

PSY.
FURS

MUSICIAN

\$1.95 NO. 70, AUGUST, 1984

Peter Wolf:

After J. Geils
the Pro's & Con's
of Moving On.

by Bill Flanagan

**KING
CRIMSON**
Collision on
a Four-Way Street

GO-GO'S

Lif

**BASS &
DRUM
SPECIAL**

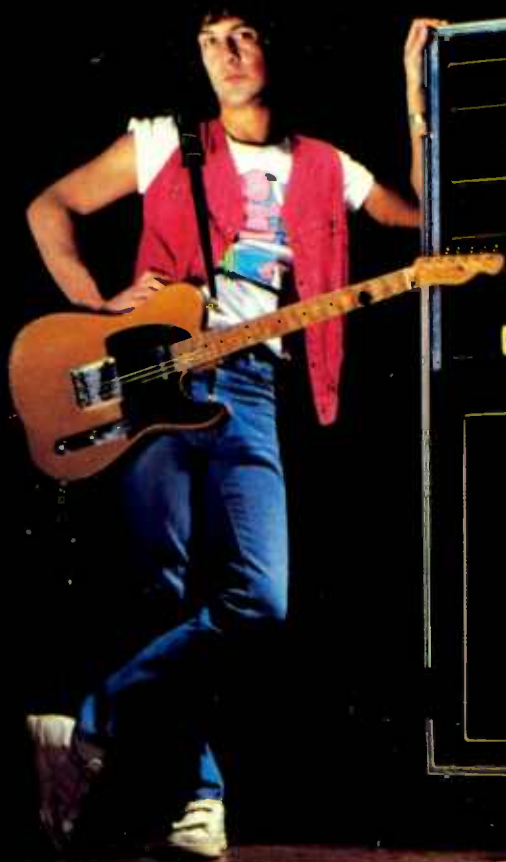
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Heads Over Heels

SLY & ROBBIE
Reggae's Riddim Twins

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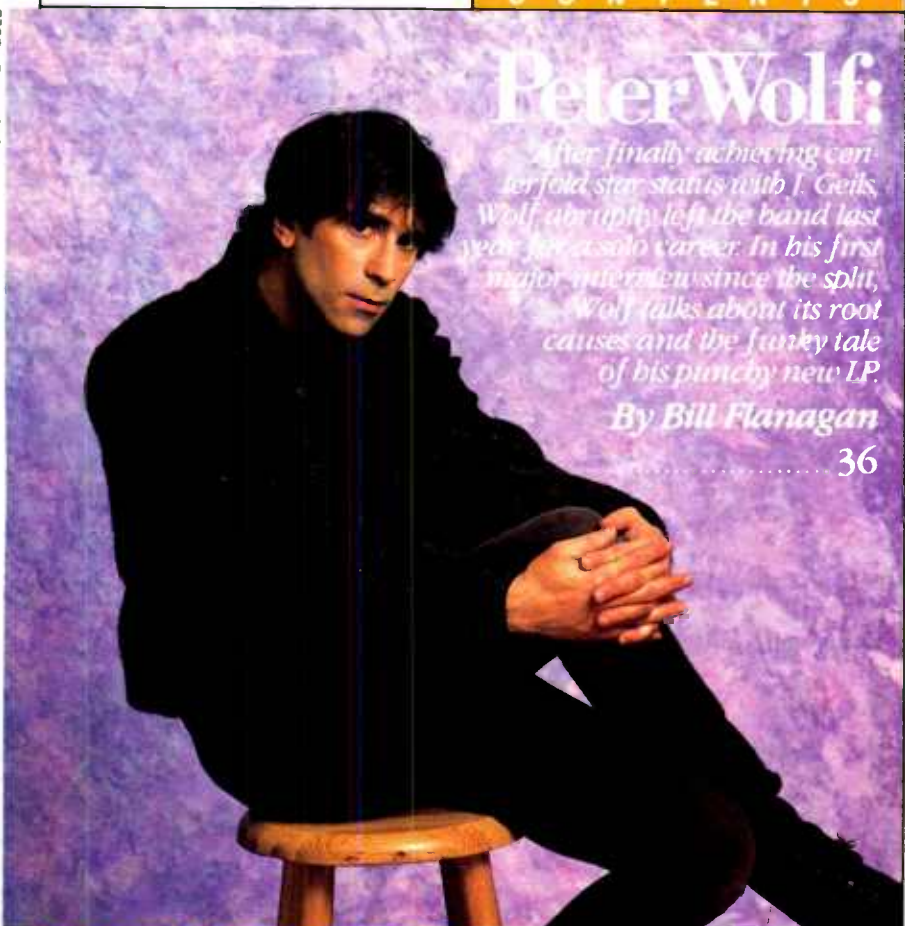


Roland Makes It Happen!

MUSICIAN

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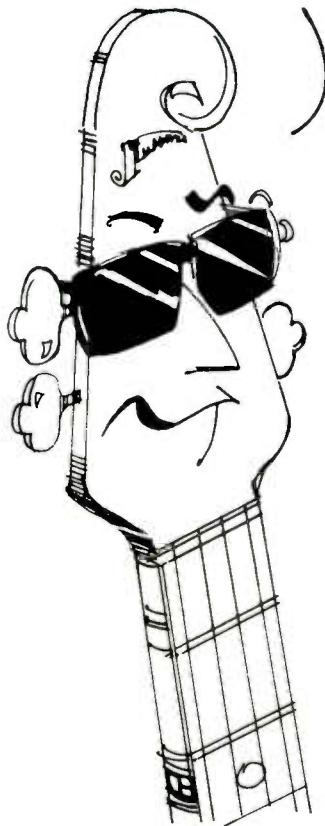
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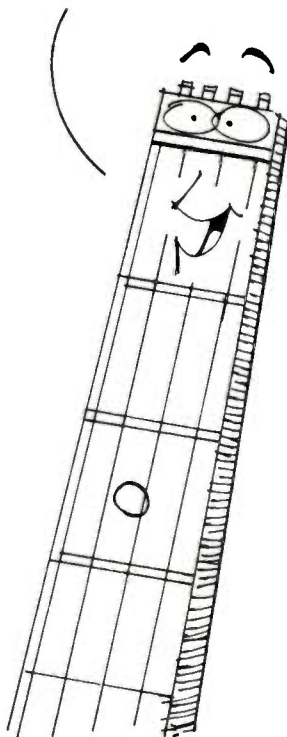
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Assoc. Publisher/Ad Director

Gary Krasner

Executive Editor

Vic Garbarini

Art Director

Gary Koepke

Managing Editor

Jock Baird

Promotion Director

Paul Sacksman

Staff Photographer

Deborah Feingold

Associate Editors

Mark Rowland Scott Isler

Contributing Editors

David Breskin David Fricke
Brian Cullman J.D. Considine
Timothy White Charles M. Young
Francis Davis Freff Rafi Zabor

Sales/Promotion

R. Bradford Lee J.R. Morse

Advertising Sales

Ross Garnick

Production Manager

Pamela Ellis Hawkes

Production

Keith Powers Julie Panebianco

Lisa Laarman

Typography

Don Russell

Assistant to the Publisher

Cindy Amero

Administration

Michelle Nicastro Deborah Reid
Maria Pallazola

Main Office/Production/Retail Sales

31 Commercial St., P.O. Box 701
Gloucester, MA 01930 (617)281-3110

New York Advertising/Editorial

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Group Publisher

Gerald S. Hobbs

Circulation Manager

Barbara Eskin (212)764-7467

Subscriber Service

Gregory Thompson (212)764-7536

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Letters

EARTHISTS ARE HUMAN, TOO

It sounds as though there's a bit of the Flat Earthish in Freff if he can declare that Thomas Dolby is *not* a synthesizer wizard. If anyone still had doubts about Thomas' humanity, I'm sure that after reading Freff's masterpiece on him, they don't anymore. I thank you for the accurate portrayal of a talented, funny and very warm artist.

Mary Brown
Urbana, IL

Your cover boy Thomas Dolby gave a concert in Toronto a couple of days prior to my receiving the May issue. I was under the impression that he was a bizarre character absorbed in his music-making machine, so I was a little apprehensive about how he'd come across as a stage performer. Instead he gave a very traditional performance of some exciting rock 'n' roll, as well as some esoteric pieces. He shouldn't worry about stage presence, he has it. Gary Kimber
Downsview, Ontario

GOODIES FOR BAKER

For every dimensionless pop music nonentity like Thomas Dolby who graces your cover in order to sell the magazine, you give us a thoughtful, well-written and informative story on a music giant like Chet Baker, whom no other music journal has the smarts to profile. Arnold F. Blake
Abington, MA

Thank you for the interview with Chet Baker in your May issue. This well-written article by Jerome Reece gave me an enlightening introduction to a trumpet player that I was sadly unfamiliar with. Thanks also for keeping us up-to-date with the great Carl Perkins. Please keep up this kind of work, as it is greatly appreciated. Stephen Cuomo
Boston, MA

Kudos for the Jerome Reece interview with Chet Baker in your May issue. What an interesting life—it reads better than Hollywood fiction. He's been one of my idols and influences since the 50s. That very personal, sparse style is always the subject of discussion... and since it's so unique maybe that's the way it should be. The horn voice that speaks softly we hear loud and clear.

Keep doing it Chet, the world is catching up to you again. Rod Beegle
Bedford, PA

In the Chet Baker interview by Jerome Reece it was a damn shame that Chet had a loss of memory and did not mention that Phil Urso, tenor sax, was an influence on him. How come Chet hired Phil for sixteen years, on and off, and not the saxophone players mentioned in the interview? Chet re-hired Phil for a two-week gig to start his 1973 comeback. All is forgiven, Chet. Take care of yourself, for music's sake.

Joe Urso
Port Richey, FL

NOBLESSE OBLIGE...

This letter is in response to the AOR programmer who was upset by the potshots taken at that institution of higher programming.

Well, if the shoe fits... It's a sad state of affairs when I have to *read* about new releases, artists, trends, etc., because AOR radio is too concerned about playing it as safely as possible. They don't care about music; they care about points, ratings and advertising dollars. The result is, in the words of George Clinton, a mind-numbing cow-like moosick.

You've shaped the musical tastes of the masses through the years, but now that job has been turned over to noble crusaders such as *Musician*. I'll let the music rags be my radio. Keep your dull and racist formats, because as far as I'm concerned, *you're history*. Let's hear it for the noble crusade!

John Burke

I read with interest the letter from John Amberg (May 1984), the music director of an AOR station in Peoria. Radio has the power to expose the masses to good music, and thereby raise the quality of life in our McDonaldland society. Besides, Mr. Amberg, there are no Gregorian monks in the Himalayas. If there were, *Musician* probably would review their albums.

As Alfred Hitchcock once said, "They'll never know in Peoria."

Lisa Richards
Wittenberg University
Springfield, OH

TWOMACK TWALK

Finally someone in the music press has given Womack & Womack some very overdue and much-deserved recognition. I would like to thank *Musician* and J.D. Considine for finally telling the rest of the world about the composers of the finest R&B record many of us have

heard in a very long time. Dan Von Behren
Minneapolis, MN

HE CLASH INTA TLEE

So the Clash has lost the rock 'n' roll promises it once lit, according to Geoffrey Himes (May 84, p. 38)? I'm an avid Alarm and U2 fan, but haven't forsaken the Clash merely because they have more than one album out. Young brave bands who make promises as they enter the slimy world of the record business sometimes emerge with hard-won wisdom to go with their idealism. Excuse me while I strap myself to the tree with roots, 'cause Himes, you ain't goin' *anywhere*. Brian J. Kelley
Erie, PA

May I be the first to congratulate *Musician* and Geoffrey Himes in particular on his fine journalistic work on the Alarm. Those of you who have not yet witnessed their live show, I strongly suggest you do. Sorry Chrissie, but you should be opening for these guys.

Todd Dawson
Pompton Lakes, NJ

DIRE PERKS STRAIT AHEAD

Wow! Thomas Dolby, the Alarm, the Thompson Twins and Carl Perkins all in your May issue. *Musician* just gets better and better. Carl Perkins performed here on the riverfront last year and it was wonderful. Glad you let him do the talking in your article. But a question: Where the heck is Diresville, Tennessee?

Carol Sheehan
Memphis, TN

IDOLATRY

Your unbiased comments about Billy Idol in your May issue changed my mind about your magazine. Even though Billy shows great promise as a rising star, his punk-cum-sex attitude is not healthy. His wrist-slashing new wave image promotes self-centered individualism. We have enough of that in the world already. Call it an "I'm Okay and You're Uncool" attitude. Hopefully Idol will begin to take his work seriously.

Justin H. Strong

ROTHEN NEWS

Francis Davis' warm review of my record in your May issue is very much appreciated, but I have to let you know that Gerry Hemingway plays steel drum *and* trap set (I am not a percussionist), and although I *do* play soprano sax there is none on this record.

Ned Rothenberg
New York City, NY

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World Radio History

MUSIC INDUSTRY NEWS

SCOTT ISLER

WHO'S ALL CRAZEE NOW?

Granted, in a finite world there are only a finite number of **Slade** songs. Still, the coincidence-of-the-month award goes to **Quiet Riot** and **Mama's Boys**, both of whom have recorded Slade's "Mama Weer All Crazee Now" as singles and videos.

Quiet Riot, of course, has hit the Slade songbook before. Their version of "Cum On Feel The Noize" propelled last year's debut U.S. album quadruple-platinum status. Singer Kevin DuBrow mentioned in *Circus* magazine this February that the band would record "Mama Weer All Crazee Now," but doubted it would be released. Six Thousand miles away, Mama's Boys—a trio of young Irish brothers—decided the Slade chestnut would make a good opening salvo for *them* (the song title reinforced their name as well.) A 12-inch single of "Mama We're All Crazee Now," Mama's Boys' more literate misspelling, shipped May 11; the album followed two weeks later. MTV reportedly liked the video.

Then, according to a spokesperson at Jive/Arista, Mama's Boys' label, Quiet Riot went "berserk." The latter group was planning a mid-August release for its new album. When they got wind of the Mama's Boys recording, they rush-released their album on June 5 and shipped their version of "Crazee" to DJs on May 31.

Why did Quiet Riot pick another Slade song? Manager Warren Entner, speaking through a publicist, said there was no particular reason: the song was in the band's repertoire, and "just came up in the studio" during pre-production. They recorded it, and decided to go with it as a single "to surprise everybody."

Instead, officials at Pasha/CBS, Quiet Riot's label, were surprised by Mama's Boys—unpleasantly. "Until I saw the 12-inch I didn't even know about the Mama's Boys version," says Harvey Leeds, CBS' director of video

promotion. He calls the coincidence a "weird fluke."

Others aren't so sure. "I think Mama's Boys knew exactly what they were doing," says Bill Bennett, CBS director of album promotion. Michael Caplan, associate director of national album promotion at CBS, adds that "we had every intention for six months that ['Mama Weer All Crazee Now'] would be the next Quiet Riot single." A spokesperson at Jive/Arista states that "maybe it was common knowledge in the CBS building," but the news didn't make it overseas. And Leeds admits he didn't know of the Quiet Riot recording until mid-May.

CBS' video department reportedly tried to knock Mama's Boys off MTV by having a sync license for the video clip withheld. However, MTV programming veep Les Garland denies getting any heat, and the cable station added Mama's Boys to its playlist on May 30—as it will most likely do with Quiet Riot's clip as well. (This won't be the first time MTV has aired two videos of the same song. Remember Falco's and After the Fire's tapes of "Der Kommissar"?)

The only people who seem to be enjoying the affair are Slade themselves. "We couldn't get arrested with that tune when we first brought it out here," says bassist Jim Lea, who co-wrote "Crazee" with singer Noddy Holder in 1972. "We can just sit back and be serene. We get paid as everyone gets on the bus."

LIFE IMITATES TAP

This Is Spinal Tap is supposed to be a put-on, but the film's creators may now be wondering if they aren't gifted with an eerie prescience.

One gag in the movie concerns the fictional band's sexist cover design for their new album. Their record company, Polymer, substitutes an all-black jacket. Another, less-fictional heavy metal band, the **Scorpions**, has suffered the same indignity in real life. The Scorpions' platinum-selling *Love At First Sting* album cover bears a cover photo (by kinky fashion photog **Helmut Newton**) of a couple embracing while the man tattoos the woman's thigh.

The image proved too much for 670 Wal-Mart stores. When the chain refused to carry the album, PolyGram, the Scorpions' label, devised an alternate cover with a photo of the group. This is presumably less offensive. (Then again, you never know with heavy-metal bands.)

The final twist is that PolyGram is also Spinal Tap's label. The uncensored Scorpions cover is in

plentiful supply; the few copies of Tap's original *Smell The Glove* cover smuggled out of the pressing plant command high prices on the collectors' market, but only without the record.

Another Tap joke involved guitarist **Nigel Tufnel** (Christopher Guest) and his custom amps with volume knobs that go to eleven. Lo and behold, **Ted Nugent** announces that he and Sunn amplifiers are collaborating on a 200-watt Penetrator amp with a volume knob that goes to twelve! We eagerly await the next move in this game of decibel oneupmanship. Zzzzzz....

DISCRETE BITS

The Stray Cats will be thinking twice about recording other people's songs—or at least taking liberties with them. In April the neo-rock 'n' rollers lost a five million dollar lawsuit brought last year by the publisher of "Jeanie, Jeanie, Jeanie," an Eddie Cochran tune the Cats cut on their first album. A U.S. district court judge found the band changed almost half the song's lyrics and was guilty of copyright infringement. It didn't help that the "new" version of the song was considerably raunchier than Cochran's. The Stray Cats are appealing (their case, that is).

Attention record companies: **Grace Slick** and the **Suburbs** are both up for grabs, having been dropped by RCA and PolyGram, respectively. At least Slick stays on RCA as a member of **Jefferson Mongoose**. Ironically, the Minnesota Music Awards recently voted the Minneapolis-based Suburbs' sole PolyGram album, *Love Is The Law*, album of the year, and its title track single of the year.

Yes, that really is **Nils Lofgren** holding down the guitar spot on tour with **Bruce Springsteen** and the E Street Band. Former E-Streeter **Miami Steve Van Zandt** is busy touring with his own band in his solo incarnation as Little Steven. Lofgren is an old friend of the Boss, and he passed the New Jersey audition.

Maurice White producing... **Barbra Streisand**?! The Earth, Wind and Fireman lends a hand on four songs on Streisand's new album. In other EW&F news, **Phillip Bailey's** second solo LP will be produced by **Phil Collins**.

Another musical marriage: producer **Steve Lillywhite** to wed singer/songwriter **Kirsty MacColl**. MacColl, daughter of folksinger Ewan MacColl, is better known in England than over here. Her recording of her own "They Don't Know" inspired Tracey Ullman's Top 10 cover version.

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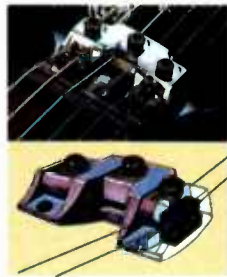
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PSYCHEDELIC FURS

SCOTT ISLER

A CURDLED PUNK SNARL FINDS UNLIKELY HAPPINESS IN POP MELODY

RICHARD BUTLER, Psychedelic Furs: "It's very difficult to get a positive attitude. It's the easiest thing in the world to criticize. But to actually 'fess up to something requires a lot of conviction."

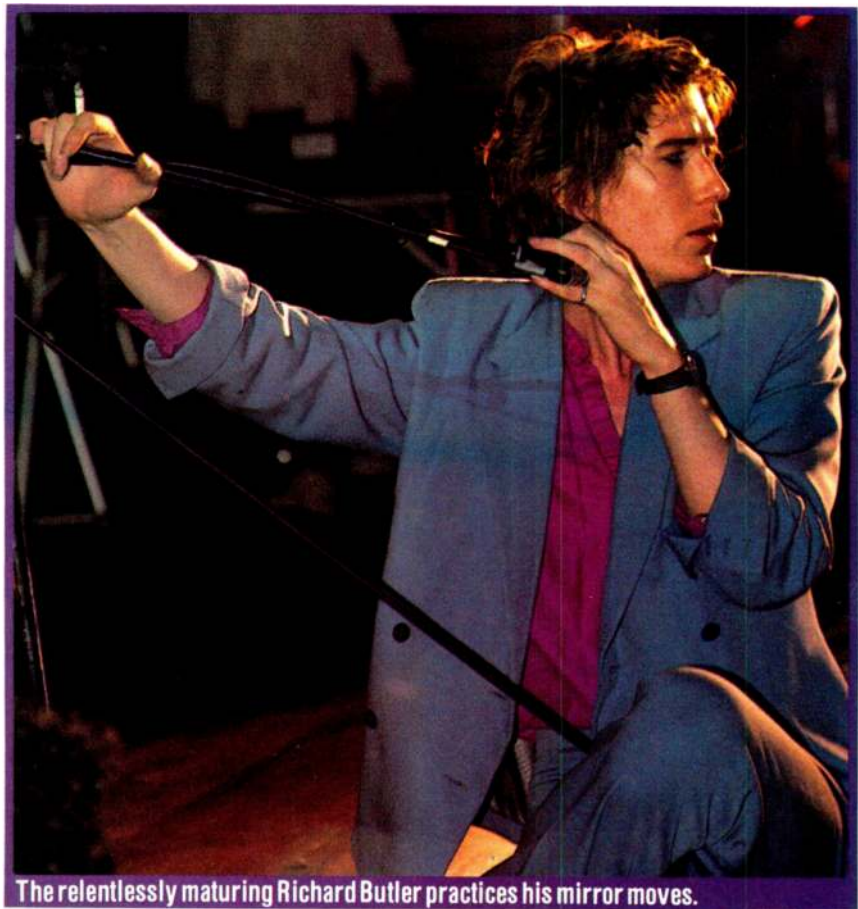
Stop the tape. Is this the same Richard Butler who flung the word "stupid" around so much on the Psychedelic Furs' first album that the adjective took a two-week leave of absence at the Merriam-Webster Rest Home for Over-used Epithets?

Well, yes. But that was 1980; welcome to 1984. Anyone who's followed the band's progress has noticed the Furs' relentless maturation from curdled punk inheritors to increasingly sophisticated popsmiths. *Mirror Moves*, their fourth album, builds on the momentum of "Love My Way" (from the preceding *Forever Now* LP) to offer the best chance yet of the British group denting U.S. mass consciousness. And frontman Butler talks like a born-again Hit Parader.

"When we were starting out, it was tempting to think that pop music was gonna go out the window," the thirty-year-old singer draws. "There was a sense of crusade against trite, meaningless songs. But I think we've been proved wrong."

Not that the Furs have become trite or meaningless. On *Mirror Moves* lyricist Butler probes feelings and relationships with blurred imagery greater than the sum of its parts. The music is more danceable than the extremist tempos of yore, yet retains a gritty integrity—as does Butler's nicotine-stained voice, still astringent but grappling bravely with melody ("I'm tired of shouting").

They've come a long way, baby, since the taunts of "We Love You" and "Imitation of Christ." They've come an even



EBET ROBERTS

The relentlessly maturing Richard Butler practices his mirror moves.

longer way since 1977, when Surreyite Butler and bass-playing brother Tim founded the Psychedelic Furs with some schoolmates. They chose their name to grate against the new-wave sensibilities of the time, and nothing more. The band was "almost a hobby" until signing to U.K. CBS (Columbia Records here) in 1980. By then they were a sextet, with two guitarists and a saxophone.

"We started as a democratic band," Richard Butler says, "which immediately hung people around our necks. If you have a sax player who for some reason wants to play on everything, and you've told him he's an equal member of the band, you'll have sax on every song." Today's Furs consist only of the Butlers and guitarist John Ashton, with hired hands added as needed.

The Furs have gone through almost as many producers as band members. The roster includes Todd Rundgren, Steve Lillywhite and Martin Hannett. *Mirror Moves*' Oscar-winning Keith Forsey played drums as well as produced, and draws high praise from both Butler and Ashton. "I don't think we've worked with a producer who puts so much effort into

it," Butler says. "With Steve Lillywhite it was always like going into the studio and playing virtually live." Ashton even states the record "is as much Keith Forsey as it is the Psychedelic Furs. He's very good at arranging rhythms, writing drum patterns with a LinnDrum and recording those." (Drummer Paul Garisto replaced Forsey for the Furs' current tour. Filling out the band are guitarist Mike Mooney, keyboard player Ed Buller and saxophonist Mars Williams.) LinnDrums. "Positive attitudes." Keyboards! Are the Furs...*mellowing out*?

"Yeah!" Butler chimes in. "We were a very young band when we made our first two albums. I *am* feeling more optimistic, but it's not as present in my writing as I feel that it will be."

The band's songwriting itself reflects newfound professionalism. "It used to be much more haphazard," Butler says, "with a lot of effort wasted. Me and John, or Tim and I, would get together and bang through a load of riffs. If we didn't like one we'd bang through another one. We didn't sit down and say, 'Start on this chord, then add a chord to it.' We didn't

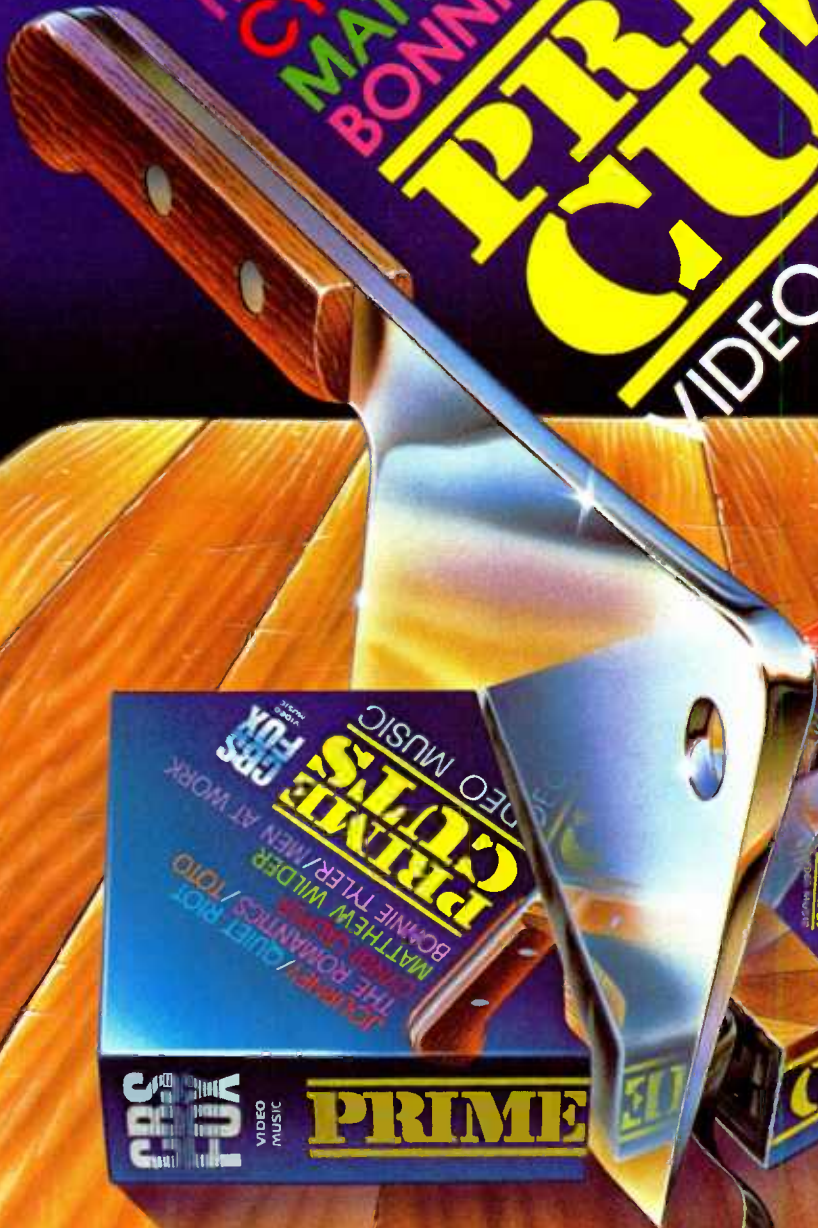
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ROCK 'N' ROLL TALKIES

MARY ANNA FECZO

ARE THE LABELS REALLY READY FOR DIALOGUE?

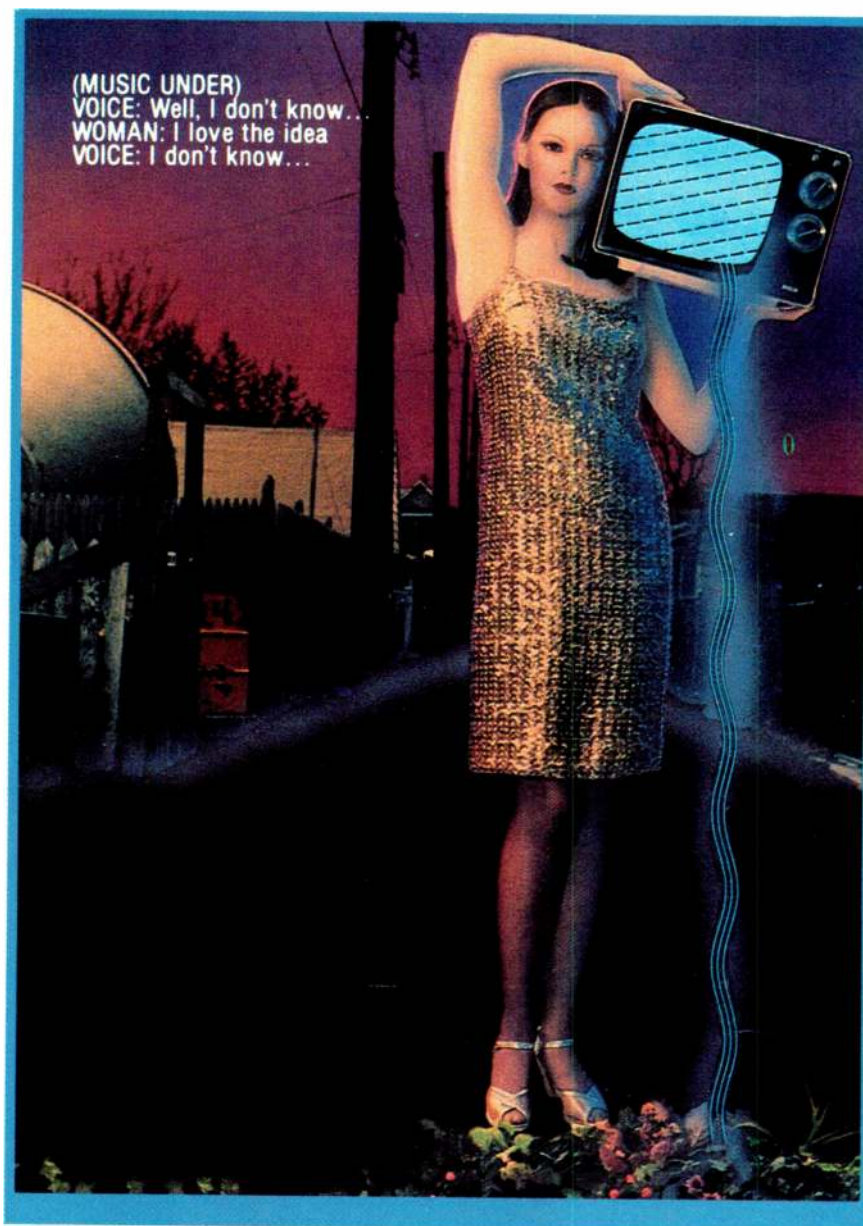
Just when you thought the art of music video clips had reached its zenith, directors have now stumbled across something even better than images of trussed-up women. This revolutionary technique, this aesthetic great leap forward, this industry-shaking practice is: dialogue.

Speech. Words. The simple addition of dialogue to video clips is creating a whole new ballgame in the industry. The "dialogue video"—now appearing with increasing frequency—is paving the way for a new form somewhere between the traditional, musically untampered clip and straightforward concert footage.

Alan Arkush used broad comic prologues for Bette Midler and Mick Jagger's "Beast Of Burden" and Christine McVie's "Love Will Show Us How." Jon Landis created an extended horror prologue dramatization for Michael Jackson's "Thriller." Thomas Dolby, in his self-directed "Dissidents" video, features a Russian-speaking character translated in sub-titles. Bob Giraldi regularly employs dialogue—in prologue, epilogue and body—in his videos with artists like Paul McCartney, Pat Benatar and Lionel Richie. Edd Griles came up with a twist: Dave Wolff silently mouths the words "I'm not going" in Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time."

But perhaps the most versatile video clip director working within a dialogue framework is Jack Cole. He has spanned R & B, rock and country in his promos for ex-Earth, Wind & Fire vocalist Philip Bailey ("I Know") and Journey lead singer Steve Perry ("Oh Sherrie"), among others.

"For a long time I felt that music video was in the silent film era," Cole says. "It was music against the most simplistic story line going—and no one thought



LINDA FOX

enough to expand the meaning of the song and the characters within the structure of the video with the use of dialogue."

Cole blames earlier video clip makers' "formularized approach of beginning and ending with the song" as the chief inhibitor of directors' use of dialogue. However, his partner and producer, Paul Flattery, feels the record companies are the culpable parties.

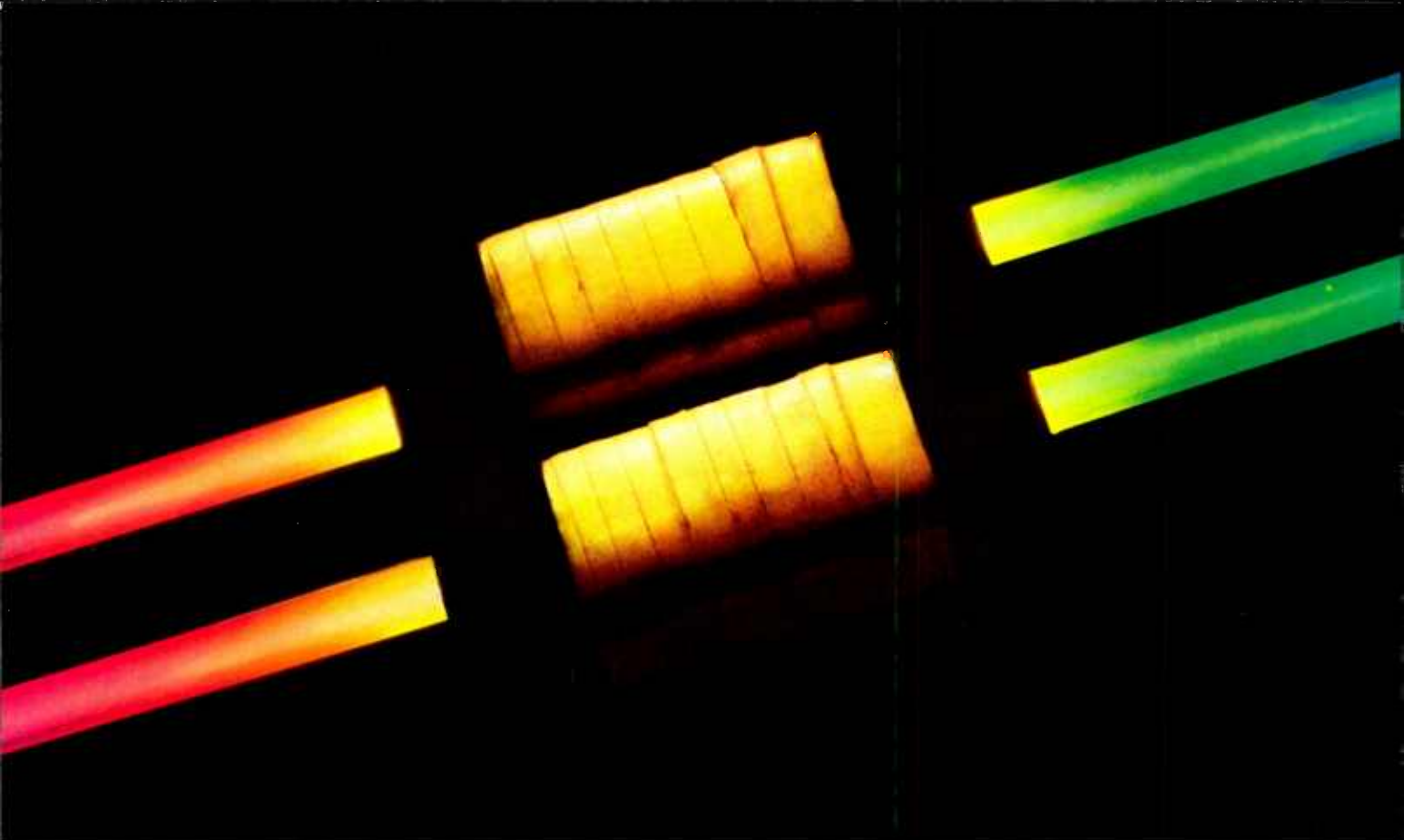
Flattery's contention is borne out by the partners' experience with Columbia Records while they were pitching the Philip Bailey clip, "I Know." Bailey's was one of the first rockvids to use dialogue between characters within the body of a song. The label's product managers

were nervous enough about the story line, casting the ex-supergroup artist as an inner-city cab driver whose auto accident years before had cost him his athletic career and his girlfriend. Cole didn't even broach the topic of dialogue until the first day of the shoot.

"I was writing dialogue secretly," he recalls. "We weren't even sure how much we'd be able to use. We were testing the give and take of the label, which had rejected my suggestion of a dual ending that could be rotated in programming.

Ultimately Cole got his way, using dialogue "to build character and connections." The clip made a strong impression on John Diaz, director of

continued on page 106



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COUNT BASIE

RAFI ZABOR

LETTING GO: THE PSYCHIC PHENOMENA OF JAZZ CURTAIN CALLS

It may be an anomaly worth entering into the folklore:

On the night Count Basie died, April 26 1984, my father, sick, worried, and clinging to sleep with the tenacity of one who needs every available bit of it, was disturbed by a voice that spoke aloud but did not wake him. The voice said: "Count Basie is dead. No one else in the world knows yet, and I'm telling you." It repeated: "Count Basie is dead. No one else in the world knows yet, and I'm telling you."

My father's voice, Russian, phlegmatic, and perhaps by means of tone expressing his nearly total disinterest in jazz and a resolute disbelief in psychic experience, replied: "All right, you told me. Now leave me alone, I need my sleep."

The voice countered this with: "Count Basie is dead. No one else in the world knows yet, and I'm telling you."

"I don't know Count Basie!" my father complained.

"But you'll be the first to know!" the voice insisted. "Count Basie is dead. No one else in the world knows yet, and I'm telling you."

"All right already!" exasperated my father.

"Count Basie is dead..." the voice began again, and, says my father, it went on all night, depriving him of his necessary rest and trying, now and then, to impress him with the exclusivity of the information and with his own lamentable lack of gratitude.

Finally, near dawn as my father tells it, my father's sleeping, sleepless soul was possessed by an idea. "Look," he said to the irritating, invisible herald, "if you're so smart, tell me something I really need to know. What number is going to win the lottery this week? I could really use a couple of million dollars right now."



ANDY FREBERG

A bewigged doorman announces "Count Basie!" The party improves.

There was a pause in the aether. Then, unbelievably: "Twenty two..." said the voice.

"Yes?" my father said, all ears.

"Twenty seven..."

"Yes yes?"

"Count Basie is dead. No one else in the world knows yet, and I'm telling you."

"Aaaaagggghhhh go away!" my father understandably replied.

The next morning he woke to the news, like the rest of the nation, that Count Basie had died during the night. Two days later, it occurred to him to tell his son the jazz critic the story. But honest, I don't know what to make of the incident at all (my father himself couldn't care less). I've tried on what explanations

I could think of, and none satisfies; the only one that is even coherent is improbable.

It is, in sum, that a Spirit or number of Spirits in the intermediate world attends upon the little world of jazz, and that perhaps such a spirit, possessed of the unhappy news of Count Basie's demise, decided for some reason to tell me, knowing I would care. Finding me neither in my room in the woods upstate nor at my parents' apartment in Brooklyn and lacking the omnipresence tradition accords a disincarnate intelligence—I was sleeping, fitfully, on the floor of Kate Dombroski's loft on Sixth Avenue, Manhattan—the fleshless being decided, "What the heck, I'm here,

I'll tell his dad"; and then inexplicably persisted when his bit of news was greeted with cries neither of interest nor woe.

Literate jazz fans will of course know that the incident is far from solitary, will remember, for example, Charles Mingus' report of a "clap of thunder on a clear day" when Charlie Parker died, and again when Lady Day passed (or was it Lester Young?). Mingus' own departure hence was more spectacular and livid: the day he died in Cuernavaca at the age of fifty-six, fifty-six sperm whales beached themselves and died in nearby Baja.

When I told my worthy constituent, Mr. Gary Giddins of the *Village Voice*, the story at a Mingus tribute at the Village Gate, this resolutely secular intelligence snapped back without a second thought, "I always said God was a jazz fan." Well, if He is, He's part of an extraordinarily small minority. Perhaps, considering the portents in heaven and on earth, the majority should take note, and change its ways.

Perhaps the most eerily beautiful tale in this vein was told me by Carla Bley. One night a couple of years back, in another part of the excellent forest in which I am typing this page, she was sitting at home late when a tune came to her whole, not in her own compositional

style and set to chord changes she retrospectively identified as those of "Mood Indigo." It sounded like an elegantly Ellingtonian variation. She wrote the lovely and unbidden music down and went to sleep. The next day she found out that Barney Bigard had died that night. Bigard, of course, had been Duke Ellington's great clarinetist in the Ellington band's youth and prime; he had written, or partly written, "Mood Indigo" on his own, says Bley, but his bandleader got the a half credit, not to mention half the steady income generated by the piece. The tune that Bigard passed to Bley on his way out she accordingly entitled "Copyright Royalties," and included on her album *Social Studies*. The sheet music, of course, is published...heh heh heh...in the twilight zone.

But back to the present, if we can find it.

In the sequel, my father (an avowed atheist who has nevertheless been applying the Qabbalistic discipline of *gematria* to the *Sh'ma Yisroel* in order to divine a numerical sequence that will win him three or six million dollars from the State) did not go on to play the lottery that week, but his more credulous son the jazz critic did, using two six-number series containing twenty-two and twenty-seven, the first of which came to

his mind with the clarity of certain knowledge. For the record, the winning sequence contained neither twenty-two nor twenty-seven in its lucrative coils, and I was out a foolish buck.

I will miss Count Basie, miss knowing the man is around. Contemporary American music would be unimaginable without what he contributed to it, which if I had to sum it up would have something to do with happiness, expansiveness, and freedom. On this smallish blue-green ball doing its circle dance in infinite space, and in the comically short time we have been here to slaughter each other, fry chickens, and build cathedrals—I think that covers it—Count Basie has made some of the wisest, widest, healthiest and most celebratory music on the set. If you add up on some more satisfactory abacus what Basie, Walter Page, Jo Jones, Freddie Green, Buck Clayton, Dickie Wells, Herschel Evans and the indispensable Lester Young among others put down, you'd have some notion of what life might be like if we had a more unbounded sense of adventure and were not so determined to be humorless, cruel, unimaginative and stupid. It is, I think, one of the best pictures of unconstricted human nature we have, and I am satisfied by it, belly-full, as I am by few things in life or art; and Basie's

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gnomic, three-note piano style is one of the great demonstrations that being alive, on earth, might be of some value after all. Man, he can play a little phrase over rhythm you could contemplate for sixty years and not exhaust its possibilities, proof positive that profundity doesn't have to be dull. Basie's ability to charge apparently empty musical space with the energy and architecture of his ideas has been equalled only, maybe, by Thelonious Monk. Modern jazz of course would have been impossible without his band's rhythmic innovations, and to my ears, no matter how wonderful pre-Basie jazz may be, it always sounds rhythmically stiff compared to that four-four Basie opened out wide and sweeping and fruitful as the plains, hell, bigger, better than that, take you right off the edge of the earth, that dance could, out of the depression and into the sweet clear blue. Those not aware of the great 1938-39 recordings on MCA and CBS would be well advised to become so.

The band, of course, went on to become *the* definitive American big band, toward which all others lead up and from which all subsequent departures depart (Ellington's aggregate being, naturally, an entirely different and altogether more specialized creature, *sui generis*). You want the technico-historical breakdown? How Basie voiced brass section against reed section in the

manner of Don Redman with Fletcher Henderson, not combining discrete voicings a la Ellington, how he picked up the band from Bennie Moten, what territory bands were, how riffs were spontaneously generated and developed, how he absorbed the liberating effect of bluesy, liberated Kansas City without which modern jazz would not blah blah blah? Aw, you can read that lots of places. And you can *hear*, cancha?

In closing, I would have you contemplate instead the name, "Count Basie." In my opinion it is one of the happiest names, *qua* name, that has been applied to a human being. It has volume, flesh, balance, irony, weight. It has a ring. It suits the man. A number of times in the last few years I have amused myself with the vision of an absurdly baroque or rococo ballroom, either mid-eighteenth century France or mid-1930s MGM, with a circular swirling of gowns on the floor and a marble staircase at its entrance, at which stands a bewigged doorman more pompous than any of the guests, accepting the cards of those about to enter and then announcing, in a voice that cuts right through the music: "The Duc de Montmorency!" for example. Or, "The Marquis and Marquise de Sévigné!...The Prince and Princesse de Guermantes!...Pierre Bezuhoff!" Accepting the next card without blinking, he announces in an identical voice and to

my indescribable pleasure: "Count BASIE!" The man himself comes down the stairs. The party improves.

I feel certain, that in whatever world he has recently and irreversibly entered, the creatures are happy and wise, and he will be welcomed and appreciated, applauded and understood.

• • •

Psylfurs from page 13

piece things together as we do now."

That could explain why early Furs songs tended to be one or two-chord drones. By contrast, "The Ghost In You"—a single from *Mirror Moves*—is so disarmingly tuneful, with its "love love love" refrain, that the casual listener could miss its wistful undercurrent. The music may be more inviting, but Butler's lyrics remain roiled in inner turmoil. If he sounds de-fanged, it's because the rebellion has turned to disinterest.

"Music should make people think about themselves, re-evaluate themselves," Butler says. "Early and mid-period Bob Dylan did that to me. As I learn about what's going on in the world, I hope to communicate that to other people. I'm owning up to feelings. I'm not distancing myself by using the third person, and I'm not being so sarcastic. I hope to be more positive and find more answers. As I find them, I'll let you know."

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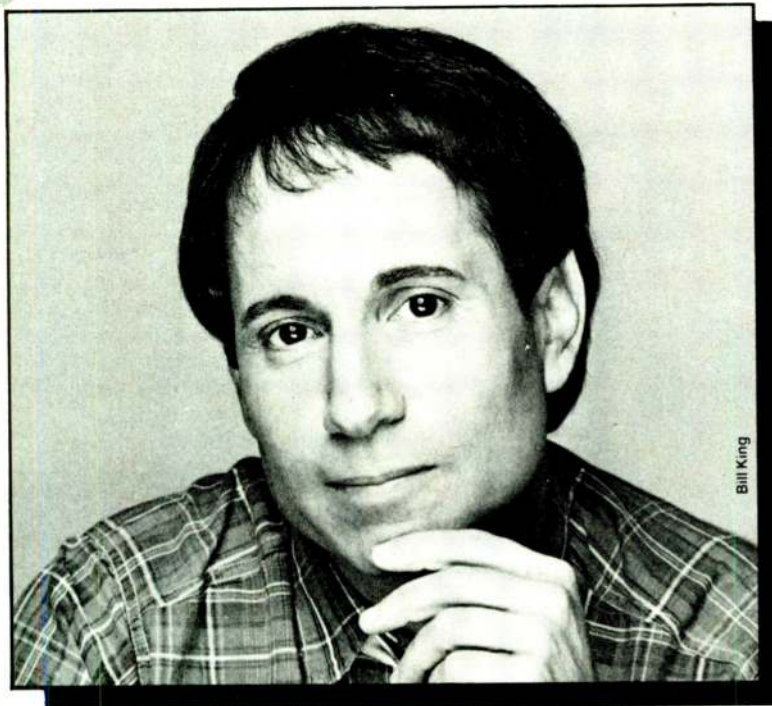
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FACES



Cameo's frenetic funk has lately taken a political bent.

CAMEO

Down-to-Earth Cosmic

We all owe Cameo a debt of thanks.

See, the four-man funk band from New York City is a rather cosmic bunch, knee deep into transcendental meditation and Eastern philosophies. But—and here's where that debt comes in—at least they don't ram it down your throat like any number of other bands.

Some groups try (and usually fail) to convince

observers that they have a "depth" that goes beyond their music's shallow dance-attack. Cameo is happy to let you accept their stuff on that level. Larry Blackmon, the band's thirty-one-year-old founder, explains, "What we do, what we're into, our beliefs and philosophies and whatever, is really personal."

Politics, however, is another matter. In recent years Cameo, which now resides in Atlanta, has taken an increasingly aggressive political stance. Once upon a time the band was famed for the polished, frenetic funk of

"I Just Want To Be," "Shake Your Pants," "Freaky Dancing" and "Style." Recently they've participated in black community voter registration drives and released a mocking new track called "Talking Out The Side Of Your Neck" whose video clip contains footage of the Reagan assassination attempt.

As far as Blackmon is concerned, Jesse Jackson's try for the White House is a landmark in black politics that Cameo can't ignore. "With Jesse's campaign we find out and show ourselves how strong we really can be. I think a lot of that point is being missed. I think that should be talked about more, because people will believe in themselves more and have the courage to take that extra step to try to straighten out some of those people in Washington."

All of which sounds pretty down-to-earth for a "cosmic" band—even one that doesn't proselytize. "You have to speak to people in a language they understand," Blackmon explains loftily. "Doesn't mean that's the only language we speak."—**Leonard Pitts, Jr.**

YES

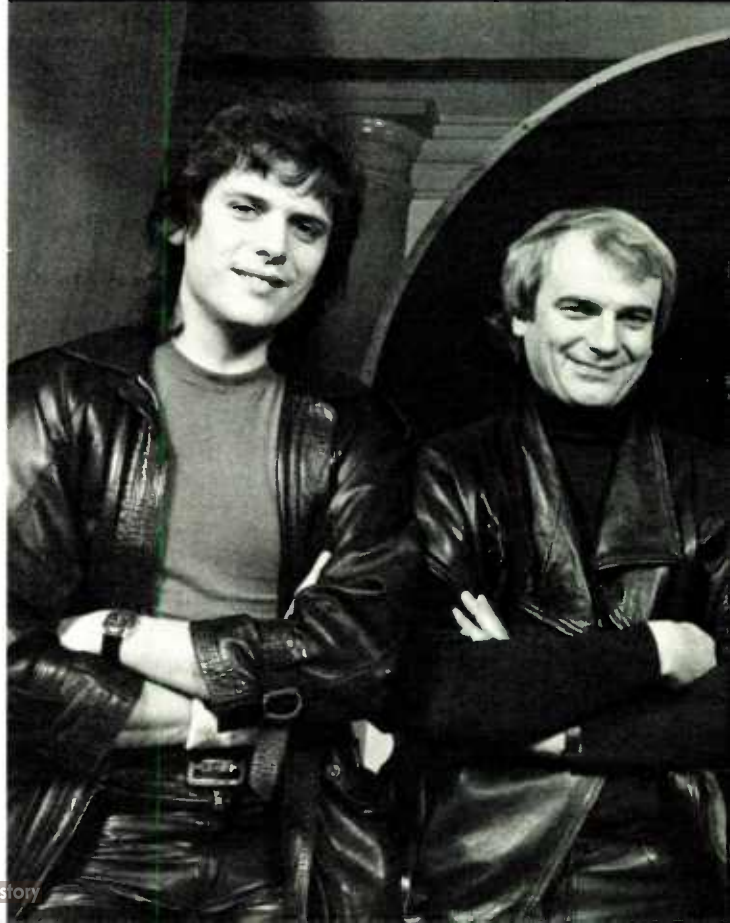
The Ghost of Yesses Past

There's a different Yes now, that's for sure. The former art-rock Yes would never have run Bugs Bunny cartoons before a concert (*Bugs Bunny cartoons?!), nor used a dance-beat version of their own "Leave It" as an opening fanfare instead of something by Stravinsky. But the ghost of this old band won't die. Their show in New York's Madison Square Garden—the last date of the group's first North American tour in four years—proved that to a sellout crowd.*

Not that it wasn't a good show, with lots of energy, high caliber musicianship and tech wizardry. The present golden age of wireless allowed Trevor Rabin, Jon Anderson and Chris Squire to roam playfully around an 80s-deco slanted metal stage.

Unfortunately, the Garden's lousy sound reduced Yes' transparent textures to the

Trevor Rabin, Alan White, Chris Squire, Jon Anderson and Tony Kaye:



quality of roadbed gravel. The band's schizophrenia didn't help; they couldn't make the old material toe the new 90125 line. Vast portions of the crowd spontaneously sang along with "Hold On" and "Hearts," but the old songs sat there like a lump. Trevor Rabin isn't Steve Howe. Tony Kaye isn't Rick Wakeman or Patrick Moraz. Since the band didn't revamp its "classics," the audience was compelled to reminisce about how Yes was in the good old days.

Why repeat the past—even with new faces—when there's a bright future to explore? Having made a stunning rock comeback, Yes can afford to leave "Starship Troopers" behind on its path toward new music. —**Freff**

ANDY FREEBERG



System's Mic Murphy and David Frank: "We get bursts of energy. We don't deliberate."

SYSTEM

Systematic Synthesis

Call it Systemspeak (they do)—you won't find it explained in even the most recent Directory of Online

Databasing Mic Murphy and David Frank didn't plan it this way. But when they say, "Oh yeah—alright—okay—I mean" to each other, they communicate more than we're likely to know. They don't just talk like best friends; they seem to draw from the same memory bank.

Frank (keyboards and electronics) and Murphy (guitars) are the System, two guys as plugged-in as a home computer and a lot bigger-hearted. The System's two albums show they know how to pull on a groove like taffy while shaping it into solid pop. Since their recent *X-Periment* LP they've unwound by working on the soundtrack for *Beat Street*, Harry Belafonte's ballyhooed breakdance flick; penning a single for Chaka Khan; working on another single with Stevie Nicks; and knocking out a handful of 12-inch singles in their spare time. "We get bursts of energy," Murphy chirps. "We don't deliberate."

The disparate *X-Periment* is all over the DOR horizon, from the hard-edged "I Wanna Make You Feel Good" to the air-cushioned "Promises Can Break." As a result, fans of last year's solid *Sweat* (with its hit, "You Are In My System") may be left scratching their heads.

"We want our music to be a synthesis of a lot of different kinds of sounds," Frank says, slipping out of Systemspeak for interview purposes. "We don't want something we write to be classified as a dance song, or a rap song, or a rock song. If a song like 'You Are In My System' has a very mechanical funk sound to it, the vocals might be

sweet and there might be a beautiful melodic line."

On *X-Periment* this counterweighting yields grooveful pop, or maybe mass-audience funk. These two best friends are themselves a balancing act: they say they instinctively fill in the gaps each other leaves when recording. They even fill in the gaps of each other's conversation. Asked what they were listening to these days, Frank turns to Murphy and says, "Can I give our answer this time?" No doubt about it—this is a system.—**RJ Smith**

BILL EVANS

No, Not That Bill Evans

Bill Evans the saxophonist is probably destined to be known as "Bill Evans the saxophonist" for at least the foreseeable future. That's the way it is when you have the same name as (but are in no way related to) one of the seminal pianists in jazz history. At the rate he's going, though, Evans, twenty-six, is bound to—so to speak—make a name for himself before very long.

So far, Evans' reputation is largely a case of fame by

Bugs Bunny cartoons?!



EBET ROBERTS



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STEVE BASSETT

Have Voice, Will Travel

Steve Bassett is not just another fresh face. Although his soulful self-titled LP has yet to find an audience, Bassett's already sung for more people than most performers ever dream of reaching—on TV commercials. Chances are you've heard him touting the benefits of Noxzema suntan lotion, extolling Burger King's roast beef sandwiches or praising American Airlines.

An artistic compromise? "No! It's fun as shit. I'm a song salesman, an entertainer," the thirty-three year old singer declares.

You name it, and Bassett's probably sung it. Richmond, Virginia born and bred, he dropped out of college fifteen years ago to hit the rock 'n' roll circuit and ended up playing piano in Michigan with Teegarden & Van Winkle (of the 1970 hit "God, Love And Rock & Roll"). By the mid-70s Bassett was back home building a career as a blue-eyed R&B singer. "That's the old-style R&B, when they used to mix rock 'n' roll with gospel," he notes.

Bassett subsequently ran the gamut, fronting a ten-

piece soul band, working solo in piano bars, performing with a sixty-five-voice black gospel choir. One year he played three hundred and thirty-five one-nighters up and down the Atlantic coast's "beach music" circuit.

Eventually, one of his independent recordings caught the ear of legendary talent scout John Hammond, who introduced Bassett to Columbia Records. The happy outcome is his major-label debut, produced by old pros Jerry Wexler and Barry Beckett and featuring the cream of Muscle Shoals' funky sessionmen. Despite the heavy emotional delivery dominates the show. He is typically modest about his talent. "I've got what some people call vocal character—I call it scar tissue. There's a rattle in my voice that produces an old rough sound."

Should the LP fall by the commercial wayside, Bassett won't worry. "If you don't fit in the music business, it doesn't mean you're not a musician. No matter what happens, I'll always use the talents God gave me to entertain people. I'll still be singing when everyone that's in music today is off selling shrimp!"—**Jon Young**

Evans has restrained his wilder jazz influences on his debut LP.

association. In 1980, barely out of college, he was tapped for Miles Davis' comeback band; currently he's working alongside John McLaughlin in the revamped Mahavishnu Orchestra.

Evans maintains a higher profile on his first album, the impressively eclectic *Living In The Crest Of A Wave*. If the record doesn't exactly establish him as a major voice on tenor and soprano sax (he also plays flute, keyboards and various electronic gadgets), it does reveal a skilled, versatile player and composer whose thoughtful approach is surprisingly restrained for a phenom.

Despite his resume (and the sound of much of the album) Evans says he doesn't consider himself a fusion player or even much of a fusion fan.

"I could have made a real wild jazz album. I have a whole collection of jazz-oriented tunes that I have a ball playing in clubs. But I was more interested in making a statement about who I am—evoking a mood, dealing with

colors and emotions. I'd rather play three notes and have somebody say, 'That reminds me of a lake in Montana' than play a whole lot of notes and have somebody say, 'Man, he's burning!'"

Evans does his fair share of burning on *Wave*, and he also plumbs some jazz and jazz-oriented rock clichés. But when the album works, it does indeed evoke a mood. At its best, it has a reflective quality more reminiscent of Pat Metheny (whose former bassist Mark Egan plays on and co-produced the album) than of the funk-laden outpourings of most crossover-minded saxophonists—although Evans describes his music as "wilder and looser" than Metheny's.

Evans plans to spend the rest of the year with the Mahavishnu Orchestra and then alternate his Mahavishnu commitments with his own band. "I have something to say and I'm ready to say it," he says. "This is the music I've been thinking about since I was ten years old."

—**Peter Keepnews**

Bassett makes no apologies for his TV commercial career.



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RUN-DMC

Fresh Rap Realism

Rap continues to have plenty to say, and with good reason. The unemployment, underemployment and general hardship that afflict ghetto kids aren't ending under the reign of Reaganomics. The question is how to say what needs to be said in a way that sounds fresh—a current rap buzzword, the ingredient everyone is looking for.

Run-DMC's string of rap hits—"It's Like That" b/w "Sucker M.C.'s," "Hard Times" and "Jam Master Jay"—have established these two Queens kids as leading proponents of the genre's most stripped-down, "cut to the bone" style. The singles are strung together on *Run-DMC*, but their thematic coherence makes it the first rap album to hang together.

The record's centerpiece is the current single "Rock Box," which breaks the rap formula with a heavy-metal guitar line by Eddie Martinez. After Eddie Van Halen sparked up "Beat It" this move was probably inevitable. What is gratifying is "Rock Box" incorporates mega-force guitar dynamics into the rap rhythm with such

power and grace. It's a beautiful monster, both heavy and smooth.

Live, Run-DMC eschews all show-biz pretense. Instead of space-cowboy or *Road Warrior* couture, Run, DMC and their DJ Jam Master Jay appear in street clothes and stomp around the stage proclaiming their lines for what they are: dead-on observations and today's headlines.

Of course, to carry this off you need presence and timing. Run-DMC has opened for George Clinton's traveling

circus, and the experience shows. At recent performances at New York's Danceteria and the Ritz, Run and DMC created the feeling of a dialogue going on between each other, and between them and their audience. Without any stage trappings to distract, the audience could respond only to the beat and the words. Respond they did.

"Rock Box" is blaring out of New York's ghetto-blasters, but as of this writing has not yet leapt radio's racial divide. If it does, we'll say Michael Jackson's crossover really did shake things up. If it doesn't, Run, for one, won't be surprised.

"We don't really expect anything," he said at a party celebrating the album's release. "We just do the best we can." Realism is what these guys are about. And that's the way it is.—**Richard Grabel**

SPINAL TAP

HM's Irony and Allure

You almost couldn't hear the music for the guffaws when Spinal Tap performed a special live show at New York's CBGB to promote their mock-rockumentary *This Is Spinal Tap*. Guitars and vocals tended toward differ-

ent keys, deflating the silly Black Sabbath-like epics "Rock And Roll Creation" and "Stonehenge." Tap's infantile psychedelic "hit" "(Listen To The) Flower People" became club-footed reggae only marginally worse than Led Zeppelin's "D'Yer Maker." The very sight of Harry Shearer as elfin bassist Derek Smalls vigorously punching the air in his Viking leather bondage harness got more cheers than your average Carmine Appice drum solo.

One hopes the band—actually creators and players Harry Shearer, Michael McKean and Christopher Guest plus two British session players (including ex-Atomic Rooster drummer R.J. Parnell)—won't take this vaudeville rock act on the road. There is too much real Wishbone Ash, Deep Purple and Grand Funk Railroad in Spinal Tap's film and show to confuse genuine heavy-metal fans. But in knocking the genre down a peg or two, the creators of *This Is Spinal Tap* also cleverly illustrate its strange allure. For all its aesthetic faults, heavy metal flourishes because for both fans and musicians it represents pure escapism, vigorously physical and gloriously macho. All *Tap* director/co-writer Rob Reiner and company did was exploit the funny spots. See Spinal Tap and share the fantasy.—**David Fricke**

Harry Shearer, Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, R.J. Parnell and David Kaff backstage.



EBET ROBERTS



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Melissa Manchester

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Lee Greenwood

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Here's the microphone soundmen everywhere are talking about. And we're not surprised—we worked closely with top sound engineers to perfect our new SM87. It's a studio-quality supercardioid condenser mic with Shure's legendary road mic ruggedness.

A sound solution to feedback. A revolutionary new cartridge element is the heart of the Crowd Pleaser.™ Its highly directional supercardioid polar pattern rejects unwanted sound bleed and allows an astonishing amount of gain before feedback. This enables the SM87 to perform flawlessly, even in high gain, multiple-monitor situations.

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get the shakes. The exclusive Shure elastomer "space frame" shock mount isolates the capsule from virtually all hand-held and mechanical vibrations. And the built-in multi-stage filter minimizes popping and wind noise.

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CRIMSON

ORGANIZING CONFLICT IN TIME AND SPACE

BY FREFF



*I'm Tony...
I'm Belew...
I'm Billy...
I'm Bobby...
We're the King Crimson
Band
We're the best in all the
land
So settle back and have
some fun
And tap your foot in 21.*

There's this place.

Call it the Court, if you can stand the past reference. Even if you can't; enough argument and testimony goes down there to justify the name – and maybe enough judgment, too.

It isn't like your usual place, this Court. Not like New York or Dorset or Woodstock or Champaign-Urbana, Illinois (though of late it has manifested itself in all those locales). It's a *quality* of place, bound not by the laws of physics and three-dimensionality, but by the laws of finance and the relative fragility of its current vessels/vassals. It's the ground beneath itself and the air above, but not the space between. It just... is.

And what it is, is King Crimson. Not the band. The thing that lives *behind* the band. The fire that reaches out through the medium of The Fripp Animal, grabs hold of a confusing, contradictory collection of musicians, and then makes them beat each other creatively silly in order to give Crimson a voice in the world.

No joke. Look at them: Tony Levin, a session man's session man (hell, he brought Steve Gadd into the business); Bill Bruford, a technique-obsessed drummer with no interest in keeping time; Adrian Belew, a mad mix of Kerouac and Hendrix and Huck Finn; and Robert Fripp, an unfulfilled, often unhappy, and ultimately unwilling





The band has a mind of its own. None of us can push it in any direction, even though we try.

EBET ROBERTS



apex of the Crimson pyramid. This is not a band, this is a passionate case of possession. More than that—it's the biggest gamble happening in modern rock. If these guys could get it together fully, magnifying all their strengths and cancelling out all their weaknesses, they could crack the whole music industry like a whip.

The gamble has got lousy odds. Axiomatic in the relationship between the Court and the Real World is that the closer the Court comes to busting through, the more pressure both sides put on the point of nexus. In *Crimson 1*, it punched hard with its first effort, *In The Court Of The Crimson King*. What other record can lay legitimate claim to simultaneously siring jazz-rock, art-rock, and heavy metal? But that band trailed off into nothingness, so it regrouped and hit back with *Crimson 2*, leaner and meaner by far, and precisely strong enough so that as it was about to become the biggest thing in Europe, the pressure valve gave and blew the top of Fripp's head off. Like kicking in a TV screen, *that* was. Lots of sparks, a loud *whump*, and no more picture... until years later, and *Crimson 3*. The current lineup, arguably the best ever: two Yanks and two Brits, each a master of his instrument. Crimson, having pulled a good hand in the game, is laying out four solid aces to cover the bet.

Only it's not working. Or at least, not working yet. Not on the level it could. It's the stabblest Crimson of them all, in terms of personnel, and as wonderfully thunderous and magical onstage as ever—but it keeps releasing records that are good but not great, and which sell like it.

Why? Conflict. The *disorganized* kind. Over space, over time, over trust.

All the pieces of Crimson are there, but they're in the wrong place. Space isn't shared; it's fought for. Time isn't kept; it's ground out, in a claustrophobic patter of synthesized guitar arpeggios, because Fripp needs the beat of rock and Bruford is offering only the flow of jazz. The rhythm section in this band isn't the bass and drums—it's the bass and the lead guitar! And Belew, who would normally fill the rhythm guitar slot, is busy soaring. Somehow, out of all this, they keep making music. It's a hell of a struggle.

And maybe the Court likes it that way. Nobody ever said a great calling had to be benevolent.

"Beats me," he smiles.

But ask him about his Scrabble dictionary, or the art on the walls, or about the new Radio Shack 100 computer he's using to go on-line with the world, and it's a different story. Tony Levin *appreciates* the things he likes. He'll go a long way for them. He loves taking pictures while on tour so much that he finally self-published a delightful collection of candids called *Road Photos* (which he hawks, of course, while on the road). He loves opera so much that for several years he tried to schedule his tours so they wouldn't conflict with the season at the Met. He shifts with equal fascination from discussing the joys and conveniences of electronic mail, to boxing, to how overwhelming he found his visit to the Rodin museum in Paris.

So he talks, and you talk, and gradually his opinions about Crimson's problems and pleasures come out to test the air.

Crack in the framework #1, conflicts in Time—and a growing tension between Bruford and Fripp (at least from Fripp's point of view). That's why Tony is busy programming a Sequential Circuits DrumTraks to use on the upcoming tour. The polarity between Bill Bruford's jazzier-approach to drumming and Fripp's demand for drumming that keeps time had reached a peak on "Sleepless." In the end Bob Clearmountain and Tony wound up creating a whole new drum track for the song, by taking the sounds of Bill's snare and bass drums and electronically cutting them back into the track in a straightforward, rock steady backbeat.

"We had tried recording that song before. It was slow and moody. But we ended up giving up on the song in June, in England. When we reconvened in Woodstock, in December, I was in a different mood with my playing, and I did the opening as a slapping part instead of using a pick, as well as playing it much faster. It just took off to a different place then, for no reason; it was just very much in the air. That happened with quite a few of the songs. On this album, more than the others, we would get together and work hard and... fail. In Woodstock we breathed a collective sigh of relief, because about half of the album just suddenly, magically came together.

"I don't know what was different. I don't know what was wrong the other times. *Nothing* was wrong. It's just that a band is a very live thing. It has a mind of its own. I mean, we're four pretty intelligent guys and we can't any of us push the band in any direction, even though we try.

"I can't analyze Robert any better than you can. But I think he really feels better about the band than he says he does. No, Bill *isn't* an American-style drummer on this album, but I do think this album is the one where he is no longer fighting being that kind of drummer. I think this is the album where the American and English influences are finally equal. I'm a very strong player, so I would have guessed that when we started I would have counteracted Bill's English style. But I didn't. Instead I actually went through quite a bit of anguish about what to do with this new style of playing, and a funny thing happened—I grew. I changed. I said 'that sounds interesting, I can do that.' In a sense I deserted Adrian and left him with the pop element of the band. I went English. I went busy. But that was years ago and I've done as much in that direction as I can, so I've fallen back

LEVIN

—"This is very unusual, that you'll see instruments here in my apartment. Usually there's just a bass sitting in the corner ready to go out for a session."

—"I'd never listened to King Crimson. Wasn't influenced at all by the band, and here I am in it."

—"Crimson live is better. Live is the thing. You say Robert says that, too? You mean we agree? Are you going to put this in the article—me and Robert agree?"

—"Yes. And no. I don't know. And I know better than to predict."

That last is a fairly typical Tony Levin answer to an interview question. It's no dodge. It's just that the average rock 'n' roll interviewer asks about things that Tony has never actually thought about. Which, mostly, means music. And bands. And what the hell holds Crimson together, anyway?

to playing with a strong pulse, which the music hasn't really had before this. Or needed."

The pulse may be strong, and direct, but the latest method of creating it isn't. Tony's new experiment is in mixing electric and synth bass as tone colors, by playing both at the same time. "I've got a little Moog Source, and within one bass part or track I'll be playing back and forth from it to the Stick, or my Music Man bass, just alternating notes very quickly. Sometimes the same notes, so it's just alternating timbres."

Which brings up Cray in the framework #2, conflicts in Space. Tony, by grace of his position in the band's sonic spectrum, has the least trouble with it...but it's still a problem.

"Both Robert and Adrian, when they create a song, create the whole basis of the song. Which doesn't leave a lot of room for the other guitar player. And they usually have bass parts in mind, and certainly a drum part, and it's not easy for them to see those go... and sometimes it's not easy to *make* them go. There's a lot of thrashing about.

"When we first started rehearsing this album, in Illinois, I was intent on it being a bit more of a dance album. Not dance like some albums...but as King Crimson goes, anyway. I made up my mind not to play the top of the Stick on the album, and I had a vague notion of this back-and-forth style playing. By the time we were working in England another idea had become popular, of having it be an 'industrial' album. I envisioned at one time doing a whole album like 'Industry.' Warner Bros. wouldn't have been happy at all."

Nor would they have been happy, one suspects, with another approach that Tony brought into rehearsal: the King Crimson Barbershop Quartet.

"I've always loved barbershop quartets, ever since high school. So one day after everyone had finished in the studio I multi-tracked four vocal parts, and the next day I said, 'Right, guys, seriously, I've got something here I think is pretty good and that we could do.'"

*I'm Tony/ I'm Billy/ I'm Bobby/ I'm Belew...
We're here to sing and play for you/ We're the King Crimson band.*

"And Robert said, 'Let's put it on the record.' Except for that, I think it was a pretty good laugh."

BRUFORD

—"At the end of my band, which was running almost concurrently with Robert's League of Gentlemen, I think he and I arrived at a similar place. We were both wanting the society of people who no longer needed instruction, or whom you no longer wished to instruct or to show things to."

—"It's easier to be in Crimson now than it ever was. Much easier. Robert and I are both a lot calmer, in my opinion."

—"I'm a classic Englishman. I sort of garden like crazy. Physical labor balances musical activity beautifully."

—"I love jazz, what can I say? I still listen to *A Love Supreme* all the time. In that record I find just about everything I respect about music."

The way Bill Bruford tells the tale, it's all quite comfortable these days. Life is good, life is direct, life is simple. He has his family and his gardening.

He has an acoustic piano/drums duo with Patrick Moraz that allows him to explore the little things in drumming, and he's got Crimson to let him paint the rhythm in big, increasingly electronic strokes. Rounding it out, he's earning at least as much as he would have if he'd stayed at University and become a corporate economic advisor for British Airways, or something of similar ilk.

If there's any trouble in paradise, maintains Bill, it's strictly Standard Operating Procedure.

"Creating Crimson's music," he explains, "is just about everything that the general public thinks it isn't. I think they have this idea that Robert comes in with this huge stack of manuscript...but it's not like that at all. It's argy-bargy. It's give and take. I mean, the music's hardly composed, anyway. 'Composition' is a nice, flattering term that's sort of devolved down from the western classical school, and we'd all like to think that our better rock groups *compose*...but Crimson sort of *scuffles* for its music. It's down there somewhere on the rehearsal room floor, and it scrabbles and gets its fingernails dirty and people resent certain things that are going on in the music, then come to live with them, and finally find something good to do with the things they initially resented. I'm quite an irritant at rehearsals because I don't settle. What used to be the deal was that the drummer settled his part immediately, so that the rest of the group could go on changing theirs. And a drummer was also what everybody else invariably overdubbed on...which is a bit like being shat on. I've come to really resent this idea that somehow the drummer has to be a carpet, putting all these notes into place irrespective of any musical sense at all. So I've been retaliating by deliberately changing my part, day in and day out, which really gets them going...no, that's an exaggeration. It keeps them on their wits, though."

Easy for Bill to say—but then, he's got the advantage of a lifetime of getting to hit things in public. It's quite a release. Take "Sleepless," for example. Does what happened to his original drum track faze him?

"I mostly played the tune as I thought it should be played, leaving out great sections of drumming. Which were then put back in. But you see, I'm quite happy to sort of provide some drumming noises and then let other people rearrange them as they see fit on certain tunes. I quite like that. There used to be an incredible, insufferable preciousness with music, where the *note* was a precious item."

Well and good. Still reasonable...but there's a drum machine looming in his future, and that concept prickles. In lots of places. "Drumming, for me, doesn't really occur with a machine...well, I'll put it this way. It can take away some of the chore of keeping time. Drummers used to keep the time. Remember that idea? And it was held that other musicians *couldn't* keep time, so they employed this guy called a drummer to do it for them. This is all a farce, of course, and we have to assume by now that Robert Fripp can keep time. And if he can't, well, that's tough. But timekeeping is also something we need for the audience. The machine can handle it, leaving me free to stand and play a vertical rack setup of Simmons SDS 7s, embroidering on the top.

"Look, when you play a note, and I play a note, I quite like both of them. But music really occurs in



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the distance between the two. It's the minute human differences that make the music for me, and these are increasingly known as errors. Take the history of the rattle; a good kalimba player will leave rattles on his instrument. Rattles are essential flak around the sound. But in the West we spend thousands of dollars getting rid of every conceivable harmonic distortion, and then of course spend thousands of dollars putting it all back in again. At some point I put up my hand and say I can't hear any music here anymore, just binary code going past. In this oscilloscope mentality, music is supposed to abide by some mechanized rhythmic formula. Rhythm has never really been like that. Rhythm, to me, is about Tony Williams coming and going like the breeze, like a storm, rather than the thing that military bands went to war with. Which is called beat. Rhythm is pulse, as opposed to beat."

There'll be plenty of both, on the tour. Tentative plans are for there to be four different drumkits on the stage, in addition to the drum machine. The vertical Simmons rack already mentioned, a Simmons set to be used on "Waiting Man" and several other tunes, Bill's standard hybrid electronic/acoustic set, and a small, solely acoustic one. There is another drummer in King Crimson, after all: Adrian Belew. Bill feels that it is important for the band to exploit that.

"God—Adrian, what can I say about Adrian. When people speak through their instruments they lay themselves wide open. I think what Adrian has realized is that he doesn't have to please anybody else. And the most pleasing he will be to me is when *he's* most pleased. When he's found his thing.

"I think a lot of his life he's had the traditional entertainer's idea that you are indebted to the customer, and must supply what the customer wants. Jon Anderson and I always had arguments about that back when I was in Yes. I used to say, 'Good God, man, Charlie Parker never worried about what the audience thought!' And he'd say, 'Who's Charlie Parker?'"

don't...bury me.

"I'll be straightforward with my emotions here. I feel that Bill should be playing as Bill plays. Because I love it, and think it's him, and there are plenty of drum machines that can play a straightforward pulse if that's what you like. In keeping with my new directions I prefer Bill being Bill, which implies inventiveness and pretty much placing the beat all over the place."

Of course, if Bill plays that way it's guaranteed to irk Fripp....

"I haven't found any solution to this basic dilemma yet. Right now we're starting to arrive at a style where Bill and I play together with me functioning as the beat drummer, which I'm pretty good at, and Bill functioning as the random schizophrenic jazz drummer (or whatever you would call it; the guy who is doing the orchestration of the drumming). I think that might be an answer. If a song requires a beat drummer, we should have a beat drummer—me, or a drum machine, or maybe we should bring in somebody else. I know this problem really bothers Robert. And I don't really know what to say about that, because it doesn't bother me anymore."

At the moment, Adrian is far more concerned with technical matters concerning the upcoming tour. He's eager to get on the road, and especially to get to Japan. It's a special place for him. But before that, he has to figure out just what he's taking. Since the last King Crimson tour, the entire band has acquired new and elaborate equipment. Making it all work together will be quite a chore.

Top of his list are the old standbys: a Foxx Tone, an Electro-Harmonix Frequency Analyzer, not to mention a variety of small compressors, flangers, delay chains, and 10-band eq units, all running through his favorite amp, one he's used on nearly every recording he's done, an early Roland Jazz Chorus 120. But the current pedalboard is going, because of slow switching and an unstable microprocessor. And he won't be taking the stereo amplification and the three volume pedals that linked into it to help him control the effect. ("I'd have to send different delays to different amps at slightly different times, which gets pretty complicated for my little feet. Especially for these songs, which are complicated enough.") He *will* be taking the fretless Roland synthesizer guitar that was featured prominently on "Model Man," "Sleepless," and "Man With An Open Heart."

Some tough choices are going to have to be made before the show pulls out of rehearsals in Champaign, choices dictated by the changes in the band's music.

"I'll tell you one difference I think we successfully managed. For a long time the band had talked about playing more freeform style, actually *not* playing together. It was suggested at one point that we go into the studio and really not pay attention to each other, but still try and go in the same direction, if you know what I mean. That's how a lot of the industrial sounding stuff came about, by just going in there and trying to make an 'almighty noise,' as Robert calls it. Where it really works for me is the thing I'm happiest about on the whole record, "Dig Me," where I told the guys I wanted to lay down this very awkward guitar part and then have them play to it, but in a way that would sound like we're really not playing together as often as we are. The song sounds like it's falling apart."

BELEW

I'm getting further and further away from the normal pop song, the thing I was brought into the band to do.

—"I feel, personally, that I'm getting further and further from wanting to do the normal pop song, the kind of thing I think I was brought into the band to do."

—"I think about the future of the band all the time."

—"I think of myself as not a very articulate person. But I do study the dictionary a lot and read lots of words, because I think it's part of being a lyricist to understand words."

—"My two favorite drummers of all time were Ringo Starr and Bill Bruford."

Well, that last rather settles the issue of Time, at least from Adrian Belew's special and highly intuitive corner. He's changed on the topic. Earlier on he was leaning with Fripp, trying to get Bill to simplify. But that, he feels, was in a period when the songs were also leaning in that direction. Now he senses his own pace and pattern changing as success pushes the years of "Holiday-Inn-itis" into the past. He's less inclined to stomp on someone else's inner path when he's just beginning to dust off his own. Like the lyric says—*dig me...but*



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CRIMSON

Not unlike the car that is the song's protagonist; and also not unlike the tons of new tech piled around the rehearsal room, still not quite working right.

"We were talking about this the first day we were here. We got all this stuff set up and we were looking at it and saying 'Gee whiz, look at all this,' and I said 'Y'know, boys, we should just go back to Stratocasters and Super Reverbs.' And Tony and Bill and I were laughing about that and we just shook our heads and said, 'Yeah, man, we'll have a garage sale.'"

sorry it did. Because it is excruciatingly painful."

Robert Fripp is a riddle wrapped in an enigma wrapped in a guitarist. He's the common denominator in Crimsons 1, 2, and 3. He's the channel, the conduit, the big bay door between the Court and here. But he's not an equal member of the band. He may not actually even be a member, in the traditional sense, any more than the gesso ground spread on a canvas can be said to be part of the painting done on top of it.

The other band members take the space easily, without thinking. But Fripp's sense of responsibility holds him captive to the vision. He knows what Crimson needs, and if they won't provide it, he'll subvert or betray his own playing style to try and fill the gap. He lays himself out, nerves bare and screaming, and lets them get away with it.

Bill talked about the drummer having to go in and be the carpet; but Fripp, from his point of view, is forced by his perception of Crimson's needs—which are definitely not identical with his—to be the floor beneath the rug.

"That is exactly what I do. I construct a field on which other people can find themselves. But in finding themselves, it doesn't occur to them to extend the courtesy to me. And that you can print. Because hopefully they will then read it and the penny will drop. Dear guys, if you're reading this: your guitarist is frustrated!

"Why, then, do I continue to do it? Because, obviously, there is something there worthwhile. No other band is doing what King Crimson is *continued on page 106*

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

FRIPP

Dear guys: if you're reading this, your guitar player is frustrated.

—"Music is the cup that holds the wine of silence. Sound is that cup, but empty. Noise is that cup, broken."

—"I feel limited by recording. Not always... if it's 'my record' I feel limited, I feel a responsibility. But if it's someone else's record I don't worry, because they're picking up the pieces."

—"The Giles Brothers were looking for a singing organist. I was a nonsinging guitar player. After thirty days of playing and recording with them I asked if I'd got the job or not—joking like, you know? And Michael Giles rolled a cigarette and said, very slowly, 'Well, let's not be in too much of a hurry to commit ourselves, shall we?' I still don't know if I ever got the job."

—"I never thought Crimson would happen again... speaking strictly as a human being, I'm

Produced by Keith Forsey.

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Peter Wolf: Funk and the Chill Factor


by Bill Flanagan

Michael Jonzun is an important man in Boston. Michael lives at the House of Hits, a funky 8-track studio in Roxbury, the black section, where he and his brothers make records like the funk hit "Pack Jam," and brother Maurice Starr's *Spacey Lady* LP, and the New Edition's gold single "Candy Girl." The House of Hits is also where Michael and Peter Wolf began work on *Lights Out*—Wolf's first solo album—after Wolf's split with the J. Geils Band last fall. Michael Jonzun is an important man in Boston, but now he's talking about New York.

"Pete's got that whole New York scene down," Jonzun laughs. He and Wolf went from the House of Hits to the Cars' Syncro Sound studio before heading to Manhattan four months ago. They were supposed to stay a week; Wolf's been there, ensconced in a hotel, ever since. "New York is him," Jonzun continues. "It's like, 'Okay, Michael, we're gonna do it up now! This is New York!' He knows how to deal with that."

He sure does. On a Tuesday afternoon in late May, Wolf leaves his hotel to go over to EMI Records, where a dozen promotional decisions are awaiting him. When we return, no more than three hours later,



Photograph Deborah Feingold

the desk clerk hands him a great fistfull of phone messages. When we reach his room there are a dozen more stuffed in his door. Scraps of paper with inscriptions like "Tatum O'Neal called."

Wolf takes out the top priority messages and begins returning calls. "Hi, this is Pete Wolf. Is Mick there?" He looks up from the phone. "Jagger's back in town—this could be dangerous." Jonzun's right. Wolf's got this New York scene down.

"I don't think I'm that good a songwriter yet," Wolf says later that evening. "I really don't think I am. It's a hard thing with me. I read in your magazine that David Byrne said songs are the hardest part, that they drive him crazy. I've got to agree. I'm still learning a lot about it. I'm still trying to put more of the person in the song. When I get too intimate, I tend to think it's too schlocky or something. It's weird. I really envy songwriters who have that song you just know was a real transference of feelings and emotions to the lyric and music. Like a lot of Dylan. Like Sly Stone's 'Family Affair.' It's a haunting thing. There's so many great songs and, I don't know, I just don't feel I've reached a level where I'm really a good songwriter yet. It's something I'm hoping to attain."

The next afternoon we're having lunch when Wolf brings up the subject again. "To be clearer," he says, "it's not that I don't think I'm a good songwriter. It's that I don't think I'm as good as I want to be yet. I'm still learning more about the form. I'm still working on learning how to do more with a song. I still feel I'm a student of songwriting."

Why the qualification? "After you left last night I went over to Jagger's," Wolf explains. "He asked about the interview, what we talked about. When I told him I said I thought I wasn't a good songwriter he said, 'Don't say you're not a good songwriter! Say you're not as good as you want to be!'"

Jagger shows up on *Lights Out*. He sings along with Wolf on a track called "Pretty Lady." He came by to jam one night and came back the next to record. By the time the House of Hits had transplanted itself to Right Track studios in Manhattan, everyone from Bob Dylan to Big Al Anderson was stopping by. Guys like Adrian Belew, G.E. Smith and Elliot Easton stuck around long enough to add guitars to the tracks Wolf, Jonzun and Gordon Worthy (Michael's cousin) were putting together.

But if the LP got its rock credentials stamped in New York City, it got its funk back in Roxbury. That's where Wolf and Jonzun recruited players like guitarist Carlos "Rice" Peppers—who plays the sort of fat funk rhythm guitar James Brown used to build whole albums around—and Rusty the Toe-Jammer, a street kid who scratches with his feet, and Tony "Rock" Cowan—who makes his living playing guitar in Boston lounges.

The marriage of hard funk with hot rock 'n' roll comes off without compromise to either side. Artists like Prince and Hall & Oates pull off black/white crossovers by emphasizing the pop values both forms share. Wolf and Jonzun have gone a step further by making a crossover record that's *hard*. This isn't the place where the Bee Gees met Tavares. *Lights Out* is a drag race between rock's '57 Chevy and funk's sleek Cadillac. The partnership had more subtle benefits for both, as Michael Jonzun points out: "To a funk audience, to the street scene, I'm probably as popular as Pete is. The people who know and respect me wouldn't necessarily highly respect him. And vice versa. He has something I want and I have something he wants. We knew we could do it together."

Wolf began jamming with Jonzun and hanging out at the House of Hits in the summer of 1983. He sang a duet with Maurice Starr on *Space Lady*, and wrote a number of tunes

"LEAVING GEILS FORCED ME TO FIGURE OUT WHAT GOT ME OFF, WHY I WAS MAKING MUSIC IN THE FIRST PLACE."

with both Starr and Jonzun. Although no one will say much about why Wolf and the rest of the J. Geils Band split, one source close to the action says that among the contributing irritants was that Wolf wanted to use some of his House of Hits songs on the next Geils LP and the band balked.

The Geils split resulted from a shift in the band's center of gravity, from Wolf to Seth Justman. During the decade Geils recorded for Atlantic, they didn't sell a lot of records, but made their rep and living from endless concerts. Wolf's considerable talents as a performer made him the focal point of the touring group. By the time Geils moved to EMI Records in 1978, though, Justman's interest in producing and arranging had started to pay off with slicker, more radio-oriented records. By *Love Stinks* (1980) recording had replaced concerts as the band's primary strength and Justman, more than Wolf, was leading the group. Wolf's desire to go outside the band, to use his House of Hits tracks, did not sit well with Geils. Asked about that, Jonzun says, "I think

they didn't believe in the tunes. I never got into what really happened with Pete. It was a touchy situation. When I worked with him I tried to give him confidence. I'd say, 'Hey, man, we gotta keep movin' on.' I knew it was hard for him dealin' without the other guys—cause he dug those guys. They were like family."

"It was just a deterioration of relationships," Wolf sighs. "It wasn't like Seth and I had different directions. We were really well in sync on musical tastes. People say to me, 'Do you find that now you can express yourself in a way you couldn't with the Geils Band?' It's not like that. The band was a great place for musical expression. I never felt, 'I wish I could do that.' There were no constrictions whatsoever. We were all in sync on that. It wasn't musical taste or style that was the problem. It was a breakdown in communication."

Geils manager Bob Hinkle suggests that the long-deferred platinum success the band finally attained with their last album, *Freeze Frame*, allowed simmering differences to emerge. "There are those kinds of problems," Hinkle says, "which are easily swept under the rug when it's 'Us Against the World,' but which rear their heads very substantially and quickly when those financial barriers are crashed through, when you're very successful. That's what happened to this band, unfortunately. The differences were very intense, they were very involved with personality, and they were—at least for the foreseeable future—irrevocable."

"Wolf has said he was fired, the band has said he left. It doesn't matter who did what to whom. The fact of the matter is that the differences were substantial and they are for the moment irrevocable. Many of them were personality and many were creative."

Wolf denies he said he was kicked out. "I never said that," he insists. "All I said was that I felt sad about the result. It was something that really upset me. I just didn't want people to think I left the band to pursue a solo career. The solo career was something I had to do just to keep doin' my music."

Peter Wolf seems to burn on more circuits than most people. He has a quick mind and rapid-fire tongue that can jive past unpleasant subjects or dumb questions. For this interview, Wolf made a special effort to turn down the volume and get to the facts. Often he went back to amend or elaborate on earlier answers. Articulate and funny, an obvious center of attention, Wolf nonetheless projects a vulnerability—a sort of constant self-questioning—that is instantly likeable. For all his charm, though, one always feels Wolf knows exactly what he wants and is working on a way to get it.



RON POWNALL

Wolf scans the headlines for tasty, relevant material as collaborator/ producer Michael Jonzun strikes a sympathetic chord.

MUSICIAN: When you were making *Lights Out*, did you ever miss the Geils band?

WOLF: You miss the camaraderie, that's for sure. We were together so long and we became very close. It was a strange new experience for me to be in a new studio with a strange engineer and someone else helping with the production. New musicians. The thing that was exciting was also the thing that was terrifying: I didn't know where it was going to lead.

This album forced me to figure out what got me off, why I was making music in the first place. After being in a band for a long time, you get a sort of tunnel vision. A band is its own microcosm. If you have some sort of success, you tend to forget about the early days, about trying to borrow an amp or get a microphone. I found myself right back to point one: driving around Boston borrowing drums, taking musicians home at 4:30 in the morning. I had to go to the hock shop with one guy to get his axe.

MUSICIAN: Some groups almost seem to subconsciously resist stardom. The Clash, obviously. Or NRBQ. It's like resisting temptation. For years it seemed like the J. Geils Band were always right on the verge of superstardom—but always pulled back. Finally *Freeze Frame* put you over the top and you and the group split. Once again it's back down the hill and start over.

WOLF: When we were touring with the Rolling Stones, I had this conversation with Mick Jagger. He was of the philosophy that bands who make it early on have fewer problems than bands who are together for a really long time before success comes. I disagreed with him but (laughs) maybe he was right.

It's hard for me to look at it objectively. I look back at the amount of work the Geils band did and I'm very proud of it. We worked very hard and we really tried to keep our integrity intact. We really didn't try to take any cheap shots. On each album we tried to have some growth. We were concerned

every step of the way. During those periods when we did endless one-nighters we'd always rally up in the dressing room like a team going out for the marathon, and we'd just explode onstage. The stage was always a great release. And we worked very hard at the records. We tried to get around all the barriers—financial, lack of record company support. It was a long process.

MUSICIAN: But after *Freeze Frame* you were finally secure.

WOLF: People sometimes get a sense that one degree of success brings security. It doesn't necessarily do that. You mentioned NRBQ. I can't speak for them, but I think what most bands want, what the Geils band really wanted, was respect and a sense of credibility. I think that's the greatest success one can achieve. Success is all a relative thing. There's always someone more successful. And when you're working so hard, success is abstract. You don't really see the success because you're so consumed in the process of work.

A lot of bands think, "Well, so and so got a hit—now it's easier." A hit brings attention and helps the credibility, but it doesn't necessarily solve a lot of the problems. The monetary aspects are helpful, in the sense that it gives you more freedom to take more time, which can be important. But it doesn't necessarily make the next step easier.

MUSICIAN: This is your first solo project and you have a lot riding on it. Did you ever consider turning it over to a name producer?

WOLF: Yeah. There were a lot of producers I thought of at first. But I had a really good feeling about Michael and a great belief in his talents. I remember when some people at the record company approached me about what my plans were and I mentioned that I might go in and do it with Michael Jonzun, it was like, "Uh...who?" I think there were a lot of nervous people up at EMI saying, "Maybe he's lost it!" Michael's produced a whole lot of things for Sugar Hill and Tommy Boy, but

he'd never done anything like this. There was some sense of "Let's get some safety—get a good producer or at least somebody who's credible."

Ed Stasium, the engineer, flew into Boston to talk about making the record. I took him down to Syncro Sound. He walked in and said, "Yeah, I can make a record here." I said, "Aren't you going to, like, go around and clap your hand to check the ambience?" He said, "We don't have to do that stuff anymore. If it's halfway decent sound equipment, no buzzes, we can make a record. He played some stuff he'd recorded before to check out the speakers and said, "Great! When do we start?"

MUSICIAN: *In a lot of funk music the song finds a groove and then stays there—doesn't move around too much.*

WOLF: I agree with you. The problem with many funk things is they have incredible grooves, but as far as the structure—a lot of the tracks, the arrangements tend to get a little tedious. Though many of them are made for the dance floor. Listening statically and dancing, dynamically, are two different things.

MUSICIAN: *But the tracks on Lights Out change fast. Nothing is static for long.*

WOLF: Thanks. It's what we try to do—to defy stagnation. You listen to a track and try to make it as interesting as you can, for yourself and everybody around. You try to throw it in. Sometimes you'll find that staying primal—staying in one bag—causes this hypnotic reaction that you want. We wanted to keep it, not primitive but, as *basic* and as raw as we could. It's not a very polished album.

MUSICIAN: *How did you begin writing with Michael Jonzun?*

"WE WANTED TO KEEP 'LIGHTS OUT' AS BASIC AND AS RAW AS WE COULD. IT'S NOT A VERY POLISHED ALBUM."

"Hey, my name's Pete." He said, "I'm Michael Jonzun." I said, "Oh, you're Maurice's brother." That day we started hangin' in, writing songs.

MUSICIAN: *Lights Out is a composite of all sorts of sounds, from new wave to funk. Did you find yourself pushing Michael in certain directions? For instance, his keyboard part on "I Need You Tonight" has a new wave approach.*

WOLF: One of the things that attracted me to working with Michael was that he had such a varied sense of taste and style. With that song, particularly, we had the feel of the song and he came upon his part really naturally. Although Michael does, for the Jonzun Crew, a lot of really intense funk music, he's a well-rounded musician. His taste is very broad. So there was no communication problem. No one led anyone at all. We all tried different things and all got excited.

MUSICIAN: *I heard that when you were at Syncro, you'd loosen up by picking up an acoustic guitar and leading the band through country tunes by the likes of Hank Williams*

and stuff. It seems funny that you'd use C&W to get loose with black funk players.

WOLF: Yeah, it is funny. We built up a whole repertoire of country music. Michael knows a lot about country. In different forms and styles of music there are certain performers, personalities, who have what I call *the Chill Factor*. You listen to 'em and it gives you a chill. If I listen to James Brown or Otis Redding I get a chill. If I listen to Hank Williams or early Buck Owens I get a chill. I appreciate the artistry and the style. It's unique. It's like listening to certain Coltrane, Mingus or Monk tracks. They're great personalities.

Hank Williams' *form* was country, but the stuff is incredible high music. I could listen for hours. A lot of tapes I make for the road have James Brown into Hank Williams into the Falcons. They go all over the place because to me it's not the *type* of music—it's the groove; *the Chill Factor* on the track.

I mean, I can hear a Kitty Wells track and just *die*, it's so funky. Or early Wanda Jackson. There's some Hank Williams tunes that paralyze me in the same way that Elvis and James Brown paralyze me. The exciting thing about rock 'n' roll is that it's still growing, it's still getting more sophisticated and exciting. I find it now very much like the period in the mid-60s when you had the English invasion and Motown and a lot of good things going on. There's a lot of good things going on. There's a lot of exciting new groups, and this "urban contemporary" sound is a fusion of elements from all different places. I think it's really incredible.

I like the term "urban contemporary" because it doesn't say "black" or "white." It's more of a fusion, which is healthier. Racism's gotten better, but it still exists and it's still criminal. It's one of the perverse things about this nation. It still hangs onto the incredible racist feelings that are so deep in this country. We liquidated an entire nation of people to build skyscrapers. That's pretty intense.

MUSICIAN: *I'm sure some rock fans will say your new album sounds too black.*

WOLF: Those are people I don't mind alienating. When I started working at the House of Hits I was amazed by a lot of the new funk music, the way it was constructed.

MUSICIAN: *For example?*

WOLF: They start with drum machines and with synthesizers playing bass patterns. With relatively few instruments you can get a lot of varied sounds, a complex sense of blending and layers, and just a primal sense of the beat. Which is what rock 'n' roll always was—a primal beat. It's rhythm with very little glossing on it. Yet it's very electronic, lots of synthesizers; very



RON POWNALL

Wolf and cohorts check the LP's ghetto blaster quotient.

WOLF: Robert Palmer, the *New York Times* writer, mentioned he was really excited about a bunch of new music that was coming from Boston: the New Edition and the Jonzun Crew. I hadn't really picked up on it. I knew of it but I didn't realize it was from Boston. So when I got back to Boston I called up Maurice Starr. I really wanted to meet these guys. I was fascinated that they were in Boston and I hadn't bumped shoulders with them.

Maurice introduced me to the House of Hits. One day he and I were working on some tunes. I was sittin' on top of an amp, playin' the bass, and this guy was just there. He said, "Hey, I like that beat you got goin'." He sat down at the synthesizer and in about fifteen minutes we had a song. I said,

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RON POWNALL

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I know that a lot of musicians—myself included—are finding themselves surrounded by this incredible new technology. It's awesome in its variations. But what it's really doing is making the personality itself more important. In early 50s rock, in doo-wop and rockabilly, the beats were very similar. The construction of songs was similar. It was the personality of the vocalist and the style that made Gene Vincent different from someone else. And it's starting to happen again. Look at Michael Jackson, Boy George, Prince. The musicianship is excellent—but the personalities are being focused on as much as the music. As technology becomes more absorbed, personalities become more important.

MUSICIAN: *How were the sessions different from what you do with name studio players?*

WOLF: We'd always start off a session with jamming to loosen up. There would be dinners together sitting around a table, and the stories would fly. Fights over who was better: Otis Redding or James Brown. Michael and I really approach music from an emotional Chill Factor, like I say. If we didn't like somebody, even if he was a great player, he didn't get on the record. Everybody that worked on this record really left some blood on the tracks.

MUSICIAN: *I think people now feel you have a street-level credibility whereas, in the past, your image was more of a mad party animal—the bad boy from Boston. One obvious difference is the way you sing about women. The old Wolf was macho—"Hey, mamma, get down!" Since Monkey Island and Sanctuary you've showed a dependence on women—women have appeared as figures of power who could rescue you from the wreckage.*

WOLF: Well, hopefully there's growth. To defy stagnation is the main motivator. And (Wolf smiles slyly) I hope they still feel that way when they hear "Mars Needs Women." (laughter) I hope there's still a sense of humor left.

MUSICIAN: *You were around musicians a lot before you began working yourself. How did knowing the early bluesmen affect your own music?*

WOLF: I had an apartment down the street from the Club 47 in Cambridge. When Muddy or Hooker drove in from Chicago, I'd hang out. I was almost like a band boy, a valet. If I knew Otis Spann was low on libation, I'd pick up some more. They'd all end up at my apartment listening to early records they'd forgotten. If they were there for several days, they'd use my apartment as space. They'd all come by to cook up meals, hang out, wait for the next show. I was just amazed to be in the company of these men who were incredible poets—and they couldn't even get arrested. They were all pretty much denied by most American audiences. It was England that threw the

laurels on them. It was the English that acknowledged them as great musicians and as great men.

MUSICIAN: *Joe Strummer was quoted recently as having said that the Clash weren't going to play any more funk or reggae because it rips off black people.*

WOLF: I haven't heard him say it. I don't know. I can't speak for him. But to me, I look at different music as influences. Everything influences an artist. If he chooses to do that it's his right, but to me a groove is a groove. There has been a lot of racism in the music industry. It still goes on. But to deny a contribution could be as great a sin, too.

And it depends on how generous one is. I've never been one to play down my influences. I've always tried to let people know where it was coming from. When the J. Geils band did John Lee Hooker's "Sno-Cone" it wasn't to rip off John Lee Hooker. It was to say, "Man, this stuff is great and *no one's pushing it!*" It's just like, if the Rolling Stones hadn't done Howlin' Wolf's songs a lot of people never would've known who Howlin' Wolf was. A lot of people got into Howlin' Wolf and Little Walter and Muddy Waters through the Rolling Stones.

One should not confuse someone being influenced from great love with someone who rips someone off. Like Pat Boone ripping off Joe Turner in the early days of cover records. That's a whole different ballgame and a whole other issue. There's no excuse for that. We always said, "Hey, if you really dig what we're doing, check out John Lee Hooker." And John Lee Hooker was always grateful we were doing it. There's a difference between being affected and in awe and influenced and respectful—and ripping someone off.

MUSICIAN: *I got a kick out of the beginning of "Here Comes That Hurt" where you went, "Here it comes!" like Van Morrison on "Here Comes The Night."*

WOLF: I'm glad you mentioned that. "Here Comes The Night" is one of my favorite songs. I was fortunate enough to know Van really well when he was living in Boston. He's one of my favorites. I will always buy a Van Morrison record. I'm just a life-long dedicated fan of Van the man. I remember when he



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Wolf demonstrates his formidable Geils-era stage skills.

was putting together *Astral Weeks*. He was living in a one-room apartment in Cambridge with his wife and son. He didn't have a dime. He had to come over to my house to make phone calls. He was living on TV Time dinners and the kindness of friends and strangers. I mean, he was in really bad shape. He was hurting. I remember I'd come by and he'd be sick a lot—just catching viruses. He'd be lying in bed with a reel to reel tape machine, putting together all these songs—"Madame George," "Cypress Avenue." I couldn't believe, day by day, the intense progression of his work and how consumed he was by it. He's just a great artist.

MUSICIAN: *That song also reminded me of my favorite part*

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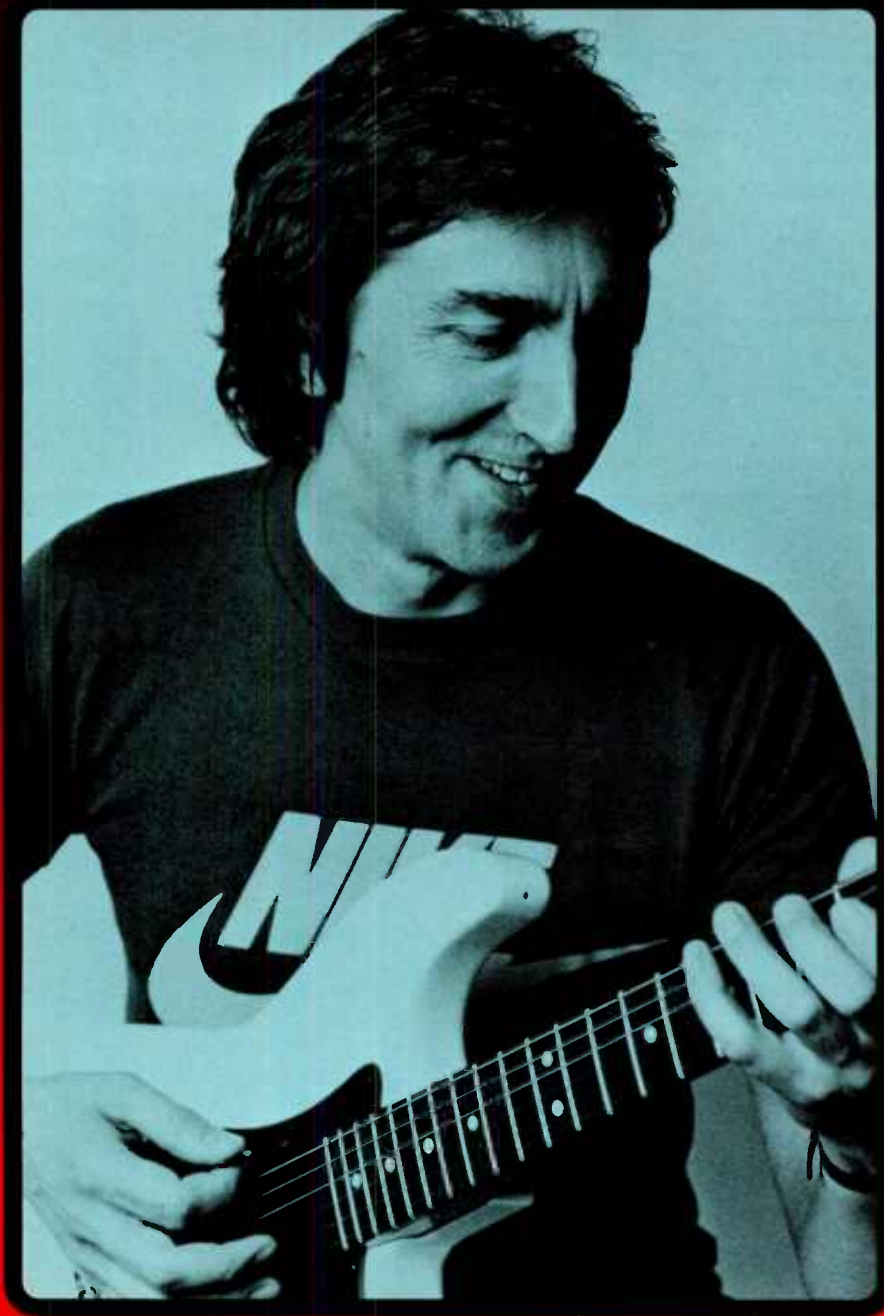
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ERNE BALL THE WORKING STRINGS

of the Geils show, when you and Seth would do "Theresa."

WOLF: Oh yeah. One of my favorites, too. The ballads are the moment of truth. I remember when Seth and I wrote that song. We had just come off *Monkey Island*, we were about a half million dollars in debt, Atlantic Records was going to drop us. We'd signed on with EMI. We were putting together songs for our first album for them. It was a pretty hard period on everybody. There was a texture we were going for, but we didn't know what it was. Seth was playing this real moody chording on the piano. We had the title "Theresa" floating around. I remember it was one of those really intense afternoons. What drives you crazy about writing songs is that it's so mysterious. You don't know if you're going to get the idea or not. Certain songs just come. Then you say, "Why did it come on that one and why is it not coming now?" It's very mystical. You can't control it.

It was weird. I was thinking "Theresa," he was thinking "Theresa," and we were both really in sync on the mood we wanted. It just started coming. I remember we finished it and we put it on a cassette and listened to it. Then we didn't talk for a really long time. It was a very emotional thing. There was so much sadness going on at the time. And there it was. One afternoon the whole thing rushed out. It's one of my favorite Geils songs. That one brings the old Chill Factor.

MUSICIAN: Did it disillusion you to get to number one and find that the problems remained?

WOLF: No, because I don't think the J. Geils band's whole goal was to have a number one album. It was to make a good rock 'n' roll record and have some excitement. The charts tend to make people focus in on 1, 2, 3, 4. Anyone who feels that kind of achievement is going to solve anything is in for a disappointment. I don't think we really felt it. But it's something you're glad happens. Being number one is an exciting thing. It was a great sense of accomplishment after all we'd been

through. The Geils Band was a long period with a lot of effort on everyone's part. It's hard for me to be objective. I'm just trying to deal with it in an intelligent way that makes sense for myself, the band, and the people who'll be reading this. I'm still too close to it—I don't think I can see the forest for the trees at this point. I'm not trying to avoid anything.

MUSICIAN: With each J. Geils album, Seth Justman was
continued on page 52

WOLF PACK JAM

Pete Wolf works out tunes with the aid of an old Wollensak reel-to-reel, an Oberheim DMX drum machine and the following credible axes: "One Harmony Spinett piano; one Silvertone electric guitar; one Gibson acoustic Everly Brothers model guitar; a Fender Champ amplifier from the 50s; one of those inexpensive little Casios; three Hohner Marine Band harmonicas, keys of C, G and A [about as unfunky as harps get—evidence of Wolf's C&W roots]; one harmonica rack with original screws; one old Electro static microphone and an old Electro-Voice, like Bobby Bland; also a box of number two pencils and a yellow legal pad."

Michael Jonzun played keyboards throughout *Lights Out* (tracks on which Jonzun's credited with bass were played on keyboard bass) but explains why he can't specify model and number for each track: "We'd blend four or five different synthesizers together to come up with one sound. We'd play on several tracks and bounce it down. You could only get these sounds by mixing several brands. For instance, on 'Oi-ee-diddeley-bop!' we used a Yamaha CS-80, a couple of Moogs and a Roland. We'd use the old synthesizers, like the Minimoog, as well as more elaborate things like the Synclavier. I don't want to do a commercial, but I'd say our companies were Moog, Yamaha and Roland. Gordon (Worthy) really likes the Oberheim. That's really nice. We used one digital synthesizer in particular: the Emulator. We used it for sounds from French horns to plucking strings. That's an incredible instrument."

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"YOU SHOULD COME TO ONE OF MY EDITH PIAF PARTIES"—flamenco dancing to the music and me playing the spoons. It's really funny." So says **Carmel**, the woman behind the name behind the band. Joined by upright bass player **Jimmy Paris** and drummer **Gerry Darby**, Carmel has lent her considerable vocal talents to **The Drum Is Everything**, the English group's U.S. debut LP. It's neither pazz nor jop.

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DEPECHE WE HAVE TO OFFER, AND ALL THAT YAZ... Vince Clarke, formerly of **Yaz**, and **E. C. Radcliffe**, **Depeche Mode** engineer and Yaz producer, are **The Assembly**. The two men invite a different guest singer to participate on each of their records; on **"Never, Never,"** the band's first U.S. maxi-single, the guest vocalist is **Feargal Sharkey** of the late and lamented **Undertones**; Humble Pie's Clem Clemmson handles guitars. Meanwhile, **Depeche Mode's** new record is **People Are People**. The record is a self-selected summation of the band's most recent work, including their current hit single. Both are on Sire...

STOP MAKING SENSE is the title of the new **Talking Heads** concert film and sound track album... **The Bluebell's** new album is due out momentarily... **David Van Tieghem** (Laurie Anderson's percussionist) has recorded both a new album and surprising performance video.

THE BEES ARE BACK IN TOWN. That's right, the **Killer B's** have returned. Our slightly mad director of publicity has culled yet another album of odd, strange and otherwise unavailable tracks by some of our favorite artists. **Revenge Of The Killer B's** features single B-sides and weird recordings by the likes of **Marshall Crenshaw**, **XTC**, **Tom Verlaine**, **Madonna**, and the **B-52's**. A honey of a record.

THE BANSHEES' SIOUXSIE has again been selected as best female rock vocalist by the readers of *New Musical Express*. (That's four years in a row, but who's counting?) **Siouxsie And The Banshees'** new album (their first for Geffen) is titled **Hyaena**; the first single is a remake of the Fab Four's **"Dear Prudence."** Watch for the upcoming tour...

IT'S NOT OUR FAULT. We were in Nevada at the time. We didn't know anything about it. If you know anything about it, write to "This Is Advertising?" Dept. M, at P.O. Box 6868, Burbank, CA 91510, and we'll send you an arguably valuable, arguably beautiful and arguably useful collector's (cough, cough) item. Supplies are limited, so break out those crayons and write now! This offer is only good in the U.S. Sorry Canada. And keep the home fires burning.

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GIRLS

**CAN'T SEEM
TO HAVE FUN**

GO-GO'S



"I went to get a physical," said Gina Schock. "When I went back the second time the doctor told me, 'You are in perfect health, but I'd like to examine your chest.' So he checked my heart and he said, 'You know, you have a murmur. Were you aware of that?'"

Gina, twenty-six, a drummer for twelve years and a fount of seemingly inexhaustible energy, was not aware of that.

"He asked me if I would be willing, just for the hell of it, to have two more examinations. I said, 'Look, Doc, I'm in the middle of a rehearsal. Can't you tell me over the phone?' And he said, 'I'd rather speak to you in person.'

"I was starting to shake in my shoes."

"We all went over with her," recalled lead guitarist Charlotte Caffey, "We all wanted to get out of rehearsal, you know? Belinda said, 'Let's get in the party car.' We were joking with Gina the whole way over. She was wearing this thing that was monitoring her heart. I said, 'Gina, what is that thing on the side of your belt?' She ripped open her blouse and there were all these wires taped to her. We were all laughing. Needless to say," continued

Charlotte, "forty-five minutes later everyone was crying because Gina had to have heart surgery. It was like a soap opera. We went to her house afterwards and, like, for the first time in my life I could not make a joke. All I could think was, 'This can't be happening.' We were all sitting around crying; Gina was talking about dying. So I said, 'Gina, if any-

thing happens—can I have your Corvette?' Everyone burst out laughing. Then I said, 'C'mon you guys, let's scavenge the house and see what there is....' Gina was on the floor rolling around laughing, until she started crying again."

The Go-Go's are, as everyone knows, fun. Cutebubblybouncy. Perkypoppy. Easy to dance to. Inspiration to little girls everywhere. And gee whiz, they even play their own instruments. Fun.

That was the line three years ago as their debut album *Beauty And The Beat* gradually stole up the charts, cresting for seven weeks at #1 and selling over two million copies in the process, as the Go-Go's opened arena-sized shows for the Police and gave even those mega-stars a run for the roses, back when the idea of an attractive, talented all-women band was image-hip enough for a *Rolling Stone* cover even, especially if they'd be willing to like, you know, take off some of their clothes.

At the time the Go-Go's enjoyed playing with their hype, not because they were naive, but precisely because they weren't; this was one band that had long dressed for success, and whose self-deprecating humor expertly masked a deeper purpose. The Go-Go's had long taken their music seriously, if not themselves; in live performance their taut blend of L.A. pop melodicism and spunky rock energy was invariably exciting, at times revelatory. And if anyone actually bothered to *listen* to *Beauty And The Beat*, they'd notice lyric strains of alienation and despair rather at odds with the effervescent textures and rhythm of the tunes themselves.

Less than a year later, with *Beauty* still riding high, the band released its second Richard Gottehrer-produced LP, *Vacation*, just in time for summer fun. Its cover was sufficiently sardonic—Go-Go's in tutus on waterskis—and its songs derivative but comfortably familiar. Production was similarly limpid, atmosphere cutebubblybouncy, a pop-

MARK ROWLAND & MARGY ROCHLIN



would try to shake it—nothing. Numbness. The doctors put me on medication and crap. The band thought I was losing my mind but I had a lot of anxiety and guilt because I thought I was going to hold up the band from recording. I probably should have gone to the loony bin.”

Because there is no noticeable swelling or discoloration, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is not always taken seriously. Months passed, however, and Charlotte’s arm problems didn’t improve. Rumors surfaced about a drug problem. She began to hear stories that she was going to be replaced.

“I had heard these rumors, and it really blew my mind,” she said. “I just confronted the girls. They denied it, and I believe them because...I don’t know, because I’m not going to sit around *disbelieving* them. I don’t want to.”

By November, vitamin therapy had improved Charlotte’s condition, but she’d lost some of her chops, and she hadn’t written many songs or guitar parts in the interim: “I had this block because of the pressure to work and not being able to play guitar.” Such was the situation as the Go-Go’s flew to England to record the album that would, essentially, determine their future as a band.



biz success formula as dependable as a cookie cutter.

It didn’t work. *Vacation* sold barely one third as many copies as the Go-Go’s debut—in industry terms, a stiff. Record royalty disparities among the group’s songwriters and non-writers added unpleasant wafts of dissension. Financial disputes between the Go-Go’s lawyers and their record company, I.R.S., turned into a lawsuit. After the group signed a management contract with Irving Azoff’s Frontline, Azoff left for MCA. Go-Go’s long-term personal manager and de facto den mother Ginger Canzoneri burned out in an atmosphere of ever-increasing hysteria and fled to New York without notice. The pendulum of popular musical taste and fashion subtly shifted from white L.A. pop back to even more sallow English prettyboys, not to mention Michael Jackson. And suddenly the Go-Go’s frothy reputation had become their albatross, suggesting that the band lacked the talent or grit necessary to be more than a pop footnote.

On a personal level, such a sharp turn of events proved even more unsettling. The Go-Go’s original success, after all, was as enormous as it was rapidly achieved, and with fame and fortune came a time of high living typically associated with young, wild-spirited pop stars. The Go-Go’s had toured for two years, during which, as Charlotte Caffey observed, partying “was a normal part of life for us.” Still, the band’s collective character was a question mark and as their original esprit began to wane, so did their insulation from outside pressures.

In 1983 the Go-Go’s began looking for a studio producer to replicate the band’s visceral live punch, eventually settling, at the urging of I.R.S.’s Miles Copeland, on Martin Rushent. For months individual members worked on writing and refining songs which would eventually form the core of their latest album, *Talk Show*. By last summer the Go-Go’s were rehearsing intensively, gearing up for recording sessions in England scheduled for late fall.

That’s when the real fun began.



Charlotte Caffey had written most of the Go-Go’s songs with rhythm guitarist Jane Wiedlin, but by June of last year, she recalled, “I had entered a very uncreative swing in my life. I had been writing for the last fourteen years—then a dry period. I think that’s what caused all my problems.”

One night she discovered that she had lost her feeling in one arm. It didn’t come back. Doctors diagnosed her malady as Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, for a guitarist an occupational hazard akin to tennis elbow, and just as sinister.

“I don’t know if it was caused physically or psychologically. I

Go-Go’s bassist Kathy Valentine had been playing guitar and writing songs since the age of fourteen. She’d arrived in L.A. from Austin, Texas via England (she played in an early edition of *Girlschool*) as a member of the Textones, a folk-rock favorite on the L.A. club circuit. (“*Vacation*” was in fact an old Textones song). Over the years she’d become their ballast, dependable, optimistic, patiently awaiting her turn in the spotlight.

When she got her chance on *Talk Show*, she came through, with songs that reflected the punchier, rocking side of the Go-Go’s gestalt (“*I’m The Only One*”) as well as contributions on some moodier, introspective tunes (“*Mercenary*,” “*Beneath The Blue Sky*”). Now she was being called on to fill in Charlotte’s guitar parts as well.

Such a solution could have sent Charlotte’s already unsteady confidence reeling. Instead, the guitarist and bassist hit upon a team strategy that Kathy later likened to “an assembly line. We would sit together and think of parts. I’d play it and put it on tape and she would learn them as she got better.

“Everyone in this band has an overlapping role; I think it’s magic. With five people, it balances itself out. But if you want to be specific,” she declared, “I’d say that Jane, Gina and myself were having more of the burden at the time. Charlotte was having her problems and was very upset. Belinda, to be quite frank, I don’t know where she was.”



The Go-Go's may be a band without a leader, but in terms of sheer impact Belinda Carlisle is first among equals. It's not hard to figure; her stage presence is more dramatic, her peaches and cream countenance more photogenic if not purely glamorous, and she is, after all, the singer. The best thing about being famous, she's contended, is "that you don't have to make reservations at restaurants"; the worst, the bane of constant recognition: "Like I'll be at a stoplight squeezing a pimple in the mirror and a car full of kids will pull up and they'll say, 'Oh, there's Belinda Carlisle and she's squeezing a pimple....' It's embarrassing."

Not the most searing existential trauma, perhaps, but then Belinda has long viewed her position in the band with some



ambivalence: "I don't want to do it in five years. I have other things I want to do. A lovely, thirty-year-old Go-Go. No thanks."

Other things included a particularly dubious production of *Grease* whose memory still leaves Belinda with "a queasy feeling in my stomach"; a supporting role as a torch singer in *Swing Shift* (she croons "The Magic Of You"); and a lengthy Hollywood-style "lost weekend" during which she regularly missed band rehearsals and her commitment to the rest of the group seemed at best erratic.

"I alienated myself," she admitted. "It was my fault, because of my own personal problems. There was lots of pressure on everyone. Charlotte put a lot of pressure on herself, but she was totally helpless. I wasn't any better."

Carlisle is the one Go-Go who remains singularly uninterested in composing the lyrics to which she must give voice; with the exception of "Skidmarks On My Heart," ("a clever song for the five minutes I spent writing it") and a couple of contributions to two minor songs on *Vacation*, her credits in the Go-Go's songwriting catalog are nil.

"Much as the band hates hearing about it, I just don't have much interest in writing," she freely admitted. "Also, I had a lot of personal problems, which will get in the way every time. I partied a lot because of it. I think creative things come of clear minds. I mean, I know some people who can take acid and create. I can't."

Still, Belinda did make a serious effort in the past year to improve her technique, centered around twice-weekly sessions with vocal coach Nathan Lam. "This time I finally coordinated emotion and voice," she opined. "It was just a matter of thinking things through—I didn't want to be cast aside as

just another lead singer who can't sing. I think I realized that singing is an art."

It shows. While parts of *Vacation* shrouded Belinda's voice to the point of entombment, *Talk Show* evidences a more supple style, from the gutsy emotional cries of "Turn To You" to the more plaintive, Patsy Cline balladry of "Mercenary." "I didn't care for the way *Vacation* came out production-wise," she understandably lamented. "For some reason Richard Gottelher made our albums sound sort of tinny and rinky-dink. No matter what he said, I think he visualized us as a 60s girl group, and that's what we sounded like."

"We didn't *decide* we were going to write a more serious album. It was just that that was the material that showed up. And the fact that we were a more mature band."

The new maturity." Jane Wiedlin savors the phrase, a tag reviewers have since eagerly bestowed upon *Talk Show*, then laughs sardonically. "That's sickening. I hate the way people latch on to things. It's no more true than teenage innocence was on our first album. How much innocence did we *really* have then? Every single person in the world is more mature than they were a few years ago, unless they're retarded or something."

It's neat to watch Jane onstage; more than any other member she exudes the playfulness, energy and ersatz fashion consciousness that initially made the Go-Go's so visually appealing—the epitome of cutebubblybouncy. She's the quintet's linchpin, its most prolific and daring songwriter, and the one who takes the most deterministic approach toward expanding her own horizons. But as her songs suggest, she's also afflicted by bouts of despair and an inability to exorcise her demons. "I sit there for a long time these days and try to figure out why I do things," she said. "I really feel like I've lost my grip on life a little bit."

Looking back on the group's series of travails, she saw Ginger Canzoneri's departure as a turning point. "We had kind of used her as our whipping boy," she explained. "We took all our aggressions out on our boyfriends and Ginger, but then we all lost our boyfriends between our first and second albums, and then it was Ginger's turn and then she split. And then we all got mad at each other because there was no one else to get mad at or get rid of the tension. We weren't sure we had it together enough to go on."

Listening to Wiedlin, one got the impression that Martin Rushent's contributions were as valuable for the discipline he imposed as for his production technique.

"I liked it," Jane exuded. "Everyone recorded separately, which we had never done before. The general rule was, don't



show up at the studio when someone else was working, although you could. But if you started cracking them up, Martin would say, 'OUT!' So you got this intense workout, about ten hours at a time. Just get in there and do your parts perfectly."

Most of the Go-Go's studio time with Rushent was thus spent glossing each instrumental part and sound to a high sheen; actual song arrangements had gradually been battered down over eight or nine months of rehearsals that Wiedlin describes as "boring and agonizing."

"'Turn To You' had no chorus at first," she revealed. "Then we threw the song away because we hated it, but I saw something—you get a feeling sometimes that it's not right to throw out a certain song. It came to me what had to be done—a change in the chorus and going back to Charlotte's original idea about the rhythm guitars. At first it kept sounding heavy metal, but we went through every possible configuration. Our reggae version," she laughs. "Salsa. And of course, our country version is very nice. It took us a long time but we finally made it right."

On an album loaded with well-crafted melodies and whip-crack rhythms "Turn To You" still stands out as the most explosive song the Go-Go's have ever recorded, from Charlotte's stirring lead figure to Belinda's alchemy of anger and pleading. "Head Over Heels" may best perambulate the Go-Go's topsy-turvy world, but it is "Turn To You" and two minor masterpieces by Wiedlin, "Forget That Day" and "Capture The Light" which give *Talk Show* its special character and dimension, that face rueful lessons of experience or suggest the terror of losing one's anchor in the world.

Between albums Jane had caused a minor splash by singing on Spark's "Cool Places With You" and appearing in their video. As a result she'd hoped to sing her most personal song, "Forget That Day," on *Talk Show*, and had even rehearsed it with the band. "But," she recalled sadly, "when we went into the studio they decided they wanted Belinda to sing it."

Was that depressing?

"Yeah," Jane admitted.

Might she sing it on the tour?

"No," she said in a pained, cracked voice. "You are talking about really bad stuff. No. They don't want me to sing." She stared out a window and didn't say anything for a long time.

Gina Schock didn't sing on *Talk Show*, but that wasn't her problem. Her problem was a producer who didn't want her to play drums.

Nothing personal here you understand; Gina's the best musician in the band. It was just that Martin Rushent, whose previous credits include albums by Pete Shelley and Human League, is more disposed toward drum machines.

But Gina, as plainspoken and down-to-earth as only a drummer from Baltimore can be, wasn't about to surrender her turf. "When we met, I told him, 'Martin, I haven't been playing for twelve years to let a machine do my job.'" They soon reached an accord: Rushent and Schock would program a LinnDrum as a guide for Kathy's bass, then Gina would record over the track. "That way my meter would be perfect and they'd be recording my drums," she explained. Of the album's ten songs, only three ultimately feature a machine ("Yes Or No," "Capture The Light" and, ironically, "You Thought," which was co-written by Gina).

Rushent, said Charlotte Caffey, turned out to be the perfect producer, "personally, musically, technically," for the Go-Go's. "He really paid personal attention to each of us and our instruments. It's something we've always strived for, that sound. We've always been a lot more powerful live than on record, and never understood why."

Despite, or perhaps because of her arm troubles, Caffey, a classically-trained pianist, plays more keyboard on *Talk Show* than on previous LPs, including some Jerry Lee Lewis-style comping on "Head Over Heels," a song she wrote on piano. "I



really wanted to play a piano part and then I found this acoustic electric Yamaha CP-80 that was really great. In fact, there were a couple of other songs that I wrote feeble, half-assed piano parts for because I couldn't play guitar.

"When we finally got through that album," she remembers, "when I finished playing that last note, Kathy and I started jumping up and down and screaming."

What would you do if you just went crazy?

Charlotte: "I would go into my house and never come out."

Kathy: "I guess I'd just run away. I'd run and run until they came to get me."

Jane: "I think I would lock up my house and never come out."

Gina: "I would tell all the people I thought were assholes to fuck off, because it wouldn't matter anymore. Then I'd get really drunk, and have sex all the time...you know, all the things I never get to do anymore."

If making *Talk Show* was fraught with drama, from a commercial view it was well worth the effort. After all, the Go-Go's first two records had sold platinum and gold respectively; after two years record distributors and radio programmers would surely be brimming with excitement at the prospect of a new release. Ha.

"People at radio basically did not want to know about this album," said Jay Boberg of I.R.S. "They thought the Go-Go's were over. Retailers were very hesitant to take in the record in any kind of quantity. They thought they'd get stuck. People believed the Go-Go's were a one-shot deal. There was a very negative vibe in the business."

Meanwhile, Boberg and the Go-Go's lawyer Emily Schenkin are not even on speaking terms. That schism can be traced to a period following the release of *Vacation*, when, Boberg claims, "Emily tried to investigate the potential of leaving I.R.S. to go to another label for up to ten million dollars. All we did was exercise our rights to keep them under contract."

Schenkin, not surprisingly, had a different story.

"Miles Copeland owed us a lot of money, and he didn't want to pay. So instead he sued us, and it cost up to about \$80,000 in lawyer's fees before we settled. Ever since that day Miles and Jay Boberg have refused to talk to the Go-Go's management or legal representatives. They are very hostile. They won't answer my phone calls. There was a team—me, Ginger and Jay—and now that team is splintered."

Talk Show eventually took off anyway, perhaps a sign that talent and justice will occasionally out. "Head Over Heels," the first single, grazed the Top Ten. The Go-Go's cautiously trudged back to rehearsals for their scheduled spring concert tour—and then Gina wound up in the hospital.

The tour was rescheduled for summer and fall, and while

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Gina recovered, the other band members contended with their own psychic fallout. "In the last six weeks I've had days when I watch television for sixteen hours," said Charlotte. "I know that's a sign of depression, but it's also relaxing for me. I mean, I try to go places."

Jane professes satisfaction with *Talk Show* but added, "It makes no sense getting excited. All I'm hoping is that it will last longer than the last album did. The longer it lasts the more time before you have to do another one."

According to her doctor, upon complete recovery Gina will have more energy than before, a prognosis that leaves her a little worried. "I've always had a lot of energy," she observed, "so I'm kind of scared. Maybe I'll need to take Valiums to be normal." Within two weeks of her operation, the feisty percussionist was already practicing again and feeling restless about her convalescence: "I'm not used to sitting around and taking it easy," she explained with artful understatement.

Kathy Valentine, for one, hopes the Go-Go's novelty appeal has finally worn off: "I guess we wanted people to be less concerned with our image this time and more with our music. The fact is we are ages twenty-five to thirty and we're musicians and we're grownups. We're there for the music."

"I think it's wrong to ever be too sure of anything," she reflected more soberly. "Fear is what keeps you striving. It is hard. It's much easier to fall apart than to stay together. It's easy to have a nervous breakdown. The hard part is to keep it in perspective."

"Jane and I were laughing about a review of our album that says, 'Go-Go's grow up,'" said Charlotte Caffey. "It's like our first album we were in diapers. The second album we were in grammar school. This is our puberty album. As for me, I always wanted to call *Talk Show* something else. I thought *Countdown To Menopause* would be a better name."

She laughed. "And everyone else said, 'Well, Charlotte, that does apply to you.'" ☐

Wolf

given more credit and presumably wielded more authority. Finally word comes that Wolf is out altogether, but the band will continue behind Seth. It sure looks like it got to the point where you felt you had to either walk or be reduced to Seth's sideman.

WOLF: All I can say is, it's obvious that Seth's a very talented musician. As to what people might think, I just can't concern myself with someone's opinion. I can just try to give this focus: the band was something we all worked very hard in, to keep it as fresh and as innovative as we could. I want people who cared about the band to know that my leaving was not because I didn't want to be a part of the J. Geils Band. It wasn't like Lionel Richie leaving the Commodores for a solo career. It was nothing like that.

There's a certain personal thing that goes on between people that it's not in good taste to go into. The best thing to do is focus on the outcome: I'm doing a solo project. I'm on this path. It's best to move on.

MUSICIAN: *I get the impression here that there are two Peter Wolfs—one who's sitting here talking and another who's detached and watches everything.*

WOLF: Well, I guess only a fool says things he doesn't think about. I don't know. I mean, I've been pretty comfortable sitting with you. We touched on some sensitive areas. That's evident. I haven't really sat down and done an interview like this in a long time. I'm trying to give your questions some thought so I can sound intelligent.

MUSICIAN: *I'd guess there's a side not many people see.*

WOLF: I think every individual is a complex being. Unless you know someone really well, what you see ain't always what you get.

MUSICIAN: *You'll laugh, but I have a feeling you're always in control of what happens around you.*

WOLF: Well, if you could step inside *this* frame, buddy, you'd be in for a big, big surprise. ☐

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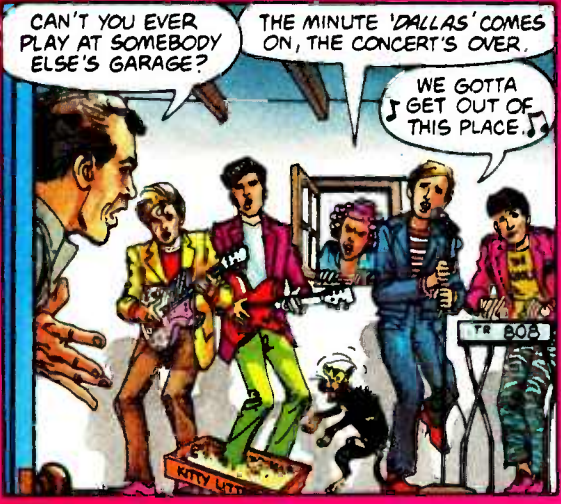
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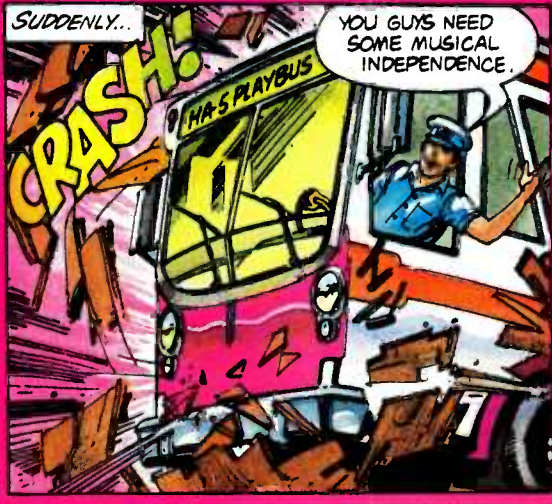
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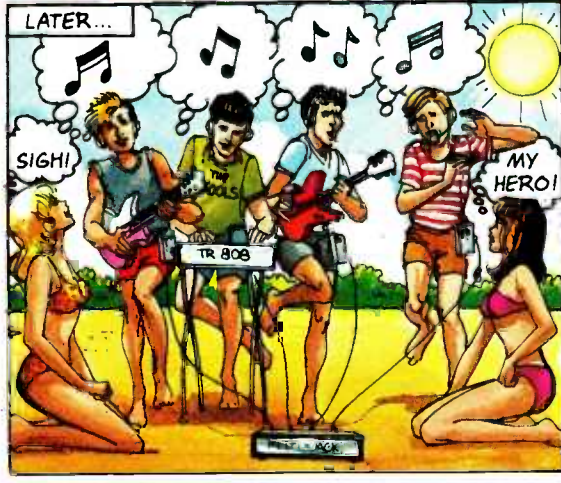
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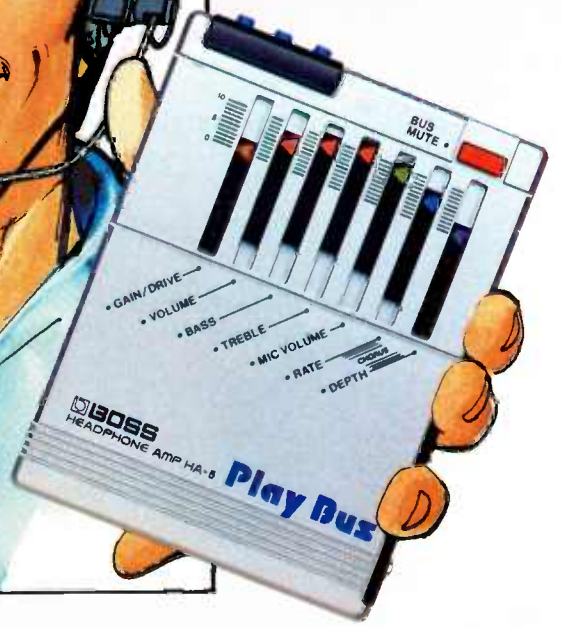
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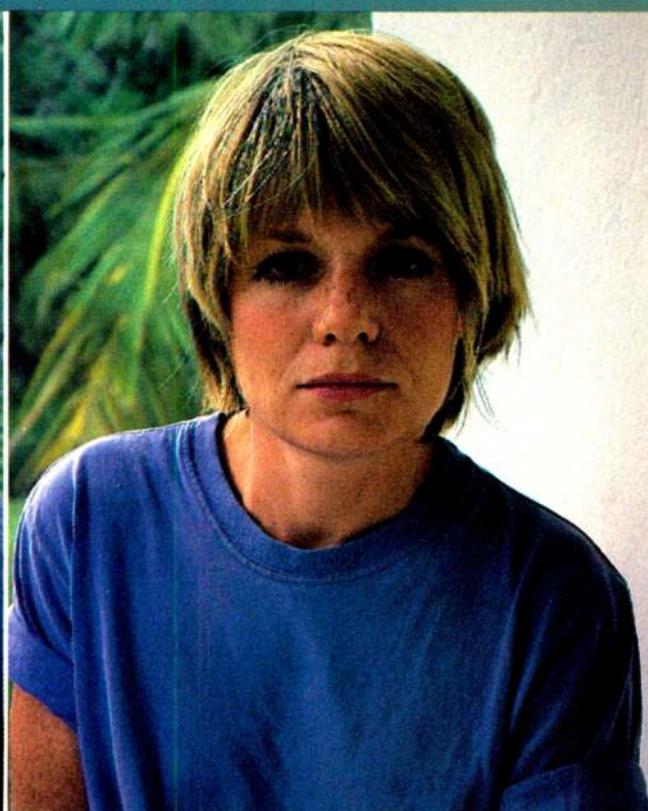
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chris & tina

TALKING HEADS' BEAT TEAM

Home at the Tom Tom Club

it's the good life. Chris Frantz, hair flung back, grinning behind his shades, plows through the ocean off Nassau, the Bahamas, at sixty miles per hour. One hand is on the steering wheel of his 26-foot, twin-engine speedboat; the other holds a Heineken. When not cruising the high seas, Frantz and wife Tina Weymouth have also indulged in such Bahamian pursuits as snorkling, wind surfing and dancing. Lately, though, they'd rather spend time with Robin, their charming one-and-a-half-year-old son. The sun shines down on an island paradise of tropical vegetation, bright beach and turquoise water, all visible from Frantz and Weymouth's living quarters. Yes, it's the good life.

If only it were *real* life.

"People think all we do is sit around in lounge chairs and tan ourselves in the sun," a well-tanned Weymouth complains. Okay, we should all be so unlucky as to spend six months a year in the Bahamas. But Weymouth and Frantz' island home is more than a place to unwind when they aren't playing bass and drums, respectively, with Talking Heads. Two Heads albums were recorded at nearby Compass Point Studios. And the Weymouth-Frantz domicile doubles as the Tom Tom Club, a rehearsal loft for their own group of that name. Can they help it if a deep tan is an occupational

hazard?

Even rock stars deserve some time off. The top-twenty success of last year's Talking Heads album, *Speaking In Tongues*, found the group's intended eight-week tour snowballing into an eight-month extravaganza. After the last, Australian leg wrapped up this March, Frantz and Weymouth repaired to their Bahamas retreat to recuperate—and plan the next Tom Tom Club album.

Frantz and Weymouth, both thirty-three, take the cliché of bass/drum "marriage" literally. They met at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1971. Weymouth, who had taken art education classes as a youngster, had transferred from Barnard. Frantz was friendly with fellow student David Byrne; the two were in a college rock group called the Artisticks. After leaving RISD, Byrne and Frantz (who had been drumming since the age of ten) started Talking Heads, and Weymouth went out and bought a bass guitar.

"We'd thought before about forming a band," Weymouth says, "maybe even a top forty-type group, but our hearts wouldn't have been in that." Her prior musical experience was as a handbell-ringer and self-taught guitarist, flautist and pianist. She chose bass for the new group because "keyboards seemed too typical for a

BY SCOTT ISLER

MODERN RHYTHM

girl"; Weymouth was also inspired by Suzi Quatro.

Almost ten years after that decision for bass, Weymouth insists "I don't feel I've gotten anywhere near to mastering it." Frantz, who doesn't even like to talk about himself, is equally modest. He admits he's not good at tricky meters: "That's Bill Bruford's turf; why should I try to do that?"

Chops aren't everything, as the Heads' and Tom Tom Club's critical and commercial success proves. Outsiders must wonder, though, how Frantz and Weymouth get along being together on the job as well as off.

"Sometimes it's not as easy when you're deeply personally involved with somebody," Frantz says of his bass partner. "It's harder to deal with disagreements. But we've managed to make none of our disagreements irreparable. We've been working together so long we generally like what the other person comes up with."

"If you have a fight over music you can always make love afterwards," Weymouth laughs.

All four members of Talking Heads have shown their ability to make music separately without diluting the strength of the parent group. The Tom Tom Club is unique in developing a healthy career of its own. The loosely-knit group of about a dozen people centers around Frantz, Weymouth and co-producer/keyboardist Steven Stanley. Their first album went gold on the strength of two dance-club hits, "Wordy Rapping-hood" and "Genius of Love." The tunes, like Tom Tom Club music in general, were direct, uncluttered and distinguished by clever lyrics sung by Weymouth and sisters Lani and Laura.

The Club's two albums, *Tom Tom Club* and *Close To The Bone*, are built on rhythm tracks. "Most songs begin with a drum thing that suggests a bass part," Frantz says, "which then suggests a lyrical/conceptual mood. You build it from the bottom up." He may "update" his drum part later with accents or effects.

Beyond that, Weymouth says, "each song comes about in different ways. Sometimes there will be a main [writer], sometimes two or three. It doesn't get kicked around too much." All songs, though, are credited to the band as a unit. "We like to see Tom Tom Club as this little closed fist," Frantz says, "so people from the outside can't say, that finger did that."

This technique may change with the third album, now in progress. Weymouth speaks vaguely of shifting to a more song or pop-oriented approach:

"I don't want to always be writing dance tracks. I feel like getting a little more personal; not to be arty—that still is a turn-off—but to find some truth or experience that is bigger than ourselves but comes from within. We want to have everything written out clearly beforehand so everybody can be at ease once they get into the studio. I'm not dissatisfied with what we did, but I don't want to do it again. Now we're doing it more the way Buddy Holly or the Beatles used to write. I almost said Burt Bacharach!"

No doubt the disappointing sales of *Close To The Bone* contributed to this rethink. "I don't think there was a track on there that had the same kind of thing happening that was happening on 'Genius Of Love,'" Weymouth states. "Although we tried! But my baby was four months old, and we needed more preparation. The first record came together so much more easily; maybe the second one got overworked."

"We lost sight of the fact that a lot of people were doing that sound now," Frantz says.

"Boy George and the Eurythmics were the party records for that time," Weymouth adds, "and that was what was happening." Frantz and Weymouth were also competing against themselves: Talking Heads' *Speaking In Tongues*, held up for months over the cover art, came out a few weeks before *Close To The Bone*. The interrelationship of the two groups is always good for a rumor about the Heads breaking up. But the parent band would more likely fall apart if the rhythm team didn't have

Tom Tom Club for a safety valve.

"Because of Talking Heads' reputation," Frantz says, "people are always using these superlatives about how inventive

we are, and rhythmically complex, and highly advanced for rock 'n' roll—as if rock 'n' roll had to be advanced to be better. People who didn't know we were in Tom Tom Club never would have guessed it was two of Talking Heads."

Frantz proved his point when Tom Tom Club played as unannounced opening act on Talking Heads' tour of Japan and Europe. "We were playing these big, big places. It was never bad, but in some places you could tell that until we played our hit song they didn't realize who the hell we were!"

It's no secret that Tom Tom Clubbers Frantz and Weymouth prefer considerably lighter music than what they play in Talking Heads. Frantz naturally is aware of the different tempos and styles involved: "Maybe there's a little bit less angularity to my parts in Tom Tom Club, so it might be a little more relaxing [to play]. But I'm a nervous wreck when I get onstage with anybody!" he laughs. "Everybody's watching, don't mess up!" he chides himself.

In the lyrics department Tom Tom Club leaves the neurotic anguish behind with Byrne. "Love songs are natural to the medium," Weymouth says, and her "other" group bears that out. (After *Tom Tom Club*'s "Genius Of Love," *Close To The Bone* offered "Pleasure Of Love.") Yet Weymouth's lyrics have an ambiguous edge that lends depth to Tom Tom Club's superficial happy-family image.

"The great songs," she says, "are the ones that somehow manage not to settle on one truth which negates other truths. Loretta Lynn writes songs like that all the time; so do Dolly Parton and Willie Nelson. John Lennon's 'I'm A Loser' has a lot of that: You don't know if it's about his mother or his career or girlfriend or his work. Talking Heads' most popular song live is still Al Green's 'Take Me To The River.' It's got sex; cigarettes, which are a drug; Jesus; baptism; love; and nature, all in one song."

Nice work if you can get it. "You just have to sit down and brainstorm," Weymouth describes her compositional method. "Even if you don't get anything done you have to sit there for



EBET ROBERTS

"If you have a fight over music, you can make love afterwards."

MODERN RHYTHM

hours and hours and hours until the shift kicks in and the muse takes over. Suddenly it's saying it through you and you're becoming like a medium. It's like giving birth; it doesn't need you to explain it. David has a great gift for that. He can improvise off the top of his brain. On *Speaking In Tongues* we didn't even erase his first-take gibberish on certain songs."

Byrne's intensity plus Talking Heads' penchant for "direct improvisation in the studio" (according to Weymouth) impose strains unique to this creative outfit. "Talking Heads has lightened up a lot in the last couple of years," Frantz says. "For a while there was all this self-imposed pressure to be excellent. I decided that was silly—that I loved music, and why should I lose sight of what it was that made me get into music in the first place? If other people want to get precious about your band, let *them* do it."

So far Tom Tom Club has escaped minute critical scrutiny—which is exactly its purpose. Weymouth describes Tom Tom Club fans as younger and darker than the Talking Heads crowd. Frantz, wearing his Tom Tom hat, notes "we had mostly what is considered a black hit." Both feel, however, that the two bands' audiences are getting closer together as black and white music continues to cross-pollenate and cross over.

For all their encouragement of musical miscegenation, the couple see themselves as a rhythm section bound together by esthetic harmony as well as matrimony.

"I never had any desire to go out and work with another bassist," Frantz says. "What I care about in bands is if their music has an emotional effect on me, or at least a very strong physical effect. I don't rate bass players as making a

band good or bad." Frantz's bass/drum heroes reflect his preference for team playing: Robbie Shakespeare and Sly Dunbar, Bill Wyman ("people really underrate him") and Charlie Watts, Motown's James Jamerson and Benny Benjamin, Chic's Bernard Edwards and Tony Thompson.

"Playing on other people's records is not so great," Weymouth concurs, based on personal experience. She contributed to an all-female band on Nona Hendryx's 1982 album, only to find her bass intro obscured behind Laurie Anderson's overdubbed violin. She has turned down other offers.

Anyway, Tom Tom Club and Talking Heads provide all the creative outlets Frantz and Weymouth could want. This year a Jonathan Demme-directed concert movie, *Stop Making Sense*, will take the heat off the Heads for personal appearances. Weymouth says of her first band. "We didn't want to do anything again until we devised some ideas that would be different from the past."


"Talking Heads still enjoy playing with each other," Frantz affirms. "But if something came up that destroyed it or made it impossible, there are alternatives."

"If it stops being interesting we would call it quits," Weymouth says. "That would be the only sensible thing to do. We used to think, 'Five years from now—well, I don't think so.' But now it's been ten years. That's a long time!"

Neither one is too concerned about the future. *Close To The Bone's* "Atsa-

baby! (Life Is Great)"—sung by Frantz in a "raspy Jerry Lewis" voice—enunciates the couple's present situation pretty well.

"A lot of people had warned us that working together, especially in a band, wasn't going to last," the drummer says. "But we had just had a baby boy, and suddenly we were in a situation where we had to admit it was crazy not to stop and smell the roses, to use a cliché. We've fulfilled not only the hip, urban, artistic ambitions; we have this *really* good kid," the proud father gushes. "You can tell he's on the right track. So it seemed appropriate to do something that was sheer enthusiasm: life is great, everything is cool, it's nice to be here."

Maybe it is the good life after all. 

EBET ROBERTS



"Talking Heads has lightened up a lot."

TALKING BASS AND DRUMS

Tina Weymouth learned early the advantages of versatility: just before Talking Heads' first tour her Hofner hollow-body and customized Fender Mustang basses were stolen from her loft—"while I was sleeping! I was devastated. I was so familiar with those instruments that I didn't know how to play any others. I decided then and there I would never rely on just one instrument. It's also good for your mind to keep changing."

On the last Talking Heads tour, though, Weymouth still used a Hofner. "The engineer said it cut well in the hall, with a lot of bottom." She also used a Veillette-Citron Standard solid-body, a custom bass made by two Frenchmen in New York. "It's a full-scale bass that a small person like myself can play easily. The neck's narrow and easy to grasp, and it's very well-balanced."

Strings are Dean Markleys: "They have a little bit of twang but not so much as regular round-wound strings. Depending on how you finger them, they can sound round. They're polished slightly on the outside so they don't eat up your fingers as much. I like a nice staccato attack on the front of the note; they're very good at that. They also fit both my basses, and

they last a long time—as long as I don't break them."

Chris Frantz uses an all-black, anodized Tama drum kit with the Heads. It has timbales, two rack toms (oversized and tuned low), no floor toms, and two cymbals ("Zildjian—of course!"). On Tom Tom Club recordings he plays his home kit, "like a kid's": an 18-inch bass drum, one rack tom, one floor tom, snare, high-hat and cymbal. "No disrespect for drummers who surround themselves with drums, but I just don't think that way," he laughs.

He also has a Simmons electronic drum kit, "even though I've hardly used it." Weymouth is wary of drum machines, but Frantz welcomes their brave new world. "Lately people have discovered how to make 'em sound like they got a lot of soul. You hear the pain of creation. You can do more with them now; you don't have just pre-set merengues and sambas."

Talking Heads used a beat box in their earliest days. "We bought a real cheapie and used it on a song called 'Atoma Bomba,' which we never recorded, about a Latin girl. For the chorus I'd stop and hit this rhythm machine, cranking it up loud through the guitar amp. People didn't get into it too much down at CBGB."



"You build it from the bottom up."

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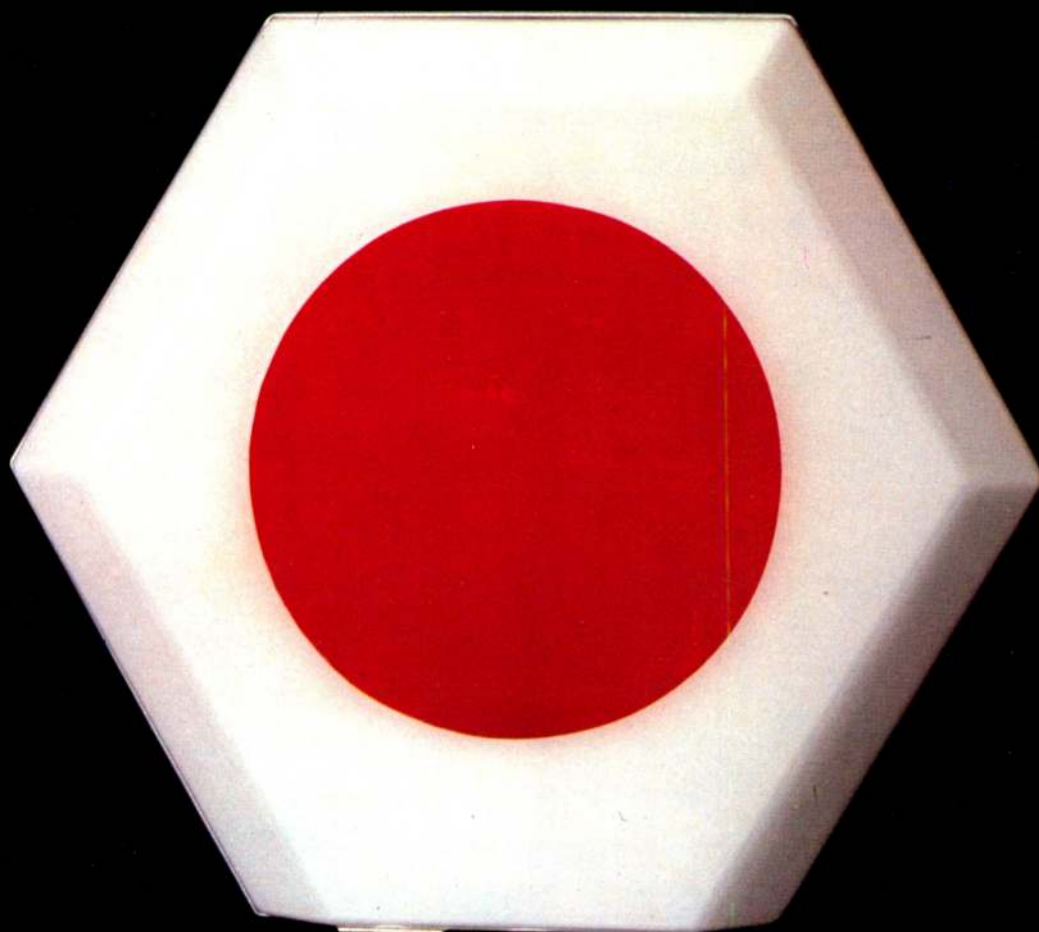
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sly & robbie

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DREAD

The Riddim Twins Celebrate Ten Years

First time in Jamaica, *mon?* The short, wiry native suddenly appeared from the bush less than twenty yards from the entrance to the spankingly modern hotel which served as our base in Kingston. "What do you need?" he asked, and when I found out his name was also Roy (little did I know at the time half the population is named Roy, I-Roy, U-Roy or Del-Roy), I immediately bargained for a handful of "plugs," individually wrapped packages containing buds of fresh, red sinsemilla. "Everyt'ing cool in Jamaica, mon," smiled Roy before disappearing, his sharply chiseled features creasing into a wide smile with gold-capped teeth.

And, indeed, what could be bad? We were in Kingston to cover the gala tenth anniversary concert celebration of the island's international reggae stars, bassist Robbie Shakespeare and drummer Sly Dunbar. The lineup of talent, all of whom have recorded with the "Riddim Twins" at one time or another, was a veritable who's-who of current Jamaican reggae—Gregory Isaacs, Black Uhuru, Jimmy Riley, the Tamlins, Ini Kamoze, Horace Andy, Sugar Minott, Yellowman and Dennis Brown.

The event was big news in Jamaica—the island's one TV station made it that evening's top story, featuring an extended tape of a jam session with the

pair. The world-wide fame Sly & Robbie have brought to the music, through their association with such superstars as the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Carly Simon, Joe Cocker, Grace Jones and Marianne Faithfull, is very important to the island. Thousands of youngsters dream of leaving the grinding trench-town poverty for the riches of America.

Because, underneath the lush, tropical sun, swaying palm trees and gentle island rhythms, everyt'ing is not so cool in Jamaica. Ex-record company mogul and now Prime Minister Edward Seaga, linked with the CIA and Ronald Reagan, maintains an uneasy peace by providing certain groups with arms and encouraging the multifarious factions to fight against and, ultimately, to neutralize one another. This is mirrored in post-Marley reggae by a frenzied fight for survival and commercial success. And, while groups like Culture Club, the Police and Men At Work parlay reggae influences into chart hits, native Jamaican musicians are getting restless waiting their turn.

Sly & Robbie have lent their support to the ten-year anniversary promotion in the hopes of bringing recognition to some of their lesser-known colleagues. As the only major record company signing and promoting reggae, Island Records is the main vehicle for international stardom. The Island Records' publicist tells us the label used to

BY ROY TRAKIN

have offices in Kingston until just recently. "We had to close them down because they were becoming a huge Rasta hangout," she explains. "Chickens and goats climbing the stairs, feathers flying everywhere...."

The influence of Jamaican native and Island Records prexy Chris Blackwell is all-pervasive. Black Uhuru's Duckie Simpson, a glowering Rasta with a towering tam stuffed with dreads (and who looks like he eats well-meaning white journalists for breakfast), mentions the "personal" relationship Chris Blackwell shared with Bob Marley and Peter Tosh; he suggests Black Uhuru would benefit from similar "respect" and attention. "Chris says we have to be more professional," he remarks pointedly. The ebullient Jimmy Riley, another talented Island hopeful, is more patient: "I don't really make plans. If Jah says so, I will. I just take it as it come. I'm signed to Island so I guess they'll arrange all that."

The National Arena in Kingston, where the concert was being held, is a five-minute ride from our hotel. Driving there, we began to see the flip side of Jamaican cool. Two truckloads of M-16-toting soldiers search and pat down a row of natives against a brick wall. Suitably shaken, we arrive at the show site, as hordes of people were milling around the arena trying to get in. Clutching our Island Records press passes, we find every entrance clogged with ticket-holding natives. Guard dogs snarl and growl, suddenly lunging into the crowd and causing stampedes and panic.



Robbie "Basspeare" gets dubwise.

ANDY FREEBERG

Doors flash open and the mob surges through a tiny crack. We strain to catch the sight of people getting clubbed on the other side. Concerned for our safety, the Island publicist promises us tickets to every New York reggae show if only we agree to return to the hotel.

Suddenly a leonine Sly Dunbar parts the crowd like Moses crossing the Red Sea, but the drummer of the hour searches in vain for an open entrance. A confused Yellowman is spurned by one guard as he tries to get in backstage. He points to a concert poster. "Dat's me drivin' deh taxi and I can't get in," he pleads. Inside, the Cool Ruler, Gregory Isaacs, takes the stage to sing "Soon Forward," a number one single in Jamaica he recorded for Sly & Robbie's Taxi label, their first native chart-topper. We are reconsidering the Island rep's offer when a movement in the crowd picks us up like an ocean wave and deposits us at a side door. Our gleaming white skin and thick New York patois convince the guard we're official "first-world" journalists. We squeeze through the tiny passageway, take a deep breath anticipating blows from a club and are surprised when inside, every'ting is relaxed, uncrowded, and yes, cool....

The hall, which resembles a medium-sized college basketball auditorium, is thick with booming bass and sweaty, undulating beat. Tiny street urchins with huge machetes at their side climb in and out of the bleachers, hawking oranges and peanuts. Surprisingly, there's not that much marijuana smoke in the air. The cream of Jamaican reggae hold forth from the stage: the Taxi Connection band would be backing all the featured performers. The ten-man outfit featured, aside from Sly on drums and Robbie on bass, many of the session musicians who work on the duo's label: Robbie Lynn and "Bubbler" Waul on keyboards, Winston "Bo Peep" Bowen on guitar, Ronald "Nambo" Robinson on trombone, Arnold Brackenridge and David Madden on trumpet, "Sky Juice" Burt on percussion and Dean "Youth Sax" Fraser on saxophone. The concert lineup traced a chronology of Sly & Robbie's riddim work; the songs played were all well-known hits in Jamaica.

"We wanted it to be like a Motown 25th anniversary show, with all the singers we've worked with who've had success in Jamaica," explains Sly Dunbar later in a lilting, slurred slang. "This is the first time we've played some of dese songs onstage. 'S fun playin' it back, y'know?'"

"This show is bigger than both of us," echoes Robbie in a soft-spoken sing-song accent.

Black Uhuru's triumvirate—Michael

Rose, Puma and Duckie Simpson—take the stage and lean into "Guess Who Is Coming To Dinner," a song they initially recorded for Taxi. The rest of the instruments drop out as the Riddim Twins go into one of their oozing, patented dubwise breaks, this time purveying a swaying Latinized beat that abruptly switches back to clipped reggae syncopation.

Jimmy Riley follows with his own take on lover's rock, followed by the smooth harmonies of the Tamlins, the ragged toasting of Horace Andy and the uplifting croon of the "next Marley," young Ini Kamoze. A jaunty Sugar Minott gets the

ANDY FREEBERG



Leonine Sly Dunbar keeps rock-steady.

crowd jumping, sharing the stage in a bright orange rain poncho with a little kid who dances along.

The audience comes alive for Yellowman, the scar-faced albino deejay whose sexual braggadocio and rude, explicit toasts have made him a native favorite. "If my dick be a marker, than the woman's pussy be like a rainbow," he boasts to the partisan crowd at one point. "I'm harder to get than a visa," he teases at another. The entire congregation chants along on "Zungazungazungazungazee."

After Yellowman, the colorfully festooned, dreadlocked Dennis Brown is a bit of an anti-climax, but the best is saved for last. Unannounced, a lithe, slight figure with dreadlocks to his waist bounces onstage and you can't take your eyes off him. It's Bunny Wailer, in town for a rare concert appearance later in the week; he launches into "Crucial," working the stage so smoothly, it doesn't look like his feet are touching the ground. Suddenly, the promise of reggae as universal language crystallizes with Bunny's charisma, grounded in the

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The Taxi gang jammed on into the night as we exited, and miraculously ran into our official Rastafarian driver we had lost in the chaos five hours earlier. "It's Jah's will," he laughed cherubically and we bundled into the car to return to the hotel.

Sly & Robbie first met in the early 70s, when they played at competing clubs around the corner in Kingston. Robbie's main influence was Upsetters' bassist Aston "Family Man" Barrett, who presented Shakespeare with his first violin-shaped Hofner (legend has it he purchased it from Paul McCartney when the band toured England). Sly marveled at the drumming abilities of the Skatalites' Lloyd Nibbs. "He had this cymbal trick," recalls Dunbar, clucking his tongue in the manner of a high-hat being simultaneously hit and muted, resulting in a staccato, tickety-tock riddim. "It would made dem crazy on the dance floor when dey heard his records."

A local financier/producer named Bunny Lee brought Sly & Robbie together for their first joint session in the mid-70s after the two had admired each other's work from a distance. "Robbie's bass sound was so huge, when you put the record on, it filled the room," says Sly respectfully. "And you could hear all the notes. I wondered who was playing bass like that."

"Sly jes' played diff'rent from de rest," relates Robbie. "Seeing Sly play, yes, it could match my style. And he was sayin' de same t'ing."

Robbie tries to explain why Jamaica rather than any other island in the Caribbean has served as reggae's music's birthplace. "In Jamaica, when you walk in de street, you get a diff'rent feelin' than anywhere else in the world. My feeling is that God picked a few people to play this music. He gave dem d'inspiration. Dis is what you must do. Dis is how you must do it."

"Africa is what prob'ly make reggae diff'rent," Robbie continues. "When deh people from England sold the African people in America as slaves, the more violent types were left in the Caribbean islands. Left dem dere to die. The chanting from down dere (Robbie strikes his chest)...it grow up t'rough generation and generation. And it passed on."

Although the duo built a hefty rep on the island as mid-70s hitmakers, it was their '78 tour opening for the Rolling Stones with Peter Tosh's back-up band, Word, Sound and Power, that introduced them to a worldwide audience and led to non-reggae acts like Grace Jones, Joan Armatrading, Gwen Guthrie and Joe

Cocker using them on albums.

"Whenever we reached the dubwise spot in the concert, the audience would scream," remembers Robbie about the Stones gigs. "To us, it was nuthin' special, because it was part of Jamaican music. But people said whenever Sly and I played togedder, we di'nt need d'rest of d'band."

"Bass and drums are like a foundation for building a house," lectures Robbie. "Me and Sly each play melodies, though, on our individual instruments. If y'listen to Sly drummin' alone, y'could dance off dat. If y'listen to bass alone, y'can dance off dat. The secret is playin' somet'ing dat's locked in when you're both together, but, at de same time, de parts stand by demselves, too."

Despite their spiritual bent, Sly & Robbie do not pepper their speech with the Jah Rastafarianisms which make communication with so many other reggae musicians so difficult. But if words do fail them, the duo's innate musical instincts take over, especially in sessions with superstars like Dylan and the Stones.

"They try to communicate with words, but spiritually and mentally, you can feel what's going on," explains Robbie, dapper in his gray leather suit, a fair amount of jewelry dangling from his neck and hands. "Once me and Sly step
continued on page 82

The Riddim Method

On records, Robbie "Basspeare" prefers using a Fender Jazz bass with medium gauge flat-wound strings. Onstage, Shakespeare sports a Steinberger bass with LaBella double ball-end medium gauge strings. "for modeling purposes...it sound good and look good." He has recently latched onto an Octave-Plateau Voyetra-8 synthesizer triggered by a custom bass, which allows him to program any sound, from a guitar chord to a horn riff. "Now, de same t'ing a keyboard can do, a bass is able to do." Robbie plays through Ampex SVT amps.

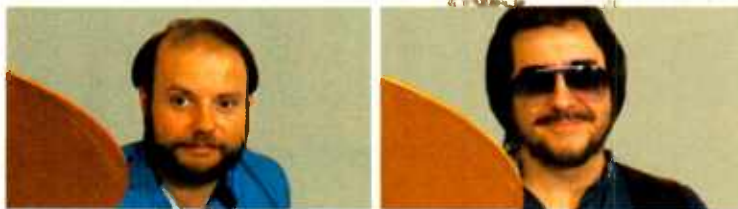
Sly Dunbar used an electronic Simmons drum kit for the Tenth Anniversary show, with an electronic cymbal, four electronic tom-toms and an electronic bass drum. The kit also included a regular snare drum and two acoustic Zildjian cymbals. "I use the electronic drums for certain effects and ridim feel," he explains. "They're good for fills, when the other instruments drop out. It allows me to reserve energy on repetitions of more than two bars. I can't even count all the different kinds of sounds I can get on the kit I have. It allowed us to duplicate the studio sound of those records live."

For both recording and onstage use, Sly is a big fan of digital drums, favoring the Oberheim DMX and the Roland TR-808. "They help keep studio costs down. Instead of spending time getting a particular beat, I can simply program the machine and recall it immediately. I use a (Duraline) Syndrum to play lines an organ is ordinarily used for in Jamaica." Sly usually sports a Duraline stick in his left hand, a Regal Tip Combo in his right.



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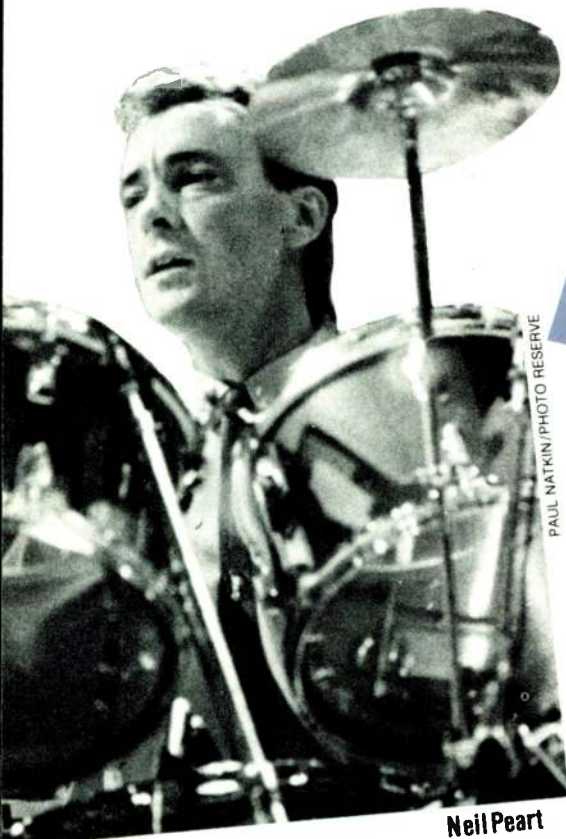


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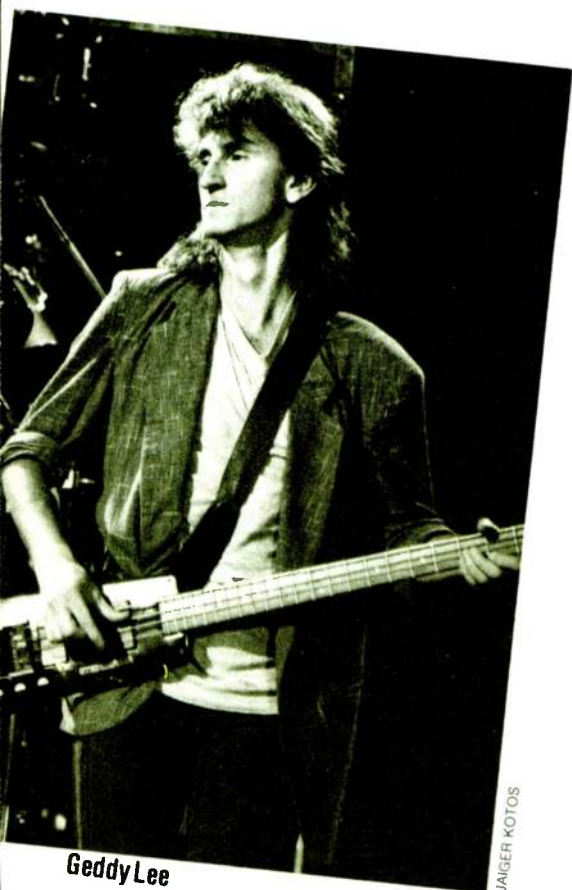
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MODERN RHYTHM



Neil Peart

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE



JAIGER KOTOS

Geddy Lee

RUSH'S NEIL PEART AND GEDDY LEE

By Freff

What's the Role of the Rhythm Section in Rush?

Peart: A rhythm section is an indefinable thing. I don't put it down to the bassist and the drummer alone being the rhythm section, really; nowadays, it's the whole band, even the vocalist. I hate to get that "us and them" attitude, bassists and drummers against the rest of the band. I grew up like that, taking it all in. But I reject it now. It was and is wrong, from both sides.

A rhythm section is fundamentally a pulse, a foundation for the rest of the music to be built upon. A rhythm is set up that is interesting and somehow hypnotic, and then the musical changes are allowed to interweave in a natural way on top of that, related to it but not dependent upon it. With Rush, being a trio puts a lot of weight on everybody in that respect. The guitar and drums have to interact rhythmically as much as the bass and drums do, to really start to stretch the limitation of the form. The Police are a good illustration of that.

Over ten years, we've taken a lot of different approaches to using rhythm, experimenting with complicated time signatures and such because we found it exciting. For a time, we threw out the pulse as being a fundamental necessity, which was good for Rush because we needed to throw out all the rules and look around to see what we were capable of doing. But now we've come around full circle to the point where that common pulse is important again. Our songs still change time signatures a lot, but always around a central pulse.

Lee: I feel it's very important for the urgency, and sometimes the anger of the sound, to come from the rhythm section. What Neil and I try and do is create a solid bed, be it funky or uptempo or laid-back, so that Alex's guitar can be looser on top of us. That changes when I'm playing keyboards: there's a real open area for the drums to loosen up. You can feel the cruise—the bass is gone and the bottom end, while still deep, is no longer as demanding. The bass isn't punching at you, and it allows you to focus in on the ride cymbal and

the little things that make a song move.

Of course, in contemporary rock the role of the rhythm section is changing because so many records are being made with artificial rhythm sections. And so much is textural. In a lot of new English music there's this huge snare sound that is the only common denominator. There's no real tom-toms, no real hyperactive bass, and off and on at whim there'll be lots of Latino-style percussion because there's so much air for them, so much space, since there's only a snare and a synthesized bass drum holding it all together.

Inspiration and Influences

Peart: I would say people like Peter Gabriel, Talking Heads, Japan, Roxy Music. Jamaican music, of course, African music—I like King Sunny Ade a lot...on the modern English pop music front there's Ultravox, the Police, Culture Club, and on the jazz-fusion front there's always been Brand X and Weather Report. Actually, my influences go far beyond what I really like. I learn from a lot of things, whether or not they appeal to me emotionally.

Lee: I've always been a big fan of the Chris Squire/Alan White and Chris Squire/Bill Bruford combinations in Yes. They were probably my biggest early influences. Then Jeff Berlin and Bill Bruford when they were playing together, and Tony Levin and Jerry Marotta.

Best Work Together

Peart: I guess I'll be obvious and say our most recent album. But again, I don't limit it just to myself and Geddy. Because often when he's playing keyboards I have to interact together with our guitarist, Alex Lifeson, in the way that a rhythm section would. That's something that we explored a lot on *Signals*, our previous album.

Current Equipment

Peart: I'm using a custom prototype Tama set, with thinner walls than their conventional shells. That makes them more resonant. It went out of fashion for a while to have drums that actually sang. They were all supposed to be very dull

continued on page 84



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MODERN RHYTHM

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

OREGON'S COLLIN WALCOTT AND GLEN MOORE

By Freff

What's the Role of the Rhythm Section in Oregon?

Moore: The bass role in any band is one of underlining and punctuation. I draw lines under what is being done, and support what is being done. It's knowing and understanding the harmony of the piece, where the notes of the chords are and the register in which those happen. In Oregon, because we're playing with tuned drums instead of trap drums and because there isn't the traditional triple or duple feeling, where there's this constant cymbal pattern happening, there is more open to me as a bass player. The harmonics on my bass have a larger place in the music, so I have not only bass and harmonic functions, but melodic functions as well.

Walcott: There are really three issues for any band: number one, to try and play together while giving everyone enough space to be creative; number two, to find a groove, a rhythmic concept that everyone can agree upon. To paraphrase Jerry Coker, "swinging is to be together"; and issue #3 is to play it properly, whether it's a tune or an improvisation. In the context of Oregon, one of the most difficult things that we've had to resolve as a rhythm section is number two. Getting a rhythmic concept together was a fairly complicated thing. Compensating for the fact that I wasn't playing cymbals much was another issue. Drums take up a huge amount of space in the sound spectrum, from bass drum all the way at the bottom to cymbals way at the top, and that means a piano player and a bass player in the traditional trio context don't have to play a lot of notes to feel a very full ensemble sound. When they started playing with me and my little hand drums, they tended to overplay, trying to compensate with more notes for the fact that there wasn't this big wash of the trap set. That's still a difficult area for us, for all of us—trying to cover the drum part, getting the orchestration correct so we don't cancel each other out.

Moore: We spent several years learning to play together. Initially I was in an overly sped-up place, coming from jazz trio playing a *la* Bill Evans or Paul Bley.

Always kind of rushing and pushing ahead. Collin's approach was more Indian, more metronomic, and not quite so excitable in terms of tempo. So it took time for me to cool down and for Collin to get more excited, so we could kind of meet in the middle. It was four or five years before we felt comfortable with that sort of rhythm section.

Inspiration

Moore: For bassists, Ray Brown, in his playing with Oscar Peterson, was my number one influence and really my first teacher in the rhythm section department. Then Scott LaFaro, Gary Peacock...then Eddie Gomez, Miroslav Vitous, David Holland. For drummers, Elvin Jones and Tony Williams. And for favorite rhythm sections there's Tony Williams and Ron Carter in Miles Davis' early band, *before* the bass was amplified, and Paul Motian and Scott LaFaro.

Walcott: Everyone has influenced me, but in another sense no one has influenced me, because there's nobody who actually plays my combination of instruments. The classic rhythm sections of Elvin Jones-Jimmy Garrison and Tony Williams-Ron Carter have amazed me, of course. Among conga drummers I've always admired Mongo Santamaria and Ray Barretto.

Own Best Work

Moore: There have always been high moments, right from the beginning, but since 1975 or '76 the playing has been pretty incredible. That was when I started using pickups on the bass, which let me use harmonics more in a performing situation. The technology really helped us, that way, because then the harmonics cut through enough for Collin to really hear them and our playing picked up considerably. Let's see...the Vanguard record that we did with Elvin Jones was a thrill for both of us. We'd been passing the drum part around between us, and to have Elvin there was just wonderful. We smiled and giggled through the whole thing. *Roots In The Sky* and *Out Of The Woods*, our first two Elektra albums, were also pretty special for me.

continued on page 84



Collin Walcott

ANDY FREEBERG



Glen Moore

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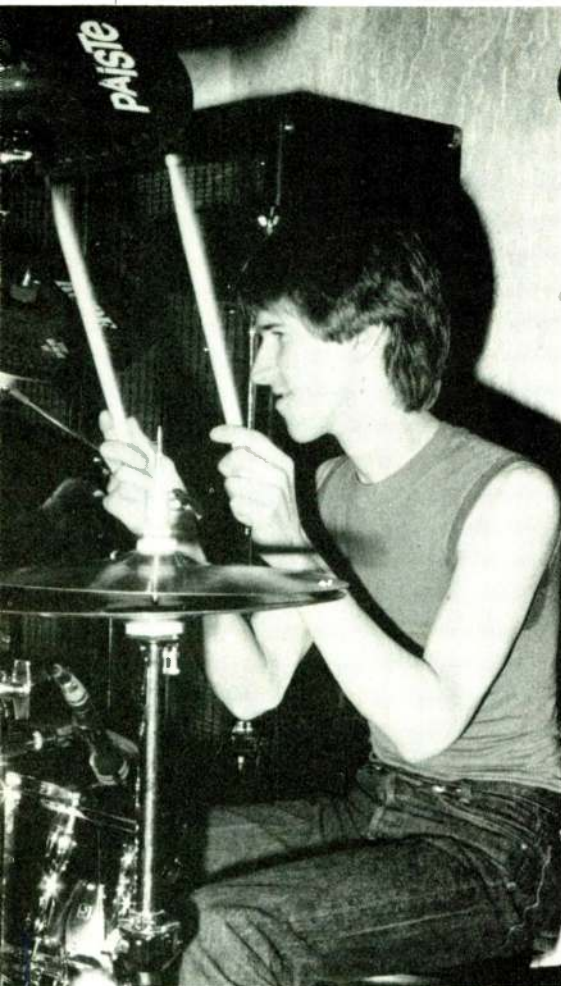
FRANK ZAPPA'S SCOTT THUNES AND CHAD WACKERMAN

By Freff



Scott Thunes

Chad Wackerman



What's the Role of the Rhythm Section in Frank Zappa's Music?

Both go wide-eyed, point at each other and say "you start!"

Thunes: Well we've never played together in the studio, and live's a very different thing. The biggest thing is playing straight through for two-and-a-half hours a night. Everybody else gets to stop except for us; all the songs are segued together. And all the different styles. We have to know everything. At any given moment he might say, "Let's do this song reggae, or heavy metal, or Mr. Rogers, or as a tango...when we've never rehearsed it that way at all."

Wackerman: You have to keep your eyes open, too, because there are a lot of visual cues. Frank holding his hand with the fingers down above his head, and then wiggling his fingers back and forth means "play like Weather Report"—like a cloud of rain, see? Pulling a clump of his hair to the left side of his head like a dreadlock means "reggae." Pulling it to both sides of his head would mean "ska."

Thunes: A number one in any other situation is listening. In Frank's situation that's paralleled with a new A-number one, which is stamina.

Wackerman: Frank does most of his albums by recording on the road, and then overdubbing in the studio later. It's kind of difficult to function as a member of a rhythm section in that context, because you have to try and capture the attitude of what was happening at the time. I'm usually more conservative when tape is rolling in the studio, and it's tough to capture the live attitude. You want it to be good. You want it to be great.

Inspiration and Influences

Thunes: Paul McCartney was always seminal; he was never very good but his sound was extremely killer. Graham Maby from Joe Jackson's band pretty much got me back into playing bass heavily. I used to listen to a lot of Jaco and Stanley, but I don't really appreciate bass as an end in itself anymore. The bass player from Midnight Oil is who I'm listening to mostly these days. You want sections? Talking Heads. Greek Thea-

tre, September 4th, 1983. That was really it for me, an amazing show. It was a Friday night and it was sold out. Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth are just amazingly tight. The fact that they're married might have something to do with that. And I'm sorry, but I've got to say Ringo and Paul.

Wackerman: Drummers: Peter Erskine, Vinnie Colaiuta, Terry Bozzio, Elvin Jones, Steve Gadd, Tony Williams ...pretty much the popular players that everybody knows. Scott sounds pretty good as a bass player (chuckles). There's also a guy named Jimmy Johnson I played with in Alan Holdsworth's band, and Jeff Berlin was fun to play with. For sections there was the old Tower of Power team, and Jaco and Peter Erskine together in Weather Report.

Thunes: I wanted to work at one point with the Gang of Four, because they are very rhythmic, and I like to get down into a rhythmic dance kind of thing. That's one thing that Frank is definitely not into, a steady, normal pace that people can try and relate to.

Best Work Together

Thunes: The Hammersmith-Odeon shows in London, on the '82 European tour. Those were really hot.

Wackerman: And the Santa Monica shows at the end of the U.S. '81 tour, because we really got a lot of tracks out of that.

Current Equipment

Thunes: I have a 1962 Fender Precision, stock, that is the love of my life. And I have a '65 Fender Jazz bass that I've had since I was thirteen. Those are what I use mostly. I've also used Carvins and liked them. My amp setup with Frank is a BGW power amp, an Audio Arts high end, a dbx limiter, an Alembic pre-amp and Meyers speakers. For strings, I've been recently switching between Maximas and GHS Boomers. For synth-bass, I play Minimoog.

Wackerman: All my drums are Drum Workshop, with a brass snare, three Remo Roto-toms, and Paiste cymbals. I normally use the 2002 series. I might be using some Simmons SDS 7s on the tour, but I don't know yet. ☐

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INFLUENTIAL BASS ANCESTORS & UPDATES

By J.D. Considine

If you had \$195.50 back in 1951, you could have walked into your local music store (assuming it was there then) and plunked down your money for a Fender Precision bass (assuming they had one). Likely, you would have been the first on your block, maybe even the first in your state, to own one. At gigs, you would have possessed a sound that far exceeded the volume and clarity of an upright bass viol, which in electric performance had all the presence of a lump of pudding. You would have been on the cutting edge of a new technology and a new music.

Walk into your local music store today, and you can still buy a Fender Precision bass. Granted, it will look a little different than the '51 model, as Fender changed the body design in 1954; it will also sound a bit different, thanks to the split-coil pickups Fender added in '57. And, needless to say, the price has gone up some from the last days of the Truman administration—the "Vintage Series" '57 Precision bass will run you \$899, minus whatever discount you can wrangle. Otherwise it's the same instrument.

Which, when you think about it, is fairly incredible. After all, you don't see Ford marketing "Vintage Series" Model A's, do you? There have, of course, been daring modifications along the way, the most extensive being Ned Steinberger's graphite-and-fiberglass rethink and the long-awaited Kubicki Ex Factor. But since the Precision, most basses have been little more than electronic attempts to improve what Leo Fender first wrought.

As amplifiers grew more efficient, and Leo's invention more commonplace, the round bottom-end and punchy midrange of the P-bass was not always the answer, if only because bass sounds simply don't project the way treble tones do. Thus, the next logical step in the instrument's evolution was to offer more treble response in the electric bass. This came about initially through two separate instruments. The first was the Fender Jazz bass, which debuted in 1960; the second was the Rickenbacker 4001, which entered the market shortly thereafter. Both used two pickups in place of the P-bass' one, the idea being to give the bassist the option of mixing his own

sound from the output of a treble and a bass pickup. Not coincidentally, both also featured thinner necks and a more guitar-like feel than the P-bass.

Neither idea seems to have been the answer entirely. While the P-bass was clearly lacking in the high-end, at least it had a full, continuous sound. The double-pickup basses, by contrast, sounded rich at both extremes, but tended to lack character and weight in the middle, giving them a hollow sound. True enough, there were many players eager to take advantage of that sound, with Larry Graham's string-popping J-bass sound and Chris Squire's Rickenbacker treble roar leading the way. But current taste seems to lean toward a more substantial midrange.

Then in the late 70s, some anonymous genius figured that if you rout out a slot down by the bridge of your P-bass and install a J-bass treble pickup, you'll retain all the bottom and midrange of the original instrument while adding the bright, treble boost you'd long lusted after. (Fender, curiously enough, never added this improvement to their own line.) Most companies' versions have even applied split-coil or humbucking circuitry to the J-style pickup to eliminate the hum of the original's single-coil (the D.I.Y.-ers, in contrast, seemed satisfied with Seymour Duncan's stacked pickups), but the balance between the fat midrange-and-bottom and the slightly thinner high-end has been, on the whole, preserved. For their common roots, though, the prolific variations of the P/J bass sound no more identical than Strat guitar copies. Musical and design prejudices come into play (mine included), so after this walking tour of the bass-ment, you should make a tour of your own before buying.

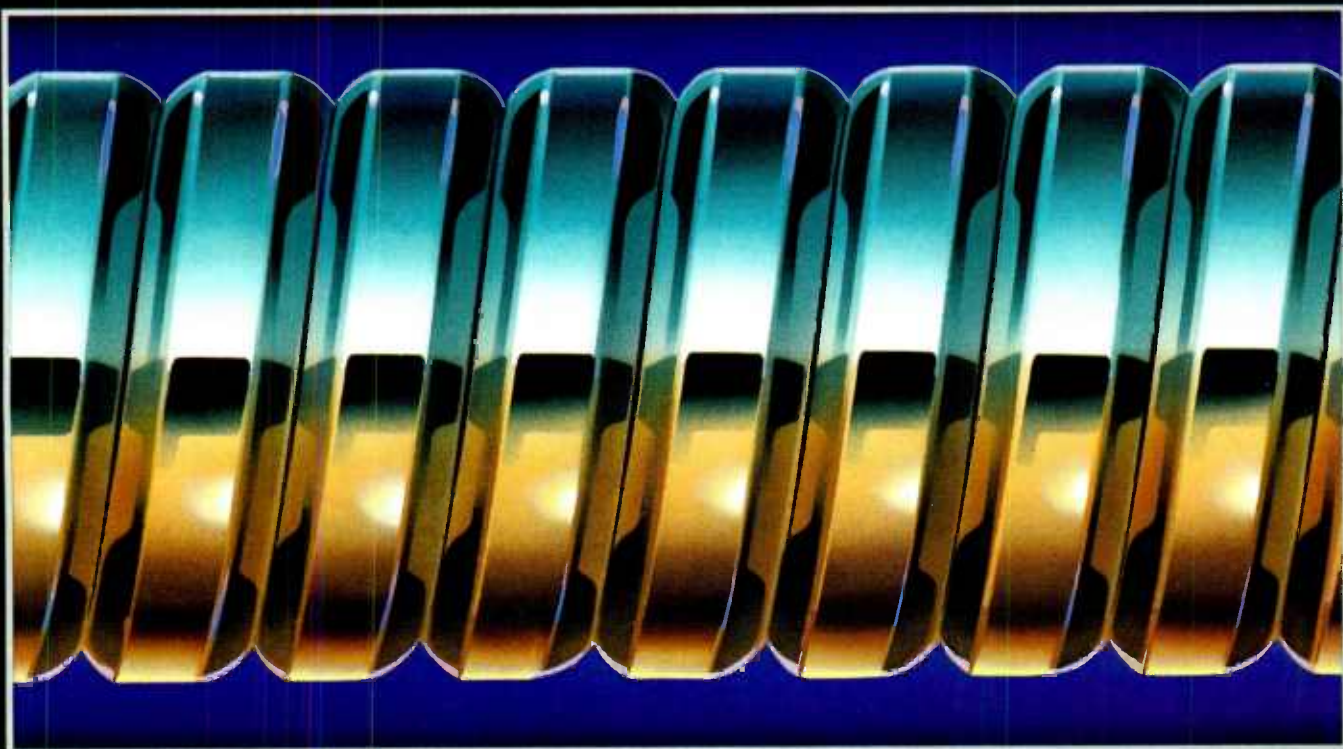
Charvel, Hamer and Kramer all have basses with P/J pickup configurations, and the differences between them are minimal—the Charvel basses seem to have a bit more high end, while the Hamer basses have slimmer necks and more substantial bridges. Ibanez has two models which stand out from the pack, the RB-650 and the RB-924; the latter boasts a humbucking J-style bridge pickup that offers a wide range of

Fender '57 Precision

Ibanez RB888

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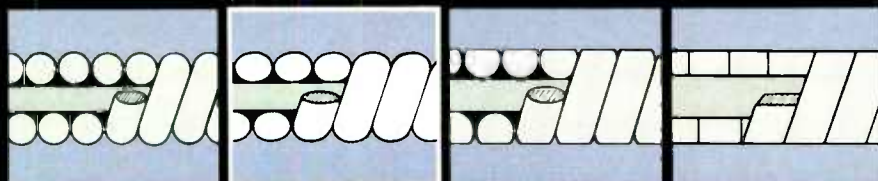
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There are now even basses available with EMG pickups in the modified P-bass configuration (though to my ears this is almost overkill). The EMGs near the bridge add a sort of halo of treble presence to their bass tones which seems a more balanced version of the Chris Squire lead-bass sound, and lends itself to string popping. Of the two EMG-equipped P/J's I'm aware of, both play equally well: Guild's SB 602 matches a thin neck to a light body, while Spector Guitars' NS-2 has a particularly comfortable body shape.

The added electronic edge of the EMG sound comes from an honorable enough tradition. When the Alembic Company began building guitars in 1968, its designers employed active circuits within the instrument to selectively boost or filter certain frequencies before the signal got to the amplifier. In a sense, this was a logical step around the problem of adding treble response through an additional pickup, because active electronics merely enhanced what was already there. Stanley Clarke's mid-70s fusionoid Alembic bass pyrotechnics sent ripples of excitement through the bass community, spurring the growth of active electronics.

Active electronics doesn't always live up to its promise. Drawbacks include the surplus weight the circuits and batteries add, and the tendency of fret noise to creep annoyingly into the instrument's sound. Generally, active electronics are as apt to give you things you don't need as things you do. Making a good active electronic bass remains an acquired knack. Fender's initial attempt at an active P-bass, for example, was nice to look at but considerably less enjoyable to listen to. Their Elite basses, by contrast, seem to be the shining stars of the company's new line of instruments. The Elite II in particular is one of the most versatile basses on the market today.

After selling Fender, Leo Fender worked behind the scenes in the early 70s to help develop the Music Man bass, still hotly defended today. Fender's first front-door venture after his non-competition agreement expired was G&L, whose first line of active basses ran a strong second to the Yamaha BB-2000 a while back as a well-rounded P-bass update. Their new active model, the G&L 2000, has lots of bottom and a well-articulated high end. It's a double-pickup job that uses humbucking pickups with huge pole-pieces, reminiscent of the Music Man bass. The plethora of active circuits and controls mixes great sounds with puzzling features—it includes a switch that allows you to change the pickups from humbucking to single-coil (which unfortunately, comes complete with the traditional hum).

Active basses don't have to come

with more knobs and switches than your amp, and there are times when it seems as though some companies are more interested in window-dressing than actual function. A fine bass like Aria's Pro II SB 1000, endowed with a dark, chewy sound, supple neck and six-position tone selector, added a pointlessly flashy accoutrement—a blinking LED by the active switch to let you know that the battery still works. Now if I could just sync that to a drum machine.... Another intriguing alternate approach to active electronics is the idea of boosting both the bass and the treble. Fleishman Instruments has installed that feature on their new Jayne bass, and Paul Reed Smith has done the same for his latest basses.

But these are just the mainstream attempts to refine the idea of the electric bass. Wander off to the side for a while and you'll find all sorts of things, from the now-legendary Steinberger bass to solid-body doublebasses like the Clevinger. Almost a different genus altogether is the 8-string bass, the idea being to add treble punch through a second, sympathetic string alongside each regular string. Hagstrom made the first 8-string nearly twenty years ago, but it was flawed by excessive weight, tuning problems and ridiculous neck thickness. B.C. Rich's 8-string basses, designed in the late 60s by Neal Moser, included reverse tuning for alternate strings. (Fleishman Instruments' Harry Fleishman was another 60s pioneer of reverse tuning). B.C. Rich's 8-string Bich bass, complete with contemporary shape and through-the-body neck, is a modified descendent. Other fine 8-strings include those by Hamer and Kramer.

Other sidetrips occasionally seem more like hardware quirks, as was the case with Gibson's Grabber and its moveable pickup, or Ovation's bass with its built-in equalizer. Still, it's best to refrain from quick judgements. The Ibanez RB-888, which looked like an RB-820 somebody left in the dryer too long, was easily the ugliest bass I've played, but sounded better than basses costing twice as much. Ugly ducklings do occasionally become swans.

And Lord knows what's waiting around the corner. Even as I write, the folks at Philip Kubicki Guitar Research are putting the final touches on their Ex Factor 4 bass. Kubicki and Geoff Richardson began work on their ergonomically designed bass in Santa Barbara nearly eighteen months ago and despite months of public curiosity have only now put their latest refinement on the market. Overall weight, center of balance, body shape, placement of the strap buttons, the length of the rock maple neck and the 55-degree angle of the 80:1 reverse tuning pegs were all

continued on page 82

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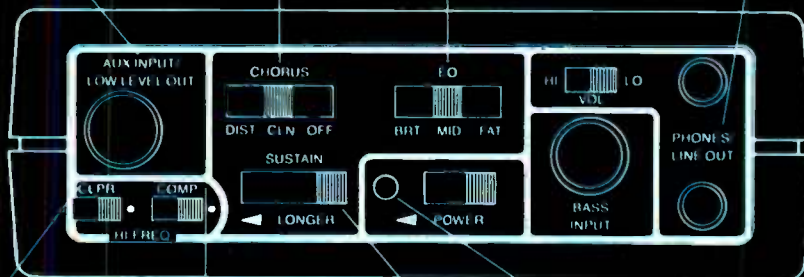
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Scholz Research & Development, Inc., P.O. Box 191, Lincoln Center, MA 01773/(617) 890-5211

SIMMONS' RAPID RISE TO HITVILLE

By David Levine

They're those strange-looking, six-sided drums, and these days they seem to be everywhere. Yes, electronic drums have at last escaped from the toy bins and novelty departments of the music world and advanced into the twentieth century, and drumming may never be the same.

It was British keyboard player and synth tech Dave Simmons' discontent with those gimmicky electronic drums of the 70s that led him to develop his hexagonal drum synthesizer/kit. Introduced to the English in 1979, Simmons drums quickly caught on with new bands like A Flock Of Seagulls, ABC, Spandau Ballet and Culture Club. Veteran drummers Phil Collins, Carl Palmer, Bill Bruford and Stewart Copeland electrified themselves with Simmons not too long after. "Actually, what you should do is make a small list of the people who *haven't* used Simmons," says Simmons tech Rob Davenport with typically dry English humor. The futuristic drum set has fortified such hits as "She Blinded Me With Science," "Maniac," "She Works Hard For The Money," "Rock It," "Karma Chameleon" and "Footloose," while artists from Van Halen to Earth, Wind & Fire to Kenny Rogers(!) have all plugged in the futuristic drum set.

"I'm doing an awful lot of Simmons work and more all the time," says Nashville drummer Larrie Londin (who otherwise bashes Yamahas). Steve Jordan reports that the Simmons scene in New York is "happening" and in L.A. the busiest session drummers were among the first to turn on to Simmons. High-demand Harvey Mason, for example, has done records, TV, films and even jingles with his Simmons kit. His spectacular drumming on the Lalo Schifrin score to Clint Eastwood's recent film, *Sudden Impact*, is one of the best examples of Simmons playing on vinyl.

"Electronic drums are great from the standpoint that they're direct, separate and the quality of recording is quite different than what you can get with acoustic drums," says Mason. "I had been interested in electronic drums for a long time. When I heard about Simmons I tried them and I was completely knocked out. I said, 'I gotta get a set of

these—I don't care what it costs.' Soon most of my calls were on Simmons."

For the studio drummer, electronic drums offer a multitude of advantages. For example, there's no need to send a caseful of snare drums to the date; one Simmons kit can cover it all. As a matter of fact, if you're not sure what drum sound you want, you can bypass the brain, put the electronic impulses on tape, do your other tracks and set the drum sound later. In live situations you can reproduce the sound you got on the record or the sound you got last night just as easily and, of course, the only limit on volume is the size of the amp you hook the stereo or mono outputs into.

Ah, you might say, but most any electronic drum machine has these applications and much more. What makes the Simmons so popular and so revolutionary is that they play like drums, they "tune" like drums and they sound like drums. For the first time the drummer knows more about electronic drums than the rest of the band. For a group of instrumentalists that has justifiable reason to be insecure these days, it's an irresistible allure.

Simmons are set up so that the factors a drummer tunes on his Simmons kit are roughly the same as his conventional set. Instead of a drum key, he has control knobs to select the amount of stick sound or attack (CLICK), pitch (TONE), fall-off or rise in pitch (BEND), resonance and duration (DECAY) and the balance of these factors (BALANCE). He can also add any degree of white noise into the sound (NOISE) and there's a SENSITIVITY adjustment to allow for dynamic playing.

Like their acoustic counterparts Simmons drum sets don't include hardware or cymbals (though hardware is readily available from a number of other drum companies). Simmons does offer the Simmons "lampshade," a plastic, hexagonal (what else?) cymbal that produces metallic cymbal and gong-type effects. Acoustic cymbals are highly recommended for truer cymbal sounds. The Simmons high-hat module's analog sound, however, is more than acceptable and the fact that the high-hat pad doesn't have to be anywhere



Thomas Dolby's Justin Mildreth



Yes' Alan White



The ubiquitous Phil Collins

VINNIE COLAIUTA

A TEXTURAL APPROACH TO CYMBAL PLAYING

Vinnie Colaiuta's endlessly inventive drumming has imparted a special kinetic energy to the music of Frank Zappa, Joni Mitchell and others. The basis for Colaiuta's approach is textural; he connects to the sound sources around him by creating a shifting panorama of unexpected textures from his drums and cymbals.

"I don't think mathematically when I play anymore. You count out what you do initially, but that becomes part of your vocabulary. I'm not just dealing with rhythms, I'm playing *sounds*. I'm a reactive drummer. I listen to other sound sources and respond with my own textures.

"It's really a 'drum set' way of thinking, instead of just hearing rhythms. Especially those bizarre rhythms you hear in your head... I know what sound source they're gonna go to right away. I'll hear different explosions on the cymbal that might fall into a place where no one expects it. I don't think about the rules, just how it's going to sound. I'll play rim shots on the tom toms; it's the way I play."

Playing the cymbals brings Colaiuta's style into even greater relief. Signature techniques like "punctuating" on the bell of the ride cymbal let him maintain the rhythmic pulse while commenting on it.

"It's a real articulate sound that doesn't seem to wash out as much for straight 8 time as playing on the body of the cymbal does. I might play full 8th notes on the body of the cymbal and in

between those notes on the bell. Not even steady ride time, just broken-up things. Sometimes I break them to make them purposely sound jagged. Other times I try to make them sound fluid."

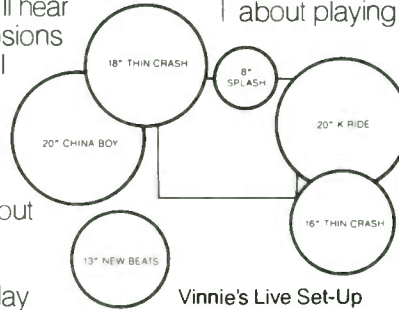
Colaiuta's definite opinions about playing cymbals that feel

exactly right are the reason why he invariably chooses Zildjian.

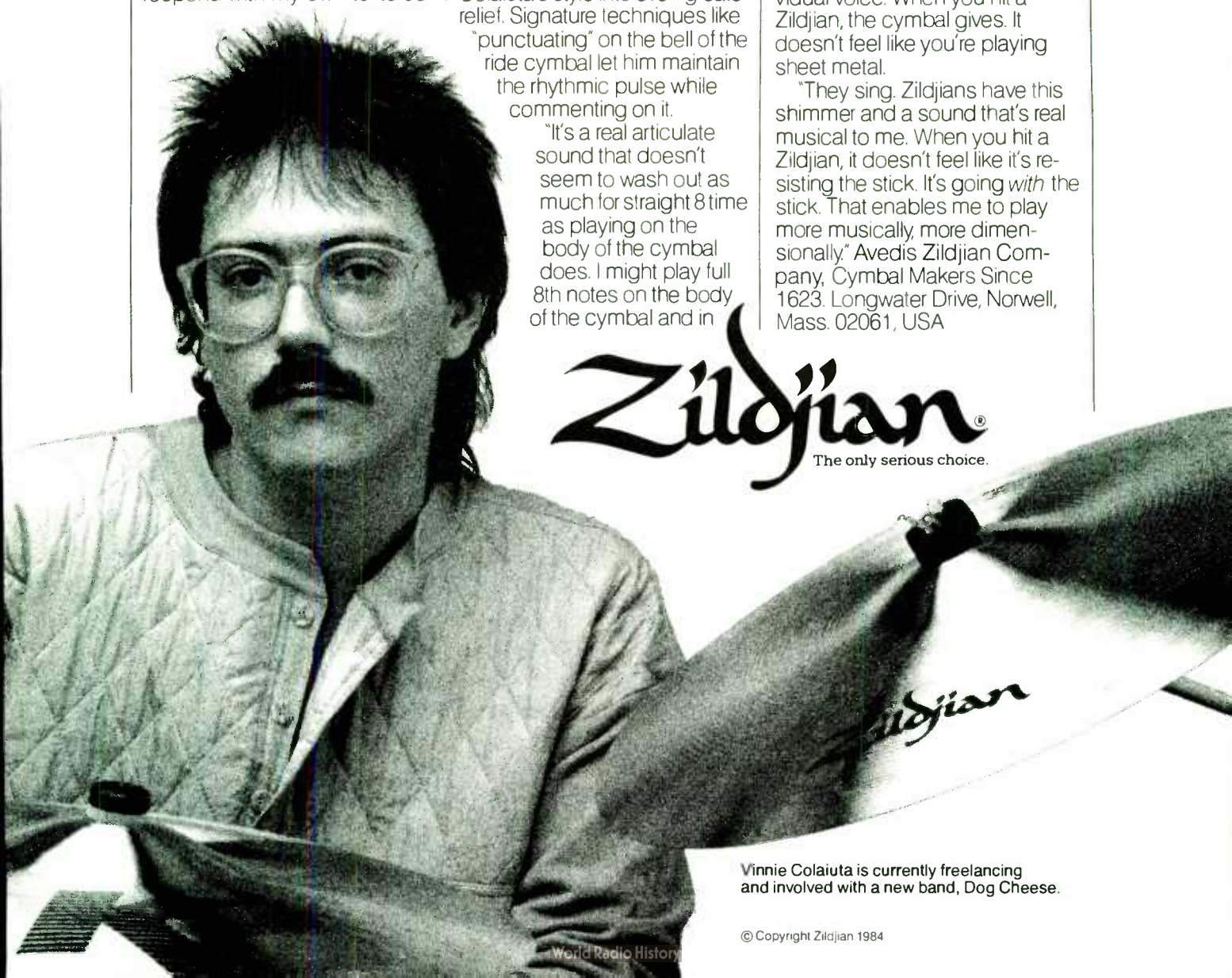
"Zildjian cymbals are real personal to me. They're all consistent to a

point — a Medium Ride is a Medium Ride — but at the same time, each one has its own individual voice. When you hit a Zildjian, the cymbal gives. It doesn't feel like you're playing sheet metal.

"They sing. Zildjians have this shimmer and a sound that's real musical to me. When you hit a Zildjian, it doesn't feel like it's resisting the stick. It's going *with* the stick. That enables me to play more musically, more dimensionally." Avedis Zildjian Company, Cymbal Makers Since 1623. Longwater Drive, Norwell, Mass. 02061, USA



Vinnie's Live Set-Up



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Vinnie Colaiuta is currently freelancing and involved with a new band, Dog Cheese.

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World Radio History

near the high-hat pedal is a definite plus.

The Simmons Drum Synthesizer model 5 (SDS 5) was that first influential Simmons electronic drum kit; it includes five drum pads and a rack with Simmons' analog drum modules for snare, kick and three toms. The modules are specific (i.e. the snare drum module gets only snare drum sounds) but they can be interchanged or replaced and the rack has space for two additional modules. Each module is on a separate channel and each has four pre-sets: factory, user adjustable and two that are user programmable. List price is just under \$3,800.

A newer update is the SDS 7 which lists at about \$4,400. The 7 is the state-of-the-art in electronic drum kits. It has analog *and* digital memories packaged so that the drummer can use sounds from either side or a combination of both. The brain has 100-kit programmability with alphanumeric LED display and a stick-activated selector pad enabling the player to preset up to a hundred different sounding kits and then recall them by striking the pad. The SDS 7 comes with five pads and modules and a rack that has twelve-channel capability. Its drum pads have been improved with a new, sculptured look and rubberized, soft playing surfaces to solve the hard surface "drummer's elbow" complaints

(Simmons promises that rubber pad updates for the SDS 5's will be available for about \$15 each).

Another new kit is the SDS 8. Aimed at a different generation than the 5 or 7, the 8 lists at just over \$1,500 and includes five soft surface pads (snare, kick, three toms) and a non-modular, meaning non-expandable, five-channel rack. The rack has a factory preset and a user adjustable one. "The 8 is for all the drummers out there who want to get into a Simmons kit, but can't afford three or four thousand dollars," says Simmons marketing director Glyn Thomas, adding an additional incentive to potential parental financiers: "People who are afraid of the noise no longer have to worry. Their kid can practice for hours with headphones on and they won't hear a thing."

Does all this mean that acoustic drums are on their way to extinction? "Does a guitarist buy an electric guitar and say, 'I'll never want an acoustic?'" asks Glyn. "No. It's not the end of the acoustic drums by any means." Harvey Mason agrees. "The future of acoustic drums is still promising," he says. "They're irreplaceable. However, like guitars and keyboards, the choice of acoustic or electric will depend on the musical situation."

Missing Persons' drummer Terry Boz-

zio is more bullish: "For me personally, electronic drums will be the way of the future. Electronic percussion in general has only scratched the surface of what could be done. Much more research and development is needed to put them on a par with a PPG or Fairlight."

As players and the industry progress, that development will occur. You can expect major drum companies like Yamaha and Pearl to bring out electronic kits of some type by the end of the year. Linn is said to be working on pad-type triggers for their LinnDrum computer and there's no reason to believe that giant electronics corporations like Roland or others couldn't cruise in for their share of the market at any time.

But, they'll all have to contend with Dave Simmons' tireless commitment to his hexangular invention. "As we speak it's three in the morning in London. Dave's probably just got back from the pub and he's working on the SDS 9," says Glyn Thomas.

Word is that the next Simmons innovation will be a PROM blown sampler with MIDI capability that will allow the drummer to load any sound into the SDS 7's digital memory. That sound could be his acoustic drums, his mother calling him to dinner, or, as the dauntless British at Simmons suggest, "any sound from breaking glass to breaking wind." ☐

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What's New in
Acoustic Drums?

au naturel

Status Cymbal

Paiste is now making their rippled bottom Sound Edge cymbals available through all six of their lines instead of only the top one. When used for high-hat, the rippled edge eliminates the airlock between the two cymbals. The effect is a bright, articulate stick sound when the high hat is closed, a more musical sizzle when slightly opened, and an aggressive cutting accent when opened and closed very fast. Contact Paiste America, 460 Atlas St., Brea, CA

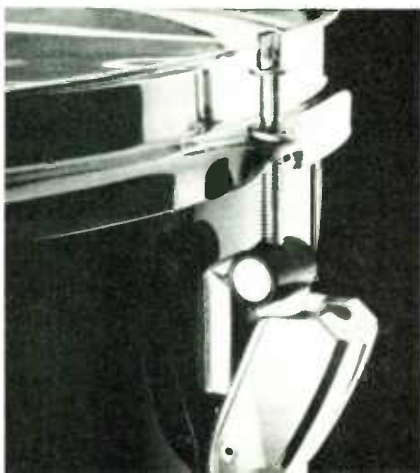


Acoustic Syndrum

Fond of your acoustic drums but want to get more electronic capability out of them? Chicago studio drummer Vince Guttman has devised a rack-mounted interface, the MX1, that takes the impulses from a detonator affixed to the drums (\$25 each) and triggers virtually every major drum computer or keyboard synthesizer. The six-channel model is about a grand, while the two-channel model goes for around \$500. From Marc, 130 N. Second St., Villa Park, IL

Big Lug

Pearl has put a new quick-change lug onto their GLX Super Pro series. Known as the "Super Gripper," it uses a springless design to enable lightening hoop and head R&R; loosen the tension rod only a few turns and the lug snaps open. The receiver nut also has a special EVA plastic tubing to grip the rod and avoid back off on tuned drums. The Super Pro series also boasts other interesting hardware updates. From Pearl International, P.O. Box 111240, Nashville, TN



From Cows to Kevlar

We've come a long way since cowhide skinned drums. One of the most intriguing new drumhead materials is Kevlar, a synthetic from Dupont used in airplane fuselages and bullet-proof vests and now in a new series of heads from **Duraline**. Not only is the material strong enough resist tearing even when a hole is cut in it (the source of Duraline's "hole-in-the-head" campaign), but its clothlike nature eliminates the ring that most mylar heads possess. That's right, less taping for recording and reinforcement. Duraline is also bringing out a new line of Kevlar sticks which last longer than wooden ones, grip better when sweaty and don't warp. Contact Duraline, 11300 Rush St. South, El Monte, CA, 91733 (213) 443-7803.

Color Coordination

Getting bored with standard drum colors? Feel there's some uniquely expressive part of you that isn't reflected in your kit, but can't deal with a second mortgage on your home for a custom paint job? Brighten up. **Tama** is offering custom coloring on all their drum sets: just prepare a pattern with illustrations, abstractions or random outrageousness and they'll transfer it to any Tama drum kit. "I hope this doesn't turn out to be a Pandora's Box," chuckled one Tama pundit. Contact your local Tama dealer for artistic guidance.

The Apple of My Eye

Want to get into digital drums but can't pay the piper? You wouldn't by chance have an Apple II computer around would you? Well, **PVI** has a new interface board and software package that turns an Apple II into a digital drum machine with twenty-eight drum and percussion sounds and a hundred patterns. Fea-

MODERN
RHYTHM

By Jock Baird

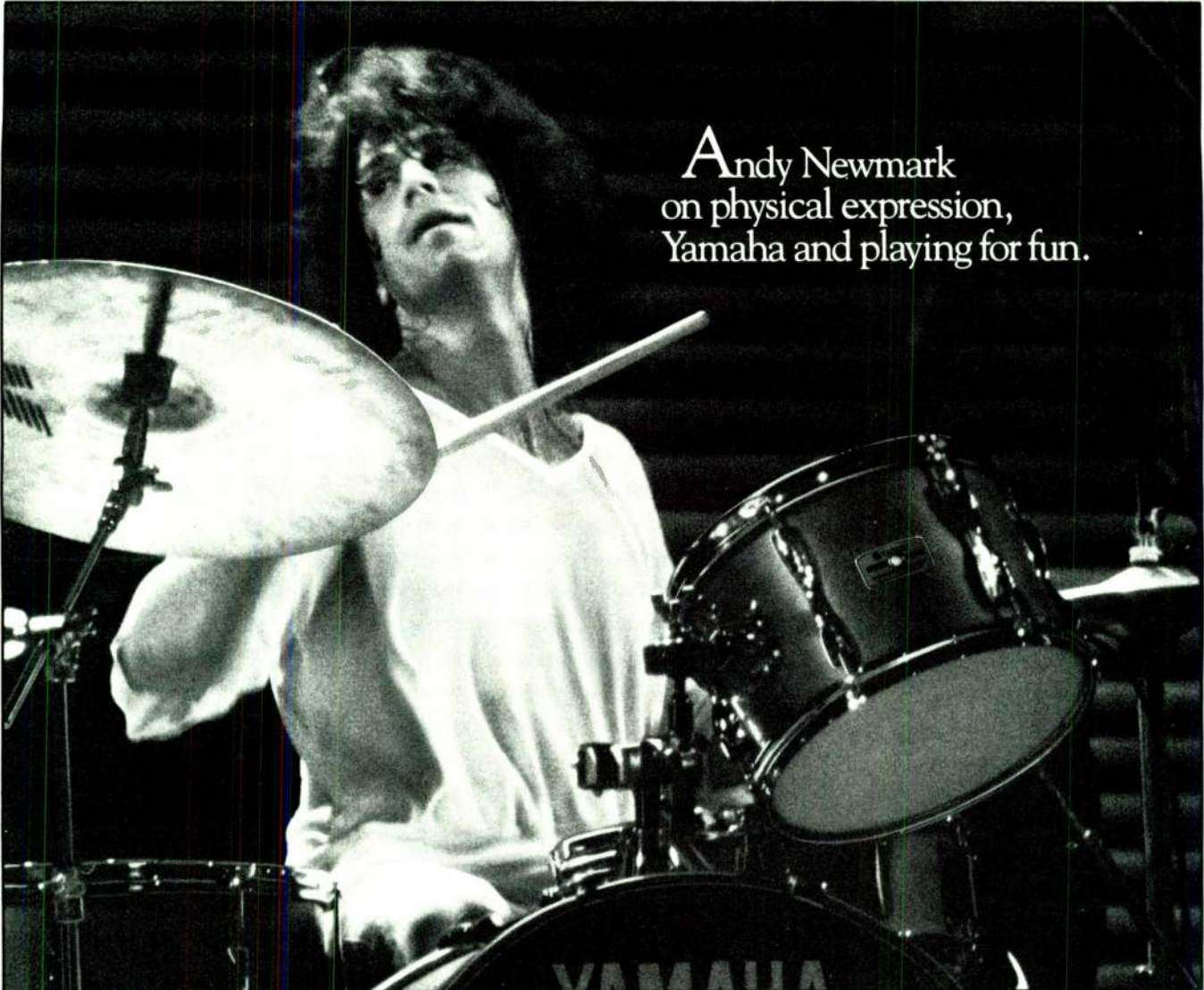
tures include real-time recording, 32-measure pattern lengths, programmable note values up to 64th note triplets, sync out to external synths and drum machines, and high resolution graphic screen displays (including a learning mode for computer idiots). The PVI Drum-Key lists for a mere \$139. Now excuse me while I try to talk *Musician's* all-purpose administrative hit-woman Cindy Amero into giving me some time on her Apple. From PVI, Great Valley Parkway, Malvern, PA 19355 (215) 627-3535. To order, call 800-441-1003.



Clinical Fun

The great thing about consumer education in the musical instrument industry is that it's got another, simpler name: *fun!* The folks at **Zildjian** are fully aware of that, and it made their Zildjian Day event (on May 20, 1984 at the Entermedia Theatre in New York City's East Village) a very special event. The place was jammed with people eager to see a stellar roster of drumming talent get up onstage and play, explain, demonstrate, jam and improvise...with no hard sell, just some of the best and most popular percussionists to be found on the planet: Alex Acuna, Tommy Campbell, Vinnie Colaiuta, Billy Cobham and Steve Gadd. Fortuitously, the retailers are also getting into the act; witness the recent Keyboard Expo sponsored by Sam Ash at the LaGuardia Airport Sheraton Inn, and their upcoming Complete Percussion and Drum Expo at the same site on July 28th and 29th. -**Freff**





Andy Newmark
on physical expression,
Yamaha and playing for fun.

"In general, my whole approach is very physical. It becomes like body language when I play. The sound that comes out seems to be an extension of my personality. I dance on the drums. What I do basically is to try to project an attitude for the length of a song. My 'sound' could be called warm and thick, and my playing is deliberate."

"If I tapped the drums lightly and was very civilized about the situation, it wouldn't have the same sound. And my Yamahas can handle it. They don't choke when you play harder. They take on a quality that hits you physically. These drums have the kind of bottom that cuts through *everything*."

"Even though I use a small kit, there are a lot of textures coming out, and it's from the dynamics. Or from hitting the drums in difference places. With less drums, I get to know each one better."

"Up until Yamaha, all of the drum kits I'd used were like 'six of one or half a dozen of the other.' Frankly, it didn't matter which one I played. The minute I sat down and hit the Yamahas, they

sounded like an EQ'd drum set after it's been mixed for an album. I actually wondered if they'd somehow managed to 'synthesize' my drum sound. Before I owned these drums, I never cared if I took my own kit to a recording session. I have an ally in the studio now."

"I can conduct music like a business, but I never had any delusions that it was just about *that*. I started playing drums because it was fun and that's still why I do it. Forgetting about the phone calls, the diplomacy, the politics—when I'm actually playing the drums, I still get that same childish joy. It's fun."

The reason why Yamaha System Drums meet the demands of many of today's top drummers is because they're "Drummer Designed." For more information and to receive Yamaha's *Drum Lines* newspaper, write to Yamaha Musical Products, Division of Yamaha International Corporation, 3050 Breton Rd. S.E., P.O. Box 7271, Grand Rapids, MI 49510.



into a studio, we try to be a part of what's happenin'. Like, with Dylan, we knew what his music was all about. But even if we didn't, from the moment he starts singin', we just listen carefully and become a part of everyt'ing. Because the riddim comes from a melody and the words. You can know from d'words if it's s'posed t'be a hard or a soft riddim."

That ability to adapt to any situation is very important if a Jamaican musician wants to succeed; "I t'ink it has a lot to do wit' bein' in a road band for so many years," says Robbie. "When you're in a club and the disco stops playin' and everyone is still out dere on de dance floor, de band has to play all diff'rent kinds of music to keep de people out dere. When me and Sly got involved in the production side of de music, we tried

not to let the sound get too monotonous. Dat's what makes me and Sly's riddims so diff'rent; we never play one t'ing.

"Me and Robbie try to incorporate diff'rent beats into reggae, like a jazz beat," adds Sly. "We in Jamaica call it like a 'clap' in church. We make the beat more wide, so you can play anyt'ing to it. It's much more open.

"Whenever de riddim changes, the other producers try to catch up. Me and Robbie are responsible for changing the riddim. We're in a period now where people want good songs, good material. We're comin' out of d'era of the DJ now, where personalities were dominant."

Despite all their global acclaim, though, Sly & Robbie want no part of becoming personalities. Sly: "I would say reggae don' need a figgerhead. It

just need work from each individual to be more established. Why hasn't dat happened? Sometimes Jamaican musicians aren't creative enough in the production...like those who'll only play reggae. Dat is one of de main setbacks. You must play all kinds of music. The reason why Bob Marley got so popular was his music; he wrote good songs."

The stoical Robbie is philosophical when asked about reggae's predominantly white overseas audience. "Color has nothin' to do with people," he insists. "We can all live together. Everyone dead and when you're dead, dere's only bone left and de bone is white. As a musician, I've gone to places where they don't understand a word of English and I'm able to communicate. Dere is no language barrier. Music can bring the most violent people together."

On the other hand, the mild-mannered bassist wants no part of island politics. "The people, dat's one t'ing. But the guv'mint, I don't want to know. I'm just a musician. I just tell dem point-blank, de two don' work together. If you're a banker, you have to stay a banker. You can't expect to be a grower. If you're doin' brainwork, stick to de brainwork. Make some money."

Sitting onstage at the National Arena ten feet from the universe's foremost reggae riddim partners, I find it easy to imagine Sly & Robbie transcending their stations as mere musicians. A good, solid reggae band reflects a working community in its intricate weave of teamwork and overlapping riddims. And there, at the center, providing the fulcrum around which everything functions, are Sly & Robbie, the heart of a music whose pulse is its most distinguishing characteristic. Yes, the head is very important, but in these tenuous times, met'inks a strong soul will prove to be even more valuable. Proud and confident without being egotistical, Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare are ready for the *next* ten years. ☐

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tuned to the human body of the player. The designers even scooped the leading edge of the noise-canceling Bartolini pickups for more accessible thumb-popping. The active electronics boasts seven separate functions, simplified to two stacked concentric pots and a rotary switch. But I'm most excited about the feature that allows two more frets on the bottom string *below* the low E, accessed by a little movable nut extension—now the keys of D and Eb are a whole new ballgame for the bassist. Will the Kubicki Ex Factor 4 be the answer to every bassist's prayers?

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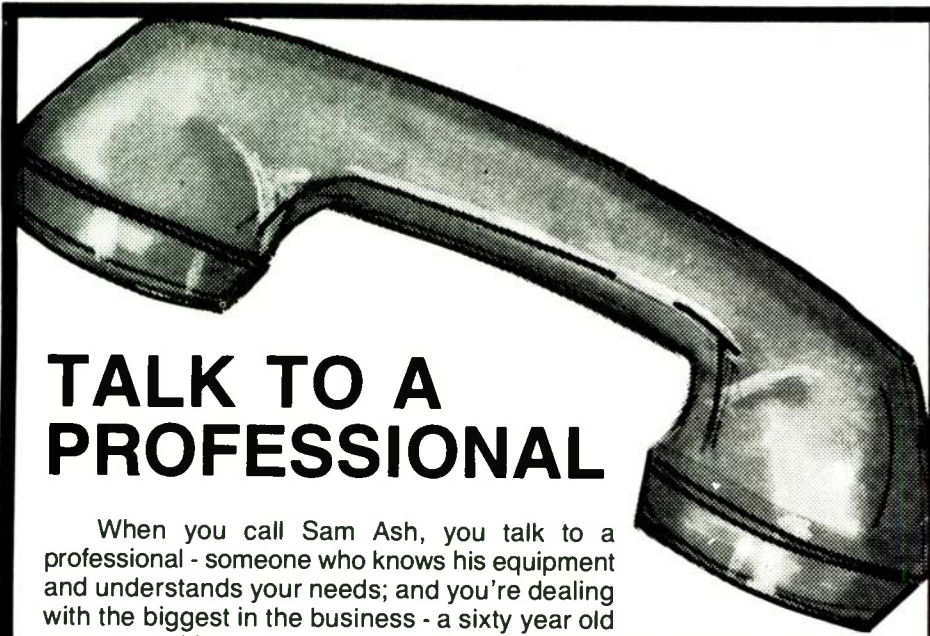
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Rush from page 66

and ultimately controllable by the electronics of the day. But things have progressed to the point where technology had better learn how to handle the natural sound of drums. Anything else is like throwing a blanket inside a grand piano to make it easier to record. For the rest I've always used Avedis Zildjian cymbals, various drumheads depending on the drum and the sound I want to achieve, and ProMark sticks.

Lee: I'm using a Steinberger L2 bass on the current tour, but for recording I also use a Fender Jazz bass and a Rickenbacker. For amplification I've got a Furman Parametric Equalizer, which I actually use as a pre-amp, API 550A equalizers, BGW power amps, and speaker cabinets loaded with 15-inch Electro-Voice speakers. For strings I like the Rotosound satin-finish set that are specially designed for the Steinberger. As for keyboards, my main one this tour is a PPG Wave 2.2—I used that all over the album. I'm also playing a Roland JP-8, an Oberheim OBX-a, a Minimoog, and Moog Taurus pedals. The Oberheim has been specially interfaced so I can run it from the pedals. ☐

Oregon from page 68

Walcott: It seems that practically every time we play in San Francisco at the Great American Music Hall, there's always been at least one set that comes out extraordinarily. Sometimes it's all of the sets. It's a combination of a really wonderful sound man and a wonderful hall and a wonderful audience. When we have all three, the sky's the limit.

Current Equipment

Moore: I use an acoustic bass that was made by Mathias Klotz in 1715. In 1970 I had it rebuilt and revitalized by Paul Toeneges in Los Angeles—he put a new neck on it, steamed the sag out of the top, and made it strong enough for modern steel strings. I use Thomastic strings from Austria, and a special tuning because of the Oregon situation—a low C string, a traditional A and D for the middle strings, and then a high C string on top. I use a Walter Woods amplifier and I have three pickups on the bridge—two Barcus-Berrys, one on each side to get the best stereo spread, and one Don Underwood. I also use two Neumann U-47s in the studio.

Walcott: The only thing that's made in America are the Zildjian cymbals I use, which I got from the drummer who used to play with Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians back in 1965, and a set of high-hat cymbals, also Zildjians. I have a Gon Bops conga drum that has been sawed in half, so that it's actually two tiny congas. The tablas I use are from Bombay, India, and the sitar is from Calcutta. To amplify all this onstage I just use some good old Shure SM57s. ☐

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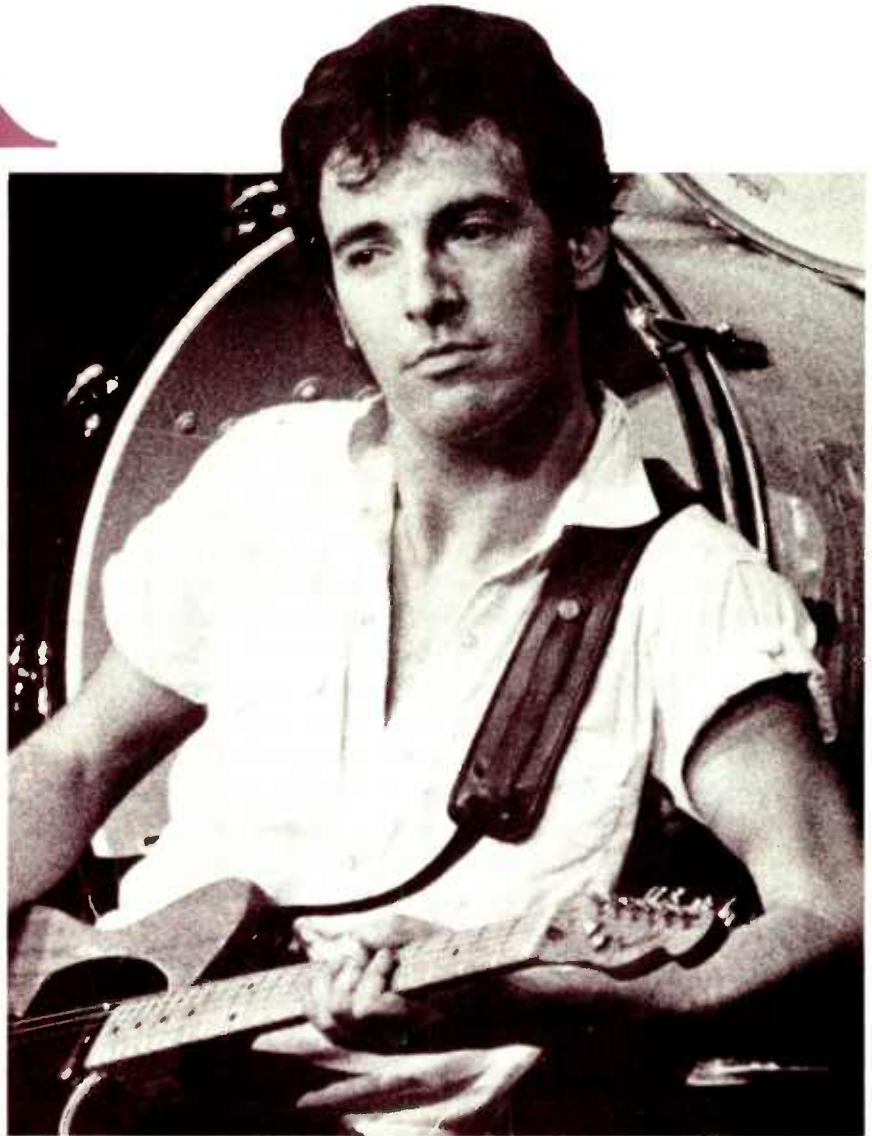
R E C O R D R E V I E W S

Times have changed in America, and times have changed for Springsteen's characters. His new LP is a reconsideration.



BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

Born In The U.S.A.
(Columbia)



CHRIS WALTER/RETNA

The guys who were born to run, pulling out of here to win and itching to get out while they're young have changed. On *Born In The U.S.A.* they're still aching to get out, but they know they never will; conspired against by time and hard times, all they have left is the memories of youthful dreams and glory days. Times have changed in America, times have changed for the characters in Bruce Springsteen's songs, and times have changed in the angry, edgy and often defiantly celebrative sound of the record he's made nearly ten years down the road from *Born To Run*.

In a way, *Born In The U.S.A.* is a record Springsteen had to make, a reconsideration almost demanded after his last two albums. Where, after all, could he take the Springsteen sound after the four sides of *The River* gave him room to let it all out, the roaring party-time rockers and elegiac ballads? Where could he

take the themes after *Nebraska*, which used and reworked the vocabulary of folk music to paint the plainest, most direct and chilling picture imaginable of the slow, grinding societal pressures he's been singing about since *Darkness On The Edge Of Town*? Now, two years after *Nebraska* and four after *The River*, he reiterates some familiar themes, dumps the car songs altogether, throws in a few seemingly personal details to bring it all closer to home and, most crucially, reworks his music from the inside out.

These songs are fashioned from a tough, abrasive sound that drags Max Weinberg's thundering drums center-stage, adds synthesizer and tosses the traditional Springsteen signatures—sax solos, tinkling piano, rousing guitar lines—out the window or into the back seat. When Clarence Clemons plays his sax on this record, it's either in a way

he's never done before—as in the muted, ghostly solo on "Dancing In The Dark"—or as a deliberate cliché to heighten the melodrama in tunes like "Bobby Jean" and "Darlington County."

Not that *Born In The U.S.A.* is a shocking departure: it recalls old outings from "Cadillac Ranch" to "The Ties That Bind"; it's got rockabilly-charged stompers ("Darlington County"); chiming rockers ("Bobby Jean," his soaring, surpassingly sweet benediction for a lost friend); and roaring near-anthems (the bittersweet, supercharged "No Surrender," in which his battered-yet-intact idealism makes a marvelous last-verse appearance). Thematically, it continues the tale he's been recounting since *Darkness*: the story of small-town, working-class folk finding their dreams of escape, release and triumph—the dreams, in short, that fueled "Born To Run"—inexorably ground down by an



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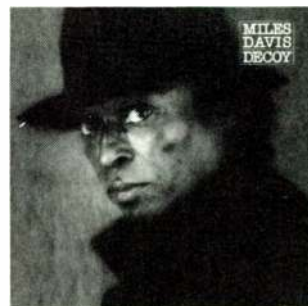
environment that leaves them "like a dog that's been kicked too much/ Till you spend half your life just just covering up."

Less bloody than *Nebraska*—nobody erupts into violence, though the chorus to the magnificently tortured "Dancing In The Dark" hints at sinister undercurrents when its singer uses "this gun's for hire" as a romantic come-on—it's also his most raucous album ever. Fierce rockers like the earthshaking title track and the gritty "Cover Me" (a rock-hard dance-style tune covered, but never released, by Donna Summer) are the obvious standouts, but the slower tunes are equally telling: the masterfully understated "I'm On Fire" is a deceptive, initially lulling ballad with an insistent, itchy synthesizer line that turns into a

spooky confession of carnal anguish; "Downbound Train" echoes the last album's "My Father's House" in its dream of redemption that turns into nothing but an empty house; and in "My Hometown," Springsteen's tales of youthful desire come full circle as the song's thirty-five-year-old narrator (Bruce's age come September) talks of how he still wants to get out, but admits he never will by showing his son the old decaying hometown.

With its hard, exultant music and its hard, desperate lyrics, *Born In The U.S.A.* is both a grim portrait and a strong-willed celebration—a record that suggests, with more regularity than *Nebraska* did, that determination and optimism are sometimes enough to withstand the pressure, that even one

dance in the dark can be enough to relieve the tedium. If it's not a hopeful album, it is an enormously important one for Bruce Springsteen, one that reinvigorates his talent for rocking in the face of hard times and injects new life into a sound that had to change with the times. Yeah, it was worth the wait. — **Steve Pond**



MILES DAVIS

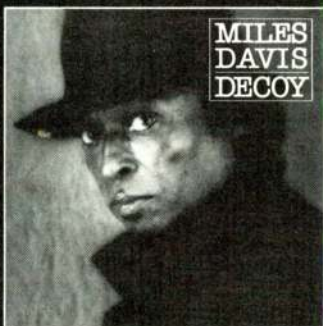
Decoy
(Columbia)

The other night I was feeling so tense and mean that *Agharta* was my only possible mood music—a sinister electric nightmarescape, a well-aimed attempt to kick the world in the balls. Funny how thoroughly I disliked the album when it came out in '76. Although this was before I turned fink and became a critic I remember holding forth on how the ugliness of Miles' temperament had caught up to the beauty of his music. Well, maybe it had, but genius, like murder, will out.

The new album's good, though the world's privates are safe. Consistency's up. With Mike Stern's departure completed, John Scofield's on hand to turn in one brilliant guitar solo after another, so you're not sitting there twiddling your thumbs while waiting for Lazarus to speak, or squeak. Branford Marsalis even turns up playing soprano on two cuts to make the game more interesting — now, if he can only get Miles to guest on *his* next album we'd have something—though Scofield clearly walks off with the honors in the junior soloist division. Miles sounds good throughout.

Here's how the album breaks down. Side one's put together in collaboration with Robert Irving III, and it attempts to be contemporary and slick. "Decoy" leads off, comes off best, a subtle snaky thing with some Weather Report licks, those little repetitions, and good solos all around. Nice little chart, very effective. It's followed by a funny, intriguing fragment; then a synthed-up, Linn-drummed dingus in which Irving III takes leave of Zawinul for some Return To Forever leavings and finally some solos help redeem it; and a trumpetless tableau of wandering Oberheims at the final border of which Miles is heard to rasp: "Got to

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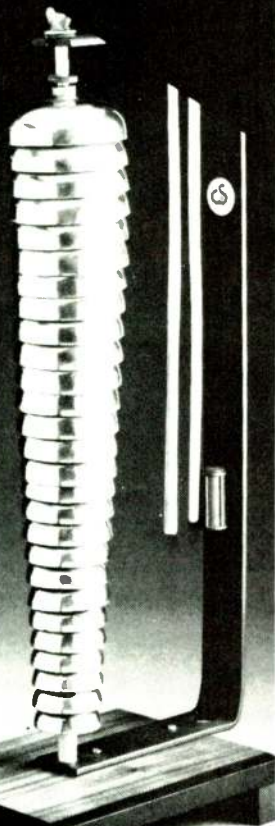
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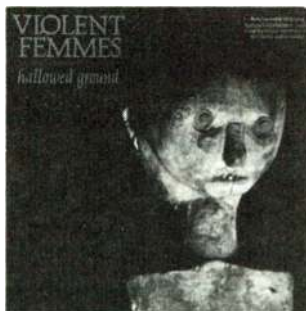
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hear that one." Egad, he's experimenting, having fun.

Side two has the meat and potatoes. The band leaps into "What It Is," reminiscent in its energy at least of *Star People's* opening cut; the solos are good all around, though I kind of wish Miles hadn't dialogued with himself in overdub for his spot. This phases into "That's Right"—I hope you're noticing these titles, folks—a slow 6/8 piece with pastel synthesizer rinses courtesy of Miles and Gil Evans, and though it's not the blues of the last album and there are some awkward moments in the trumpet's lower register, the tune has Miles' most affecting playing on the date and moments, here and there, of that pure grace Miles and Miles alone knows how to find. For which, of course, thanks and amen. Bill Evans also does very well on soprano here. The album goes out with trumpet-and-Oberheim blasts up-tempo—this one's called "That's What Happened." Gee—and then your needle goes flumph just the way it does on records made by lesser mortals.

Good album here, neither earthshaking nor so ineffably beautiful that you gasp and wonder how on earth Miles manages to do that, although "That's Right" comes close. *Decoy* indeed, a piece of vinyl to fling out there while the music laughs up its sleeve and flies away home. My favorite piece of post-resurrection Miles is still "Back Seat Betty" on the live album, that incredible note he uncorks when he takes the mute out of the horn, but the consistency and solidity of this record are encouraging. "A fine album by a promising artist."—**Raff Zabor**



VIOLENT FEMMES

Hallowed Ground
(Slash)

So your first album won the hearts of pimply-faced rock critics from coast to coast with its adolescent snottiness. But it's time to broaden your artistic outlook. After the opposite sex, parents and school, what else can you thumb your nose at?

Hallowed Ground is the Violent Femmes' attempt at career growth. The Milwaukee trio's second album differs

from its debut, but only superficially. A semi-acoustic band to begin with, the all-male Femmes here lean heavily to folk pastiche, punctuating the record with convincing mock-spirituals ("Jesus Walking On The Water," the title cut, "It's Gonna Rain"). "Country Death" is a formulaic minor mode plaint of rural madness, complete with banjo and mandolin. "Sweet Misery Blues" glosses another native style—straw-boater "jazz"—with Mickey Mouse horns.

It doesn't wash. Whatever his intent (pissing on the church? homage to the Great American Traditions?), singer/songwriter Gordon Gano doesn't have the depth to pull it off. His homicidal father on "Country Death" lacks any motivation for the listener. The obnoxious on-the-beat vocal phrasing on "Sweet Misery Blues" is similarly off-putting.

The callow Gano is more convincing as punk than holy-roller hillbilly. The only idol he obviously worships is Lou Reed. "Never Tell" showcases Gano's Reedy quaver/stutter on insignificant violent imagery. The wistful "I Know It's True But I'm Sorry To Say" will strike cognoscenti as a knock-off of the Velvet Underground's "Sunday Morning," down to the celesta fills. "Black Girls" is a pitiable tribute to Reed's "I Wanna Be Black," even if it serves largely to set up a squealing sax battle between guests John Zorn and Peter Dinklage.

Once again the Femmes' novel instrumentation lends most of the interest. Acoustic/electric bassist Brian Ritchie commonly takes the lead, spurred by Victor DeLorenzo's slapping snare drum. The low-decibel output allows the group to play with dynamics, and Gano's infrequent electric-guitar sorties are models of controlled chaos. *Hallowed Ground's* concept (if that's what it is), however, shows Gano still having problems relating to authority. Maybe a stint in the army would help.—**Scott Isler**



ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS

Goodbye Cruel World
(Columbia)

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World Radio History

(printed on the album sleeve). Without such help, Elvis' mumbles, lisps, slides and vocal serrations will be buried. With it, *Goodbye Cruel World* becomes a coherent if dense assemblage of global and sexual politics. Still, if this album were a few degrees more "mature," it would be inaccessible.

When Elvis began tearing into modern manners seven years ago, he used a big beat and snarled his message in often elemental lyrics; even a song like "Watching The Detectives" ripped off skillful metaphors in an angry frenzy. Now his sedulous delivery masks a darker and angrier vision. Costello has become like Cary Grant in *Notorious*, suave and a bit removed while the Nazis and temptresses swirl around him.

"The Only Flame In Town" kicks off

the album with a pealing, anachronistically stylized sax. "He struck a match and it lit up her face," sings Elvis, dolly-ing in, "We should have struck a match girl/ To burn down the whole place."

The love songs do not get sunnier. The disgruntled husband of "Home Truth" feels like a clown as Steve Nieve's piano obligato gives way to whanging guitar; the cryptic events of "Room With No Number" hide under a fast-trotting beat and carnival noises. In "Worthless Thing" Costello figuratively pries open the tomb of the pop demigod whose first name he adopted, and he doesn't like what he finds—a Disgraceland full of "grave robbers from Memphis, Tennessee/ And Las Vegas body snatchers...."

In "Joe Porterhouse," Costello's sing-

ing gives itself over completely to a liquid melody, a passivity that is most appropriate: typically, it's an evocation which stops just short of becoming a vignette. Bare details seem to weave around the death of an iconic prole. Summing up the punctilious bleakness of Costello's vision, the sun that beats down "...is cracking the flags."

The album's closing three songs grow progressively overt in their political content. Amidst the metaphysical riddles of "The Great Unknown," Costello sets this droll onomatopoeic picture of a mob rub-out: "Footprints set in sentimental cement/ Now burden down his bones." "The Deportees Club" is a slum-danceable xenophobic screed which refuses to forgive the sins of Mussolini and Frank Sinatra: "In America the law is a piece of ass." On "Peace In Our Time," Elvis draws a connection between Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan's geopolitical belligerency. "Just another tiny island invaded when he's got the whole world in his hands." Wartime Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain is evoked, newsreel-style—"he waved a piece of paper in the air..." to contrast with a slightly cynical view of Common Market fraternity (e.g., German disco and Italian shoes). Costello does his smoothest crooning of the album here, over acoustic guitars and distant horn fills.

This is not a record made for hits—not what the B.B.C. used to call Light Entertainment. As we suspected from the very start, Costello has found his fecundity, and his ornery power, in dealing with the squandering of love and trust—whether by young lovers or old empires. Though this LP is bristly with subtle invention, he's not making major changes in style. There's no reason the magpie, working this close to the top of his form, has to turn into a chameleon. —Fred Schruers

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PETER WOLF

Lights Out
(EMI America)

Peter Wolf is among the more believable white men who dare to sing the blues not because he necessarily "sounds" black, but for the energy and conviction

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he puts into his encyclopedic knowledge of what "black" sounds like. Listen to "Baby Please Don't Let Me Go" on *Lights Out*, Wolf's debut solo album, and hear how he packs high-pitched do-wop harmonies, sassy houseparty horns, the delightful ping of a celesta (a touch of sepia Spector) and his own hearty bark into a brassy Motown hop. Okay, for someone who used to talk a *blues* streak on Boston radio in hippie FM's glory days, Sugar Hill-style rap should be a breeze. But Wolf's giant step into electro-funk, "Oo-Ee-Diddeley Bop" is a revelation because it cooks so naturally, his unflappable vocals paced by slithering bass synthesizer and disco diesel percussion.

Despite awkward detours like the pratfall funk-up "Mars Needs Women"

and the ill-advised "Gloomy Sunday" (a bleak cabaret ballad with unintentional cartoon "Eleanor Rigby" overtones), *Lights Out* is a logical successor to '82's multi-platinum *Freeze Frame*, probably closer than anything the Wolf-less J. Geils Band is likely to come up with. The title blast, with its funky thump and arena guitar crunch, and "Crazy," its opening Kraftwerk keyboards and saucy syncopation packing a Sly Stone punch, apply a beGeiling punk swagger and top forty horse sense to the R&B forms with a sincerity and panache that dissolves color lines. Wolf's co-producer Michael Jonzun, leader of his own funk jesters the Jonzun Crew, makes a big difference. He pumps serious bottom even into the familiar new wave bop of "I Need You Tonight." More important, he articulates

Wolf's street instincts with a rootsy theatrical flourish, turning the tragic urban shootout "Billy Bigtime" into Talking Heads-meets-*Shaft*, complete with an Adrian Belew police-siren guitar solo over a ferocious boogie mega-mix.

There are plenty of other guest stars here (guitarist Elliott Easton of the Cars, Hall & Oates fretman G.E. Smith, Mick Jagger), more than enough to give *Lights Out* the proper solo superstar credibility. But it hardly needs Jagger's cameo braying on the Geils-like bar-room plaint "Pretty Lady (Tell Me Why)"—in fact, a poor second here to Wolf's own Bronx-born bite—to justify the pre-release buzz. *Lights Out* crackles with the kind of future blues electricity that will power your party for a long time to come.—**David Fricke**

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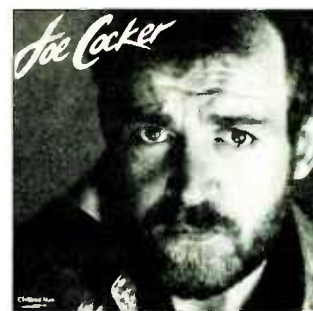
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JOE COCKER

Civilized Man
(Capitol)

TEDDY PENDERGRASS

Love Language
(Elektra)

TINA TURNER

Private Dancer
(Capitol)

Rock and soul have always cherished the emotional electricity of a sublimely broken voice. Whether it's a hoarse howl of longing or a ragged roar of rage, the character of such voices reveals as much or more about a singer than mere words ever could: "Georgia On My Mind" is just another pop song, but when delivered by Ray Charles, it speaks volumes.

Like any other musical vehicle, though, even a truly singular voice cannot stand on its own; context is at least as important. As Joe Cocker demonstrated in the late 60s, the right material and arrangements can elevate a singer to instant stardom. By the same turn, misdirection can sink a career faster than any number of wrong notes.

If anyone should understand that principle, it ought to be Cocker—his is a career that has taken more than its share of wrong turns. Yet on *Civilized Man*, the singer can be found once more

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ambulating down the road to mediocrity. Part of the problem is that the album is divided between two producers: Gary Katz, whose antiseptic production values leaves his mix scurrying after Cocker's vocal blemishes like a nervous maid after a sloppy guest; and Stewart Levine, who appears to have set his sights on such a deep sense of cool that the sessions sound as if they were recorded in an ice house. Between the two, Cocker never stood a chance, and instead of coming across as a master of crumpled dignity, he merely slumps uncomfortably, turning in his performances as if by requirement.

Pendergrass, by contrast, handles the most laid-back material of his career with consummate grace and ease. There's none of the tough, macho gruffness or sanctified shouting that was his Philly International trademark here; instead, it's Teddy the Crooner, and it's impressive to hear just how handily he fits into the role. Pendergrass has always been able to finesse a phrase, but it isn't until you hear him gently pull the leading role out of the choral passages in "Hold Me" that you begin to understand just how much power he can exert without shouting. Some of the record gets a little too sweet, but there are moments of revelation when the singer manages to go from a breathy

sign to a gritty groan without seeming to hype his delivery or the song. That easy understatement is the mark of a true master, and this, the first new material he's cut since his accident, is proof that there's plenty more to come.

Trademarks can become liabilities, after all. Just look at Tina Turner. With her voice, a hotrod holler that makes Rod Stewart's rasp sound like a moped, and her penchant for pedal-to-the-metal performances, it takes a savvy producer to keep her coming up with winners (especially given her history of bad taste in cover versions). Luckily, B.E.F.'s Martyn Ware glommed onto the dynamic of matching her rave-ups against surging synthfunk backing tracks, and the result is her most consistent work since she left Ike. Although there's little profundity here—the best phrasing on the album was copied straight from Al Green—there's enough energy and soul to get her comfortably through material as demanding as "I Can't Stand The Rain." Hardly a major triumph, but easily excuse enough for a handful of good walls.

And that is what we were all hoping for, isn't it?—**J.D. Considine**

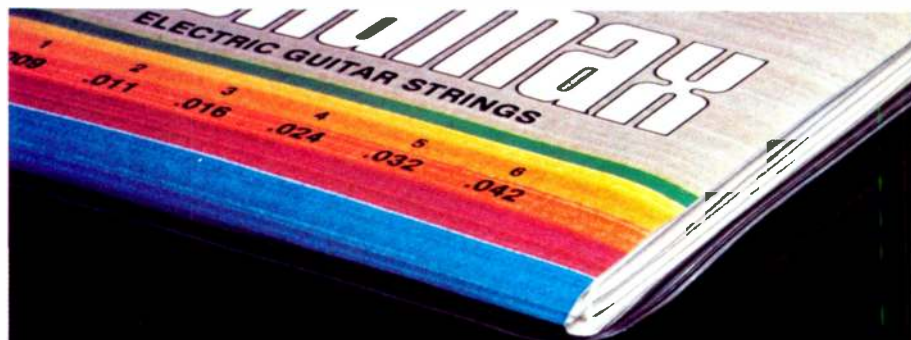
GUITAR POETS & MANIACS

By David Fricke

A guitar is the kind of instrument that can be dangerous in the hands of the right person. Any decent technician with five working fingers and good study habits can dish out curdled Cream, reified Hendrix and imitation Mahavishnu. But it's the poets and the maniacs, testing its limits and your patience, who give this instrument its eloquence and authority.

With his police siren vibrato, crazy talking feedback and leapfrog harmonic thinking, however, **Glenn Phillips** may shoot the whole damn works. Like his four previous all-instrumental solo outings, this Georgia guitar bulldog's new independent release *St. Valentine's Day* (Snow Star Records, 1467 Canoochee Drive, Atlanta, GA 30319) is what punk might sound like if John McLaughlin played it with an AC/DC rhythm section. There is a brooding current of subliminal heavy metal tension even in Phillips' fluid jazz variations on the soft erotic surges of the ballad "Zero Means Forever." With Bill Rea's big articulate bass behind him, and tight, often funky, drums and playful synths egging him on, Phillips also tears up the riff inclines of "Can't Walk Away" like he was on a motorcycle and opens "Maybe" with a Beck-strangling-Berry line. Its melodic good sense heightens the heroic glee.

Henry Kaiser and expatriate Brit **Fred Frith** move in slightly more cerebral circles—the experimental free



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improvisation gang nominally led by Derek Bailey. But they share with Phillips a provocative spirit that enables them on the recent *Who Needs Enemies?* (Metalingua Records, 2639 Russell Street, Berkeley, CA 94705) to improvise, conspire and collide over preset LinnDrum patterns with an unexpectedly penetrating rock 'n' roll thrust. Less abstract than the pair's 1979 collaboration *With Friends Like These* (geddit?), *Enemies* is no less predictable. Kaiser's greasy slide dodges a stuttering LinnDrum in "The Confession" while the two guitarists slip in and out of eerie psychedelic sync in "The Golden Eighties." The exotic compound of Kaiser's rubbery Captain Beefheart-Duane Eddy twang and neo-Oriental

scratch with Frith's nervy reorganization of guitar sounds may be a tough leap forward for novices. But a good listen to their two acoustic blues surprises, "Hard Time Killin' Floor Blues" and "Special Rider Blues," will show how deep their roots go.

The two new ECM releases by Scandinavian fretman **Terje Rypdal** and Yankee whiz **Steve Tibbetts** may seem tame in comparison. With the exception of "Laser," a solo crash-chord and Strat-scream experience that cries out for Mitch Mitchell drums, Rypdal's *Eos* is basically conversations-with-myself as cellist David Darling listens in, groaning poignantly in counterpoint. Still, they are engrossing conversations. Rypdal's mostly synthesized guitar often laps up

against Darling's sad moan like a brisk mountain stream, other times like the central passage of the title track shivering in strange pointillist fury.

Tibbetts' *Safe Journey* (his fourth LP and second for ECM) is anything but. Not so much a guitar record as a kind of ambient *Electric Ladyland*, it liquifies the expressionist pastels of post-Eno art rock with crystalline Oregon-like folk impressions and startling streaks of heavy acid wail. Acoustic passages like "Running" and "My Last Chance" echo with electric churchbell plucking and distant banshee wails. In "Test" and "Vision," Tibbetts erupts into primal Hendrix shrieks over stampeding congas and tabla. In the end, it's still fusion but there is a sobering purity about Tibbetts' alien mix that shakes you up in some wondrous ways.

In English, it means "It's Always The Same Guitar." But *C'est Toujours La Meme Guitare*, the new EP by Atlanta cult figure **Kevin Dunn** (Press Records, 432 Moreland Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30307), doesn't sound that way. Dunn manages to make his instrument vibrate with a brittle pseudo-surf ping, buzz through thick Jell-O distortion and hum like a Martian synth. His sleight-of-pedal, though, isn't half as impressive as the way he incorporates it into pop song forms combining quirky Devo with the bent humor of the "Rock Lobster" crowd. And if you think Dunn can't play, hop along to his mutant take of Bo Diddley's "Mona" with its cutting Frippertronic tone and spacey blues suggestions.

The word "spaced" seems to turn up in any conversation about **George Brigman** and his band **Split**—whenever they occur, that is. A real big deal with a few deep aficionados (his 1975 *Jungle Rot* LP is a collectors' holy grail), Brigman is an acquired taste whose biggest influences are Beefheart and British 70s fuzz-blues band the Groundhogs. As a singer, he's an inspired amateur and some of his songs have an earnest but retro-hippie quality. As a guitarist he is a heady revelation. The title track of his cassette-only release *I Can Hear The Ants Dancing* (Solid, c/o Bona Fide Records, P.O. Box 185, Red Lion, PA 17356) is a wall of molten distortion with tin-can drumming and a kind of alto fuzz melody that keeps threatening to eclipse into feedback. "Blowin' Smoke" comes off like a very earthy Stooges, and the eight-minute instrumental climax "I'd Like To Tie A Knot Around Your Mother's Throat" (hey, it's only a title) is a chaotic jam that defies proper technique in its manic search for the Lost Freakout. The other guitarists here are looking too, reaching into space uncharted even by Hendrix. But it's great to have someone like George Brigman to show us how low we can still go.

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Original Motion Picture Soundtrack — *Breakin'* (Polydor); **Original Motion Picture Soundtrack** — *Beat Street* (Atlantic). As breakdancing turns from sub-cultural artform to media-culture commodity, the likelihood of it turning into the disco craze of the 80s increases geometrically. What that means musically remains to be seen, however, if these two soundtrack albums are any indication. Granted, there are differences: *Breakin'*, the cinematic rush job, is far more mainstream in its musical tastes than *Beat Street*, the big-budget film. Authenticity isn't really the issue, though, because as exhilarating as the state-of-the-art mixes on *Beat Street* are (and both Afrika Bambaataa's "Frantic Situation" and Melle Mel's "Beat Street Breakdown" are hip-hop at its most studio-sharp), they don't really have that much of an edge over conventional throw-downs like *Breakin'*'s "Freakshow On The Dancefloor," in which the Bar-Kays cut the funk the same way they always have. Those with a weakness for class acts will probably be drawn to *Beat Street*; by and large, though, it's an even deal.

INXS — *The Swing* (Atco). Actually, it's not the swing but the funk that carries this album, for INXS have managed to absorb enough of a gritty dance groove into their art-rock song structures to give the likes of "Melting In The Sun" and (especially) "Original Sin" the sort of street smarts "The One Thing" only aspired towards. INXS may not be America's Australian Band of Choice, but give them time—they'll be there soon enough.

Deniece Williams — *Let's Hear It For The Boy* (Columbia). It should come as no more a surprise to find Columbia

constructing an album around the most likeable track from *Footloose* than to learn that none of the other selections on said album measure up to the hit. But it is cheering to discover that none of the other cuts are outright filler, and it's downright heartening to see that Williams herself produced all but two of them. Now if only she can work more of the heartfelt passion that ignites the gospelish "Whiter Than Snow" into her pop songs, then we'll really have reason to hear it for the girl.

Davitt Sigerson — *Falling In Love Again* (Ze/Island). As much as I chafe against the chic upper-class angst so much of the Ze catalog celebrates, Sigerson's eloquent lyrics, shopworn voice and unabashed melodicism make his vignettes of life on (or past) the edge utterly gripping. At times, it's the sheer drama of the narrative, as in the car-crash chorus of "Over And Over," that grab and hold you, but mostly it's the emotional momentum of the details, lyrical and musical, that leave you hooked. In the end, Sigerson makes the listener care about both the singer and the song, and as a result, *Falling In Love Again* is one of the most soulful albums anyone will make in 1984.

LaToya Jackson — *Heart Don't Lie* (Private I). Like brother Jermaine, LaToya Jackson has a light and breathy voice that is at once sexy and coy, and, also like Jermaine, she has an uncanny knack for imbuing a sense of innocence in the most salacious love songs. But unlike *Jermaine Jackson*, which smothers her brother's virtues in studio excess, *Heart Don't Lie* gives LaToya the melodic support and sympathetic production of a good Donna Summer album, making it, if not a victory, then at least something of a triumph.

David Van Tieghem — *These Things Happen* (Warner Bros.). Like Brian Eno, David Van Tieghem has an ear for finding the melody in mere sound. But unlike Eno, Van Tieghem's sonic sphere is distinctly urban, and his soundpieces are so packed with sirens, engine noise and radio clutter that the urban listener is likely to be checking for open windows, to make sure that what's being heard is on the record, not on the street. As ambience, this isn't exactly relaxing, but as music for city life, it's hard to top.

Color Me Gone — *Color Me Gone* (A&M). Forget the greeting-card name and concentrate on the music, because if you have any ear at all for rock verities,

this is an EP that will surely steal your heart away. The songs have a jangly energy to them that recall the Byrdish best of Tom Petty, while singer Marti Jones manages to combine a delivery sweeter than Robin Lane's with a psychic strength redolent of Chrissie Hynde. Can't wait for the album.

The Earons — *Hear On Earth* (Island). Despite the vaguely sci-fi image, the Earons are completely down-to-earth, so much so that their canny combination of hip-hop, reggae and funk manages to seem street-smart without actually having street credentials. Still, songs like "Land Of Hunger" and "Beat 16" articulate a perspective that's far too self-conscious, musically and lyrically, to have emerged from anything less than a distance—and given the impact these songs have, that's nothing to complain about.

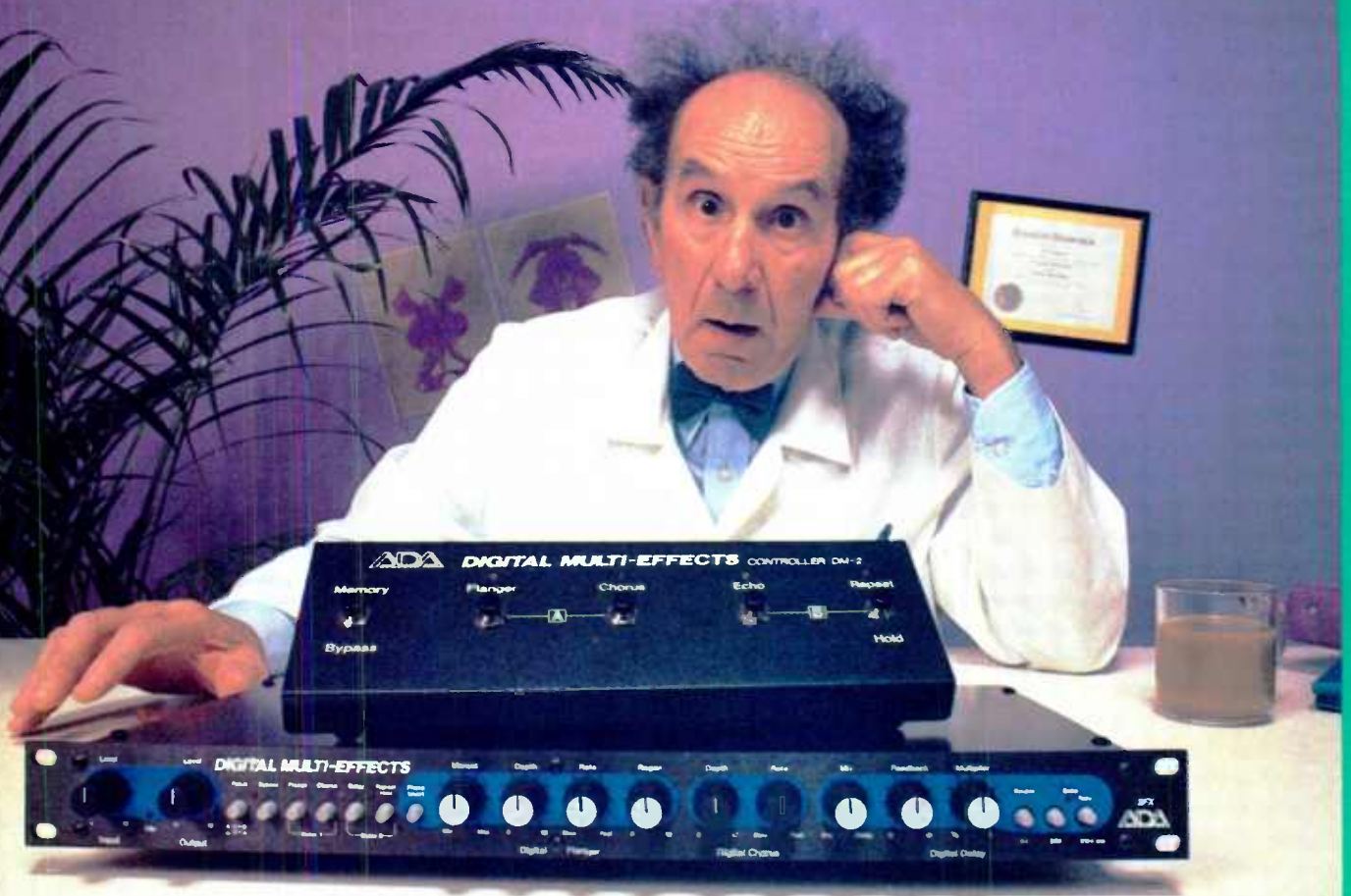
Rubber Rodeo — *Scenic Views* (Mercury). Having cleared away their electronic eccentricities and gotten to the root of their frontier fixation, Rubber Rodeo has become not so much a joke on the conventions of cowboy pop as a reassessment of the urge to roam where no buffalo roam. In other words, these are trail songs for folks whose only lonesome road is the one taking them to and from work every day, and the fact that Rubber Rodeo can pull the ironies out of that cultural crossroads without relying overmuch on spaghetti westernisms suggests that there's much more than scenery to their view.

Echo & the Bunnymen — *Ocean Rain* (Sire). The Bunnymen have always been clever lads, but when they start digging into lyrics like those behind "Thorn Of Crowns," it's not too hard to wish they'd swap their puns for the funny. Yet Ian McCulloch's vocals lend a dour dignity to it all, which, when matched with the post-Mersey twang of Will Sergeant's guitars, turns the Bunnymen at their best into a sort of post-punk, post-graduate Beatles. And at that point, even the wickedest puns take on a certain malevolent charm.

The Call — *Scene Beyond Dreams* (Mercury). Michael Been's declamatory delivery tends to give his words more weight than most lyrics warrant, but these sonic sermonettes more often than not manage a genuine sense of urgency. Too bad Been's music can't match the desperate eloquence of his stories, for if they had, this would be a Call no listener could fail to heed.

J. D. Considine

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JAZZ

S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



World Saxophone Quartet — *Live In Zurich*; **World Bass Violin Ensemble** — *Bassically Yours* (both Black Saint/PolyGram Special Imports). Does *Live In Zurich* successfully translate the delicious visual ironies of a WSQ concert to record? Not by a long shot, and the game attempt to follow the band as it marches in from the wings just comes off sounding poorly recorded, as a matter of fact. By any other measure, *Zurich* is fabulous, though, with five new Hemphill originals that achieve the trademark motion of line and melt of voices, and a whistling rendition of "Steppin'" so rigorous in its counterpoint yet so whimsical in spirit that it makes the earlier version on the justly celebrated album of the same name seem tentative by comparison. Meanwhile, the World Bass Ensemble is yet another instance of like attracting like; and while it's probably as much evidence of the paucity of musical director Brian Smith's harmonic imagination as testimony to the group's empathy that it often seems as though two bassists, not seven, are plucking and bowing, the tawny melodies that emerge here and there promise better things next time out.

Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) — *Autobiography* (Planisphere, from Hat Hut Records, Box 127, West Park, NY 12493); *Live At Sweet Basil, Volume 1* (Ekapa, from New Music Distribution, 500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012); *Ekaya (Home)* (Ekapa/NMDS). A South African pianist who combines indigenous strains with echoes of Monk and Ellington, Baptist and Methodist hymns, West African pancake, even British military bands; and whose rhythms come splashing across the keyboard in

thunderous ostinato waves, Ibrahim is "beyond category," to borrow a pet phrase from one of his earliest admirers (and most regal influences). The live, two-record *Autobiography* is a colorful ninety-minute tapestry, Ibrahim weaving in and out of too many themes for the labels to list (his own, Monk's, Ellington's, Strayhorn's, Eubie Blake's...) without once losing the thread. *Live At Sweet Basil* also finds the pianist in a reflective mood, dueting with Carlos Ward in New York's comfiest jazz room; while the septet album *Ekaya* is more expansive, with saxophonists Ward, Charles Davis and Ricky Ford rafting on Ibrahim's rhythms and proving themselves, to the man, perceptive interpreters of this most orchestral of pianists. You can't go wrong with any of these records, but *Ekaya* is really something special.

Terrence Blanchard & Donald Harrison — *New York Second Line* (George Wein Collection/Concord Jazz). Or New Orleans Second String, at least until these Messengers emerge more fully from the shadow of the Marsalis. Even so, there's much to admire on this debut, not least of all Blanchard's purity of tone and Harrison's beveled McLean-like attack. And Marvin "Smitty" Smith almost walks off with the album; everything you've been hearing about this remarkable young drummer is true.

Michel Petrucciani — *100 Hearts* (George Wein Collection/Concord Jazz). Even the normally cautious Whitney Balliett has evoked the sacred name of Tatum in attempting to convey a sense of this twenty-one-year-old prodigy's harmonic reach. But since Petrucciani is a sucker for diminished chords and tends to trundle rather than swing on up tempos, Keith Jarrett and Oscar Peterson might prove apter comparisons. Still, he is a more than credible blues player (Ornette's "Turnaround"), and his reading of Haden's "Silence" is lucid and powerful. His potential is enormous; I just hope he doesn't start taking the premature raves too seriously.

Paul Bley — *Tears* (Owl/PSI). During his half-decade absence from the recording studio, Bley's style has grown even sparer and more epigrammatic—indeed, the space between phrases is sometimes longer and more suspenseful than the space between bands. But the proof of his artistry is that even these rests seem passionate and lapidary and

rationed. It's great to have him back on record, and maybe now there'll be some reckoning of the profound role he's played in the renaissance of solo piano. **Ran Blake** — *The Portfolio Of Doktor Mabuse* (Owl/PSI). One side of shard-like piano vignettes and one side of orchestral music that's difficult to describe and perhaps not entirely successful but fascinating to contemplate nonetheless, involving (among other things) jazz soloists, quizzical piano dissonances, surreal string writing, the standard "You Stepped Out Of A Dream," a Greek singer, and a theme by Theodorakis, with nothing rounded off or reduced to the lowest common denominator, either.

Gunter Hampel — *Jubilation* (Birth/NMDS). The vibist/bass clarinetist releases two records a year, just like clockwork, all of them boasting the distinctive vocal presence of Jeanne Lee and serene, almost dreamy group textures. The solos (by trumpeter Manfred Schoof, trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff, clarinetist Perry Robinson, alto saxophonist Marion Brown, and the leader) are what give this newest its higher voltage, though those textures (not to mention the inimitable Lee) just seem to become more beguiling all the time.

Marilyn Crispell — *Live In Berlin* (Black Saint/PSI). Another fine effort from an adventurous young pianist and composer whose fierce, coiled solos make you sit up and take notice, and who enjoys a special empathy with tinderbox violinist Billy Bang, German bassist Peter Kowald and cunning drummer John Betsch.

Ray Collins & Autumn — *Magnolia* (Montclair/NMDS). Graceful inside moves (including feints in the direction of Ellington, Shorter and Billy Harper) from a group of West Coast outsiders associated with the band United Front, with solo honors going to the altoist leader, trumpeter George Sams and violinist India Cooke.

Kenny Drew — *And Far Away* (Soul Note/PSI). One reason expatriates like Drew have been able to prosper artistically as well as financially far away from home has been the emergence of talented and confident Europeans like guitarist Phillip Catherine and bassist NHØP, who join with drummer Barry Altschul to pace the pianist beautifully on this immensely enjoyable LP.

Francis Davis

Carmen McRae — *You're Looking At Me* (Concord Jazz); **Carla White & Manny Duran** — *Andruline* (Stash). Singers. It's hardly the goldstrike her tribute to Billie Holiday was twenty years ago, but McRae's warm evocation of the King Cole Trio is still the best thing she's recorded in years, which means it's worth panning for nuggets. White is a newcomer, a pupil of Lennie Tristano and Warne Marsh, whose grasp of lyrics is so sure and sensual (especially on a "Good Morning Heartache" that owes as much to Diana Ross as Billie Holiday) that I wish she'd divest herself of the quaint notion that the only genuine jazz singers are those who scat. The uneven *Andruline* also marks the debut of Duran, a trumpeter with a nice fat tone, and Peter Madsen, a taut and lyrical pianist.

Chick Corea — *Children's Songs* (ECM). Twenty brief piano exercises similar in character to most of Corea's writing over the last decade, which is to say charming in their modesty and crushingly minor when all is said and done.

Bill Evans — *Living In The Crest Of A Wave* (Elektra/Musician). Glossy, air-brushed fusion 'n' funk from the saxophonist who sounded so intriguing on the last few Miles LPs. Must have been the laying on of hands.

Alberta Hunter — *Young Alberta Hunter* (Stash); *Alberta Hunter With Lovie Austin And Her Blues Serenaders* (Riverside/Original Jazz Serenaders). Magical a spell as she cast in the 20s (and still casts, as a matter of fact), it's Hunter's accompanists (Fletcher Henderson, Eubie Blake, Fats Waller, Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet, for starters) who make the Stash compilation well worth seeking out. Conversely, it's Hunter's accompanists (an unintentionally harmolodic band of New Orleans survivors) who drag the 1961 Riverside album down. Still, the Riverside is of historic interest, for it marked the first of Hunter's many comebacks. It's just one of the first ten blues entries in Fantasy's laudable Original Jazz: Classics series, all dating from a period when the folksong movement sparked an interest in what used to be called folk blues and resulted in strained efforts only a purist could love like *Odetta Sings The Blues* and **Willie Dixon & Memphis Silm's** *Willie's Blues*, as well as some whose appeal seems universal and timeless (like **Lightnin' Hopkins' Blues In My Bottle** and **Memphis Silm's All Kinds Of Blues**). The remaining titles in the series are *Blues By Lonnie Johnson*, *Sonny's (Terry) Story*, *Brownie's* (McGhee) *Blues*, *South Side Blues* featuring **Mama Yancy** and **Little Brother Montgomery**, and *Carolina Blues Man* by **Pink Anderson**.

ECM



1/4-25006

PAT METHENY W/CHARLIE HADEN AND BILLY HIGGINS *Rejoicing*

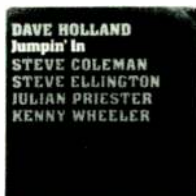
On *Rejoicing*, guitarist Pat Metheny moves into a trio context with bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins for performances of works by Ornette Coleman and Horace Silver, as well as originals by Metheny and Haden. While Metheny's guitar playing is a focal point on the album, all three musicians glow with the joyous interaction that characterizes the best jazz recordings.



1/4-25003

CARLA BLEY *Heavy Heart*

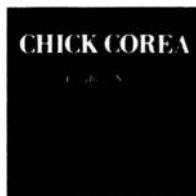
Why has everyone been talking about Carla Bley for so long? With *Heavy Heart*, you'll find out. With Hiram Bullock (guitar), Steve Slagle (saxophones), Gary Valente (trombone), Kenny Kirkland (piano), Steve Swallow (bass), Victor Lewis (drums), Manolo Badrena (percussion), Carla Bley (synthesizers) and more. "She has soul, quirky kinetic drive, wicked funkiness and a broad palette for setting moods." (*People*)



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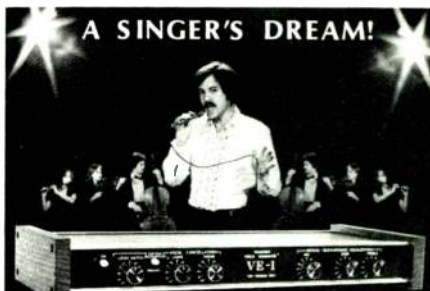
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Crimson from page 34 doing."

But at what cost? In all the rattle and bang of the Crimson creative process, some vital element is being constantly misplaced, and I think it's Robert Fripp's instincts. The hotline to the Court, if you will. Fripp doesn't play on Crimson albums anymore, not really *play*, the way he has on Bowie's albums, or on the Roches' "Hammond Song," when a more playful and adventurous Fripp could come out from behind his fastidious facade. On a Crimson album today he plays a lot like he talks, which in turn has a lot in common with the way Bill drums—in that it is overly intellectualized, certainly—so small wonder there's a Time conflict between them. And small wonder that there's a Space conflict between Fripp and Adrian, what with Fripp locking himself into a self-imposed Iron Mary of arpeggiated cross-rhythms just so that Adrian can have room to soar. (Adrian, by the way, doesn't think it's that way. "I see Robert waiting a lot," he says.)

"I can understand Bill not wanting to be the timekeeper in a band, because I'm not interested in being a rhythm player... which is an entirely honest, worthwhile, interesting role. But it's not one I go for. Now, my response to Bill's not wanting to keep time is that I don't mind him not keeping time for me, because I

can keep my own. What I object to is his *disturbing* my time. It's Tony Levin who is buying a drum machine, programming it, and operating it, because Tony realizes that to me, time is now a vital issue. My personal pulse is being disturbed so often, and so frequently, for so long, that I'm not going to handle it anymore."

It's sad. Just that. Sad because, given Fripp's sensitive personality and the nature of the Court, there can probably be no solution to the problem. As his friends well know, he is simply too much the gentleman. Another guitarist would reach out and fight for some space in the band, but Fripp is constitutionally and fundamentally incapable of resolving the difficulties. Not without cranking the pressure to the certifiable danger point, and he is unlikely to do that. It is easier to withdraw. To separate. To hold the Fripp Animal in one hand, and his consciousness in the other, and to feel the flow of Crimson like a knife placed between them.

Conflicts in Space and Time...and Trust. They prevent him from bringing what *he* is to the band, so that he gives it, instead, only a measured response.

Admittedly, he has reasons for the approach he takes. Tons of them. He has more reasons, and schemata, and situational analogs, than anyone in the band has notes. Which keeps him perfectly happy when he's sitting in a

coffeeshop, but has only secondary relevance to the moment of fire that exists when the line from the Court to the audience is drawn, straight as a rule, through the three disciplines he chooses to isolate—head, hands, and heart—in his thoughts.

Surely this frozen storm, this nuclear struggle, can't go on forever...? "Well, if you put it another way, if you ask me whether I could envisage a future in which all I did was to stay at home in the village where my family go back for three hundred years, with my friends and my family around me, and I didn't tour endlessly with musicians that irritated me, I didn't have to deal with pressures that people normally never have to deal with, I didn't have constant discontinuity as part of my everyday life, I didn't have to do interviews, stand naked up in public all the time, be hit on everywhere I go... could I handle that as a future? The quick answer would be yes. Could I handle it well? The answer is, phenomenally well. Me and a book is a party. Me and a book and a cup of coffee is an orgy."

Until the next time Crimson calls, at least. ☐

Video from page 15

east coast operations for Picture Music International, who was instrumental in signing Cole to a contract.

The use of dialogue in Steve Perry's "Oh Sherrie" is another application of Cole's belief in dialogue creating character. "There were too many visual clichés Perry didn't want to deal with or be a part of," Cole says. "So we took it and turned it around into a broad parody."

"I think we were very fortunate regarding the timing of that idea," Flattery adds. "Videos have been getting out of hand."

Chuck Mitchell, vice president of program production at RCA Video Productions, believes that the future of home video lies in its ability to become as cinematic as possible without relying on movies' traditional linear framework. "Videos don't have to tell stories all the time," he posits, "but even when you can't write out the story you should still know you've been someplace."

At their best, dialogue video clips allow the viewer access to subtle geographies: "extensions of the characters' personalities," according to Cole. In the near future dialogue may have a lot more to say about underpinning the music. ☐

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