (actually young teenage girls prancing behind masks). No one paid much attention, of course; the video age was still a few years away, and Kevin and Lol have never been what you'd call high-profile artistes.

Indeed, as musicians Godley & Creme were often irreverent, esoteric and not a little self-indulgent—not exactly a recipe for stardom, or even cometdom. But as filmmakers in the service of mainstream rock, their special brand of free-wheeling impressionism

'We've always been perfectionists. It affects every aspect of the job—the set, the direction, the editing. It's exactly the same as with music.'

soon provided a welcome diversion from the static, narrative approach of so many other pop videos. "We hate those (narrative) videos," Kevin attests. "That's what we've always fought against. The nice thing about listening to music is that an individual listener can build on his own imagination—of what a girl looks like, or what she's doing. But if you put that onscreen, you're making it all incredibly literal. We try to bring in an atmosphere that *complements* what the song is about."

"The difference in our relative success rate is that the record biz is an old, tired industry where everyone is very blasé and very factionalized," says Lol. "Whereas in video you've got half a

dozen people that everyone watches, and if you do a good job it's easy to be noticed. Plus it's a new exciting field with no real terms of reference; we're setting them, I hope. And people notice ours because it's simply more notable—not necessarily better but more of a style."

Though Creme and Godley have directed upwards of twenty-five videos, that degree of notice took a quantum leap recently with the release of three Police featurettes, especially "Every Breath You Take." In three minutes Godley & Creme had at once firmed up the aesthetic reputation of the toniest band in rock (as if they needed it), captured the charisma of its lead-

ing fair-haired Aryan, provided a link between popvid and the more classic motifs of Hollywood cinema, and put their own considerable talents on public display. But let Lol tell the tale.

"'Every Breath You Take' did for us in video what 'I'm Not In Love' once achieved for us in sound—it took us straight up in the world.

"We got a call from the Police asking us if we were interested in making a video. Then two or three days before we left for L.A., we were watching this program on English television about videos—I call them that but they were films, actually—of black American jazz musicians like Duke Ellington, for a kind of video jukebox. This was in the 40s; you put in a dime and these promotional shorts came on. They were great, too, because a lot of Hollywood technicians worked on them. And some had that stark backlighting that you see on 'Every Breath You Take.' So we went to L.A.—

we still had no ideas at this point—and Sting says, 'I saw this film and I think the video should be in this mood.' And it was 'Jamming The Blues' (a famous blues short starring Lester Young and Billie Holiday, among others), so that seemed like a good omen. And it started with the camera looking down on a guy's hat, but you don't know that until his hat lifts up." As a kind of homage, "Every Breath" begins with a shot of a circular ashtray, an image segued to Stewart Copeland's backbeat.

Having established the song's visual character through black and white, high-contrast photography, Godley & Creme set to work integrating its moody atmospherics. "We decided on a very

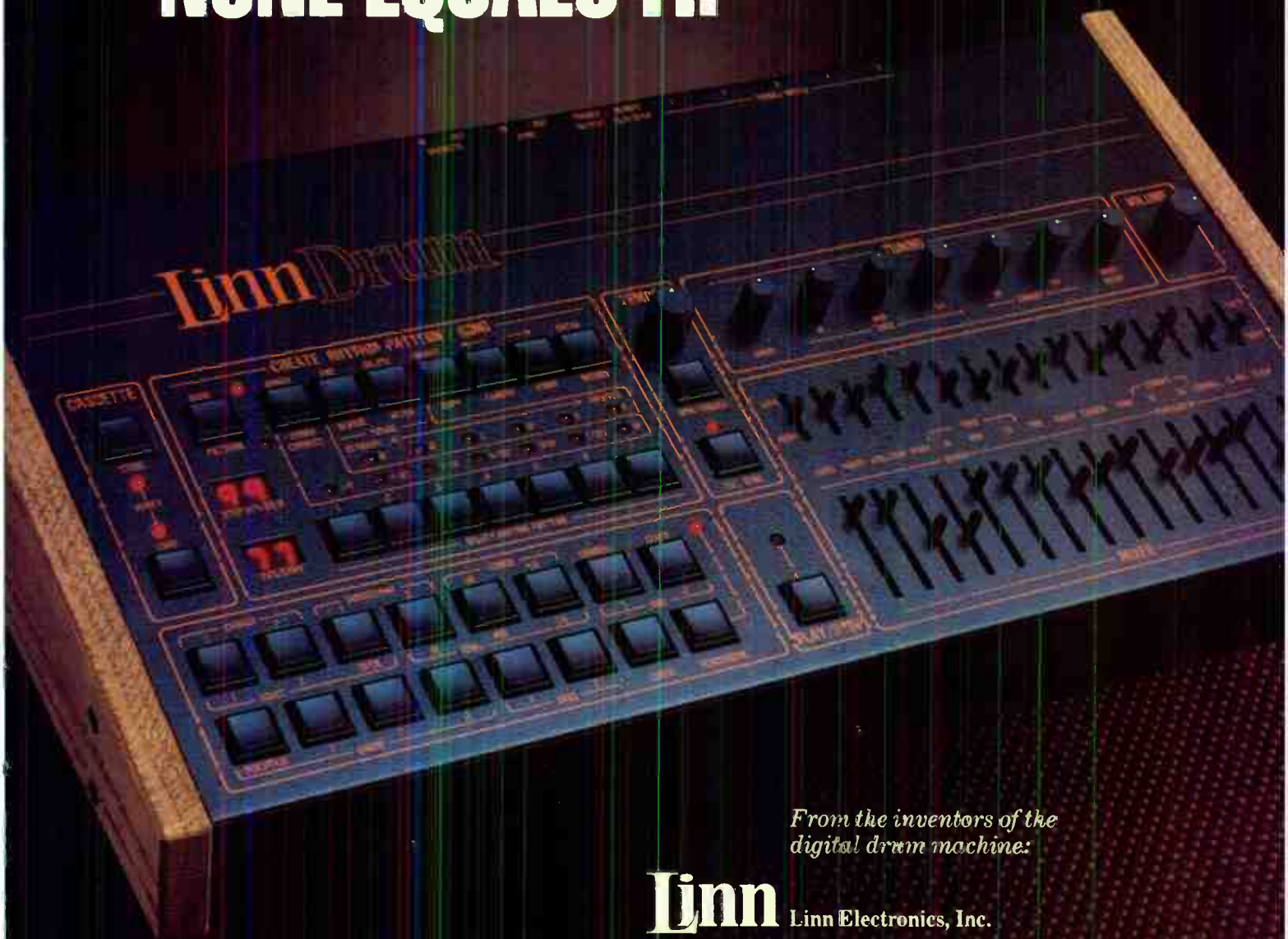
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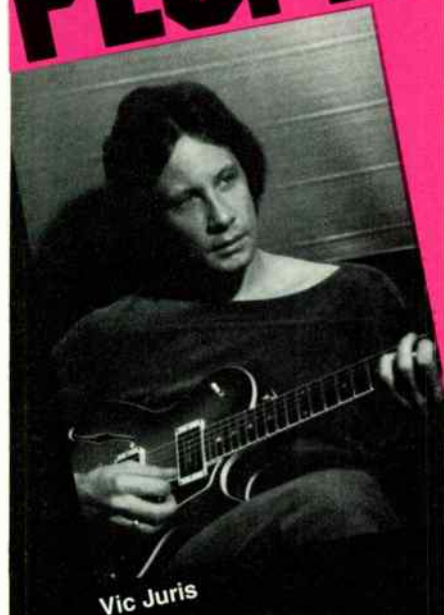
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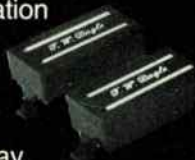


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simple set, and lit it very carefully," Lol remembers. "We framed each shot. They're all highly composed, almost like a series of moving pictures.

"The last time we were here we'd gotten a good dose of MTV," recalls Kevin, "and what we noticed were cuts like every two seconds. Bang, bang! So we thought, let's slowwww things down—let's stay on a shot for at least five seconds. Which is why, apart from the black and white, it stands out. That was calculated."

Among other things, Kevin and Lol regard their work in video as an apprenticeship, gleaning the necessary technical know-how to match the sophistication of their concepts. It's paying off. On "Synchronicity II," Godley explains, "the set was the star. The idea was inspired by Kurosawa's *Kagemusha, the Shadow Warrior*, you know, that whole post nuclear vibe. We decided to build three mountains out of the band's personal junk," he notes with some glee, "one of amplifiers and guitars, one with drums, of course, and one of mike stands, wires and tables. Then we brought in large machines to blow the debris around. But basically we came up with the set because we wanted to use a new camera device—and we needed an idea to suit it. It's a kind of mount called the 'Hothead,' and what it does is, it allows you to move a camera vertically and horizontally 360 degrees at the same time, on the end of a crane or whatever, while you operate from the video screen. So you can pan and tilt all over the place—that's how we got such interesting angles."

But Kevin and Lol's success still has less to do with state-of-the-art instruments than old-fashioned ingenuity. On "Wrapped Around My Finger," for instance, they created a surrealistic ambience by rehearsing the band members to lip sync in double time to the music. Later, the tape was slowed down to normal speed, along with the rest of the video. As a result Sting and his cohorts appear to defy gravity as they frolic amidst a soft-focus maze of tapered candles.

"We took a risk on that one," Lol admits, noting the impossibility of "fixing it in the mix." "It's not easy to mime at double-time while you're jumping around and all; you could have lip-synching mistakes and waste everyone's money. We weren't covered at all, but it worked, thank God." He lets out a small laugh at the memory. "The crew must have heard that song eighty times that day and never once at the right speed."

Herbie Hancock's "Rockit," by contrast, was almost entirely a product of the editing room. In this feature, a group of air compressor-driven stick figures (created by the English sculptor Jim

Whiting) juke, clog and breakdance around a room, all in perfect, uh, synchronicity to Messr. Hancock's funk pulse. "Normally we'd storyboard in advance," says Lol, "but that was such a technical idea. I knew we wanted one camera to shoot given shots which we would later scratch edit. After we filmed we had it all copied forwards and backwards; then we put the two together for the scratch effect."

For all their recent triumphs, Godley & Creme still share the same constraints which burden most card-carrying members of the proletariat—time and money. In the past few years production costs have skyrocketed across the board; Kevin estimates that an early video for Steve Strange's "Visage," for example, which cost about £6,000, would probably command three or four times that amount today. This despite Kevin and Lol's attempts to hold the line on post-production expense (they pre-edit off ¾-inch tape dupes in their own off-line editing suite, for example). As Lol points out, "The difference is that in the early days, people we giving more deals just to get into the business. Now they don't need to anymore—everyone's fully booked."

As one result, most videos are shot in a day, which in turn creates other frustrations. "You've built a nice set for 'Synchronicity,' but you only have one day to exploit it," Kevin sighs. "This is annoying. You know you have to move on, but you still have to get the shot right."

Yet for all their grouching and defiantly dotty sensibilities, once on the set, Godley & Creme summon the sort of dedication to craft to make a Calvinist blush.

"I think we've always been perfectionists," Lol says. "We take an attitude toward every aspect of the job—the set, the direction, the editing. It's exactly the same parallel to music. If it's a song, it's got to have good lyrics, it has to have an interesting bass part, not just some bass any muggins could play."

"But," he cautions, "in film you can't be half as indulgent as in music. In music we spent eighteen months to get something right and it turned out to be a hell of a lot of fun and a hell of a flop. And we learned from that, 'cause it was our money. In film you have to be prudent; you always need a good production team, for instance. If we can think of ways to do things smoothly, we will, but if the crews didn't want to help, none of our stuff would ever get done."

All of which seems like an awful lot of logistics to create such ephemeral pop—but heck, isn't that what pop is all about? "It's a totally commercial vehicle," Kevin Godley shrugs, as he and Lol Creme trundle back to their editing crypt. "But that's part of the pleasure—shooting an idea that's your own, and then having it live on the screen." ■

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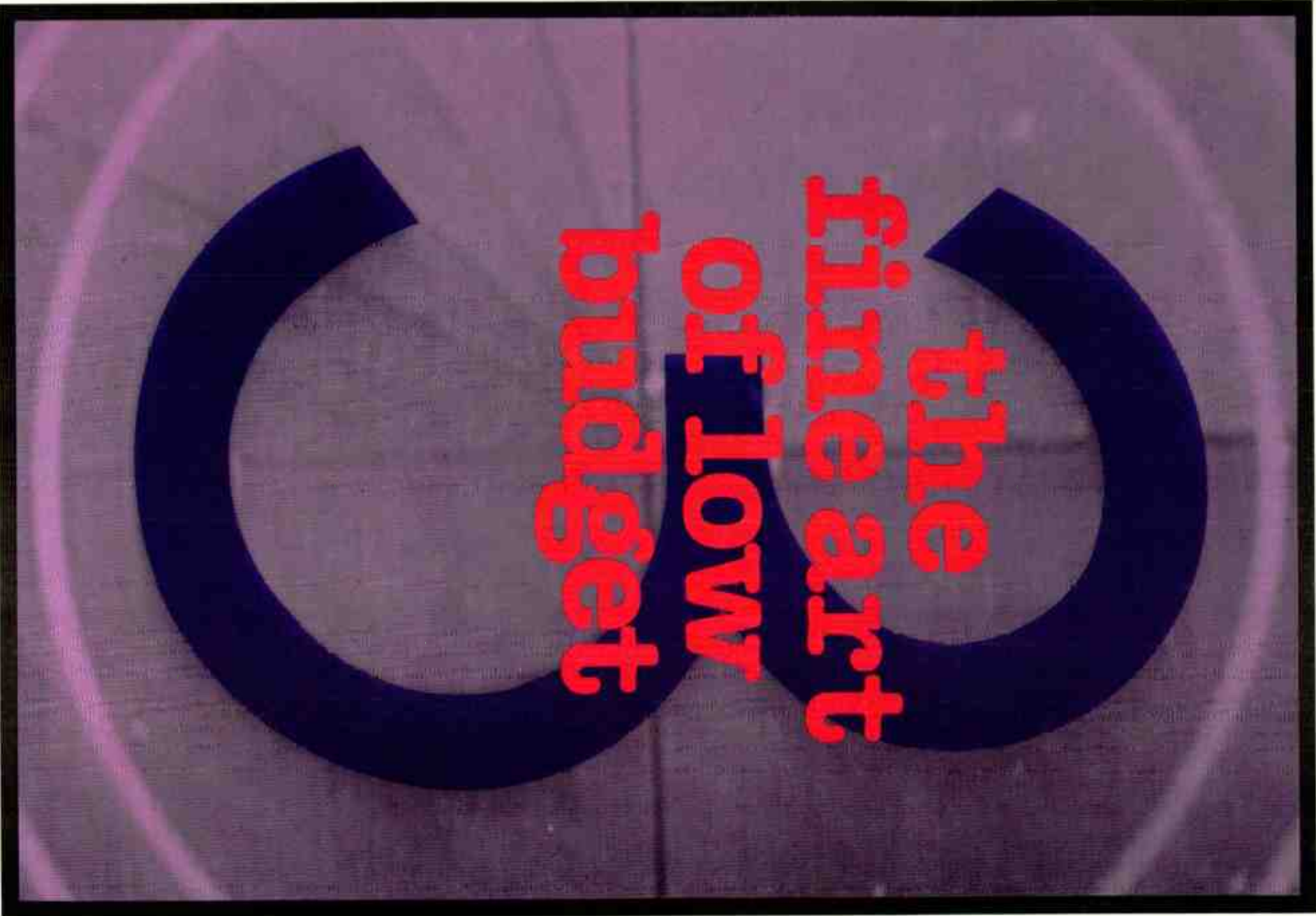
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HOW TO MAKE A GREAT ROCK VIDEO FOR UNDER \$10,000

BY JOCK BAIRD

It's a sad state of affairs that everything's gotten so video-oriented," muses producer John Marsh, "because the groups that can spend the dough are going to get more exposure; the rich get richer. New groups that don't have money have less of a chance than they had before."

"Right now, MTV is deluged with big budget material," agrees director/producer David Brownstein. "It makes it difficult for the independents."

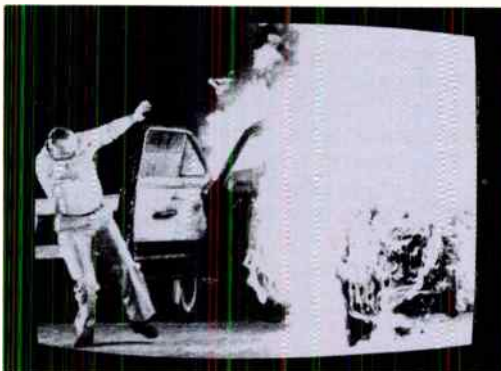
What's a band to do against such gloomy assessments of a low budget video's chances on MTV? At a time when a no-frills promo vid is budgeted at \$30,000 by most major labels, how can a band make a great tape for under \$10,000? Well, it ain't easy, but it's the fine art of the low budget pioneers of rock video. This mobile, imaginative species is not only beating out the big money on MTV, but is writing a new rulebook for making classic guerilla rockvids. Their basic motto is eloquently stated by John Marsh: "You get what you pay for.

What you don't pay for, you still have to get." When and what to pay, and how to get production value when you can't pay, are the subject of this general guide to economical epics.

First off, a piece of advice: even the most videoactive band should shrink from doing their own videos. Sure you can hone your conceptual chops on 1/2-inch for your local cable company, or supervise a basic live shoot for an audition tape, but when it comes to doing a full-scale production for broadcast TV, experience is a must. As John Marsh explains, "You've got to have good people to shoot low budget. It can't be students or amateurs, who can actually shoot high budget much better. If you can get a good person cheap, someone who likes you and with whom you have a good working relationship, you can get tons of free budget."

Confirmed do-it-yourselfers, don't be disappointed. Even if you can't shoot and edit, your role in the video process is still critical. The first meeting of band and producer is a decidedly two-way street, in which the producer and director not only listen to the song, but debrief the band on virtually every idea they have. Second Story Television's David Brownstein (212-475-4399) says, "The most important thing is understanding the band's personality, and that doesn't come in one meeting. You ought to find out what movies they like, what visual and musical influences they have." San Francisco's Patrick Kriwanek (415-826-7715) discovered, "About half the time, there's a strong person in the group who's been involved with

filmmaking in the past. When Michael Beene of the Call and I got together, he mentioned to me two Martin Scorsese films he really liked, *Raging Bull* and *Who's That Knocking at My Door?* We talked a lot about the *Raging Bull* look, which is brilliant black & white photography against a lot of infinite black background. I have since heard from the Call's manager that Scorsese saw the piece on MTV and telephoned Michael to ask him to be in a film. That says a lot about the optic nerve of this planet."



John Marsh, producing partner of low-budget wunderkind Richard Casey of Casey Movies (213-663-4706), adds another important part of that first debriefing session. "When we first interview people, we ask things like, 'Do you know anybody who has a place we can shoot, anyone with a car, anything?' Then we try to build a story around those things. We'll hear something in a song like a crashing guitar part, and we'll feel it looks like Ninjas attacking battleships in *The Killer Elite*, so we'll say,

'Can we get some battleships for free?' and someone'll say, 'Yeah, I know some people connected to the mothball fleet,' and we say, 'OMIGOD, that's a million-dollar set, let's do it.' So we listen to the song, consider the budget and find out what's available, in that order."

Then begins the toughest part of the video process: building a story line and a concept. Mark Rezyka, a director for Pendulum Productions, specializes in larger budgets than we're talking about here for the likes of Stevie Nicks, Cheap Trick and Quiet Riot, but feels the basic strategy is the same for all vids: "The responsibility is always to show the artist in the best possible way. They can't be wimpy, they have to be winners, they have to be positive." Rezyka will create new storylines aimed at deflecting negatives (Danny Spanos' ultra-macho) or emphasizing strengths (Michael Sembello's love of bodybuilding).

For Patrick Kriwanek, the first image he gets can define the entire video: "I always think of the growth of a crystal. It always starts with the fusing of the first two crystal molecules. When I'm listening to a song, I try to let my mind free-associate. I listen and I listen and all of a sudden there will be a fuse moment that will strike very strongly. For example, I did a video for the Units which depicted two gym classes in one gym, separated by a large neutral zone, with the boys on one side and the girls on the other. Eventually the kids start looking at each other and then they run across and there's a big dance number. My original image was when the first girl looks over her shoulder at the boys. It's a little Italian girl who looks

exactly like the woman in Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*. Everytime I see that shot, it still blows me out of my chair. Then the most important thing to figure out is the beginning and the end. My videos tend to be circular; they start in one place and come back to that place, even though everything has changed."

One of the biggest pitfalls of story-making is the curse of being too literal. "It's a redundancy," warns David Brownstein, "because the band has used the metaphor in the lyrics to describe something; if you visualize the metaphor rather than the thing they were talking about in the first place, it can be boring. Music is abstract by nature; it's not always a story—it's more a feeling. Peter Gabriel's 'Shock The Monkey' is a great example of something where the images are so strong, you get a feeling even if you don't know what it all adds up to."

Steve Seid of 415 Records warns of going too far, however: "Sometimes groups tend to go towards the obscure. They want to do a symbolic tape in which all the symbols are things imbedded in their own subconscious and no one else's. You want a tape that's accessible, but also has enough detail in it so that you have a sense of discovery when you've seen it four or five times."

Low budget masterpieces depend heavily on their ideas, on good stories. As David Brownstein emphasizes, "If the ideas are good up front, you don't need lots of video effects. The effects come when they've got a boring tape

wave." For Graeme Whifler, the popular cinema of India, with its *de rigueur* musical interludes, is a thirty-year fountain-head of production ideas.

For John Marsh and Richard Casey, great 60s B-movies are seminal. "It's like Roger Corman Studios...how did they crank out all that stuff? But it played. Their stories were outrageous, it was competent and they had young directors with exciting ideas. With junk material, they put stuff out cheap that had something going for it."

Casey and Marsh have been known to try *anything* on a shoestring. The video they have recently finished is a tape of hardcore punks The Angry Samoans singing the Chambers Brothers' anthem "Time Has Come Today" that is set in the President's war bunker on the threshold of nuclear annihilation. The Samoans' lead singer is ready to push the button, but the President, played by Joe Chambers himself, chooses life. Casey Movies put this video on MTV for an incredible \$5,000. How? "You can beg, borrow and steal all the stuff. We had a gimmick, a hook, which was Joe Chambers."

But surely the President's bunker cost a bundle? Not so, says Marsh. "About a year ago we were doctoring up a picture called *Please Don't Eat the Babies*, and we heard that a big major studio film, *The Beastmaster* was dumping all their sets. So we copped them and put them in a garage, and use them whenever we can. We repaint them, we redecorate them, but basically they're all the bunker. If someone comes in and says, 'I don't like this bunker crap, I want it to be high tech and glossy,' we say, 'HEY, gimme a break! You're lucky we got anything.'"

For Graeme Whifler of Whifler-Nimmer Productions (415-921-7027), as for most low budget masterworkers, the implicit humor of cheap is a formidable ally: "I like humor, and I like dark things. And I like to entertain myself, so I have to put jokes in, strange, surreal things happening."

Casey Movies tapes often play up the satire. Marsh notes, "Sure we'll have helicopters and strafing, we'll do all those clichés, but everybody knows what it is. It's not done in a way that it's manipulating those images; people don't become victims of them. Our films tend to have a lot of vertical distance." Heavy metallers don't always appreciate that distance: "Aldo Nova, right? He comes to us, he's an unknown artist, new record. We do him two tapes for thirty K. One has him coming down in a helicopter and laser blasting down a door. We got *one* laser beam; we saved it up, a grand for the helicopter and two grand for the laser. So he goes platinum, gets rich and gets a big company to do his next video 'cause he says our stuff

locks cheap!" (Irony isn't for everyone...)

Once you've got a storyline, you've got to render it intelligible. Storyboards vary from three or four pencil sketches to elaborate ninety-nine-panel executions in color, nine 3 x 4 boxes to a page, one box every four seconds. The best suggestion came from Patrick Kriwanek: "I use 3 x 5 cards with a pen sketch. For me, pencil is not a strong enough image. I can rearrange the cards and spread them all on the floor. When the band members read the synopsis, they often don't get it, but when they see it on the cards, they see the

**"IT'S AN
EXISTENTIAL
PROBLEM. YOU
HAVE TO DEAL
WITH WHAT'S
THERE."**

flow. It's like reading music on a sheet. I'll usually put big arrows on them to indicate screen direction."

Richard Casey says, "I never use storyboards. I used to draw pictures, but nobody could make any sense of them." However, he explains his ideas in detail: "If someone tells you what he's going to do explicitly, you don't have delusions. That's a problem we have, where people come in and say, 'No, this isn't what we had in mind,' and we say, 'No, this is exactly it.' We're very explicit about what we can do and how much it costs. You're not going to materialize on Broadway in a flying saucer for \$10,000."

Now you begin planning your shoot and your locations. Red Shark Productions' Dave Higgins (617-262-6668) postulates these basic principles: "You have to consolidate your shooting time as much as possible, try to get as much done in one location, try to really get through it, to shoot fast. You can't spend two hours lighting one setup and then come back to set another two. You'd never get done." Graeme Whifler agrees emphatically: "You've got to know minute-by-minute where you are, especially if you're on the road. If you don't, you're dead. It can take forever to light a set—it's like getting a good drum sound in recording—so locations where you don't have to use lights are great; if the weather cooperates and you've got a couple of reflectors, you can do it. That's how we did *Translator*. We did about 200 miles of locations on that, ten in a day. We had a big crew, about thirty people, a whole caravan of trucks and support



and nothing really happening except the band playing and a beautiful woman dancing. Then they say, 'Hey, we better do a little freeze-frame.' Effects keep your eye busy, but they're just distracting.

Great cheapo videomakers cultivate their cinematic sources. For Patrick Kriwanek, the "ideal pool" includes still photography and 50s new wave directors like "early Fellini, Godard, Truffaut, Antonioni and British directors like Carroll Rees (*Morgan*) and Tony Richardson (*This Sporting Life*). There's definitely the same kind of feeling in the film new wave and the present musical new

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equipment."

But while extensive planning is essential, don't neglect the intangible things that happen on the shoot that can make a video. John Marsh tells this story about Romeo Void's "Never Say Never" tape: "We weren't doing that well with the thing, so we took the mikes away and put the band in a circle; we shot it with them playing to each other. It gives the tape a spontaneity of interaction, where on most tapes you get a lot of preening, presentational shoots. We cut that tape for the personal rela-



tionships. They come off as a very nice group of people, and that was the quality that sold that video. We had planning, we had sets and costumes, but *that's* what made the tape."

Broadcast-quality videos are usually shot on 16mm film with one camera and a fairly large supporting crew. Most of the houses took six to ten people on a shoot, and many wanted more. Between director, producer, cameraman, assistant cameraman, grip, gaffer, costume and makeup and some production managers and assistants to get coffee and flashlight batteries, you need a full staff to keep things moving. John Marsh has worked with a skeleton crew of as little as two, but hopes those days are gone: "We've cranked it off with just me and Casey, but you die, everybody's grumpy, you don't have any food. The bare bones that we can shoot with is four, but even then you go nuts, your personal life becomes a shambles." Nonetheless, Marsh recommends adding small-crew additions to the full production footage: "As a low budget crew, we can spend a few more days on something, because we're nuts. We could take Casey and a cameraman out to the desert, rent a camera for eighty bucks and do a couple of pickups, which would add incredible production values. Normally a big budget film shoot can't do that."

Working with a big cast of motivated amateurs may seem like a great no-cost proposition, but there are a number of obligations nonetheless. David Brownstein concludes: "Friends have to be treated well because you're asking them

to spend a lot of time being bored out of their minds. The best way to treat 'em well is to feed 'em well. You need them there ten or twelve hours a day—they can't leave. At the beginning, they think, 'Great, I get to be in a rock video.' At the end of the day they think, 'Boy, they really owe me for this!'"

The use of amateur actors also affects shooting style. Graeme Whifler says flatly, "If you're dealing with non-professional actors, you have to burn a lot of film in front of them before they start to work. It's a huge factor: it's terrifying to be on TV. As the shoot starts, we shoot far away shots, shots where we can get away with tense people. And then I try to *wear 'em down*; when they're just starting to get tired, about six hours into it, I go in close and do all the intimate stuff. That's when they can perform, when they break down their barriers and look right into the lens. You get them to *like* the camera."

Economy of shooting style is generally a necessity of low budget, which makes a practiced hand all the more critical. John Marsh explains, "If they wanted a dolly on a power move at a certain place in a song, some people would plan it out and take all day to shoot it. We shoot it all at once, with the moves in it, because Casey himself pushes the dolly. We start wide and work in, making our moves at the top of the verses or right on the power chords." Variation of camera angles is essential. "It's a question of coverage, how many close-ups you shoot, how many long shots," explains Marsh. "On a lot of tapes amateurs will do, they'll shoot all midshots, cutting midshot to midshot. They don't know how to cut in certain contrast rhythms."

"I don't recommend that a band do their own editing," seconds Graeme Whifler. "In fact, I wouldn't let them near the editing room. It becomes a big committee thing, a nightmare. Editing is an art form in itself."

Patrick Kriwanek adds another pitfall to the uninitiated: "Color is hard; you can really screw up quickly with the wrong colors, subliminally pulling focus away from the group or what they're doing. That alone is the number one thing that separates the men from the boys on MTV. The good companies have a strong sense of color." Kriwanek advocates the use of black and white, but notes, "It's difficult to secure the stock. Kodak doesn't make it anymore and you have to find an occasional run that they're doing for a special project. The Call video only got done because Ford was doing a black and white commercial at the time."


Once you're past the editing, you're into post-production, home of the special effect. David Brownstein lays down

the acid test of low budget special effects: "Use them when there's a reason for them happening. When they fit, no one notices. When they don't fit, everyone goes, 'Whoop, there's an ADO effect.' In the video we did for Rubber Rodeo, there's a scene where the lead singer sings, 'When I think of the men I saw in the movies....' She pulls a big screen across, on which old cowboy films are playing. It was a simple effect, but it was specifically motivated. It gets a laugh instead of calling attention to itself."

Patrick Kriwanek is less tolerant: "Video effects are *out, out, out*. That's the fastest way to lose money and the quickest way to wipe out an attention span. In my opinion, it's always an attempt to cover up a mistake in continuity." If you *must* use an effect, here's Kriwanek's guide to what's in and out: "Smoke is out. Slow motion is in. Garters and high heels are out. Women in cages, models that are in the video for no reason whatsoever are out. I secretly love ZZ Top's videos, but politically they're really bad. I also think that jazz dance numbers are out. For me, that is instantaneous nowhere. It just doesn't fit this art form."

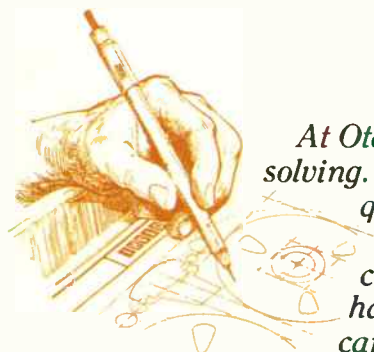
By now, you've probably guessed that your band won't be able to duplicate your favorite MTV extravagance, but most low budget filmmakers don't see

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ARE GOOD, YOU
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LOTS OF VIDEO
EFFECTS"**

that as a disadvantage. John Marsh declares, "It bothers me that most artists don't take control of their statements, that basically they're just Coca-Cola products. But that's just the state of art in the United States. Most videotapes sell the same things that sell products: power, sexist images, exploitation of people, separation of people, all sorts of crap. I mean, protofascism reigns in rock videos." Nevertheless, Graeme Whifler shrugs at the big budget assault on the rock video playlists and the problems it poses for new bands: "They gotta get that production value to be competitive in today's video market, but the great videos have a way of coming to the surface. It takes 'em longer, but they have an effect all their own. Even if MTV doesn't play them, they get seen." 

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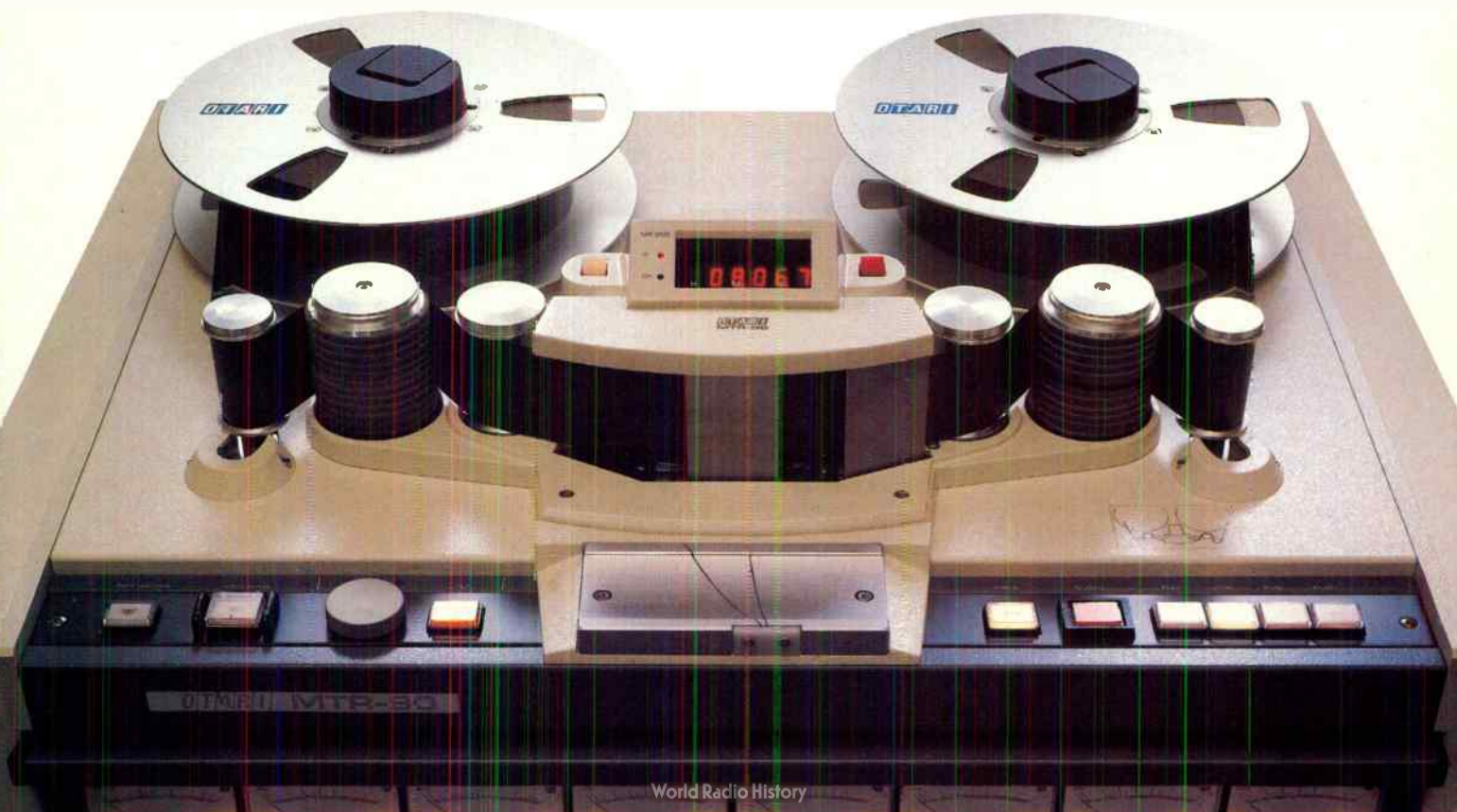
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SLICKEE BOYS

Psychedelia Hits the Beaches in the Surprise MTV Hit of the Year

By J.D. Considine

"When I Go To The Beach" is exactly the sort of beach music you'd expect to hear from a suburban Washington, D.C. garage band—a frothy swirl of surf riffs and psychedelic silliness, B-movie imagery and cheesy backing vocals. It's not, however, the sort of thing you'd ever expect to see in lurid color unless you were lucky enough to catch the band in concert. Yet three times daily for most of the summer rock fans from coast to coast had the opportunity to sing along with the Hawaiian-shirted Mark Noone as "When I Go To The Beach" turned up alongside the likes of the Police and Def Leppard on MTV.

Enviably exposure to be sure, and quite a coup for a band with no label, much less the sort of corporate clout associated with most MTV artists. How did they do it? What pushed them to the top of the pile, giving them the chance other bands across the country would kill for?

"We just lucked out," shrugs Noone amiably.

Well, yes, that about says it. "When I Go To The Beach," a flashy, cartoonish video full of beer, bikinis, bikers and the

white sands of Rehoboth beach, was essentially a gift from the gods as far as the Slickee Boys are concerned. Originally, the piece was shot as part of a projected half-hour comedy-and-music package that a Silver Spring, Maryland production company called Vox Cam hoped to sell to various cable outlets across the country. The comedy was to be provided by Travesty, Limited, the music by the Slickee Boys.

"Unfortunately," says Noone, "the whole half-hour package never got off the ground. Haven McKinney, the producer, left Vox Cam through complications that arose from this package; the package was never put together. The Slickee Boys were the only ones who got anything out of it, which is the video. Travesty didn't get anything out of it, Haven didn't get anything out of it, but we did. We're a lucky band."

Their luck didn't simply extend to getting an expensive video practically for free, either. (Just how expensive is confidential: "It was a real healthy bill," is all Noone will say, although he allows that the figure was in the \$25,000 range.) The Slickees also benefited from being teamed with Travesty's Pat Carroll, a comedian and filmmaker whose warped sensibility perfectly matched the Slickees' nutty nostalgia for 60s' style. Carroll's conceptual input was evenly balanced by the technical know-how of director Rich West, whose familiarity with the miracles of video made many of the video's cheap effects possible.

"We came up with the ideas that we

wanted and proposed them to Rich. Then he said, 'Okay, this is how we do it,'" says Noone. "There's this one part in the middle of the song where the solo comes on real strong. It's real beachy and you kind of imagine a big shindig on the sand. I told Rich that was what we wanted and he said, 'This is what we'll do: before this part, we'll have you guys on a surfboard, have Marshall [Keith, the Slickees' lead guitarist] fall off the surfboard, fly through the air and land on the beach.'"

Noone assumes a 'yeah, sure' expression and says, "I said, 'Great, Rich. That's a real good scene. You hire the helicopters and we'll be fine.'"

So how did he pull that off? "Do you know what a Chromakey is? It's where they videotape you in the studio with a blue background, which looks invisible to the camera, so they can superimpose you onto something else."

"It's like the old velvet glove routine," adds Keith.

"So they had us standing around in the studio, moving ourselves like we were surfing, and then Marshall jumped off the surfboard. Then they videotaped Marshall standing in the studio, waving his arms around like he was flying through the air."

"They do this thing where they keep reversing the image, so it looks like I'm flipping over," says Keith.

"Finally, they had Marshall jump off this garbage can down at the beach," says drummer Dan Palenski, "so they have a shot of him landing."

"It gets the point across," concludes Keith, "but actually, if you analyze it, it looks really weak."

"It looked real hokey," agrees Noone. "But then again, that was part of what we were going for. We wanted some of the real hokiness of the 'Beach Blanket Bikini Bingo' films, which we got."

The look may have been low-class, but the actual production was completely professional. Vox Cam took a truck and a union crew one hundred forty miles across the Chesapeake Bay to Delaware for the beach shots, "which were all these twenty second bits," says Keith. "They had tons of videotape and they spent a very long time editing it."

"They had two hours of raw tape that they had to edit down to two and a half minutes," says bassist John Chumbris.

"Yeah, editing it," agrees Noone. "That's the main thing, the editing. The original taping is probably a quarter of it and the rest of it's all editing."

Of course, there were different problems with each. To do the actual taping required essentially three separate shots: one at Rehoboth, one in the studio and one on location in suburban Virginia. For a segment that showed the band hitch-hiking—"Right underneath a sign

continued on page 100

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INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS

Better Playing With Your Own Private Superstar Teacher

By Michael Shore

It seems safe to say that by now, most of us have had it up to here with this rock video revolution. But while MTV and all other promo seltzer gets the big media stir, some people—ever so quietly and industriously—have been working of another angle on music video. A natural, obvious and overwhelmingly sensible kind of music video: that's right, instructional video cassettes featuring top-flight musicians.

First out of the box was Baltimore's Axis Video (P.O. Box 21322, Baltimore, MD 21208), who produced a couple of tapes featuring Max Roach in early 1972, *In Concert* and *In Session*. The former presented Max doing his masterful thing in a solo Kool/Newport Jazz Fest date (including the incomparable "The Drum Also Waltzes" solo); the latter showed Max and his quintet recording the *Chattahoochie Red* LP. Then, late in 1982, Axis released *Bruford And The Beat*, an up-close-and-personal look at the style, technique and philosophy of one of rock's most thoughtful and distinctive drummers.

To be fair to Axis, these tapes are not instructional *per se*: Axis calls them

"Percussion Profiles," and that's exactly what they are. By using nice, multiple camera angles and an off-screen interviewer, you, in effect, are there in the studio or onstage with the drummers as they talk and play, explain and demonstrate. Since they aren't outright down-to-cases instructional tapes, one more or less would have to be some sort of fan of these drummers to really want to buy them. But could anyone deny that the chance to see Max and Bill do their stuff up close, and be able to rewind and watch particular licks over and over again, in slow motion even, would be some kind of learning experience?

In all three Axis tapes the drummers in question play and talk, talk and play. Of the three, I think the Bruford tape goes into a greater depth—Bill explains his mutant Simmons electronic drum kit, his distinctive whip-crack snare sound, reflects on the drummer's role in an ensemble and in the best part of all, anatomically breaks down that killer 17/8 rhythm in Crimson's "Discipline," then plays it with the band. My one complaint (and I'm an inveterate Bruford freak, so I may have subjected the tape to closer scrutiny than many) is that *Bruford and the Beat* fails to document Bruford's earlier style, before he went electro-ethno-polyrhythmic. I was deeply into Bruford back when he was with Yes and the earlier Crimson; his drumming then, with its impeccable logic, tasteful restraint and fractured syncopations, was the perfect rock equivalent to Max Roach, whereas now

Bill's playing like a rock Elvin Jones. But then, there's plenty in *Bruford And The Beat* already; time was no doubt limited, and it's easy to see why Bill would have preferred to stick to the business at hand. Maybe there will be a Volume Two.

At any rate, the Axis tapes are beautifully produced, and not at all unreasonably priced at \$49.95 plus \$5 shipping and handling for roughly one-hour programs. (Recently though, distribution of the Bruford tape was taken over by Casino Percussion Products, Box 372, Plainview, NY 11803.) What Axis does in the future depends on how well the current line sells, of course, but so far Axis says all three tapes, especially the Bruford, have sold well with little or no advertising. May I suggest Axis profile Famoudou Don Moye, Jack DeJohnette, Sly Dunbar or Carlton Barrett... the possibilities are limitless.

Earlier this year, New York-based Drummers Collective (541 Sixth Avenue, New York, NY 10011) began releasing its own instructional video cassettes and these babies are quite literally *instructional*. On- and off-screen interviewers ask pointed questions of the players, so that this or that rudiment or technique may be demonstrated and explained in greater depth. Their first tape was actually a recording of a clinic the legendary R&B drummer Bernard "Pretty" Purdie was holding at the Collective one night. Rob Wallis of the Drummers Collective explains: "We thought the clinic was so great we felt bad for all the people who had to miss it for whatever reason. At first we decided to videotape it just for posterity, so people using the clinic could look at it if they wanted to. Then we thought of all the people in Kalamazoo or wherever who might not get to see a clinic here at all or even hear about it. And this was, like, late 1981. The whole music video thing was beginning to happen, so we figured, 'Hey, video's a great way to document what we're doing with our clinics *and* provide a new instructional medium for people too.' It just took off from there."

Their first production, the Purdie tape, runs just under an hour and is marvelous; Purdie discusses the differences between live and studio drumming, the necessity of letting a recording engineer determine your drum sound rather than vice-versa ("After all," he chuckles, "after you're through playing he's still gonna have the tapes"), and how he conceptualized and executed certain famous grooves (including Aretha's "Rock Steady"). Quick to follow were hour-long tapes featuring Ed Thigpen on jazz drum basics, using the bass drum in swing and bebop, phrasing in time *and* with the melody, brush technique, the evolution of the bebop triplet ride pattern,

continued on page 97

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HOME VIDEO

Getting Into the Game: Doing It Yourself, With Your Eyes Open

By Robert Minshall

You've just spent the last two hours watching MTV, and much of it has left you muttering: "Gee, I could do it as well as that." After all, it is the age of home electronics. Audio tapes made on home studios sometimes sound as good as that new record you just heard yesterday. Surely the time has come to run out and set yourself up with a home video studio, right?

Well, yes. And then again, no. While home recording has achieved a phenomenal degree of quality for a relatively small price, video is a far more complex matter. Home video setups are unlikely to achieve anything approaching broadcast quality.

Consider the entire spectrum of frequencies audible to the human ear, and thus the only ones with which recording technology need be concerned, is in the range of only about 20,000 Hertz (cycles). In contrast, video, which deals with the electronic reproduction of light, deals in frequencies of several megahertz (several million cycles), roughly a hundred times that of audio. It's a different ballpark, and thus a much more highly refined technology.

Professional videotape recording these days is generally done in one of two formats: 1-inch reel-to-reel, which operates at a speed of just over 9 ips, or 2-inch, the older format first developed by Ampex in the 1950s, which generally operates at 15 ips. Major networks (and MTV) at this time use almost exclusively the 1-inch C format for major productions, although the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch U-matic cassette format is used extensively in news broadcasts for minicams and the like. Ampex and Sony are the primary manufacturers of 1-inch C tape decks, which run from \$75,000 to \$125,000 for one deck, exclusive of all necessary support equipment without which these decks cannot be operated. One typical edit suite, consisting of three tape machines, scopes, sync generators (which generate the basic pulses needed to operate quality systems), a large switcher, digital effects banks, audio consoles, monitors and the computer editor, run about a million dollars. And this is just for editing.

So that's the bad news; home video just does not approach professional setups in the way that home audio does. Furthermore, it will likely be at least several years before major changes occur on the lower budget front.

So what's the good news? Simply that there is relatively low-budget video available at all. But picture quality won't be the greatest. Editing will be limited, slow and difficult, and degradation will be rapid as you dub from generation to generation. And you must expect to pay

\$10,000 to \$20,000 if you plan to be much more creative than shooting home movies on your Betamax camera and recorder.

The first thing you'll need, of course, is a camera. A chain is only as good as its weakest link, and picture quality will only be as good as the poorest piece of equipment allows it to be. If you start with a poor image, the situation can only get worse. Let's forget about the \$800 items and discuss a different price range.

Pictures produced by a color television are the sum of three separate cathodes. Everything you see on a color monitor or receiver is some combination of red, green and blue. High-end studio cameras are mostly all of the three-tube variety, in which light is optically divided by prisms, then received on three separate tubes, one for each color. The camera then encodes the outputs of the three tubes into composite video, which is ultimately decoded at your receiver or monitor. Less expensive cameras, including all of the cheap ones made for use with half-inch tape systems are of the one-tube variety, in which the color is synthesized electronically, a less accurate approximation which leads to increased error and poorer color response.

In the under \$10,000 range, the best camera available is probably the brand new Sony DXC-M3. It is a three-tube camera with excellent low light characteristics, enabling you to take advantage of subtle lighting effects. It has automatic white balance, auto black balance and auto registration. (Registration insures that the three primary colors overlay each other exactly.) The camera generates its own reference signals, or color bars, useful for editing at a fully-equipped facility. The DCX-M3 is expensive though, running between \$6,000 and \$7,000.

Several other good three-tube cameras are available for slightly less money, although neither has the same low-light characteristics. The Hitachi FP-15 is available for about \$6,000, while the JVC-1900 runs about \$5,000.

A workhorse in the one-tube camera department has been the Sony DXC-1800, which also has a bar generator, and auto white and black balance. It lists for \$2,995. The Hitachi FP-10 is also a widely used one-tube camera, and runs in the neighborhood of \$4,000.

All of the above cameras are meant to interface with $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cassette decks. As we will shortly discuss, the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch format is superior to the $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch format, but is substantially more expensive. There is one $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch format, however, which can be edited on. Sony's Beta I, which operates at twice the tape speed of Beta II, has a decent picture and is

continued on page 98



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Instructionals from pg. 92

and so on; fusion drum star Lenny White on playing approach, practice, technique, and intriguingly, developing and maintaining an "internal metronome." Also featured are funk session drummer Yogi Horton on "The History of R&B/Funk Drumming" and just about all of its various styles from Purdie's to Motown to New Orleans second-line to his own great playing, and the one and only Steve Gadd on his marching-band roots, practice, application of rudiments to the kit, chart reading, how to play just like Tony Williams, playing sambas on a trap set, and most incredible of all, the four-stick technique he used for that great "Mozambique"-derived Afro-Latin polyrhythm riff he played on Paul Simon's "Late In The Evening."

Drummers Collective is more than just a hangout for up-and-coming drummers, though. They also have "rhythm section labs" where drummers work with bassists, guitarists and keyboardists. The Collective's upcoming Fall '83 video releases reflect some of this diversity. Richard Tee, the world's busiest session keyboardist, analyzes studio piano playing, chord substitutions, playing "Happy Birthday" in a Ray Charles funky-blues vein and in faultless boogie-woogie time, and keep-

ing your head up and your eyes on the other players as well as on the charts in a studio. Jazz guitarist John Scofield, currently in Miles Davis' band, examines techniques and philosophies of improvisation, covering seventeen major modes and scales, chromatics, passing tones, picking techniques and equipment.

One of the greatest things about these and Axis' tapes is how very freely these musicians share their wisdom. There's no, "I ain't about to open my trick bag" paranoia, only a total openness and cooperation that portrays the principals as swell guys and not just great players. The Drummers Collective tapes are a bit higher in price than Axis' at \$79.95 (the Purdie is \$69.95 due to its slightly shorter length), but they're also more explicitly instructional. When I spoke with Wallis, he had all sorts of ideas: Panama Francis or maybe even Jo Jones on swing drumming; Latin percussion with traditional instruments and on a drum kit (a lot harder than it might) demonstrated by the Collective's own Frankie Malave; David Sanborn or Michael Brecker on sax; Nana Vasconcelos or someone comparable on Brazilian percussion. For now, the possibilities for instructional videos seem limited solely by money available for production.

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Home Video from pg. 94 designed for editing. The camera Sony makes for the Beta I system, which they advertise as having reasonable low light characteristics, is the one-tube HVC-280. The best part about this camera is the price; it lists for only \$1,350. (P.S: Don't skimp on the brand of videotape. Among the leading manufacturers are Scotch, Maxell, TDK, Memorex, Fuji, JVC and Sony.)

Well, you've finished all your shooting, and now is where it all comes together: post-production and editing. Unlike film or audio editing, videotape editing does not involve cutting tape, but rather is done electronically.

There are three basic record modes

on a videotape deck: master record, assemble edit and insert edit. In master record, you simply hit PLAY and RECORD, laying a new control track, new audio tracks and new video. If you hit master record in the middle of a previous recording, you will destroy the control track at that point, and with it, the continuity in the video. All home decks and many of the less expensive 3/4-inch decks only have master record and thus cannot be edited upon.

When you edit, you record video and audio only, leaving the control track intact and untouched. Insert editing is by far the more reliable method, as control track problems, and thus video breakup, are more likely to occur in recordings

made in the assemble mode. Virtually all editing in a major post-production facility is done in the insert mode, as there is simply one less major variable.

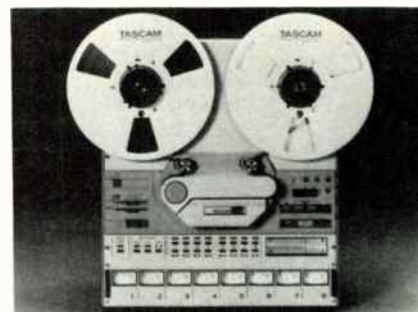
In music videos, the music or soundtrack is laid first (insert mode, audio only, on a pre-recorded tape). The video is then inserted (video-only editing) over the music. In this way, you can most assuredly achieve cuts to the music.

There are two basic types of editors, one using the control track frame pulse (of which there is one per frame), and one using SMPTE time code. The time code editors are the only ones that allow you precise, on-frame edits, but are substantially more expensive. Control track editors generally allow accuracy only to within about three frames. To get optimum lip sync characteristics when editing, time code is a must.

But time code is recorded on an audio track, which presents several problems when using it with the tape systems to be discussed herein. First of all, many of the cassette recorders have only two audio tracks, the use of one for time code eliminates the possibility of stereo recording, leaving, of course, mono as the only option. Second is the problem of crosstalk or bleedthrough. In the past, recording generally was not done on tracks adjacent to the time code track, to prevent such bleedthrough.

A new generation of audio tape decks has addressed these tricky problems. Manufacturers the likes of Tascam, Fostex and Otari now build in all the tallies and interface controls necessary for hooking up with editors and synchronizers (a tally is a digitally encoded acknowledgement that a command from the editor has been executed by the deck). These sophisticated interlocks not only read time codes, but monitor tape speed, and other critical functions. They are now standard on-board features for the Tascam 42, 48, 52 and 58 decks; the Fostex 1/2-inch 8-track deck, the B-16 (the A-8 can also be modified); and the Otari MX-5050 BQ-2, MX-5050 Mark III series, MX-7800 and MTR-10 and 12 decks. Otari also offers a more sophisticated serial (as opposed to parallel) interface on their MTR-90 series; other manufacturers are waiting for

continued on next page



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Slickee Boys from pg. 90

saying, "Unlawful To Pick Up Pedestrians," recalls guitarist Kim Kane—the band stood alongside I-495 with their thumbs out. "We're lucky nobody stopped for us," laughs Keith. "It would have been embarrassing to explain, 'No, we're not really hitching....'"

"Aw, nobody stops there anyway," sniffs Keith. "I've hitch-hiked there before."

The editing, on the other hand, required very little in the way of logistics, but ultimately ate up the most time and money. "The editors are *real* expensive," Noone says. "All in all, it took almost a year, from the day we started to the day we had the finished product. It shouldn't have taken all that time, but since we were getting this 'buddy' deal through Vox Cam, we were on a back burner."

By the time the video was finished, the cable project had met its end as well. Fortunately, the band had worked out a deal from the start that gave them ownership of the video (along with an obligation to repay Vox Cam and McKinney should the Slickees ever make any money from the project). Now all they needed was a place to show it.


Fortunately, that wasn't too difficult. Even though the single that should have accompanied the video was another six months in coming, the band pitched the clip to anybody who'd listen. "It was kind of a naive approach," says Palenski. "Sort of, 'Here's this great video—play it!'" Because so many cable outlets were looking for good, highly-watchable music videos, the band lucked out once again, signing contracts for "When I Go To The Beach" to be shown on HBO, Show Time and Cinemax.

Their biggest break, though, came with MTV. The video was entered in the channel's Basement Tapes contest, and even though it only placed second, it was later added to MTV's playlist in light rotation (three times daily) for several months. "That's the magic thing, though," says Noone. "MTV's what everybody's talking about. The record companies just don't see little live bands anymore. Getting on MTV is the only way they're going to see you."

So did the Slickees land any offers from their video visibility?

Uh, no. "Pretty much all it did was give us a louder buzz," says Noone. "Before this, a lot of people had never heard of us. Now they have. The guy who does our promotions, Leo Donohoe, was talking to some guy the other day and the guy had never heard of us, but he saw our name in the 'MTV Adds' in *Billboard*."

In short, then, "When I Go To The Beach" was a \$25,000 ploy to get listed as an "add" in *Billboard*?

Noone laughs. "Yeah, basically. So far anyway. But you never know." 

Home Video from pg. 98

standardization of protocol and signal requirement before they follow suit. These new video-friendly decks also have significantly improved their cross-talk characteristics and finely tuned the tape tensioning, so you can move minute distances on the tape to find that perfect sync point. Tascam has recently gone to a 60 Hertz tachometer to make it compatible with thirty-frames-per-second video speed, for accurate high speed position locating without putting the tape in contact with the head. Even if you are not making videos yourself, the would-be commercial or soundtrack maker would find the synching capabilities of these new decks a big plus.

Now, what editing and tape systems are available? Here goes: for a basic ¾-inch two-machine system (one record machine on to which you will edit, and one playback machine), JVC makes a good system consisting of the 8250 editing deck, the 5550 playback deck, and the VE-90 editor (which is really the same as the Convergence ECS-90 editor, about which we will say more momentarily). This system runs about \$11,500. If you want time code editing, add another \$2,500. An equivalent Sony system would be the 5850 editing deck (\$7,250), the 5800 playback deck (\$4,500), coupled with the RM 440 editor (\$1,770), for a total system cost of \$13,520. If you want time code editing, substitute the Convergence ECS-90 time code editor for \$5,500, for a system cost of \$17,250. There is also a new editor made by EECO with a few more features, which runs about \$7,000.

All of the above ¾-inch systems allow no frills, cuts-only editing. If you want three-machine control (one record and two playback), allowing for A/B rolls, and increased flexibility, along with the capability for dissolve and wipes (for which you would need a switcher, sometimes called a mix effects generator), the costs rise rapidly. A second playback machine runs you another \$5,000 or so, the edit controller with the increased capability (such as a Convergence 103BT) about \$15,000, and the switcher \$5,000-\$10,000 more.

Earlier we mentioned the Beta I alternative. You can get the editing machine for \$2,650 (the Sony SLO-383), the playback deck for \$1,890, and the editor for \$1,770 (the RM-440, no time code capability). The price, with the HBC-2800 camera mentioned earlier, would run \$7,660, excluding the necessary support equipment mentioned above. As this is roughly half of what the equivalently equipped ¾-inch system would run you, it might be your best bet if you are interested in making edited conceptual demos. It is a format in limited use, however, and compatible editing facilities

continued on page 126



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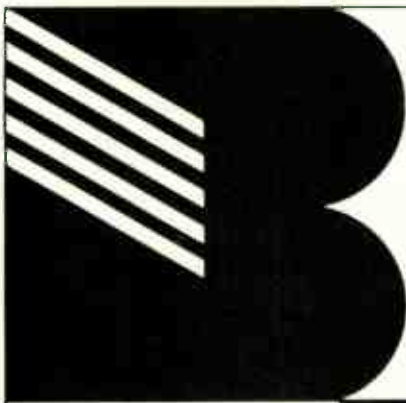
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Yamaha Combo Products Division has introduced a new line of affordable (under \$300) professional electric guitars. The line includes the SC300T and SBG200 (shown) electric guitars and the BB300 bass. All three models feature rosewood fingerboards and nato bodies. The two electric guitars have nato necks, and the bass' neck is one-piece maple.

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R E V I E W S

Bob Dylan *Infidels* (Columbia)

BOB DYLAN

Some months ago in New York, Bob Dylan made an impromptu appearance during a performance by Levon Helm and Rick Danko at the Lone Star Cafe. He got up onstage, sang a few tunes and then reportedly announced to the startled assemblage, "You better get ready because I'm coming back."

He wasn't kidding. *Infidels* is an album worthy of all the obligatory hype from remorseful rock critics its release is guaranteed to elicit: the greatest thing since sliced bread and/or *Blood On The Tracks*; a document of moral suasion to scatter the synth-pop pharisees from the temple; harbinger of a comeback to rival Muhammad Ali's; Orpheus ascendent, born-again repentant, rock 'n' roll triumphant, poet of the lumpen...and if I exaggerate, may the Lord strike me down with a bolt of, uh, cloth.

Well anyway, *Infidels* is a powerful, angry, haunting, perversely beautiful record. Whether it's actually on a par with *Highway 61 Revisited*, *John Wesley Harding* or *Blood On The Tracks*, its most obvious musical predecessors, I'd not care to argue, or judge. But I do contend that all these masterworks, while brilliantly evocative of our own emotional landscapes, were never any riskier or more personally revealing than *Slow Train Coming*, *Street Legal* or even—gulp!—*Saved*. In other words, *Infidels* is not a "comeback" album because as an artist, Dylan never compromised the artistic imperative to first be true to oneself. If certain secular humanists (like myself) had trouble relating to those interim voyages, that only underscored the integrity of his convictions (or didn't you think he knew that born-again weren't cool?).

Ironically, *Infidels* is invested with even more moral, if less specifically, religious fervor than Bob's last few outings. Here every song posits a problem and

the problem is this: good versus evil. The best songs, like "What's A Sweetheart Like You Doing In A Place Like This?" expertly mesh the personal with the philosophical; sung to an innocent traipsing through the belly of a presumably corporate beast, Dylan's tone is at first sympathetic, then cautionary, accusatory and finally sorrowful, shifting the angles of observation by the time each chorus rolls around. His images range from soft-focus to razor-nasty ("You could be known as the most beautiful woman/ Who ever crawled across cut glass/ To make a deal"), while the instrumental accompaniment, notably Mark Knopfler's liquid guitar fills, suggest the poignance of earlier romantic ballads like "You're A Big Girl Now." Indeed, Knopfler, who's listed as co-producer (though the LPs overall texture is clearly Dylan's), fuses with ace riddimists Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare to provide Dylan with his strongest musical groove since the Band's. And though his vocals are set back further than usual in the mix, Dylan's projection is always crisp, authoritative and occasionally explosive.

On "Union Sundown," for example, he launches a jeremiad against the evils of capitalism that travels far beyond the provincial borders of, say, Billy Joel's "Allentown." "The world isn't ruled by democracy," he sneers at one point, while the band kicks along a roiling delta blues-boogie, "the world is ruled by violence." On the sarcastically titled "Neighborhood Bully," an allegory for Israel that's synched to a classic Rolling Stones-styled riff (Ron Wood guest stars), he goes further, excoriating liberal-think ("Neighborhood bully/ He lives to survive/ He's criticized and condemned/ For being alive"), the righteousness of born-again Christians apparently still paling before the militance of born-again Zionists. But then Dylan's politics have usually been misconstrued as something apart from an intuitive grasp of what constitutes "justice," so that even as I cannot politically agree with the narrow frame of "Neighborhood Bully" without acknowledging a larger matrix, on first listen, the

intensity of Dylan's feeling brought tears to my eyes.

Infidels is hardly a joyous album, or even a particularly consoling one. *John Wesley Harding* at least offered "I'll Be Your Baby Tonight" as a hopeful farewell coda; *Infidels* can only caution "Don't Break Down On Me Tonight," which suggests a gulf of spirit as wide as all the years in between. That Dylan can bridge that gulf without either shrinking from its implications or conjuring some bogus "transcendence" is an honorable achievement. That his vision could still become the basis for a group of songs as bracing and honestly delivered as *Infidels* is transcendent.

Get ready. He's back. — **Mark Rowland**

The Style Council *Introducing The Style Council* (Polydor)

Paul Young
No Parlez (Columbia)

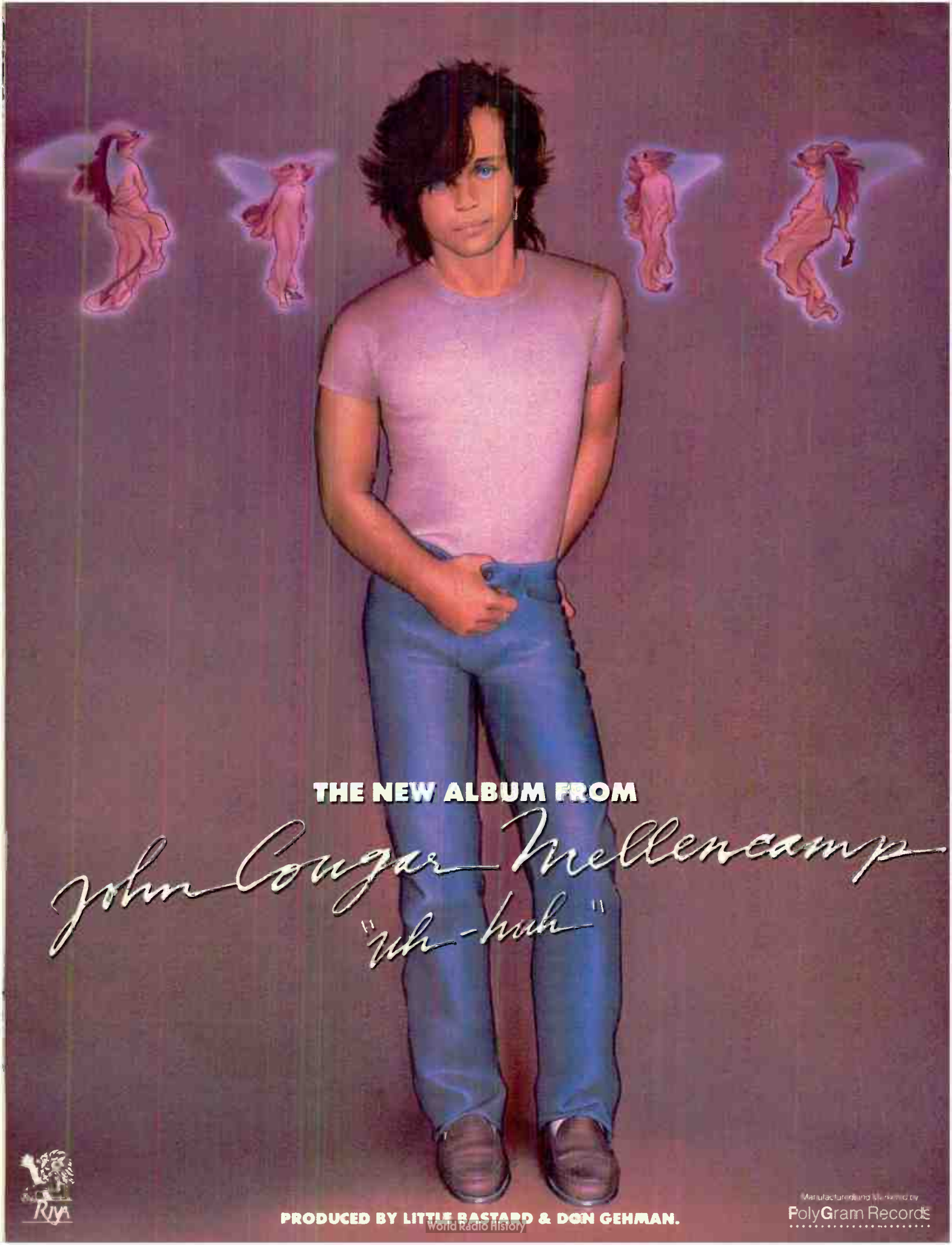


It takes nerve to open an LP—even a mini-LP—with a seven-minute dirge, but the Style Council's Paul Weller has never wanted for that.

A few months after he dissolved the Jam at the peak of their British popularity, Weller reappeared with his new "group": himself, keyboard player Mick Talbot and occasional studio musicians. The Style Council presumably provides a more accurate, or servile, forum for Weller's current musical obsessions.

In the Jam, Weller paid homage to England's mod bands of the 60s. The Style Council pays homage to the U.S. soul music to which the mod bands paid homage. If Weller is still ruled by his influences, at least now he is going to the source. Consequently, his singing is less stiff than before, and the music less brittle.

Introducing the Style Council digests the band's three U.K. 45s to date. The seven tracks vary in approach, bound together by Weller's prickly sense of



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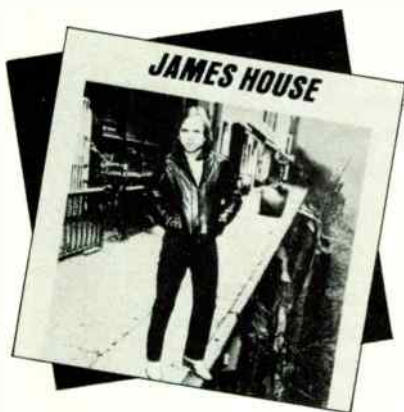
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integrity. The slow, languid "Long Hot Summer" eventually mesmerizes with its minimal chord changes, cyclical bass lines and white-boy falsetto chorus. (The tune is also here in an unimaginative "club mix.") "Headstart For Happiness," which also explores the theme of broken romance, is a stripped-down duet; just Weller's vocal and acoustic guitar, and Talbot's organ. Folk-soul, anyone? "Money-Go-Round" is a droning political diatribe ("The same old wealth in the same old hands"), while the snappy precision of "Speak Like A Child" resurrects vintage Motown.

As always, Weller's dead earnestness is at odds with the music's inherent joyfulness; lyrics like "I'm always sad/ In a natural way" justify being buried in the mix. Originality has never been Weller's strong suit, but as long as he remains ambitious, the Style Council will bear watching.

Paul Young is another Britisher with a penchant for soul, although he expresses himself less neurotically than Paul Weller. *No Parlez*, Young's debut solo LP (he sang previously with the Q-Tips), is a breezy collection of love songs distinguished by his pleasantly boyish tenor, a solid high-tech backing band and busy but unobtrusive arrangements. A daring attempt at Joy Division's "Love Will Tear Us Apart" understandably lacks the aura of the original; Young sounds more comfortable with a conventional show-stopper like Marvin Gaye's "Wherever I Lay My Hat (That's My Home)". Although *No Parlez's* spotlight is on the singer, an emphatic rhythm section and medium-tempo material make it danceable as well as listenable. No heavy statements here—just sparkling pop music. — **Scott Isler**

Ray Manzarek *Carmina Burana* (A&M) The Doors *Alive She Cried* (Elektra)



Before you start groaning about *more* Doors Revival ripoffs and the unhealthy grip the late Jim Morrison has on the imagination of rock teens today, spare a thought for *Carmina Burana*, the new solo outing by ex-Doors organist Ray Manzarek. Now seriously, do you really believe Manzarek's game is to make a killing off impressionable young Doors fans who also happen to be gonzo about a German cantata based on the heretic poesy of thirteenth century monks? To anyone who doesn't know *Carmina Burana* from Carmine Appice, Manzarek's art-pop interpretation of Carl Orff's 1935 choral

work is probably going to sound like Music To Invade Small Eastern European Countries By—cathedral vocal majesty with a hearty beer-garden flavor, jumpy polka-like rhythms cloaked in ominous gray melodies and topped by fearsome keyboard spires.

But Manzarek, together with producers Philip Glass and Kurt Munkacsi, has coolly walked the dangerously thin line between stuffy purism and Rick Wakeman overkill in applying *CB* to rock instrumentation. Orff's use of uncomplicated melodic phrases and his tendency to reach climaxes by snowballing repetition is not far from Glass' own minimalist devices. To emphasize that dramatic simplicity, Glass and Munkacsi have set Manzarek's wisely restrained chamber-quality arrangements in a dry, gently layered sound with bracing airy spaces between the choir's Latin wail and straight-faced bop of the seven-piece band. The respectful cut of Manzarek's fusion stride is not entirely true to the rebel spirit of secular excess in the poems. Still, he throws in some welcome light relief with the perverse Zappa-phonetic jazz oom-pah in "Boiling Rags" and a full-throttle organ solo in "The Face Of Spring" that sounds like it walked right out of "Light My Fire."

Which conveniently brings us to *Alive She Cried*. Coming at the height of Doorsmania (and just in time for Christmas giving), this album of previously unreleased live performances has a faint mercenary air about it. Yet because it is free of memorial pretension and mythic projections of Jim Morrison as God, it succeeds as a tough arrogant rock 'n' roll record with moments of genuinely transcendent energy rising up from the band's collision of white blues crunch, freakout aggression and naive poetic ambition.

The ten-minute "Light My Fire" certainly vindicates the Doors' later reputation as an obedient vehicle for Morrison's drunken indulgences and literary experiments. Morrison's singing is strong, fervent, but basically by the book. The attack in those extended solos is a different story—Manzarek hammering out abrasive clusters of organ notes, Robby Krieger's guitar coiling around them like a dizzy snake, John Densmore slamming his kit silly with furious accuracy. And *then* Morrison leaps into the fray with a brazen Tarzan yell that says more about his animal stage presence than all of his 60s press clips.

"Love Me Two Times" and "Moonlight Drive" do not differ appreciably from the studio versions, but the Doors drive through them hard, Krieger sneaking up on you in the latter with the slimy glide of his guitar. Densmore keeps "You Make Me Real" going with Keith Moon hysterics. And the vintage blues "Little Red Rooster" is coated with earnest if not

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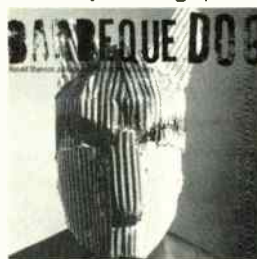
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entirely authentic grease.

With the exception of some snatches of verse during instrumental breaks and a 1968 take of "Texas Radio And The Big Beat," *Alive She Cried* shows Morrison as a team player, at his most effectively physical when the band hemmed him in with their own heady propulsion. In the punky soundcheck recording here of "Gloria," the best Morrison can come up with in his brief solo space is a coarse oral sex rap that, in 1983, sounds like bad David Lee Roth. It doesn't prove Jim Morrison was nothing without the Doors, but it helps spread the glory around. And if *Carmina Burana* lacks the fire of *Alive She Cried*, it is at least one Door's noble attempt to show he isn't nothing without Jim Morrison. — **David Fricke**

Ronald Shannon Jackson & the Decoding Society *Barbeque Dog* (Antilles)



We critics aren't to be trusted, not when we're so loose with our language that each new geek of the week is hailed as the second coming

of Yahweh. Maybe there should be an enforced prohibition of such common usage gush-phraseology as *ambience*, *irony*, *artistic resonance* and the like.

So if I use the term *brilliant* to describe the music of Ronald Shannon Jackson

& the Decoding Society on *Barbeque Dog*, will you stop reading this? If I imply that Jackson's made a conceptual and stylistic breakthrough with far-reaching implications for composers and improvisers or that his music presupposes a unity of purpose between jazz, rock, funk and ethnic musics, a unity with both cerebral and physical impact... will you still respect me in the morning?

Well, believe it this time, Virginia, because *Barbeque Dog* is the kind of music Coltrane and Hendrix would've made in a New Orleans whorehouse if Chick Webb were their drummer, and as such it represents the fruition of four years' hard work for Jackson: years of shifting personnel, lean gigs and uncertain ensemble polarity; years of tension without release and frenetic supersonic barrages of sound; years of exciting but wildly uneven albums. Years of commitment to the kind of artistic search and growth that can only be done in public, warts and all, until you've worked through your mistakes and arrived at a unique collective sound.

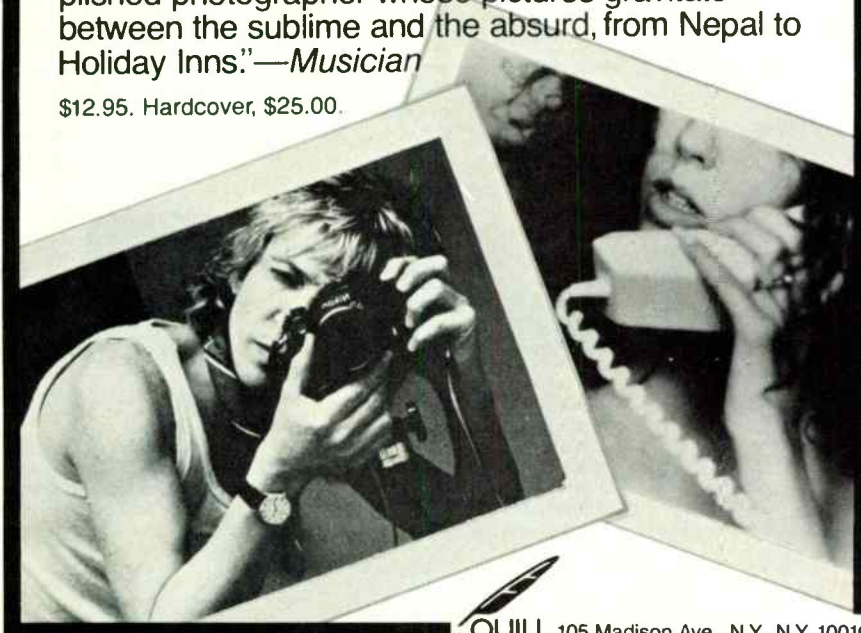
Jackson never solos because he's always soloing, hearing guitars, double electric basses, trumpet and saxophone as separate but equal adjuncts to his swirling independence. On the wind-swept, lonely "Mystery At Dawn" (where there's no drumming) and the Moorish, multi-tiered "When Cherry Blossoms Bloom In Winter, You Can Smell Last Summer," Jackson's wheels-within-wheels New Orleans approach becomes apparent in the languorous contrary motion of the horns and basses (each at a different tempo) and Vernon Reid's jangling banjo and guitar. On the Ivesian "Harlem Opera" these string and horn sections provide the orchestral gravity for a double-timed conversation between Reid's screaming Les Paul and Jackson's fanfare of warriors.

In fact, every composition is a cross-cultural gumbo of folk rhythms and melodies, like on the heraldic "Yugo Boy" where Melvin Gibbs' and Bruce Johnson's bass guitars slip and shout like Mississippi delta slide guitars as Jackson's hustling Hungarian samba combines with the Swiss airs of Zane Massey and Henry Scott's horns and guitar synthesizer to create a mood that suggests a theme song for the 1996 Olympics; or the title song, a virtual encyclopedia of greasy backbeats, funk, gospel, blues and Savannah melodies. About the only thing the Decoding Society lacks is the presence of one overwhelming solo voice to act as a majorette in Jackson's parade. But these young musicians are powerful and sensitive to the group identity, and as a result *Barbeque Dog* is one of the few crossover records that doesn't short-change any of its sources or pander to the mainstream—a new sound for the 80s. — **Chip Stern**

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Bunny Wailer Roots Radics Rockers Reggae (Shanachie)



In rural rum bars from Black River to Oracabessa, it's common for a parched Jamaican laborer, be he teetotaler or tippler, to announce the urgency of his burning thirst with a sharp RAP! upon the countertop and the lusty admission, "Fire downtown!" The request rings out with an elemental verve, in synch with the tropical swelter-fest in which the honest worker must break his back, and the human frailties he must struggle to overcome. When it comes to depicting the vivid lyricism of life in rural Jamaica, whether of one perspiring in the furrows of one's humble bush "cultivation," or embracing the simple pleasures of socializing in the village dramshop, Bunny Wailer simply has no peer.

Part preacher, part plowman, part poet, Bunny resides on a farm near Swift River, a hamlet in the hills of Portland Parish northeast of Kingston. Composing in such a bucolic environment, the mystical former Wailer has an uncanny ability to draw hauntingly compelling analogies between the stark truths and spare trappings of country life, and the computerized Babylonian machinations that threaten to trivialize and trample them into oblivion.

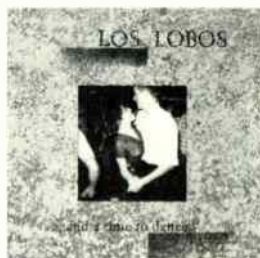
"Just mind how you run up your mouth/ Acting like a gorgon/ Be careful how you going all about/ And pretending you're a drunkard," Wailer admonishes searingly on "The Conqueror," the stunning 1981 Solomonic single that appears on *Roots Radics Rockers Reggae*, his first Stateside LP in three years. In Bunny's point-blank vocals, in the album's sizzling rhythm tracks, and in its varied themes, there is the recurring image of dread conflagration. Once the title track establishes the heated feror of those fighting the good fight—whether they're devout backwoods Rasta ascetics, fearless political activists or committed ghetto musicians—the record undertakes a panoramic exploration of the power of a tempered soul's flame: to purge, to scorch, to consume. The conciliatory political passion of "Cease Fire" (as embodied in the central symbol of the burning chalice/peace pipe) is contrasted with the incantatory religious ardor of "Love Fire." Interspersed among these two superb tracks are evocations of jam session fever in "Rockers," and dancehall lust in "Rockin' Time" (a rewrite of the old Coxson ska hit, "Jerk In Time") and "Wirly Girly." There's even an examina-

tion of the abandon of latterday rude-boys on "Let Him Go," an update of another mid-1960s Jamaican Wailing Wailers hit.

While the new album is part collection and part re-release, much of it having appeared in slightly different form on the 1980 Solomonic release, *In I Father's House*, it's fascinating how well it jells conceptually. And for sheer intensity and strength of purpose, there hasn't been a reggae album as absorbingly atmospheric since Bunny's own *Blackheart Man* (Island Records, 1976), a folkloric interpretation of the Last Days that was nothing short of a masterpiece.

At a time when the reggae scene is sadly stagnant, often soporific and increasingly arid, Bunny Wailer's prideful pastoral declamations hit the nation's record counters with a dramatic flare and a blazing intelligence. *Roots Radics Rockers Reggae* could easily have been titled *The Fire This Time*. — Timothy White

Los Lobos ...And A Time To Dance (Slash)



With all due respect for X, Los Lobos' seven-song debut effort on Slash—*...And A Time To Dance*—may be the quintessential

Los Angeles album, bridging as it does the East L.A. barrio with the polyglot culture of greater L.A. In this, their third LP, Los Lobos have managed to develop a blend that works well beyond the L.A. River border: a mix of rockabilly, jump-up blues and the toe-tapping polka pump of Flaco Jimenez-style Nortena. It is a grab-bag of styles that demands dancing no matter what one's heritage is. David Hidalgo's vocals and accordion playing evoke backyard weddings under a sweltering sun while guests take their turns dancing with the bride. Particularly on "Anselma," one of two Spanish language songs, Hidalgo belts out sentiments that come right from the roots: "If you refuse to go away and marry me, I'll take away your father's ranch and property, I'll even go as far as to burn your house down...I'm letting you know in case of escape, I'm not worried because my uncle runs the next town, I'll just let him know and he'll bring you back to me...."

The production of the album by Blast-ers' saxophonist Steve Berlin (who also contributes) and T-Bone Burnett is uncluttered and properly sparse, a front-line reaffirmation of Los Lobos' basic appeal—dance music with a communal tone. The musical stew is well spiced with some blistering accordion and gui-

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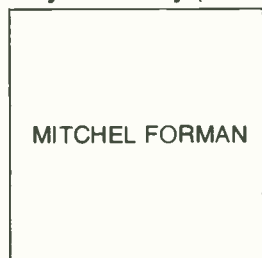


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tar work courtesy of Hidalgo and with such standard Mexican folk instruments as *guitarron* and *bajo sexto* (from Conrad Lozano and Cesar Rosas); even a techno-pop synthoid would feel moved. The quartet's beat is maintained by the servicable drumming of Louie Perez.

...*And A Time To Dance* has all the feel of a labor of love, not only on the part of Slash and the band but also from extraneous contributors like noted East L.A. artist Richard Duardo, who handled the LP's art direction. If there were anything to complain about, it would be the fact that there isn't enough. Just as the mood is set, the side is over. And from the variety presented—from Richie Valens to Don Santiago Jimenez—it's clear that Los Lobos have a wealth of material to explore. — **Jeff Spurrier**

Mitchel Forman
Only A Memory (Soul Note)



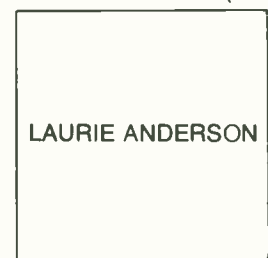
After being generally disgusted with the somnambulist meanderings of the recent rash of "sensitive" lyricists of the solo piano, it's very refreshing for me to hear Forman avoid their pitfalls. And avoid them with appealing style and conviction. A pianist and composer of formidable technical facility, Forman is able to integrate poignantly introspective, impressionistic feelings into sophisticated structures that cohere so naturally it's easy to over-

look their inherent complexity and formal logic. The six compositions featured on this impressive album flow in such fluid and natural succession that the effect is that of a grand suite—or "journie," as Forman would put it (listen to the beautifully eerie organ transition between "What Did You Think It Was That Needed To Be Loved, Anyway?" and "The Police").

Subtle sparks of wit and surprise, and Forman's very mature harmonic conception, buoy his deceptively direct, lilting melodic lines much in the manner of Bill Evans. His left-handed ostinatos are used judiciously to add verve and joy; his dramatic shifts in volume and artistic use of space are never forced, and his human images are vivid and honest. In other words, this young man is already teaching important lessons in emotional honesty, taste and restraint that some of our "giants" of the solo piano would be wise to learn. Oh, and if I haven't already mentioned it, Forman has a style that is very much his own—and a potential that must not be overlooked.— **Cliff Tinder**

Subtle sparks of wit and surprise, and Forman's very mature harmonic conception, buoy his deceptively direct, lilting melodic lines much in the manner of Bill Evans. His left-handed ostinatos are used judiciously to add verve and joy; his dramatic shifts in volume and artistic use of space are never forced, and his human images are vivid and honest. In other words, this young man is already teaching important lessons in emotional honesty, taste and restraint that some of our "giants" of the solo piano would be wise to learn. Oh, and if I haven't already mentioned it, Forman has a style that is very much his own—and a potential that must not be overlooked.— **Cliff Tinder**

Laurie Anderson
Mister Heartbreak (Warner Bros.)



All the academic chatter about the deep intellectual significance of Laurie Anderson's performance art and epic adventure of her sprawling

mural *United States I-IV* obscures one very interesting point: she writes really neat songhooks. They are usually quite simple ones—the hushed hymn-like chorus of "Big Science," the lullaby swing of "O Superman"—altered by spatial electronic effects, dissected into accelerated overlapping Philip Glass licks or left so startlingly bare that they nearly evaporate into the ambient void. But it is on these slender hooks, made playfully unrecognizable, that the dramatic motion of her maverick expression hangs.

This four-song EP breather from her concept concerts permits a more intimate peek at Anderson's songwriting and the tangents extending from it. She has, for example, a peculiarly limited repertoire. "Gravity's Angel" opens with another variation on her frequent plunking ("Hot Cross Buns") keyboard inversions and Gregorian vocal gestures. "Blue Lagoon," a kind of dream postcard-transmission, is also based on a slightly confused hip-hop synth motif. Yet the elementary nature of those core ideas and their shy melodicism highlight the extremes she summons around them while giving them firm song roots. In "Blue Lagoon," Material's Bill Laswell

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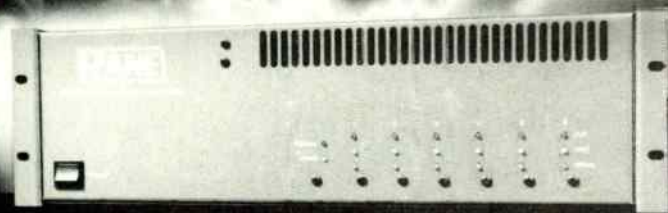
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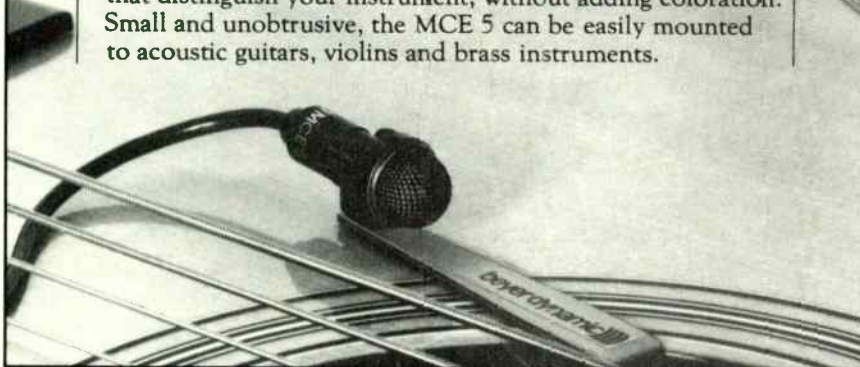
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issues spurts of burping bass in conversational counterpoint to Anderson's synth while Adrian Belew's guitar wings around them in acrobatic displays of feedback and otherworldly twang. To the meditative drone and staircase keyboard line of "Langue D'Amour" she adds a rhythmic sucking sound, imitation Himalayan pipes and a distorted Peter Gabriel backup vocal without derailing its weird hummability.

That Anderson reveals in the pop turns implicit in her work is obvious from "Sharkey's Day," an excursion into Talking Heads-style dance exotica. Almost conventional in its straight rock 'n' roll thrust (credit the combined boom of Laswell and drummer Anton Fier), the song unfolds from a clever "Shaft"-like chorus complete with cooing R&B blackbirds into strange blossoms of fragile quivering Belew guitar, bustling organic percussion and Anderson's own clawing hyperfuzz violin. Hardly the stuff of *United States*, this is more like *Soul Train* in space, a lively jaunt into new rhythm spheres which she should try more often. Given what Anderson already does with a few basic song-hooks, she'll soon see the art in that, too.

— **David Fricke**

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Laura Fissinger

Waits from pg. 22

forehead" and "sold used office furniture out there on San Fernando Road."

For Waits, wedded bliss has wrought more soothing changes. "Well, Boo-Boo and I have a little trailer in Miami," he revealed. "The fishing is good; my brother-in-law sells Cuban cigars, and we got a little place by a duck pond. I'm a tax shelter for a guy named Moe Digliani, and my father-in-law is trying to get me

interested in pork bellies. As soon as I can get out of the hospital, I plan on looking into some swampland in Louisiana; I'm already a slumlord in Chicago. And I believe you should eat your vegetables, drink plenty of fluids, rest in bed and never eat at a place called Mom's. Also, never sleep with a woman who has more problems than you do. Nelson Algren said that." ☐

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For *Swordfishtrombones*, Tom Waits wanted what engineer Biff Dawes called "a real natural sound." To achieve it, Dawes said, "the mikes we used, and where we placed them, were more important than, say, eq-ing at the console, or things like delays and echo." Microphones employed at Sunset Sound in Los Angeles, where the album was recorded, included AKGs, Neumanns and an omnidirectional Altec.

Experimentation was the rule; said Dawes, "Tom was definitely into working on the sound. I was a little surprised at his patience about dealing with everything. He didn't rush through it." Still, Waits' penchant for "natural" techniques didn't preclude a few modern moves. For example, the glass harmonica (consisting essentially of several glasses filled to varying levels with water and "played" by running a finger along the rims) on "Rainbirds" was actually created by an Emulator; using one glass, they fed its tone into the Emulator and let the machine do the rest.



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ROCK

S H O R T T A K E S

Ashford & Simpson — *High Rise* (Capitol). The title track is classic Ashford & Simpson, every bit as delectable as "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" (and that's even when you figure in the difference between Nick & Valerie and Marvin & Tammi). That should come as no surprise to dedicated fans, but it's still great hearing this kind of soul on the radio, or any of the album's other songs on your home stereo. Passion may be out of fashion elsewhere, but not with this couple.

Pat Benatar — *Live From Earth* (Chrysalis). If you went by the mix and nothing else, you might be excused for thinking that the focus of this album was Neil Geraldo's guitar, with Benatar's voice running a poor third to the audience noise. Whether this is the result of Benatar's poor performance, Geraldo's status as producer, or Chrysalis' utter indifference, is a matter for conjecture. But personally, if I wanted a recording of Pat Benatar live, I'd smuggle a tape machine into her next concert.

J.J. Cale — *#8* (Mercury). Okay, so it sounds a lot like the first seven. Whaddaya want, *progress*? Cale's groove is still the sweetest ooze this side of maple syrup and his guitar solos carry the sort of easy authority that makes Eric Clapton sound like some young whipper-snapper. Although the occasional contralto of Chris Lakeland smooths out the vocals some, this is no more "commercial" than any other J.J. Cale album. But if you ever needed a reason to join a cult following....

Carly Simon — *Hello Big Man* (Warner Bros.). If you ever needed proof that sidemen do not make the session, slip on Simon's version of Bob Marley's "Is It Love?" and note how even with Sly & Robbie laying down the groove, Simon can't get the rhythm right. As for the rest of this collection of mash notes and almost-true confessions, as the last song puts it, "Shes floundering again."

Hunters & Collectors (A&M/Oz). This assemblage of prime Australian weirdness sounds at times like early Psychedelic Furs minus the sarcasm, at times like PiL with a Stax/Volt fixation. Not your everyday combinations, to be sure, but because Hunters & Collectors do not hold that the first tenet of progressivism is jettisoning all melody, this is the

sort of album that passes quickly from fascination to obsession. Be sure to spread it to all your friends.

Mick Fleetwood's Zoo — *I'm Not Me* (RCA). You're not Fleetwood Mac, either, which no doubt explains why this mix of light rock and refried rockabilly falls so flat. Certainly it isn't the *players*....

Johnny Cash — *Johnny 99* (Columbia). The surprise here is that the title cut is from Springsteen's *Nebraska*, as is the lead song, "Highway Patrolman." Given Cash's gravelly deadpan, the results seem promising on paper, yet the passive fatalism of these versions is disquieting, for where Springsteen seems trapped by bad breaks and good intentions, Cash ends up sounding merely *trapped*. Not for the easily depressed.

Various Artists — *Klezmer Music: The First Recordings* (Folklyric). Benny Goodman didn't just stumble onto his style—klezmer music was the original Jewish jazz. A hybrid of Yiddish folk music filtered through Gypsy and other Eastern European folk styles, klezmer music had the ensemble feel and vocalized inflections of early jazz, but the melodic twists of an entirely different idiom. These recordings, made between 1910 and 1927, don't offer much in the way of high fidelity sound, but if emotional expressionism in music means anything to you, this is an album well worth owning. (Arhoolie Records, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530)

Depeche Mode — *Construction Time Again* (Sire). Just like everybody else, I figured that Depeche Mode lost its limited *raison d'être* when Vince Clarke went off to form Yaz. Boy, was I wrong. *Construction* sounds every bit as mechanical as the title implies, but lyrically so, with the result that songs like "Everything Counts" and "Pipeline" are hauntingly melodic, from the limpid vocals right down to the clanking sound effects. Who said synth-pop was dehumanizing?

Mental As Anything — *Creatures Of Leisure* (A&M/Oz). "If you could describe our actions," sings Reg Mombassa on "Drinking Of Her Lips," "I know they would annoy some people." The same could be said for much of the music on this album, but if pub-rock grit and beer-sotted silliness annoys you, then what are you doing reading this

column in the first place?

David Hykes & the Harmonic Choir — *Hearing Solar Winds* (Ocora Import). Using a technique for simultaneously singing a fundamental tone and selective harmonics which Hykes borrowed from Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhists, the Harmonic Choir produces eerie, translucent waves of vocal color. It's as if Brian Eno were to produce a *Music For Monasteries*; haunting, fascinating, yet frustrating because it evokes the ethereal without ultimately becoming spiritually revealing.

Andre Cymone — *Survivin' In The 80s* (Columbia). Minneapolis' best-known new wave funkster may want to party like it's 1999, but his old buddy Andre Cymone can't seem to see past 1984. That makes this album something of a downer, but no more than the fact that the groove has cooled out considerably since last year's *Living In The New Wave*. Stick to the sex songs, though, and it's all right.

The Golden Palominos (Celluloid). With Fred Frith, John Zorn, Bill Laswell and Michael Beinhorn on hand to help Palominos Anton Fier and Arto Lindsay, you can count on plenty of funny noises from this one. Fortunately, Fier's relentless pulse and the Material boys' funk smarts make this *Weird Sounds You Can Dance To*, and believe me, that helps a lot. (260 West 39th Street, New York, NY 10018)

Comateens — *Pictures On A String* (Virgin/Mercury). The Comateens, by contrast, offer Predictable Noises You Can Dance To. A little too predictable, in fact—although I'm never one to scoff at melody so judiciously applied, I can't help wishing that guitarist Oliver North knew more than one rhythm lick.

The Romantics — *In Heat* (Nemperor). Unfortunately, *In Lukewarm* would be a lot closer to it. Although it's nice to see that the much-delayed success of "What I Like About You" (courtesy MTV) has got the Romantics back on track, it's a shame that the bulk of this album sounds like "Fifty Ways To Rewrite 'Louie, Louie,'" especially since none of them is the right one.

Trio — *Trio And Error* (Mercury). Trio's combination of deadpan humor and minimalist chic goes a long way in songs

continued on page 126

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JAZZ

S H O R T T A K E S

David Murray — *Murray's Steps* (Black Saint/PolyGram Special Imports). Like any composer worth the paper their scores are written on, Murray is becoming adept at revamping earlier designs to suit the spur of the moment and the exact dimensions of the personnel on hand. Proof: the ingenious new twists in "Flowers For Albert," "Sweet Lovely," and the title maze. Even better proof: the self-generating solos and band riffs that come leaping up from his charts. And "Sing Song," the album's only brand new piece of work, is the most felicitous track of all, capturing the sweet effervescence of Motown love pledges without becoming snafued in vain emulation of the form. The octet's revised lineup (with new starters Bobby Bradford, Craig Harris and Curtis Clark) sacrifices contrast in the trumpet chairs but picks up more improvisational sting with the bristling Harris now on board, though it's still the saxophonists—Murray and Henry Threadgill—who pack the hardest sting of all. Not an epiphany like *Ming*, but not an anticlimax like *Home* either, this is a most encouraging progress report.

George Russell — *Live In An American Time Spiral* (Soul Note/PSI). By the time you read this, Russell will be putting his theories into practice at a concert hall or watering hole near you, hopefully leading a big band as skillful at cracking his code as the electrifying ensemble he conducts here (soloists include Tom Harrell, Ray Anderson and Marty Ehrlich) and hopefully deigning to play older material as well as new. (A retooled "Ezz-thetic" is the most vivacious thing here.) Russell's first-ever American tour could hardly be coming at a more opportune moment: his music has never seemed more gregarious and inviting, and records as splendid as this one should finally win him the following he has long deserved.

Carla Bley — *Mortelle Randonnée* (French Mercury, available from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012). Finally asked to score a film, America's most cinematic composer wantonly shuffles through her back pages, serves up endless variations of "La Paloma" and somehow emerges with the most estimable jazz soundtrack since Ellington's

Anatomy Of A Murder. Whether her music is in perfect sync with Claude Miller's scenes, as Ellington's was with Preminger's, we'll have to wait and see. Now—when's someone gonna make a movie about *her*?

The Griffin Park Collection 2 — *In Concert* (Elektra/Musician). A two-record set offering tarnished stars Freddie Hubbard, Joe Henderson, Chick Corea, Stanley Clarke and Lenny White the chance to shine again. And they do, they do—even if the spirit of informality that permits such fancy-free blowing also encourages patches of bluster and stretches of vamp-till-ready indecision here and there.

Keshavan Maslak — *Big Time* (Daybreak, available from Daybreak Express, Box 250, Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn, NY 11215). Saxophonist Maslak is one of those shadows below the underground, a Ukrainian-American whirlwind who has yet to receive the notice coming to him, even from the New York avant-garde *demi-monde*. If I still thought there was justice in the world, I'd expect this album's long bubble of ecstasy and irony (with trombonist Ray Anderson giving Maslak and the sagacious rhythm section of Misha Mengelberg, John Lindberg and Charles Moffett a hard bruising on one track) would do the trick.

The Lounge Lizards — *Live At The Drunken Boat* (Europa). Their second (and far superior) LP finds the stripped-down, unplugged Lizards doin' the chameleon. They turn in credible renditions of "In A Sentimental Mood" and "Out To Lunch," but what they still do best is satirize the absurd obsession too many jazz players (and too many jazz listeners) have with chops and cool.

The Microscopic Septet — *Take The Z Train* (Press/N.M.D.S.). This month's left-field hit—a saxophone quartet plus rhythm playing cartoonish tangos and barrelhouse rave-ups with wit, precision and genuine panache. Though the solos are all very accomplished, it's the unison passages and the delicious writing by Phillip Johnston and Joel Forrester (I don't know who they are, either, but I aim to find out), that give this its sheen.

John Lindberg — *Give And Take* (Black Saint/PSI). The strongest statement as a leader so far from the most

promising bassist to materialize in eons is an album of boldly envisioned, delicately crafted duets with trombonist George Lewis and percussionist Barry Altschul.

George Adams & Danny Richmond — *Gentlemen's Agreement* (Soul Note/PSI). Despite similar cover graphics and identical personnel (the tenorist, the drummer, pianist Hugh Lawson, trombonist Jimmy Knepper and bassist Mike Richmond), this is no *Hand To Hand*. But the earth-shaking dialogue between the leaders on "More Sightings" and the calm deliberation of the Lawson originals on side two make this worth hearing, even if Richmond's quasi-free piece is an embarrassing shambles.

Red Rodney & Ira Sullivan — *Sprint* (Elektra/Musician). Live from the Jazz Forum. I'm not especially fond of the *pro forma* modalism that dominates this band's book (courtesy Sullivan and pianist Gary Dial), but Rodney is playing with such élan these days, it hardly matters what he plays. And the playful bite of the Rodney-Sullivan exchanges on the title tribute to Ornette Coleman proves you really can teach an old dog new tricks.

Lee Konitz — *Dovetail* (Sunnyside/N.M.D.S.); **Clare Fischer & Gary Foster** — *Starbright* (Discovery). Konitz's readiness to explore sometimes leads him up some questionable trails (the aimless noodling on the title track, for example), but more often yields the compelling brand of quiet and intense self-discovery which characterizes the remainder of this engrossing album, on which he receives empathetic support from pianist Harold Danko and bassist Jay Leonhart. The closest thing to Konitz on the West Coast is the underrated altoist Gary Foster, whose album of duets with pianist Fischer boasts tough-minded lyricism from both men.

Nana Vasconcelos — *Zumbi* (Europa). Stringing together the multitude of sounds he can make with his body, limbs and voice, the Brazilian percussionist has woven a colorful fabric with a sleek, tough rhythmic backing. A refreshing change of pace, even if its charm stretches thin before side two is over.

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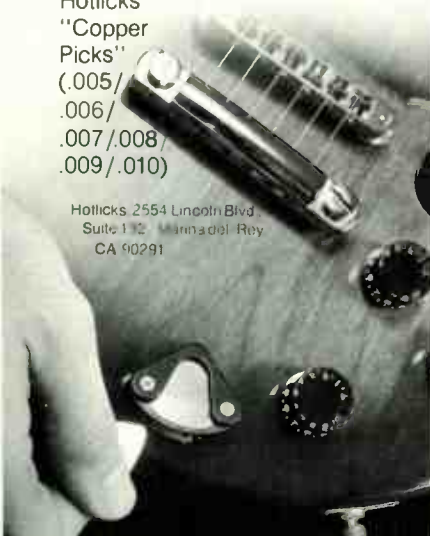
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(Cadence Jazz, Redwood, NY 13679). The energy level is high and so, for the most part, is the level of inspiration on the debut by a pianist who impresses on the basis of her work with Braxton but is clearly more in her element here, at the helm of a Hotspur trio and a changeling quartet, both enlivened by the irrepressible violinist Billy Bang.

Joe Bonner & Johnny Dyanl — *Suburban Fantasies* (SteepleChase). One of the pianists who had the thankless task of blocking for Pharoah Sanders in the early 70s, Bonner is a slippery figure himself when he has an open field in front of him, as he does on this album of limber duets with the stalwart South African bassist Dyanl.

Kirk Lightsey — 1 (Sunnyside/N.M.D.S.) His first time out unaccompanied, the veteran pianist best remembered for his stay with Dexter Gordon in the late 70s displays a light touch, a harmless enough tendency to rhapsodize on ballads and a keen understanding of the writings of Wayne Shorter and Thelonious Monk.

Rock Shorts from pg. 122 like "Da Da Da" or "Anna," and doesn't do a bad job with wacky cover versions like their loopy "Tutti Frutti." But the upgraded production values of this album make the songs repeated from the EP sound unbearably slick and disappointingly glib without adding anything to the new material. One of the risks of learning

your craft, I guess.

Michael Stanley Band — *You Can't Fight Fashion* (EMI America). Given the fact that the cover shows an idled Republic Steel plant, the title is black irony. Yet the shift in the band's sound, toward Bob Pelander's keyboards and away from the Springsteen-isms that have trailed the band for years, might be taken for fashion sense of a different sort. Whatever the case, this may well be Stanley's best album, if not through songs as strong as "My Town," than because these fervent disciples of individualism have finally found a sound truly their own.

Ronstadt from pg. 40
sense to anyone?

There are implicit connections made by Ronstadt's latest side trip. She's gone from "Someone To Lay Down Beside Me" to "Someone Watch Over Me"; from "Crazy" to "Crazy He Calls Me." But isolating the standards leaves the process incomplete; she needs to integrate these songs into her regular set (imagine Smokey's "Ooh Baby Baby" segueing into Irving Berlin's "What'll I Do"), and dispense with some formalities. These aren't fragile antiques. When Willie Nelson did *Stardust*, he slipped into the songs as though they were flannel shirts he'd been wearing for years; with Ronstadt, you can still see the tags dangling from her sleeves. But there's no denying that the tunes are a flattering fit. — **Mitchell Cohen**

Home Video from pg. 100
ties may be hard to find.

Unfortunately none of the editors mentioned above will currently interface with your Tascam 58 or Fostex A-8, although Convergence has just completed one and other manufacturers are near completion. For now you need a synchronizer such as the Audio Kinetics Q-Lock, the BTX Shadow, or the less expensive Adams-Smith.

You can start a limited video facility at home, but do it with your eyes open. The price expands exponentially with your desires and needs. The potential for frustration at the lower level is enormous, but with some imagination, know-how and lots of patience, there is still much you can do. ☐

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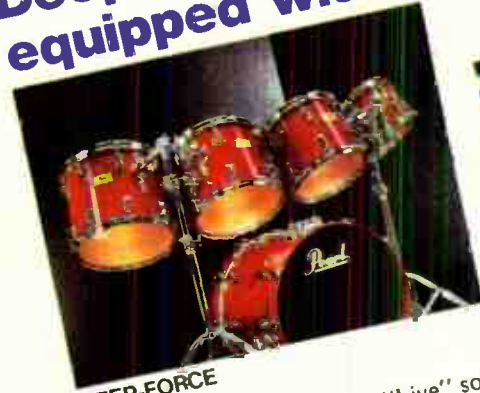
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Blakey from pg. 38
 sengers have always been hard blowing bands, but *never* jamming bands. That would be shucking.

The latest in a long line of gifted Jazz Messenger musical directors is twenty-one year-old Terence Blanchard of New Orleans, who in addition to his provocative broken harmonies, rhythmic counter-point, stop-time punctuations and bluesy pronouncements (particularly noteworthy in a sardonic recasting of "52nd St. Theme"), is the most exciting, original young trumpet player on the scene today. (He is reputedly Wynton Marsalis's personal selection as his replacement.) As Blakey shifts from his dry, sticky Zildjian Flat Ride to a sweltering Medium Ride, the sound cresting like a malevolent microwave oven, Blanchard surfs effortlessly along as if he were playing all the rhythm instruments with long, clean lines and a warm, pure tone. Not that Donald Harrison's splintered alto lines or Jean Toussaint's Coltraneish tenor get outclassed, but Blakey never seems so happy as when double-clutching a hot trumpeter. And with Lonnie Plexico's roiling bass and Johnny O'Neal's Garnerish piano surging along underneath, Blakey's gangsters conjure up a perfect balance of 50s hardcore swing and 60s pulse-time spirit, all animated by a gut-bucket, heart-pounding funkiness that is more

rocking and contemporary than any of the heart-is-willing-but-the-flesh-is-weak sell-out bands now proliferating. A band that must be experienced *live*. Reality may not be commercial in the 80s, but so long as Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers have their say, it will be a noble struggle. — **Chip Stern**

Richards from pg. 67

New York. I'd come up behind him and said, "Berry, what's happening?" And BAM, he turned around and let me have it. I saw him in the L.A. airport recently and he said, "I'm real sorry about all that; I didn't recognize you." I was just very proud of the fact that I hadn't gone *down*.
MUSICIAN: *Your vocals have gotten stronger and more confident over the years. Would you like to sing more often with the band?*

RICHARDS: I've always enjoyed singing, but that wouldn't leave Mick with much to do.

MUSICIAN: *True, the tambourine is a limited medium of expression. Did you ever have any formal vocal training?*

RICHARDS: Yeah, I used to sing in a choir at Westminster Abbey.

MUSICIAN: *Right. Keith Richards, the choir boy. They'll never buy it, Keith.*

RICHARDS: No, I'm serious! I was a soprano in a hot choir for four or five years. We used to get off from school and get free trips to London to play festivals. The three of us who were sopranos used to do the solo down the aisle of Westminster Abbey with the cassocks and the whole bit. And the funny thing is that all three of us were the biggest hoods in the school. Then my voice broke and they kicked me out. That was my first taste of show business (chuckles).

MUSICIAN: *Another thing Bill Wyman told us was that you were much nicer and more introverted than your public image would indicate.*

RICHARDS: (Shyly) We all are....

MUSICIAN: *Is there a "Keith" image that you project, maybe subconsciously, so the world can focus on that while you live your own life?*

RICHARDS: No, at least not consciously. There is an image projected that people come for and take away with them and give to their readers if they're journalists, and obviously there's a lot of me in that image. I've never tried consciously to project it, but there's not really much you can do about it. It's like a little shadow person that you live with. In some situations, I'll realize, "Uh, no, these people expect me to do a *real* Keith Richards..." and sometimes it's quite funny.

MUSICIAN: *Do you ever worry about...?*
RICHARDS: As long as you're aware of it, it's something to play with. I'd only get worried if I really became like Keith Richards... whoever *he* is (laughs). ■

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