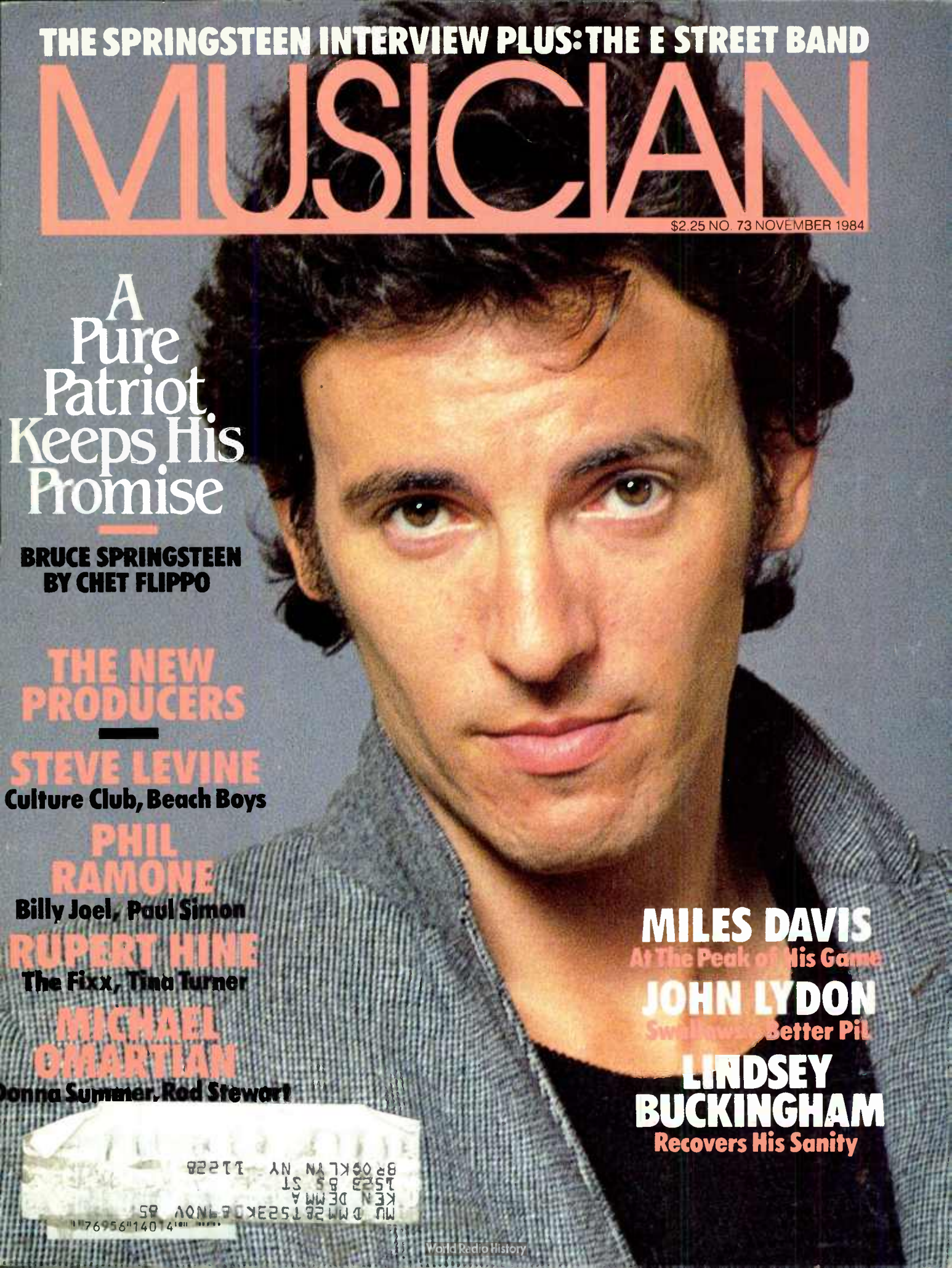
THE SPRINGSTEEN INTERVIEW PLUS: THE E STREET BAND

MUSICIAN

$2.25 NO. 73 NOVEMBER 1984



A Pure Patriot Keeps His Promise

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN BY CHET FLIPPO

THE NEW PRODUCERS

STEVE LEVINE
Culture Club, Beach Boys

PHIL RAMONE
Billy Joel, Paul Simon

RUPERT HINE
The Fixx, Tina Turner

MICHAEL OMARTIAN
Donna Summer, Rod Stewart

MILES DAVIS
At The Peak of His Game

JOHN LYDON
Swindling, Better Pil

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM
Recovers His Sanity

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RK 100

System


POLY 61-M

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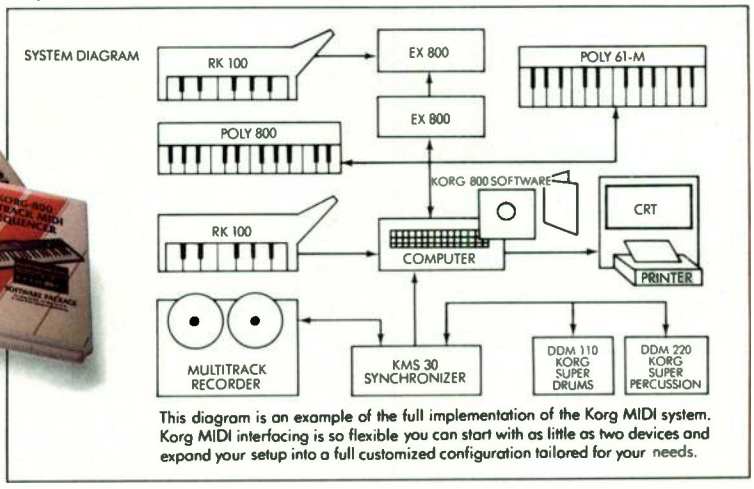

This diagram is an example of the full implementation of the Korg MIDI system. Korg MIDI interfacing is so flexible you can start with as little as two devices and expand your setup into a full customized configuration tailored for your needs.

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MUSICIAN
NOVEMBER 1984


DAVID GAHR

MILES DAVIS

A musical conversation with an epic artist who can't stand still.

By Tom Moon **36**


DEBORAH FEINGOLD

JOHN LYDON

A seasoned troublemaker shares his view of a post Big Bang universe.

By Rafi Zabor **42**

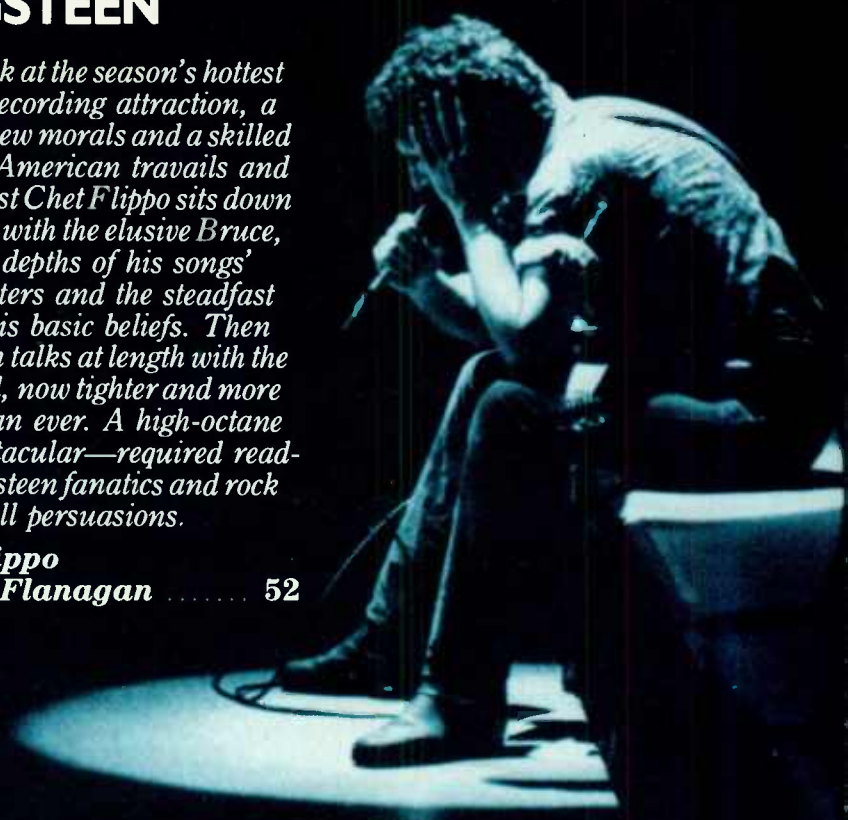
THE NEW PRODUCTION

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY LYNN GOLDSMITH

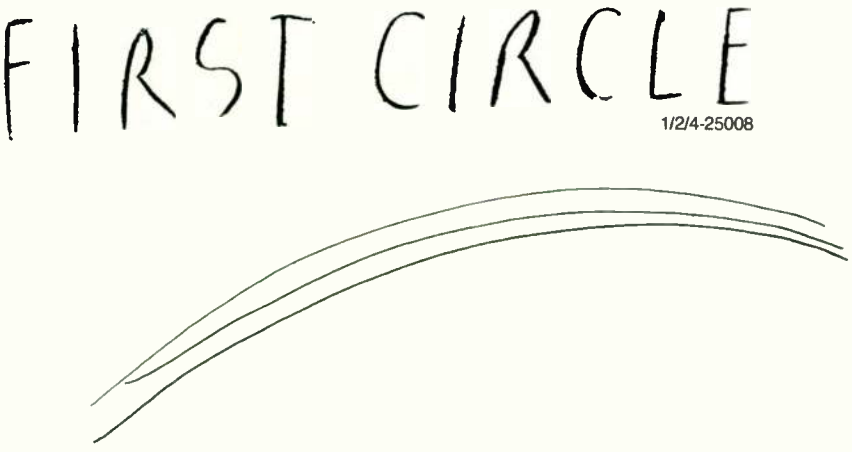
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

A two-part look at the season's hottest concert and recording attraction, a champion of new morals and a skilled chronicler of American travails and triumphs. First Chet Flippo sits down for a rare chat with the elusive Bruce, plumbing the depths of his songs' varied characters and the steadfast structure of his basic beliefs. Then Bill Flanagan talks at length with the E Street Band, now tighter and more committed than ever. A high-octane twin-bill spectacular—required reading for Springsteen fanatics and rock 'n rollers of all persuasions.

By Chet Flippo & Bill Flanagan **52**


LAURA LEVINE

PAT METHENY GROUP



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Letters

WOLF COLD CUT

Kudos to Peter Wolf for always giving credit to his primary blues and R&B influences, but in the heat of the moment, memory sometimes fails us. "Sno Cone" (recorded by the J. Geils Band on their debut LP) was originally written by Texas bluesman Albert Collins, *not* John Lee Hooker as Wolf stated. It was just one of a string of Collins cold-cuts with titles like "The Freeze," "Frosty" and "Ice Pickin.'"

Andy Schwartz
New York City, NY

KING QUADROLOGUE

I cannot express how much I enjoyed the unique quadrologue on King Crimson. It showed that everything is not smooth sailing, but no great band can claim uniform harmony and equanimity (thank God!). Belew is Fripp's polar counterpart while Bruford and Levin continually extend their instrument's boundaries. King Crimson does something no other band does—they *sound* different.

Layton M. Payne
Houston, TX

When was the last time Robert was *happy* in King Crimson? If someone could show me some documentation of *any* time I'd be really impressed. Also, King Crimson has *always* been better live. The records are just the Court's trick to get you to come see a live show.

Gordon A. Van Huizen
San Diego, CA

Oh my God! Conflicts in time. Conflicts in space! Mr. Fripp is frustrated because everyone's walking the rhythmic floor he builds just for that purpose. Well, Mr. Fripp, you can learn a great deal from Mr. Freff's very enticing article.

Patience is a virtue Mr. Fripp. The band's sound has really meshed since *Discipline*. So relax, you're not experiencing frustration, just growing pains.

John Magill III
Audubon, NJ

The Crimson article by Freff really laid bare the psycho-dynamics of that group. After all, any band's music comes from the individual personalities and how they express themselves together. Very illuminating. .

After reading July's feature on Rubber Rodeo, I was disappointed to see J.D. Considine's Rock Short Take. J.D., *you're* the one with a "frontier fixation." Skip the buffalo chips and just tell us what you think.

Dave Lenef
Chicago, IL

GA-GA'S

Sure they're cutebubblybouncy, but the Go-Go's also one of the most exciting pop groups performing today. Thanks to Mark Rowland and Margy Rochlin for an intelligently written article on one of America's most underrated rock 'n' roll bands. Great photos, too!

Montford Coon, Jr.
Mentor, OH

I have enjoyed the Go-Go's and their music ever since *Beauty And The Beat*, and I am still an avid fan. It's encouraging to read about a band that doesn't give up because of seemingly insurmountable problems. The Go-Go's have endured for a good reason—they truly care about what they're doing. Here's hoping that Gina Schock and the rest of the Go-Go's are around for many years to come.

Pam Soule
Cazenovia, NY

A standing ovation goes out to Mark Rowland and Margy Rochlin for their outstanding journalistic skills. Not only are the Go-Go's fun to watch live, but you have to listen to their album *Talk Show* to really appreciate their serious music. Maybe next time they'll be put on the cover.

Patti Raiman
Chicago, IL

NO

I don't know what Yes concert Freff was at, but I also attended the Garden shows and they were terrific. If anything, the crowd responded to the old stuff better than the new stuff.

Michael Feinman
Lido Beach, NY

I thought Bugs Bunny was great.

Marie Cox
Milford, CT

I really enjoyed the August issue of *Musician*. All my favorites—Rush, Yes, King Crimson and Zappa—were included. But I have to disagree with Freff about Yes. I don't know how it was in New York, but in Dallas the old songs were great. Nonetheless, I must congratulate Freff on his interesting and informative interview with King Crimson. Nice job in August, gang.

Ben Bocardo
Plano, TX

FUR FLIES

While I applaud your championing of the Psychedelic Furs over the past few years, their fashionableness illustrates the old axiom—if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. I suppose Richard Butler came to the conclusion that his powerful, questioning approach to rock 'n' roll wasn't making inroads into the pop mainstream. Hence the laid-back blandness of *Mirror Moves*.

Thanks anyway for the update. One bad record does not a reputation make, considering the quality of their previous product.

Gary Kimber
Downsview, ONT

NO RESISTING BY QUARTET

While it's always nice to see NRBQ mentioned, Bill Flanagan's statement (in the Peter Wolf interview) that they "resist stardom" is the kind of attitude that probably hurts the band more than anything. With ten albums, songs like "Me And The Boys" and years of hard work and intensive touring, I don't know how anyone could think that. A resistance to being forced into the same formatted existence as everyone else is more like it—something I thought *Musician* would be the first to recognize.

Michael Stein

SHORT RESPONSE

Are you saying that a band can't be poetic or subtle without being R.E.M. or the Furs?

A band which has such a quickly growing audience in the States and virtual cult status in Britain, namely Echo & the Bunnymen, merits more attention than a blurb on page 100.

David Snow
North Hollywood, CA

BASS RESPONSE

In the article on basses in your August issue, J.D. Considine makes reference to "Chris Squire's treble roar leading the way" in the development of high end bass sound. J.D., have you not heard of an Englishman by the name of John Entwistle? Yipes!

Armando Davis
New Preston, CT

EVERY MAN HAS A WOMAN

IN THE MANY CENTURIES I MAY HAVE LIVED OR MAY LIVE YOU ARE THE ONLY SOUL THAT HAD SO MUCH FAITH IN ME. THANK YOU, JOHN– Y.O.

AN ALL-STAR ASSEMBLAGE OF TALENT GATHERED TOGETHER.

Each of these artists has placed their signature on a truly memorable work of art. "Every Man Has A Woman," a birthday tribute honoring the words and music of Yoko Ono. Featuring all new previously unreleased recordings by Elvis Costello, Eddie Money, Harry Nilsson, Rosanne Cash, Roberta Flack, Trio, Spirit Choir, Alternating Boxes, Sean Ono Lennon and John Lennon.

"Every Man Has A Woman," a celebration in song. Featuring the first single, "Loneliness," by Harry Nilsson.

MUSIC INDUSTRY NEWS

SCOTT ISLER

NEW MUSIC STEPS OUT

What do three days at the New York Hilton have to do with "new music"? Plenty, if you were there August 6–8 for the fifth New Music Seminar. From humble beginnings in 1980 the Seminar has grown to the point where it resembles what it presumably was established to attack. This year participants faced an overwhelming smorgasbord of over thirty panel discussions (held four at a time), DJ and break dance exhibitions, and concerts showcasing **Difford & Tilbrook**, **Black Flag**, **Run DMC** and **General Public**, among many others.

"I don't think it's a matter of selling out," protests Seminar co-sponsor **Mark Josephson**. "The music we've espoused from the beginning has become something the mainstream is interested in."

And how. Josephson claims an attendance of 3,600. The Seminar's "presidents panel" included the heads of Geffen, Warner Bros. and RCA; the artists panel included **Daryl Hall**, **James Brown** and **George Clinton**. More importantly, the Seminar featured exhibition space for some fifty music-related businesses. This served Josephson's main rationale for the event: "An opportunity for people in a specialized part of the business to get together and talk."

"'New music' is not a generic distinction," Josephson says, but "rather a distinction of attitude." That said, the New Music Seminar should continue to grow in size and importance as the latest wave of musicians and professional workers find their places in the industry.

BLACK DAYS FOR R&B

It was a sad summer for R&B music: within thirty days, heart attacks claimed four noted singers. On July 13 former Spinners lead singer **Philippe Wynne** collapsed onstage at an Oakland, California nightclub. His solo career never caught fire, but during his five-year stint with the Spinners in the 1970s the Cincinnati-born Wynne racked up six million-selling singles and five gold albums. His down-home vocals, as much as Thom Bell's production, contributed to the Spinners' success. Wynne was forty-three.

Although she was only five years older than Wynne, **Esther Phillips** spanned two generations of pop history. As teenaged Little Esther she had a number one R&B hit ("Double Crossing Blues") and two other top ten R&B tunes in the early 50s. Ten years later she scored a top ten pop hit ("Release Me"), and over a dozen years after that a respectably big disco crossover hit ("What A Difference A Day Makes" in 1975). She died August 7 while hospitalized in Torrance, California. **Etta James**, **Gloria Lynne** and **Linda Hopkins** sang at her funeral, conducted by the Reverend **Johnny Otis**.

Percy Mayfield topped the R&B charts with the classic "Please Send Me Someone To Love" in 1950. The soft-voiced ballad and blues singer was also a sophisticated songwriter; besides the above hit he penned the existential "The River's Invitation" and Ray Charles' teleological "Hit The Road, Jack," among many others. Mayfield, sixty-three, died August 11 in Los Angeles.

Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton was more a blues than pop or R&B figure. Her sole R&B hit, however–the chart-topping "Hound Dog" in 1953–obviously influenced a tender Elvis Presley. She also wrote "Ball And Chain," a show-stopper for the late Janis Joplin. Thornton, fifty-seven, joined Joplin July 25 in Los Angeles.

PIRATES ATTACK JACKSONS; "VICTORY" AT SEA

It had to happen: a bootleg concert video cassette. And who better to receive this dubious honor than the **Jacksons**? Their tour this year not only rivals the IRS in its ability to generate massive income, but provides just as big a temptation to cheat.

Handbills given out at the Jackson's August 5 show in New York promised "the most exciting offer ever!": a Beta or VHS tape of the group's "first Kansas City performance." The flyer listed only a Mt. Vernon, New York phone number and discreetly mentioned "two weeks only." Tapes were hand delivered for $65 each, cash only.

The video apparently comes from the closed-circuit projection the Jacksons are using on their tour. In Kansas City, unlike the other locations, the Jacksons used the venue's video system, and not their own. The tape–of almost an entire Jacksons set–is hardly state-of-the-art in picture quality, but decent enough for a bootleg copy. There are no credits.

On August 14 the FBI arrested Dewitt Gilmore, nineteen, of Mt. Vernon after he allegedly took money from FBI agents for copies of the Jacksons tape. The source of the program remains at large. Look out!

NEW HOPE FOR THE FORCES OF GOOD

Every once in a while the record industry, ever sensitive to the atrocity of home taping, burbles with talk of a tape "spoiler"–some device that would render taping of records impossible and ensure record company executives a good night's sleep. Current technology centers around a signal encoded into a record that would prevent recording.

Now a German scientist, Dr. **Helmut von Quatschkopf**, has come up with an elegantly simple solution. Von Quatschkopf proposes that tape recorders be built with erase heads placed after as well as before record/playback heads. If hardware manufacturers are reluctant to alter their machines to make them piracy-proof, von Quatschkopf offers an alternative: surround the residences of known home tapers with powerful electromagnets that can blank out tapes (and, if they're wearing pacemakers, the home tapers themselves).

The Recording Industry Association of America is said to be "considering" the ideas.

Science, it's wonderful: CBS Records has released *Momentum I; The Running Tape*, a sixty-minute cassette of music designed for jogging. **C. Bryan Rulon**'s composition for happy feet hovers around eighty beats a minute to sync up with a corresponding pulse rate among joggers. There is no truth to the vicious rumor that MCA Records shelved a similar project with one of their bands after the death of jogging popularizer **James Fixx**.

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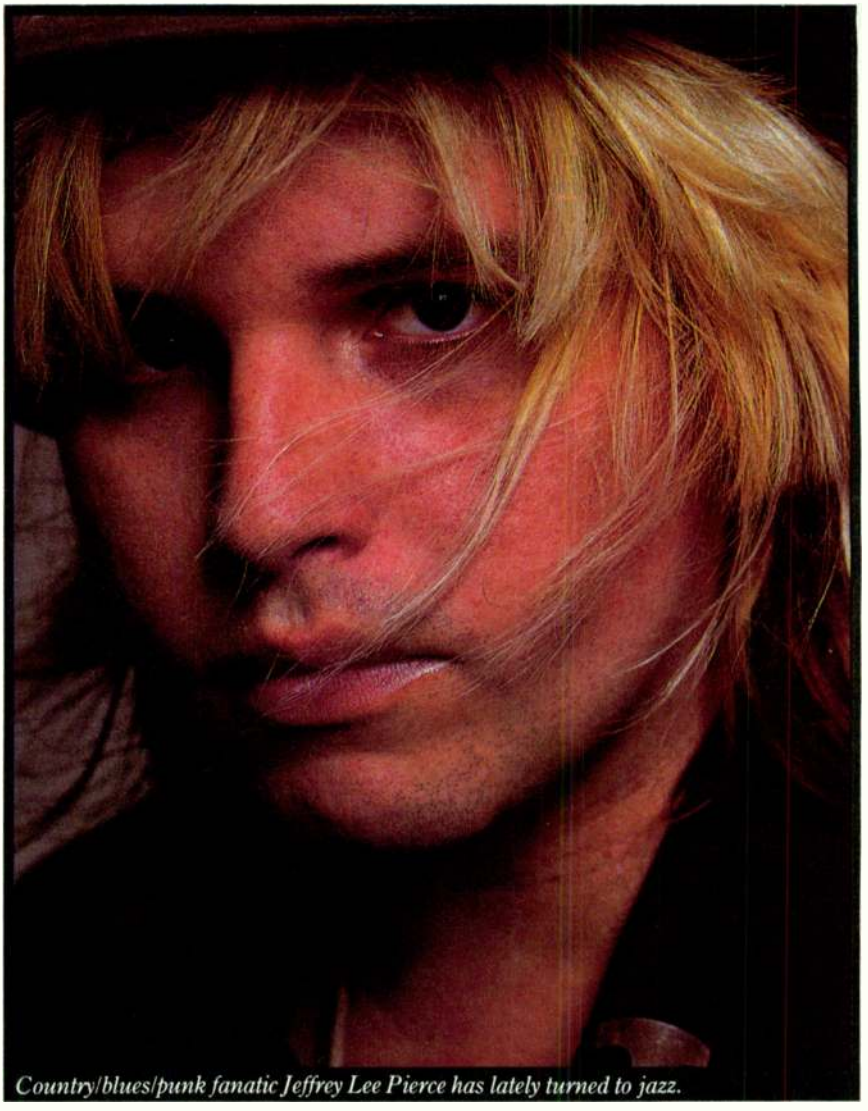
GUN CLUB

CHRIS MORRIS

THEIR AIM MAY NOT ALWAYS BE TRUE, BUT TALK ABOUT FIRE POWER....



Country/blues/punk fanatic Jeffrey Lee Pierce has lately turned to jazz.

HOWARD ROSENBERG

Jeffrey Lee Pierce, the moon-faced lead singer and guiding intelligence of the Gun Club, is leaning on a small table in the bar of a Mexican restaurant in West Hollywood. His fourth or fifth gin and tonic sits in front of him. He is discoursing on his favorite subject: himself. He recalls a gig in San Francisco.

"Boz Scaggs was there," he says. "He comes backstage and tells me I have a really good voice, but I'm ruining it. I go, 'What else is new?'" Pierce laughs his breathy, high-pitched laugh. "'I seem to be ruining everything else here, Boz. My liver is gone. My girlfriend skated on me. I have no money, and I just got back from Amsterdam. God knows what else I haven't ruined here.'"

This is a familiar Pierce riff—an act of confession to counterbalance the braggadoccio of his public routines. Jeff Pierce, Rock Star, constantly co-exists with Jeff Pierce, Fuck-Up; this contrast explains in large measure the Gun Club's controversial reputation in Los Angeles, and why Pierce remains at once irritating and charming.

The Gun Club (originally dubbed the Creeping Ritual) began nearly five years ago as a vessel for the personal fixations of Pierce, then best known as "Ranking Jeffrey Lee," a staff writer for the pre-eminent L.A. punk rock journal *Slash*. At the time, Pierce was enraptured by the country blues records of the 20s and 30s; the band's repertoire featured souped-up renditions of Tommy Johnson's "Cool Drink Of Water Blues" and Son House and Robert Johnson's "Preachin' Blues," as well as rip-and-run originals like "Sex Beat," "Ghost On The Highway" and "Black Train" which recast the dark spirit of the blues in modern dress. Fronting a trio that played with powerful simplicity, Pierce turned in a series of manic, sometimes bratty and slobbering performances that quickly won him a rep as one of L.A.'s premier punk *enfants terribles*. (These early shows have been recently documented on the unauthorized English import *The Birth, The Death, The Ghost*.)

Two LP's followed: 1981's *Fire Of Love*, on Slash Records' Ruby subsidiary, which showcased the feral imagination in the Gun Club's blues-punk fusion, and 1982's far less satisfying *Miami*, a murky, self-indulgent affair produced by Pierce's long-time pal, Blondie's Chris Stein (with guest vocals by Debby Harry, under the guise of "D.H. Lawrence"). By 1983, the group showed signs of splintering: the import-only EP *Death Party* featured none of the original band members. Pierce himself seemed content with a healthy cult status in France and semi-permanent residence in New York.

Apparently tired of self-exile, Pierce returned to Los Angeles to record his new album, *The Las Vegas Story*, with his current group–Kid Congo Powers, who returned to the fold after a stint with the Cramps, and bassist Patricia Morrison and drummer Terry Graham (both from the early L.A. punk group the Bags).

"New York was driving me insane," Pierce confides. "A lot of bad experiences were happening with women and dope, so I had to get out of there, and I've been able to come here and dry out and do this record and write."

In the lengthy interim since Pierce last resided in L.A., his thoughts about so-called "roots music" have altered considerably. "One thing I'm really starting to hate is American music," he says sincerely. "Not that I like English music—I've hated that much longer. But I've

started to like music that has nothing to do with the First World or the West." Strange sentiments from the man who once thought Skip James was God.

"The only American music I like right now is jazz," Pierce continues. It shows: *The Las Vegas Story* includes a short version of Pharoah Sanders' "The Creator Has A Master Plan," with the horn line played on guitar by Pierce, and the group's live show sometimes climaxes with John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme."

"It's just thrilling," Pierce says, his eyes lighting up. "The overall feel of jazz is more encompassing of every emotion. Take good records and compare them to each other–like Charlie Patton's 'Mississippi Boll Weevil Blues' and Hank Williams' 'Lost Highway' and Charlie Parker's 'A Night In Tunisia' and Coltrane's 'Afro Blue.' They're all very direct records, they make you listen to them. But country and blues don't really get out of their environment. In 'Afro Blue,' Coltrane could conceive of everything."

This new fixation with jazz, and a year of fairly heavy touring in Europe, has resulted in a new and unexpected discipline for Pierce, whose past stage and studio demeanor has ranged from the sloppy to the deranged. He is calmer now in live performance, and on record takes apparent delight in his Tom Verlaine-like guitar playing.

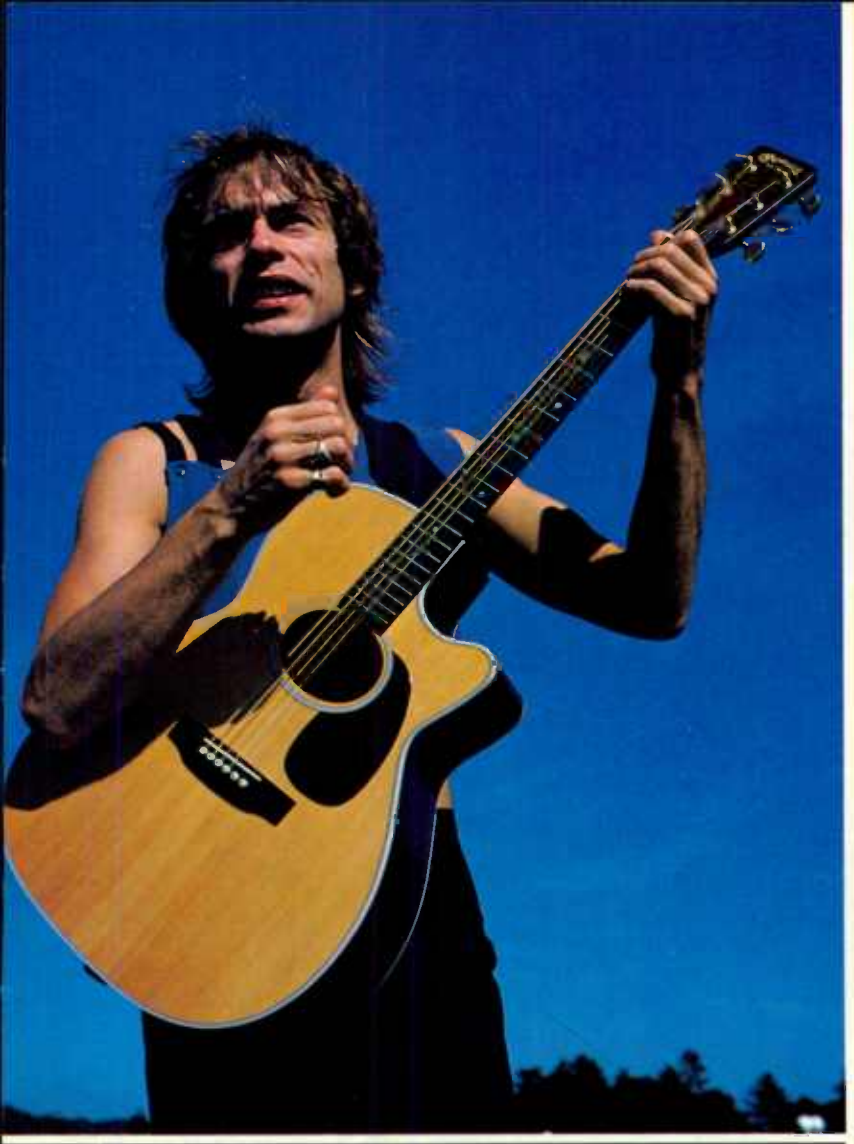
"I couldn't play any of that a year ago," Pierce says, waxing autobiographical again. "I got locked up at the George Washington Hotel at 23rd and Lexington in Manhattan with this woman. Because of our inability to communicate with each other, I got really weird and decided to just sit around and play guitar endlessly, endlessly, endlessly, until I literally drove her nuts."

Despite this newly-acquired (and fairly formidable) technique and the relative cool of his recent shows, Pierce shows few signs of mellowing. Asked if he's more serious now, he replies, "Hell, no. Much less."

I note that the band is less undisciplined now. Pierce ponders this for a moment. "I think that I'm less conscious now of, like, the *outside*. You know," he adds, launching into the terminology of his buddy and literary mentor William Burroughs, "people I'm with, the dogs, the fucking pigs, the goddamn boards and syndicates, the Green People, all that shit. I just don't care anymore. I might care more about the art of it, but I definitely don't care anymore about serving any sort of necessity or a request or a demand or whatever anybody wants me to do.

"I don't make very much money, but I'm making a living," he says. "And if I want to play 'A Love Supreme,' I can play 'A Love Supreme.' We're going to do a tune by Abbey Lincoln. We're going

continued on page 28



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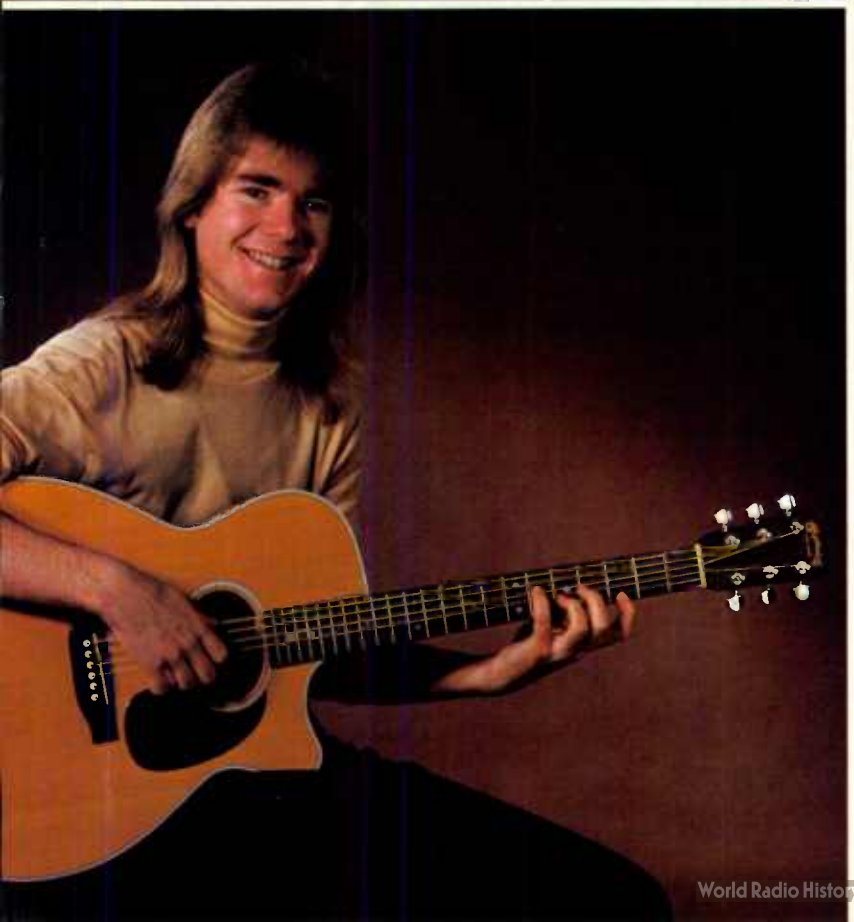

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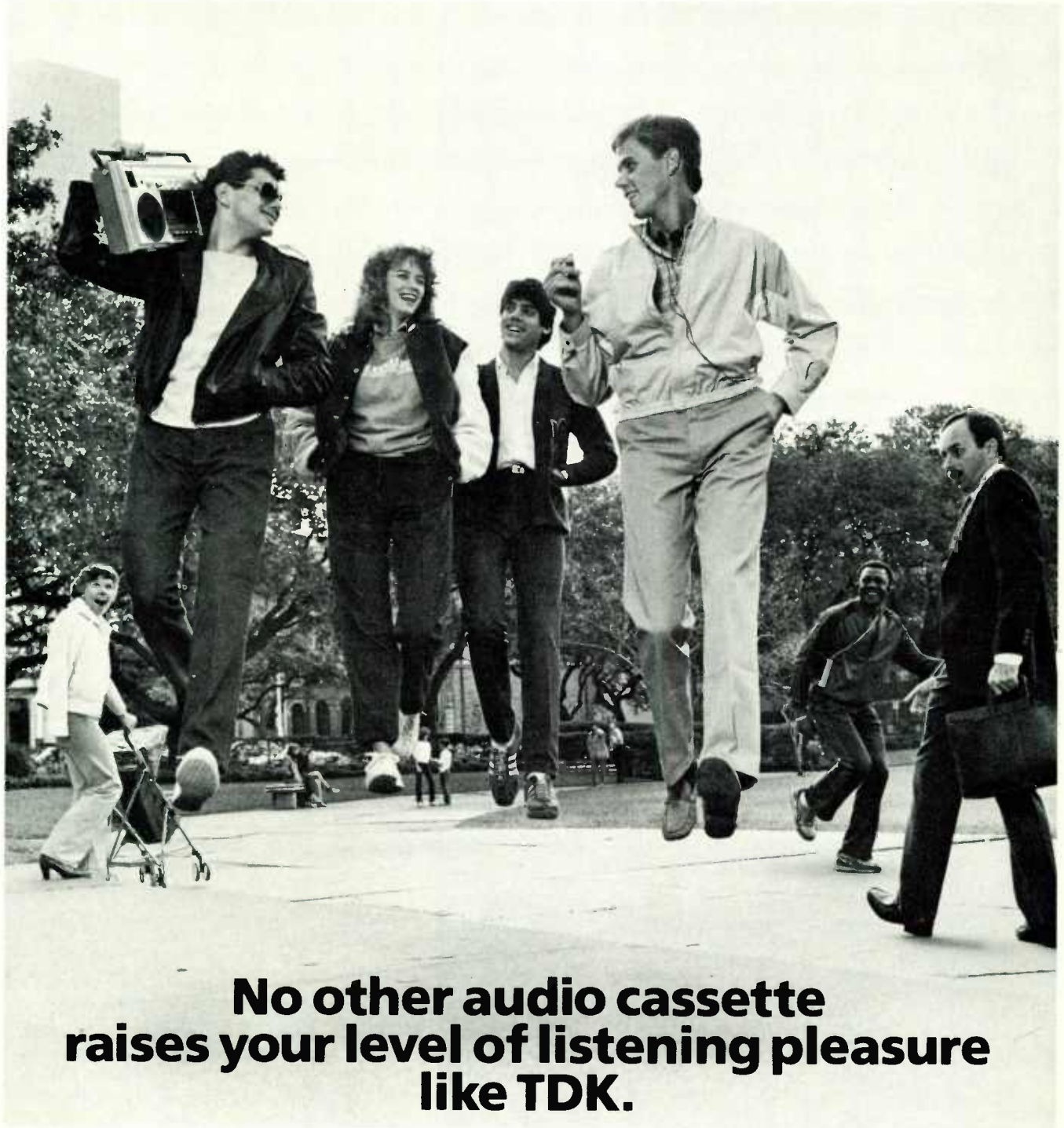

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PERSONAL BRINKSMANSHIP AND STATE-OF-THE-ART SUBCONSCIOUS

"I guess I'm not a well boy"; Buckingham displays newly regained control.

GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA

We all go a little mad from time to time," says Lindsey Buckingham. "And as long as you reel yourself back in—it's okay. For me, getting this stuff down on vinyl was a lot better than going to see a shrink. You know, if you're one of those guys who's constantly suppressing your emotions, then maybe one day you get your machine gun and go take out a McDonald's."

For the moment, Lindsey Buckingham has canceled his reservations for insanity. The events of the past couple of years—in particular the torturous break-up of a six-year relationship—took him perilously close to the brink of personal and professional madness, but Buckingham has reeled himself back in. And the reel he used, the album appropriately titled *Go Insane*, not only loosely chronicles those events but serves as a cathartic release from them.

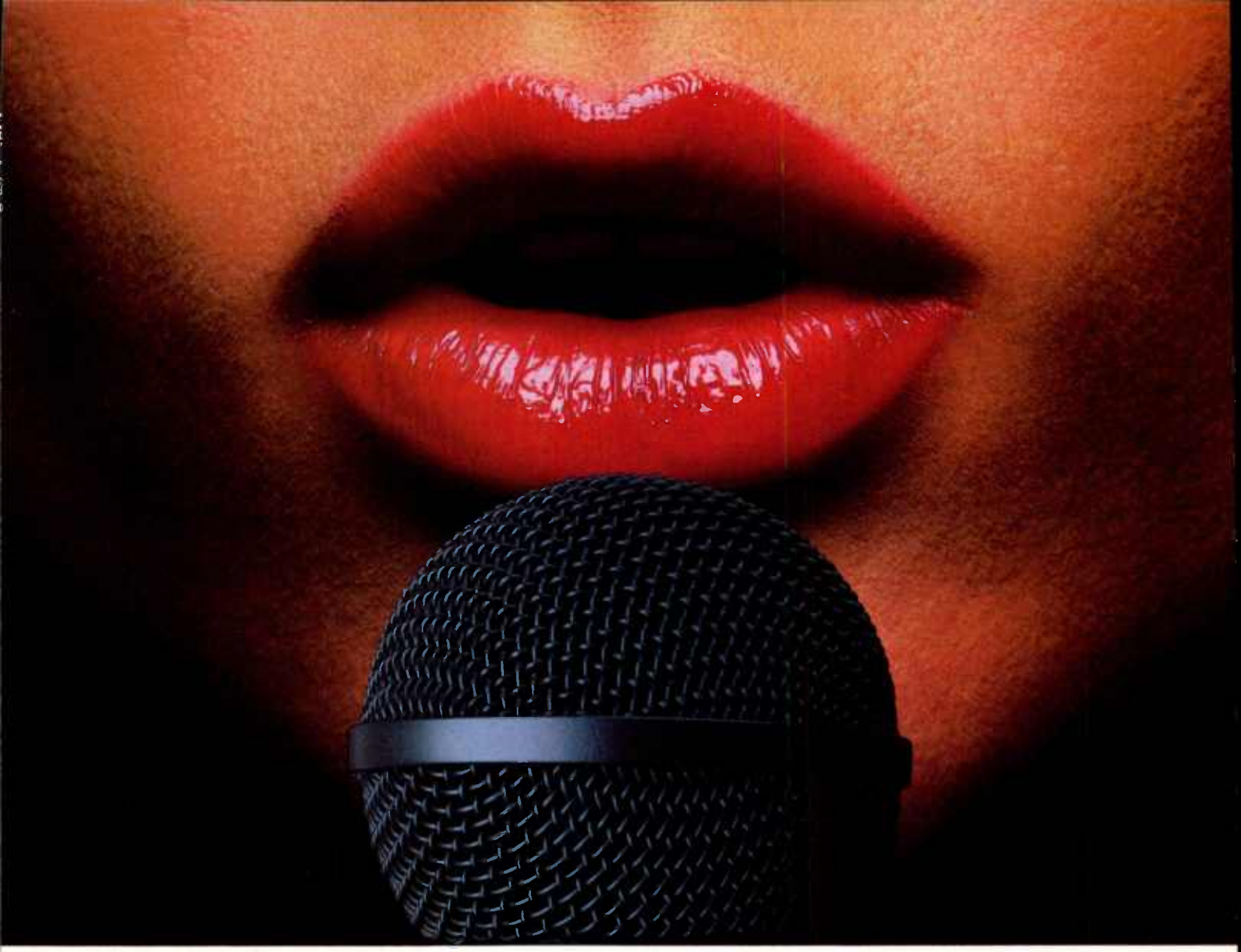
Yet *Go Insane* is more than a powerful emotional cleansing; it's also a state-of-the-art technical triumph, a collection of tracks dense with musical invention. That rare combination of mind and heart, chops and feel (as well as its direct Beach Boys references), makes this record a worthy successor to *Pet Sounds*, blasphemous as that may sound. (No, Buckingham isn't quite Brian Wilson; but then Brian could never quite reel himself back.)

Buckingham, of course, has spent the better part of the last ten years as Fleetwood Mac's jack of all trades—guitarist, singer, songwriter, principal producer, and the guy whose arrangements have brought that band's more pedestrian material (i.e. Stevie Nicks' songs) to life. *Go Insane* is his second solo turn, after 1981's *Law And Order*, and each time, Lindsey has handled virtually all of the vocal and instrumental work himself. "The whole experience of Fleetwood Mac has been a sense of responding to other people's needs, sometimes ahead of my own," he's tactfully observed.

"It's a more political, more verbal, and more conscious process. Working on my own," he goes on, "is like painting on a canvas; the likelihood of any particular canvas taking on a life of its own and leading you in a certain direction is far greater."

What is particularly surprising about this canvas, however, is not so much Buckingham's form—he's long been a studio innovator and original pop texturalist—so much as the raw, even tortured feeling that's splashed all over it. In the past, Lindsey's always been a pretty cool number—even while tearing up the stage with Fleetwood Mac he managed to remain a paradigm of tasteful pop flash, while offstage he's an articulate, sophisticated and meticulous, if rather self-effacing pop craftsman—in other words, everything that his ex-paramour Stevie Nicks is not. His last album, *Law And Order*, though specked with some unusual instrumental colors, was for the most part lawful and ordered—spare, guitar-oriented, conventional pop. And even as we speak he exudes the quiet confidence of a man comfortable with his own talent and quirky vision, the affably affluent yet modest mien of a successful California artist.

But check out the covers of *Law And Order* and *Go Insane*, and you begin to get an idea of the personal changes Buckingham's experienced in the last



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three years. On the former, an airbrushed and bare-shouldered Buckingham stares out at the world like some young innocent; on the latter, he is unshaven and intense, his hair in a modified "Eraserhead" cut, his tie undone and his jacket falling off. Ironically, *Law And Order* was released on Asylum; Lindsey switched over to Elektra for *Go Insane*.

A good deal of *Go Insane*—the title song, "I Must Go," "Bang The Drum," "Loving Cup"—reflects the strain that Buckingham and his former girlfriend, Carol Harris, were under as they struggled to find some common ground. "I was just in a situation that was getting a little out there from her point of view; and I was going insane as well, almost secondhand. 'I Must Go' is pretty much about that. You get to a point where commitment to something starts to become self-destruction. In a sense, that's what the whole album's about—getting to that point, having your whole sense of reality tested on a daily basis. "Of course," Lindsey points out, "insanity is a relative term. Behavior that might be acceptable in a rock band might get you committed if you work in a bank."

Buckingham's *Go Insane* palette was expanded immeasurably by his use of the Fairlight CMI (Computerized Musical Instrument), the ultimate paint brush for the musical colorist. Oh, he also plays "the usual array of guitars and basses," as he puts it, along with such esoterica as a nineteenth century "lap harp," but the Fairlight is mainly responsible for the record's remarkable depth and adventurousness.

On *Law And Order*, Buckingham played a drum kit; he'd record a click track, play the drums to it, then build each song's arrangement from there. The kit was eliminated on *Go Insane*, in favor of a LinnDrum and the Fairlight's own storehouse of drum and percussion possibilities, but Lindsey continued to construct his songs from the drums up. Typically, he would use the Linn to put down a metronomic high-hat pulse—something simple and unerring—and then play the CMI "drums" by hand.

"I certainly can't play drums as well as a Linn can," notes Buckingham. "And if I wanted to play something myself, it was just as easy to do it on the Fairlight, 'cause the sounds are already there and you don't have to set up a whole kit. Not only that," he laughs, "being able to play drums with two fingers cuts down considerably on the fatigue factor." Using the Linn and Fairlight drums also gives some *Go Insane* tracks—including "I Must Go" and "Loving Cup"—a febrile rhythmic intensity unmatched in anything Buckingham has recorded before.

Buckingham is a longtime Beach Boys admirer, and some of his earlier work—like "That's All For Everyone" and "Walk A Thin Line" from Fleetwood Mac's *Tusk*—echoed Brian Wilson's production and vocal sensibilities. "Bang The Drum," however, more than echoes the Beach Boys; it *is* the Beach Boys, as if Lindsey had found one of the long-lost tracks from the legendary *Smile* album lurking somewhere in his subconscious and brought it to life.

"Bang The Drum" opens with two Fairlight keyboard parts, both using the computer's harmonium/accordion setting. One of them is played straight ("I wanted a churchy sound, because it's a fairly sad song"), while the other is gated to produce a steady throbbing effect. Those keyboards, and the slow, almost languid beat of "Bang The Drum," recall several Beach Boys tunes of the 70s—but the real similarity is in the vocals, particularly the light "bum-bum-bum" and "chink-chink" parts backing the verses. Each of those parts, Buckingham says, was recorded three times; "a triple-track sounds less multi-tracked

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PEAVEY

MORRIS DAY

Day's unexpected celluloid celebrity got him out from under the big purple thumb.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

SCOTT ISLER

A MAN OUT OF TIME, BUT NOT OUT OF GOOD FORTUNE

Morris Day is sitting pretty. More precisely, he's reclining in an upholstered armchair inside a swanky hotel facing New York's Central Park. It's the end of a long day: photo sessions in the park, television show tapings, being tailed by a *People* reporter. Not fully caught up with his cross-continental jet lag of the night before, Day is understandably tired. But he's smiling.

And why not? Until a couple weeks earlier, Day was best known as lead singer and comic frontman of the Time, a gold-selling dance/funk combo. In turn, the Time was best known as an axle in the Prince juggernaut; Day and Prince have been friends since they were teenagers. That was before the film *Purple Rain* opened. As Prince's romantic and musical rival, Day virtually steals the show. He portrays a vain, cool—and broke—dude with remarkable flair for his first screen appearance.

"I didn't think I was gonna come across so great," Day says, "because I'd never acted before. I went to one (private) screening; I stayed halfway through it. I couldn't keep looking at myself. A lot of people told me I was coming across good. When the premiere came up, I went and I enjoyed it. I found myself laughing at myself—sometimes when people weren't laughing!"

Such modesty is surprising, if not shocking. In the Time, Day can't survive two-bar instrumental fills without checking his processed "do" in a huge mirror trundled out by "valet" Jerome Benton. The Morris Day unwinding in his hotel room is more subdued, although still dressed to (lady) kill in a half-unbuttoned white shirt revealing a gold chain, brown pinstripe pants and white patent leather shoes.

He's also a Morris Day on his own, having put the Time behind him. He says the decision to leave the group stemmed not from his celluloid celebrity but a preceding departure of guitarist Jesse Johnson. "At that time I started feeling different about the group. It just wasn't the same; me, Jellybean [Johnson, drummer] and Jerome were the only original members left. I'd always wanted to do solo records. Then the movie came out and I thought it would just be a good time to go out on my own.

"However, you'll notice that when they do write-ups now, they mention me and not the group. It wasn't the group's performance (in *Purple Rain*) that people liked. You have to be realistic. And I know I can do well on my own."

Besides splitting from the Time, Day also split from the Time's management team of Cavallo, Ruffalo and Fargnoli, who also manage Prince. The topic is one of very few which reduce the usually voluble Day to a halting sputter. "It just wasn't good for me there. I'm not out to criticize anybody. I'm just interested in going forward. I wasn't comfortable there."

Steve Fargnoli had no comment when

asked about Day's secession. One inference—which Day won't deny—is that he felt lost in the barrage of Prince publicity following the release of the *Purple Rain* album and movie. Shortly thereafter Day signed with manager Sandy Gallin, whose Katz-Gallin-Morey-Addis firm also represents Dolly Parton, Christopher Cross and the Police's Sting. "I'm treated good now," Day says, snapping back to his standard operating brio, 'I'm the *man*, where we at now, you dig what I'm sayin'?"

The jive talk comes with the gold chain and watch, and a flashy ring. Day had none of them when he was born "twenty-five, twenty-six" years ago in Springfield, Illinois. His family moved to Minneapolis when Morris was six, by which time he'd already shown a percussive bent: "My ma brought me a little drum set so I'd stop tearing up the furniture." He graduated to a real drum kit around the age of twelve. He never took lessons.

The same might be said of Day's high school career. He was less interested in classes than in playing with his band, Grand Central, which included Prince on guitar and André Cymone on bass. "I was sort of inhibited in high school," Day recollects. "I wasn't in any of the cliques, or sports, or anything that girls like. I just hung out by myself and played my drums. Then I got in a group. That started bringing me out—a lot. I really found myself."

After high school, Prince started a new band, taking Cymone with him and leaving Day on his own. In 1978, he and his mother moved to Gaithersburg, Maryland, and Day scouted bands in nearby Washington, D.C. A year later they relocated to San Jose, California; Day "couldn't find any groups" there either, and continued at menial jobs later celebrated in the Time's "One Day I'm Gonna Be Somebody."

He moved back to Minneapolis, where Prince was faring better at the music game—so much better that he helped Day land a recording contract at Prince's label, Warner Bros., although Day still had no group. Day calls his solo signing "fortunate. Because I hadn't figured out what I was going to do yet."

The admission supports statements that the Time's 1981 debut album consists mainly of Prince's overdubbed accompaniment and backing vocals behind Day. But Day, forsaking drumming for singing ("I tried it and it worked"), found a band in time for the album's cover shots: a Minneapolis outfit, Flyte Tyme, evolved into the Time with the addition of Day and guitarist Johnson.

The Time and its 1982 follow-up LP, *What Time Is It?*, both went gold; the current *Ice Cream Castle*, helped by the film, should exceed them in sales. The band's personnel shifted but not the production involvement of one "Jamie Starr" and "the Starr Company," both pseudonyms for the reclusive Prince. Measuring his words carefully, Day suggests his moves–away from the Time, away from Prince's managers, away from Minneapolis ("a long pit stop") to Los Angeles, are an escape from a big purple thumb.

"The only thing that perturbed me at all in the past was I didn't have enough control over the projects–bottom-line control, what you say goes. There were people I was working with who had more control."

Asked about future work with Prince, Day first scans the hotel room for hidden microphones. "I'm not against it, but I doubt that would happen," he says, then clarifies with doubletalk. And don't expect Day, even with his newfound freedom, to reveal just who is playing on that first Time album. "That's a mystique I don't want to unwrap," he says in comparatively soft tones. He looks across the room at his publicist. "That's how ya do it, ain't it?"

Day's solo recording debut is a ways off. His priority now is another movie, and he's been poring over scripts to that end. Indeed, manager Gallin sought out Day for a film project after seeing *Purple Rain*. The singer is considering a part that's "a take-off of the character I play

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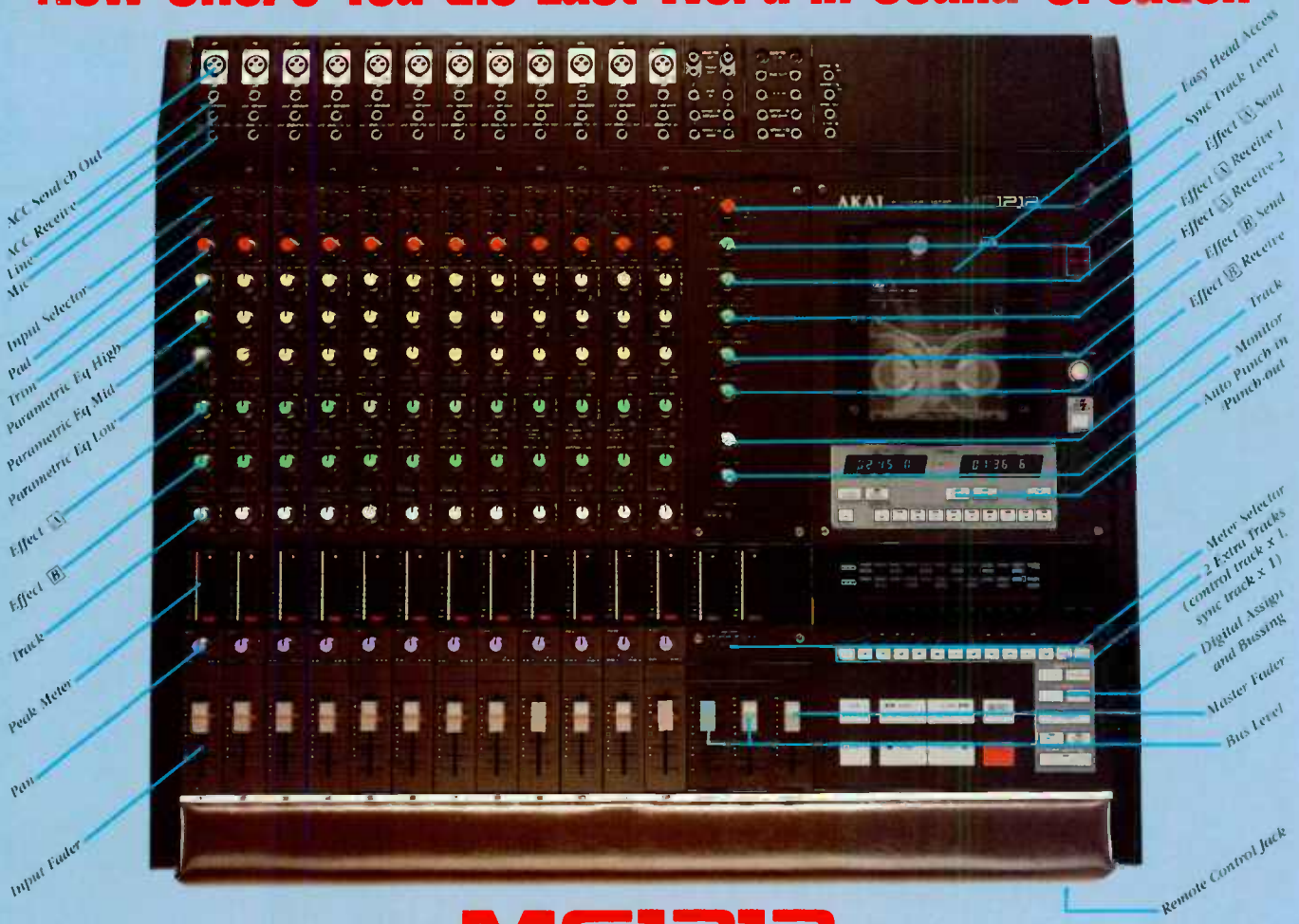

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Day from previous page

in *Purple Rain*." He doesn't take critics' charges of sexism in that film personally. "I didn't have anything to do with the development of the film. I'm an ac*tor*," he stresses in an orotund way. Then he pauses. "I kinda like telling people that." Then he explodes into cackles.

Day deserves the last laugh. Not all that long ago he was working in a car wash; now he is juggling two successful showbiz careers. "I can do more than one thing at one time," he states. "Coordination is something you learn being a drummer."

His seesawing of modesty and justifiable boasting—with a leavening of humor–indicates Day will be able to keep his good fortune in perspective. "All of a sudden I'm feeling my Wheaties," he says. "There's only a few things in life I can do." M

Buckingham from page 21

the end, making this album was a reaffirming experience. I think I'm gaining some of that power back." M

Mental Help

Along with the Fairlight CMI and the LinnDrum machine, Buckingham's assortment of equipment on *Go Insane* included a variety of guitars, among which were Fender Stratocasters and Telecasters, a Martin D-18 acoustic and a Guild nylon-string acoustic. Onstage with Fleetwood Mac, he generally plays a custom-designed Turner electric guitar equipped with flat-wound strings, but for recording purposes he uses both a standard Turner and a "double-octave" Turner. Bass parts on the album were supplied either by a Turner bass guitar with round-wound strings or by the Fairlight; on "I Must Go," he used both the Turner bass and the Fairlight's cello program. The nineteenth century "lap harp" used on "D. W. Suite" was a gift from Mick Fleetwood; it can also be heard on "Empire State," a track from Fleetwood Mac's *Mirage* album.

Much of the early work on *Go Insane* was done in the garage studio at Buckingham's L.A. home, which is equipped with Studer and MCI 24-track recorders and a Neotek console. Additional recording took place at Cherokee Studios in L.A.

Gun Club from page 14

to do an Art Ensemble of Chicago song. We're going to do all this wild stuff. My band's happy."

So the current band is willing to take the dare?

"That's what it's always been about," Pierce says happily. "God, it sounds corny, but it was always about a completely creative sort of thing, going from one extreme to the other, never being predictable. I like being that kind of an artist."

There is little chance that Jeffrey Lee Pierce could be any other. M

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SPECIAL AKA

Integrity in the Revolving Door

Times change, and fast. In 1979 the Specials and their 2-Tone label spearheaded a British pop movement that was intent on suffusing music with social and political import. In 1984 Special AKA (name altered after personnel upheavals) is the only group left on 2-Tone, and has just issued its first album in four years. This is activism?

"We got so bogged down," a weary-sounding Jerry Dammers exhales over a transatlantic phone line. "Everything that could possibly go wrong went wrong in the studio." With sardonic humor, the new album is titled *In The Studio*—probably pronounced like "to the torture chambers."

It's been a long, strange trip for leader/keyboard player Dammers, one of the very few original members left. Since emerging from Coventry as ska revivalists, the Specials/Special AKA have undergone unexpected stylistic permutations—at one point claiming to play muzak—and suffered mass defections. Dammers has held the band together through thick and thin, and still managed good U.K. chart visibility without compromising his ideals. The Special AKA's most recent British hit single, "Nelson Mandela," is a bubbly plea for the release of a South African political prisoner.

Despite its joyous highlife sound, "Nelson Mandela" is "a serious song," Dammers says, "as opposed to all the drivel that's turned out now in the name of pop music—meaningless lyrics and things." Dammers' lyrics are far from meaningless, especially on singles like "Ghost Town" (about unemployed youth), "War Crimes" and "Racist Friend." His, and the band's, integrity have survived intact. Trouble is, by now Dammers virtually *is* the Special AKA.

"It's more or less based around me in the studio," he admits. "That wasn't the intention but that's the way it turned out. It's not really like a band at all. It's like the Archies or something."

He says he'll "use different people on every record from now on." Consequently the Special AKA exists only . . . in the studio. Considering Dammers' problems with band members "walking out, coming back and walking out again," this may be a wise course of action. "It's not easy to find the right combination of people," he says with admirable restraint.

In The Studio was recorded "on and off over a two-year period," Dammers says. "I was so fed up with it by the time it came out that I couldn't bear to listen to it." For all the time and expense ("We're in quite bad debt now to the record company"), the album is coherent lyrically, and musically forthright as well. The 2-Tone creed lives yet.

"I'm an optimist," Dammers says. He adds with a rare laugh, "I think nuclear war is inevitable." – **Scott Isler**

PATRICE RUSHEN

Diminutive Drawbacks

Patrice Rushen wants to be taken seriously as a musician. It's an uphill battle.

She's black. She's a woman. She stands four foot, eleven-and-a -half inches and weighs maybe ninety-five pounds fully dressed. She's cute as the dickens. Your first inclination definitely is *not* to treat her as the accomplished musician she is; rather, you want to cuddle her protectively and put her on a high shelf out of harm's way.

Rushen is used to such reactions. "It makes you feel bad," she says, "because it presents obstacles in a situation that's already full of obstacles. There are so many intangibles to being successful in the record business."

Rushen, twenty-eight, is a former child prodigy, a jazz artist-turned-pop star whose session credits include Sadao Watanabe, Hubert Laws, Prince, Peabo Bryson, Ramsey Lewis, the Temptations, Harvey Mason, Ronnie Laws, Flora Purim and quite a few others. Her own music has such a light, frothy touch to it that one isn't immediately tempted to consider her worthy company for the industry's movers and shakers, despite her credentials.

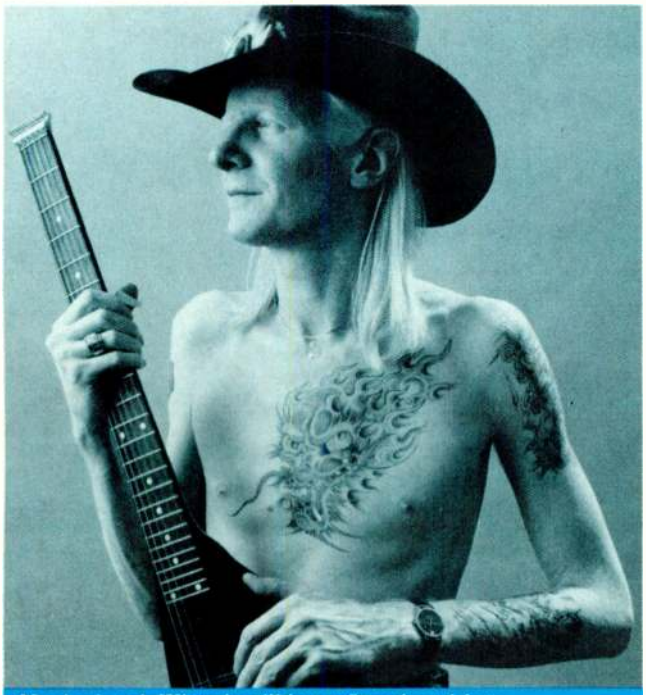
She plays keyboards, guitar, bass, drums, and flute. She has written, produced and composed a number of hit singles for herself in recent years, including "Haven't You Heard," "Forget Me Nots" and the latest, "Feels So Real." She's never gone gold, let alone platinum, but has been a dependable seller for Elektra Records.

So she was more than a little chagrined, she says,

BOBBY HOLLAND

when she heard that Elektra wasn't initially impressed with her 1982 LP, *Straight From The Heart*. The album lodged well inside the top 20 and copped a pair of Grammy nominations. Rushen says she, not Elektra, pushed the record across the finish line.

"I had to work harder than I ever had in my life, 'cause that was one of those times when I didn't feel like I had the support there. These are the kinds of things that are frustrating and make it difficult. As well-adjusted as I may seem, it's real hard and very emotional for me, too. I'm just Project XYZ, but this is my life and I take it kinda personally." – **Leonard Pitts, Jr.**



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

No slowhand, Winter's still in top fingerboard form.

JOHNNY WINTER

Tattoos, Blues & Television

Johnny Winter grins like a kid with a new toy. "You gotta see this thing," he says, switching off *Live At Five* and inserting the first-ever Johnny Winter promo video into his VCR. Built around Lee Baker Jr.'s rousing "Don't Take Advantage Of Me," the tape juxtaposes scenes of a modern urban cowboy bar with its old west counterpart. Near the end Winter clamps his hands on two barmaids' shoulders, leaving imprints of his Texas state tattoo.

A Johnny Winter promo video? The idea seems incongruous. Winter, after all, is no over-rouged wimp-rocker but a battle-hardened vet. For over twenty years he's played uncompromising, jack-hammer blues-rock in stadiums, arenas and ramshackle bars that might charitably be described as clubs. He has outlasted a score of changes and trends in the music business, lived through a nasty bout with heroin, and come out of it still playing guitar like ringin' a bell. In his case the term "survivor" is justified.

In 1984 pop music survival means promo videos, and Winter is willing. "Just keepin' up with the times," he grins. "In fact, I'm makin' exactly the kind of music now I want to make. I'm lookin' for new ways to let folks know about it."

Indeed, the new *Guitar Slinger* on Chicago's Alligator Records may be purer Winter than anything he recorded during his superstar years at CBS. The album is prime Texas-Louisiana electric blues with a hard Chicago-style edge courtesy of, among others, the Mellow Fellows Horns.

Guitar Slinger is Winter's first album in four years. (He's just produced an album for long-time hero Sonny Terry.) When fellow Lone Star native Stevie Ray Vaughan scored a top forty hit with his *Texas Flood* last year, Winter was exhilarated. "I was gettin' depressed for a while, but when I heard Stevie I told my managers, 'See, there *is* a big market out there for what I do . . . let's go find it.' "

He just might. If three guys from Texas with beards like Russian novelists can find gold in the under-fifteen age group, why not a Texas albino with the fastest pair of hands from that state since John Wesley Hardin?

"You know those ZZ Top videos where they always show that key chain with the Z in their video?" Winter refers to his compatriots. "Well, I can't wait for the first little kid who sees *my* video and goes off and gets a tattoo of Texas on his arm!" –**Allen Barra**

NONA HENDRYX

Alive & Sweating

Nona Hendryx seems to be a victim of the Tina Turner Syndrome: a remarkable voice in search of worthy material and a sympathetic producer. Her first solo album, in 1977 following Labelle's dissolution, was an overlooked hard-rock prophesy. Following a stint with Talking Heads, Hendryx teamed with Material, the N.Y. avant-funk production team, for *Nona*, a brash modern soul adventure. But the uninspired follow-up, *Art Of Defense*, fell victim to trite humanism in her lyrics and monochromatic arrangements.

So who would have guessed that Hendryx's August appearance at the Channel in Boston would be the most anyone has done to toughen funk since Michael Jackson checked the L.A. directory for E. Van Halen's phone number? On record, the stylized "I Sweat" is just another post-*Flashdance* club effort; live, at a steely, double-time pace (and with a few dozen crowd members onstage), the song earned its title. Bassist Carmine Rojas riveted down the beat throughout the night, while guitarist Ronnie Drayton bent huge, wild chords. And you should have heard what they did to the Supremes' "Love Is Like An Itching In My Heart" for an encore.

"Unless I record live, I don't think I'll ever capture that on record," Hendryx said after the show. Her last two albums were meeker than she would have liked "because [Material] wanted to get more into experimental sounds. But now that I'm not going to work with them anymore, I hope to get something closer to [the live show] on the next album, more of a funk-rock album."

EBET ROBERTS

There's nothing defensive about Nona.

Although her live appearances prove she can fashion a unique, rock-based sound, "record companies don't see me in that light. There's still this polarization between white and black [music] in this country. But I'm willing to take a chance again, because things have shifted a little bit." – **Rob Tannenbaum**

CHEQUERED PAST

Old Metal Meets New Wave

If the seven years since the Sex Pistols "Anarchy In The U.K." have proven anything, it's that the only difference between punk and heavy metal is that one was just played a lot faster. The Ramones frequently admitted their fondness for Black Sabbath. Billy Idol's old band, Generation X, got Ian Hunter to produce their second album. And former Sex Pistols guitarist Steve Jones has a lot of explaining to do about his new band Chequered Past, whose EMI America debut album is basically souped-up AOR crunchola with a new wave pedigree.

"The Sex Pistols were just a normal rock band and I was a rock guitarist," Jones, now twenty-eight, insists. "Johnny Rotten's singing just made it a bit different, I suppose. The thing about punk was that a lot of guitar playing wasn't so much licks as heavy metal was, but more plain thrash chords."

Nigel Harrison (bass). Singer Michael Des Barres—veteran of 70s glitter band Silverhead (with Harrison) and "supergroup" Detective—lacks Rotten's corrosive charisma, but he's a definite improvement on most sub-operatic Styx/Boston charlatans. The band has some pugnacious songs like "A World Gone Wild" and "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way"; even these, however, sound a little square next tc their versions of "Church Of The Poison Mind," "Flashdance" and "Girls Just Want To Have Fun."

"The idea of doing covers was not just 'Johnny B. Goode,' " Jones explains, "but anything that was current—and really doing it with balls." At first that was all Chequered Past had. In 1981 Jones started playing with Burke and Harrison for fun; his first post-Pistols band, the Professionals, lasted one tour and one album (*I Didn't See It Coming*, an undiscovered punk-metal classic). Things got serious later in Los Angeles when Jones and Des Barres began writing their own songs.

Veterans of the Sex Pistols, Blondie & Iggy, the Past blasts.

Most blasts from *Chequered Past* are strictly riff city, though, given a good boot in the rear by ex-Iggy Pop guitarist Tony Sales and Blondie's rhythm section of Clem Burke (drums) and

So what's wrong with wanting a taste of the big arena money? "The Chequered Past isn't a pose," Jones insists. "We're not Asia. Besides, I'm sick of playing in pissholes." – **David Fricke**

EBET ROBERTS

Newly armed with synthesizers, the Nevilles are a formidable threat.

NEVILLE BROS.

Updating the Gumbo Factor

Neville-ization: The process by which America's grittiest regional band cooks African, Caribbean, Latin, Cajun and R&B ingredients into a wickedly spicy gumbo.

Neville-ization is also the name of the new Neville Brothers album, their first in almost four years. It's a treacherous slice of wax, cut live in 1982 at the legendary (and now closed) Tipitina's. The four brothers from New Orleans lay into their polyglot signatures: four-part harmonies, call-and-response vocals, four-part percussion. And the rhythm section, comprised of Aaron Neville's son Ivan and three peers, gets knee-deep into some nasty syncopated funk, twisting Bo Diddley's beat into an ambush of counter-rhythms. The band sounds timeless, shuffling and stomping through three decades of alternately sweet and tough Neville-ized R&B chestnuts.

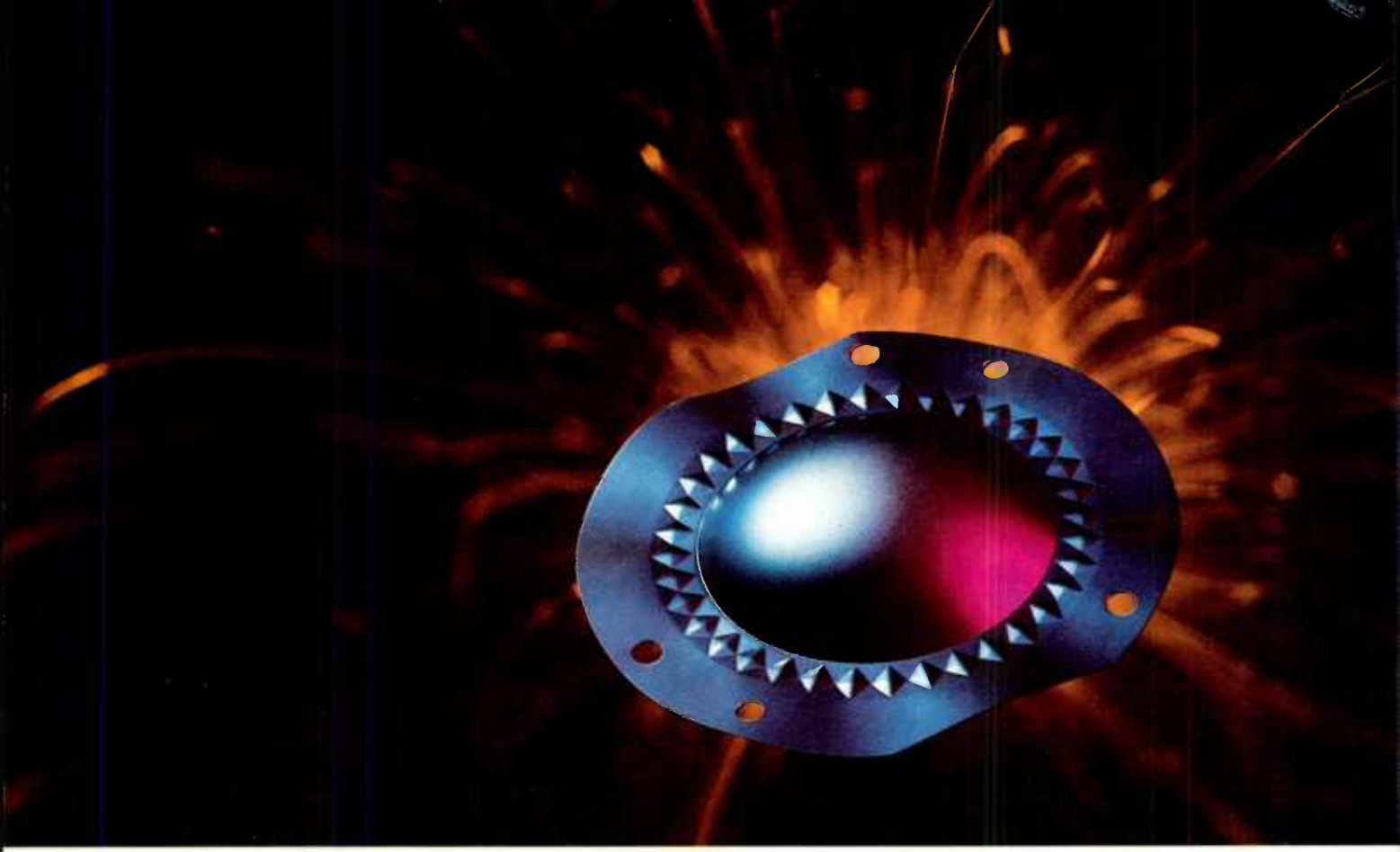
As is fitting. The Neville Brothers are steeped in the heritage and culture of New Orleans. Art and Cyril are alumni of the Meters, New Orleans' most expansive and polyrhythmic rhythm section. Aaron had a number two hit in 1965 with "Tell It Like It Is." The brothers learned from their late uncle George "Big Chief Jolly" Landry, former leader of the Wild Tchoupitoulas.

Neville-ization is the purest expression to date of the band's pan-ethnic musical hybrid. The critically ballyhooed *Fiyo On The Bayou*, with horn section and lavish arrangements, ran way over budget, causing A&M Records to drop the act. The brothers trimmed down to an eight-piece working band and released the live platter on Rounder-distributed Black Top. "This is what we really feel comfortable with," Art says.

The Nevilles went into an L.A. studio in August to record an album of all new songs. The New Orleans traditional ists are adding an 80's touch: synthesizers.

"With synthesizers, we'll just take what we do to another dimension," Art says. "It won't be antiseptic. We're going to take it to what I call the 'chill-bump factor'.

"This [live] album is just the tip of the iceberg of what we have in store. The business has round holes and we're a square peg, but I feel we're good enough to fit in. We're gonna shoot for the moon—past the moon. We're going for another galaxy altogether." – **John Leland**



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HAL WILLNER

Conceptual Crossbreeder

No one is ever going to call producer Hal Willner a purist. His trademark is the crossbreed, concept albums on which musical genres and performers intentionally collide. In 1982 he conceived *Rota Amarcord*, a collection of film composer Nino Rota's music played by jazz musicians. This year it's *That's The Way I Feel Now: A Tribute To Thelonious Monk*. The audacious project includes unlikely rockers Donald Fagen, Joe Jackson, NRBQ, Peter Frampton and Was (Not Was), among others, interpreting the high priest of bop. Anyone expecting a staid program will have come to the wrong place.

Willner's vision is unfashionably democratic. "In the late 60s," he says, "there was a lot of crossover between jazz and rock. Captain Beefheart naturally led you to Eric Dolphy; *Bitches Brew* worked the other way around. It doesn't seem to be that way today. I mean, no one ever thought to invite the non-jazz musicians who love Monk's music and were influenced by it. A week later I called Donald Fagen, and Terry Adams of NRBQ, both big Monk fans; they immediately said they wanted to work on a tribute album."

After pitching the idea unsuccessfully to a number of major labels, Willner—the former music coordinator for *Saturday Night Live*—went ahead and began recording at his own expense. He cut tracks with Fagen, Jackson, Frampton, Chris Spedding and NRBQ even before securing distribution.

"The rock musicians did it for love," he claims. "They all knew I didn't have a big budget. Fagen and Jackson are songwriters, they would never do Monk on their own albums. The pressure about getting a hit was gone; for them it was a good time." With those artists behind him, Willner quickly got a deal with A&M Records.

It's a testament to Willner's laissez-faire methods that all the rock material sounds so uniquely personal. The often-skewed arrangements are sure to offend Monk aficionados, but Willner's defense is immediate and sincere.

"These rock musicians are to be respected even more. They knew they were going to be put on the chopping block for even attempting to play Monk—they *must* love the music. For me that comes through on every cut, and every album I do has to have this feeling."

Willner converts and non-believers alike will have plenty to debate in the coming years. The producer's next conglomerate musical tributes are to Charles Mingus and Kurt Weill. –**Steve Futterman**

His Monk tribute now complete, Willner plots anew.

RANDY MARTUSOW

'Rockit' won't lead you to anybody. I think that using rock musicians is a good way of exposing Monk's music."

His brainstorm dates from Willner's attending a Monk tribute concert shortly after the pianist's death in 1982. "I was very frustrated because

British synthpop pioneers Depeche Mode beep on.

DEPECHE MODE

Silicon Teens Grow Up

They may be sick of hearing it, but Depeche Mode is one of the few British synthesizer bands to grow up gracefully in public. Dave Gahan, Martin Gore, Andy Fletcher and Vince Clarke were just another British electronic pop band in 1981, intoning adolescent love songs to the inhumanly perfect beat of a drum machine.

That all changed with Depeche Mode's third LP, *Construction Time Again*, in 1983. "Our earlier stuff was too lightweight sounding," explains Alan Wilder, who replaced Clarke in 1982. "So we went for a different approach. Rather than using synthesizers, we decided to go for a more acoustic sound." Just as unusual as the guitars and other non-synthesized sounds were the maturity and downright humanity of the lyrics. Instead of wondering about the meaning of love, *Construction Time Again* tackled such non-trendy issues as world hunger, geopolitics and international business.

Whether because or in spite of such growth, stateside success has eluded Depeche Mode. Sire Records hopes to reverse the situation with *People Are People*, a U.S.-only "greatest hits" compilation. The title track is an effective, catchy anthem denouncing prejudice; it reflects Wilder's notion that "if you're writing about something that means something to you, you want to get across to as many people as possible. The attitude that it's just for people who are cool is crazy."

Now at work on their next LP, Depeche Mode is still a long way from exchanging synthesizers for Stratocasters. As Wilder jokes, "We were thinking of getting a machine that throws drumsticks out into the audience." But this band's collective heart is thoroughly human. –**Debbie Geller**

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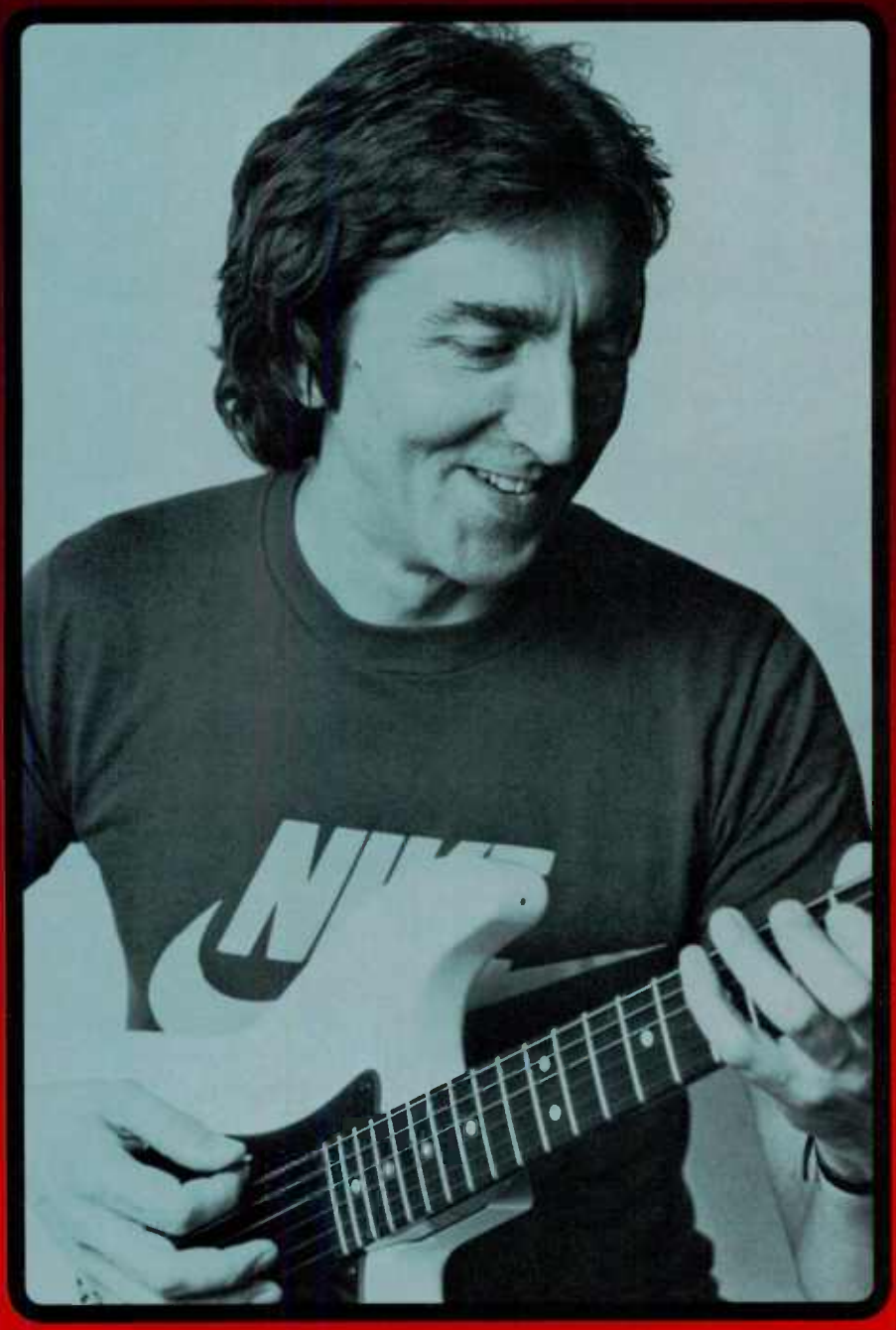

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A Four-Star Innovator at the Peak of a New Game

MILES *phase five*

By Tom Moon

MILES DAVIS, visual artist, is poring over his work. A sampling leans against his dining room window overlooking Manhattan, others are stacked in a pile on the floor. "Which one should I give 'em?" he wonders aloud in characteristic sandpapery whisper—the voice heard famously at the end of a few recordings—as he sorts through linear drawings, sketches, deep brown-hued paintings.

He's selecting a piece to donate to the Olympic Arts auction, and the jazz legend clearly doesn't relish the task. The art is thoughtfully developed and well executed, recalling the angular look of his cover work from *Star People* and *Decoy*. I cast a vote, and he shoots back "I'm not talking about for *your* eyes" in mock reproach; he ends up choosing the piece anyway.

This is Miles Davis at the peak of his game. At fifty-eight, yet another phase of his sinewy career is unwinding: here is a man whose thread of influence is woven deeply and inseparably into the jazz fabric, one of those rare geniuses whose work seems to continually nudge and expand the perimeters of possibility. Miles has grown with the music, and at the same time forced the music to grow. He could have frozen his style at bebop, where he learned his craft, or his own cool school, or with the modal improvisation concept he pioneered on *Kind Of Blue*, or with the classic 60s quintet. Even the early electric period (Miles, you'll remember, was the first to successfully integrate electronic instruments into improvised music) would have sustained his star status nicely.

But Miles Davis, the artist, has continued to evolve. He has endured injuries, extended hospitalization, innumerable setbacks. When he re-emerged in 1981 after a six-year hiatus, critics bemoaned the groping hit-and-miss quality of *The Man With The Horn* and subsequent live performances. This year's *Decoy*, his fourth effort since the comeback, is by contrast the full-fledged realization of what Davis has been attempting all along: a loose, electric riff sound sprayed with synthesizer and enlightened solo offerings, and grounded by the pulsating heartbeat of drummer

Photographs by David Gahr

Al Foster and Chapman Stick/bassist Darrell Jones. Davis is practicing daily, and has regained the impassioned control of the trumpet which marked his best period. If his work on *Decoy* and the opening night performance at the New York Kool Jazz festival are any indication, Miles Davis is playing exactly what he wants to play.

He is similarly in control of the business of his career. The performer notorious for turning his back on audiences and ignoring critics is now talking—enough to warrant a two-day spot on the *Today* show. He has recently completed an extended European tour, and is preparing to take his current sextet (with Foster, Jones, guitarist John Scofield, saxophonist Bob Berg and keyboardist Robert Irving III) for a spin around the country. *Decoy*, Miles' partially-animated video debut, has just been aired; his version of Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time"—one of several pop tunes he regularly programs—is now available as a 12-inch single.

This whirlwind activity seems to nourish Davis: he radiates health, and his taut features beam an inner calm that borders outright happiness. His alert, softly imperative eyes scan the open living space—perhaps falling on the telescope on the balcony, the coffee-table elephant with a "Miles" banner around its neck, the urban-gray tint of the walls, the electric piano humming in one corner. Davis' aura rules the room. He is dressed in a loose-fitting khaki overshirt, with baggy pants held in check by a wide leather belt—a swashbuckling sophisticate unmoved by current fashion. He jaunts cat-like, rarely sitting, immersed in the swirl of energy that is his work. The man with the horn reels around, attention focused back on the canvas: "What did you want to ask me?"

Miles discovers Bill Evans posing for the bitches.

MUSICIAN: *Tell me what you're listening to, Miles.*
DAVIS: What do I listen to? Lately just myself. Weather Report, Earth Wind & Fire, Michael Jackson, D-Train, Missing Persons, Prince. I like Prince, Prince is a funky little dude, ain't he? What's that guy's name—Huey something & the News? He reached way back and got that one; sounds like Wynone Harris. I turn on the black stations, and just listen . . . Marcus (Miller), Luther Vandross, big Luther; whatever they play is good. Sometimes I tape it, and when I'm driving in my car in California, I like to listen; the motor doesn't cut in, and the static isn't there when you tape . . . .

MUSICIAN: *You're driving these days.*
DAVIS: Yeah, I'm glad of that. I couldn't drive 'cause of this leg. And after I got it fixed the doctor told me just cool it, said I have to drive an automatic: I like'd to have went nuts, man. When they said I could drive again, I started to kiss him . . . If he was a woman, I'd laid down and opened my legs.
MUSICIAN: *Tell me about* Decoy.
DAVIS: It's two years ago; I have to go back and think about what I thought about. The melodies were so plain, we had to put a lot of synthesizer stuff under it: different patches, different kind of chords, drum machine. We really laid on this one, we socked it. A lot of overdubs, a lot of the bass I took out because it was too much, a lot of the melodies were so plain, you had to write countermelodies and it really turned "Decoy" and "Code MD" on. You should have heard it naked. In other words, we put some clothes on the melodies.

"Freaky Deaky," I did that by myself. I made an introduction to that slow blues. Instead of using it for an introduction, I put some harmony to it, and made it a bridge. Can you remember the record? Remember the little part that says de-de-dat; de-de-dat? (sings "Freaky Deaky"). Anyway, we put the bass (sings bass line). It's a funny little feeling, you know but I was thinking of—you ever hear any Kurt Weill? Got a German um-pah. That's where that came from. Then I made the blues in C minor. Gil told me to play behind myself, so you could hear what I was doing. A lot of times I'll play different chords against each other, and you can't hear it unless you're a musician. I played the chords behind myself, and Branford.

The second side is a bunch of stuff that John played that I copied off, and we dressed it up. Real simple nice melodies. We took the best part, cause a lot of it Al (Foster) was dropping the tempo and Bill (Evans) was screwing up. I just cut out a lot of his solo. Here's a guy who can play his instrument, you know what I mean, so he sees bitches out in front, and he just grabs his horn and poses. Al said, "You can't see him cause you're playing synthesizer." One night I looked over there and he was (poses) and so that's what came out. He can play better than that. He sounded good on flute, but we couldn't use that part.
MUSICIAN: *You said you're onto something a little bit different now?*
DAVIS: It's different but when it comes time to put it out, I don't know *what* we're gonna do. We might find a whole new thing. Every time I record something, I can't say it's gonna be on a record. Now everybody wants to hear me play "Time After Time." We just left Paris—they loved that song; we had three encores. They don't even know what it was. [Cyndi L. had not yet hit Paris.] We did two concerts there, they were sold out. I lost about ten, five, ten pounds.
MUSICIAN: *Why?*
DAVIS: Because I was playing, and I don't eat when I'm playing. I think I ate twice. But I wear all that stuff when I play—you know, stuff for a hernia, right here: rubber thing here (points to his stomach). When I got through playing it was just *Wheew* (slides his hand down his front). See that? I had two hernias. With the notes I hit, my guts would be on the floor. I'd say "Oh shit" (Miles bends over and mimes picking up his guts). I'd be doing that—"He done blew his guts out."
MUSICIAN: *How are you writing tunes these days?*
DAVIS: I write around different people. My bass player's so funky, man. The rhythm section now is so good, they can make the Lord's Prayer sound good. Say I want to change the opening number, I'll just hit the first note and write something around it. Maybe use something for the drums, to accent. When you play a concert, it's more or less like a movie or a show. They play the opening, then you play a middle number, then you play a finale. The concert has to be balanced. If I feel like changing the opening number, I'll write something; and if I feel like changing the middle number, I'll write something, or the ending. Or if I want Darrell to play something, to show his

talent—how funky he is, goddamn is he funky. You know "Decoy" is funny, it sounds all right but playing it, it doesn't do anything to me. We'll have to tighten that one up. I stuck in another one in Paris, so the next album will definitely be "D-Train," "Time After Time," and the other one I wrote, 'cause every time we play it, people go like this: (claps hands). I like "Code MD."

MUSICIAN: *I like that too, the muted trumpet in the back is really effective . . . .*

DAVIS: We left that in, three trumpets. See, you're listening . . . . That's nice, don't you like that idea?

MUSICIAN: *Great idea.*

DAVIS: Yeah, you know what would be nice, if you could . . . if you could play around a record, and make an album. Say, if you have "Decoy," and you have, say, a cut from *ESP*, try that one of these days.

MUSICIAN: *On this album, more so than on* Star People, *I hear you really using the studio. You must be spending a lot of time there.*

DAVIS: You know what I can do, I can go in the studio on certain days, with Bobby (Irvine III) and myself and the band, and just carve out a whole album in about three hours. And it would be great. I like live recording, cause guys get uptight when they record: "What, is the red light on?" It's not us. I like to just go in and turn it on and play.

MUSICIAN: *That's what I got from you and John (Scofield) on* Decoy.

DAVIS: John plays such great melodies in rehearsal, I take 'em off and put 'em on paper. I say, "John, you now have a song." I think people are ready for that, going in the studio and just playing. That pat stuff drives me nuts: "You gotta do this, and it has to be twenty-one minutes, how many tunes you got, gotta make one so the DJs will play it." I'm not gonna go through all that any more. I think the next one we're just going to play, then come in, and write melodies to some of 'em, double some solos . . . somebody plays a nice line, we'll just stick with that.

MUSICIAN: *You all were getting into that a bit on Friday . . . .*

DAVIS: You should hear the Paris tape. You wanna hear it? We were in Paris, Atlantic City, Los Angeles . . .

MUSICIAN: *Which do you feel the best about?*

I can go in the studio on certain days and just carve out a whole album in three hours. And it would be great.

DAVIS: In Paris, the second show. Something about Paris gives you that freedom. Soon as you land in Paris, you feel like "Whew! glad to get away from this place for a while." You know how those businessmen talk on the airline, that drives me nuts. (Loud voice) "Yeah, ahh-ahh." I said, damn, nobody trained those mothers just to talk to themselves. When I get tired of that I like to just take a trip to go to Paris. The second set had a lift to it. "Time After Time" is different on there (the Paris tape), "Jean-Pierre" is different . . . sometimes when I play it, a lot of melodies in minor key, they come to me . . . so all I do is play about nine or ten folk songs in that framework . . . then if I want John to play something funky, I'll put it into A major, so he can play his funky shit. That particular night I played all A minor melodies. Eight-bar motives. That's Paris. Tell you, the vibes are different, something happens to you over there that doesn't happen here. You know how stiff Diahann Carroll is, she was in Paris, and I saw her put her ass

The Sound: "I just discovered that's what people like about me."

up on the piano, and cross her legs, and sing "It's quarter to three . . . ain't nobody in the place but me and you." She wouldn't dare do that in the States.

MUSICIAN: *What are your audiences like in Europe?*

DAVIS: The audience is different because they like what's happening. Here they say "show me." What helps us here is that I can't be still and play. I have to walk all over the stage to get that stuff I'm thinking out. Stuff I play gets the rhythm, and I just can't stand still and play, 'cause it would do me like this anyway (poses).

MUSICIAN: *Tough question: you've been on the forefront of American music for decades. How do you perceive your influence on American music?*

DAVIS: I used to ignore that question, but I think I have some influence on it, you know, 'cause trumpet players do try to approach the trumpet like I do. And guys try to write like Gil and I did in 1949, *Birth Of The Cool*, *Miles Ahead*, *Porgy And Bess*. Johnny Mandel, and Quincy and them tried to write like that. Now it's changing. You don't have a big band arrangement like that behind singers; you've got synthesizers, and it's full, but it's not stiff. Like when you hear some patches on the synthesizer—like we use on "JP"—you can't write that, what instrument's gonna play that? It's endless what you can do with different patches. You can overdub it, but it doesn't have to be stiff like those four saxophones or those french horns. It could be high but sharp. You could take four notes, and put steel drums, electric drum, chimes, bagpipes, strings and brass together, on the synthesizer. Man, when you hit that, it's gonna sound like the world did it. You say "Plaat" like that, it's gonna have a little ring in it, it's gonna be round, but sharp,

you know, and after you hit it you're still gonna hear something.

MUSICIAN: *That stuff you play with trumpet and synth in tandem . . . .*

DAVIS: Reason I liked Atlantic City was because the sound system was so good, I sound like five brass playing. The other (places), the synthesizer didn't come up to the trumpet. In Atlantic City I said "pop" and you could hear all of it—it sounded like a full brass. You have to really watch your intonation when you play like that because if you overblow, you'll play out of tune.

MUSICIAN: *To play in that kind of a range, too. You're back playing way up there.*

DAVIS: I don't worry about if I'm gonna make the note or not, I just hit it. Because when you practice, you know what you can do. 'Course if I do, it's not a long note anyway, it's short. Bam, bop. Unison is only two out of tune notes. Darrell told me that when he plays that black bass (Steinberger) he tunes it out of tune, 'cause when he plays it sounds like unison. And that's right.

MUSICIAN: *You used an Oberheim OB-Xa. What does Bob use?*

DAVIS: He has that Prophet 5.

MUSICIAN: *What do you see as the future? Synthesizers? What are the horizons?*

DAVIS: The ear is getting used to the synthesizer sound now. And when Quincy puts Michael's stuff together, actually he has what, three or four composers under him? One for the brass, one for the strings, Quincy says Michael does his own work real well. When he comes in, he's ready. I like that boy. Everybody knows his sound.

I just found out that's what people like about me. The reason they know me on the records is because my sound is different from any trumpet player. I went to Japan, and I was backstage, and the mike was on and I played a run, and they start applauding. They recognised the sound. I said, "No shit!"

MUSICIAN: *I can't believe that. Of course you know you have a sound.*

DAVIS: You know, I never thought about it. Gil keeps tellin' me that. He says whenever you feel depressed, just listen to *Miles Ahead*, and listen to "Spring Field." He says that's all you have to do. He calls me up and tells me these different things.

MUSICIAN: *You mention* Miles Ahead; *do you ever listen to the old records?*

DAVIS: No. You know what song I want to play? The song that the guy sings on Weather Report, "Can It Be Done?" Joe's (Zawinul) gonna play it with me.

MUSICIAN: *What else do you want to play?*

DAVIS: Just that for now. I love that song. See, if I play these things, I get 'em out of my system. I already rehearsed it with the band. Hard patch on the synthesizer—you really need strong hands, the keys come up too far. Little by little, we'll take out those (old) numbers one by one, and get different ones. I have some stuff from the next album we haven't even rehearsed yet. What you have to do is hear it in the band before you play it—you have to hear in your head how it sounds, and then we see if it's appropriate to use it. 'Cause, you know, when you're in front of people you can't be bullshitting. People say "What?" "What?" Especially black people. In Atlantic City, they were right on the front row. One guy told me—I was playing the blues, that slow blues on the second side—and he said, "That's the way that should go, Miles, that's right."

You know, there's a lot of people who are good musicians: don't play no instrument. Musicians think they're putting something over on the people, but they're not. People that pay their money to hear you, they know when you're playing.

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JOHN LYDON'S PIL

RETNA

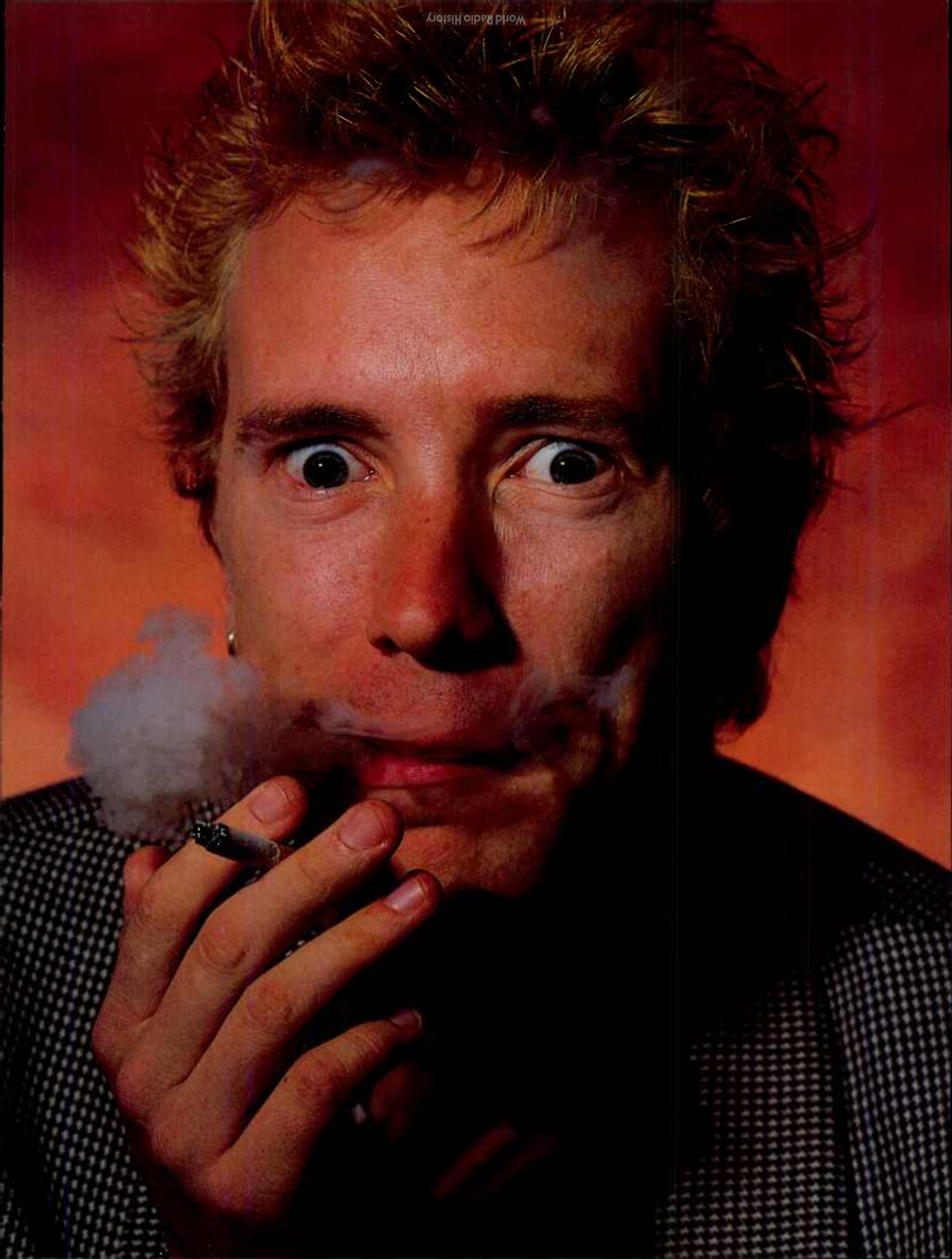
I remember when the first pictures started showing up in the American papers. They looked pretty bad. All those drastically zoned-out kids with their hair up in spikes and safety pins stuck through their cheeks, bondage gear, swastikas, black leather, rags, chains, noserings, purple hair, creative scars, public nausea, nipple cutouts, the whole gleeful array, and I thought that it was likely the most pointless dramatization of mass disaffection I had seen, adequate perhaps to show the onlooking world (and parents, I thought: parents) how immedicably wounded and distorted a declining civilization had managed to make them feel so young, so butchered out of the body of common humanity. Aliens.

I wasn't on the rock scene, but I did read the articles and thought, well, we're gonna see weirder things than this

THE LATE GREAT JOHNNY ROTTEN BLOWS UP THE WORLD AND MAKES A HOME IN THE AFTERSHOCK.

Rafi Zabor

Photo: Deborah Feingold



as the culture crumbles over the next thirty years, so you might as well get used to it early. No birth without pangs and no death without a rattle; we'll see which one it is in a couple of decades when the bomb drops or humanity starts living up to its name.

Then, one night awhile later, a friend phoned and said in a rush that the Sex Pistols were on the radio, so I turned a dial, found the last half of "Holidays In The Sun"—still my favorite cut on the album—and decided in about three seconds that no matter how useless the manifestation looked, I had it all wrong, because I was listening to the sound of liberation, a furious assertion of the living and real in the face of the dead and untrue. Also some of the greatest rock I'd ever heard.

Now, obviously the Punk Moment is not something to get all sentimental about. In an undiseased culture we would not be in need of such drastic purgations. And I never found another band as vital or as revelatory as the Pistols. And scads of people did waste their time and selves in senseless displays of mutilation and the wearing of uniforms uniforms uniforms—as usual in cultural convulsions, a ton of dead weight for every ounce of living spirit. But we're still living in the aftershock. It's part of the climate we live in, like the pollution in the atmosphere and the dust in the human machine. "We're the future, *your* future," was presumptuous but not untrue.

The seventeen-year-old singer in the band was brilliant. For an untrained street kid with no particular ambitions he worked out one of the greatest vocal styles in the history of rock in pretty short order. Those who think it was all fairly basic rant 'n' scream might pay attention to the way he puts the aforementioned "Holidays" over the top with great line readings like "I'm looking over the wall and *they're lookin' at me*!"—hysteria as a first principle of style, not to mention the epochally scabrous "We mean it, *maannn*," of the touchingly patriotic anthem "God Save The Queen." Then there are the songs themselves, brilliant, radical inventions that manage to damage whole cultures in three chords and four fast lines of rant. There's the line in the middle of "Bodies" that decides once and for all if obscene language can be used effectively in hard rock, hilarious songs like "No Feelings" ("I look around your house, you got nothing to steal," etc.), and above all the way Rotten manages to mount a hard rock attack while sidestepping entirely the rhetorical macho heroism that had seemed so inseparable and dull a part of the idiom for so long. Balls to all of it!

Of course Johnny Rotten—John Lydon's first great invention—was more than a rock singer. For the audience, he was almost pure representation, an embodiment of attitude, an individuation of a powerful and chaotic moment in time. He was every upright Englishman's bad dream of the Irish, a gutter-snipe Paddy with a shiv and a too-sharp mind. The world is full of laser-brained young men trying to write the world's greatest rant, but they tend to spin their wheels without ever engaging the gears of the world. Lydon intersected with his moment in a bigger way than he could have imagined, but in the negative, as destruction, as the massive death of illusion. The exhilaration, such as it was, belonged to Lydon in the freedom of the creative act, while back in the world of cause and effect a shit-storm was building up, and Lydon decided to get out from under fast. The Sex Pistols crashed and burned in San Francisco, true to their central impulse, and the rest was rubble, stupidity, exploitation and Sid Vicious dead.

Something like that anyway. As Lydon says, "The press are going to write what they want, aren't they? It's always going to be bigger than the truth and slightly warped." I have, then, performed my function, possibly *in excelsis*. I did, however, retain an interest in Johnny Rotten and when *Second Edition*, the American version of *Metal Box* finally came out here I was terribly disappointed. The new music sounded passive, the kind of thing I'd thought those kids in the pictures were listening to *before* I'd actually heard "Holidays In The Sun." This music was a devastated landscape scarred with trenches, barbed wire, traces of gas attack and the remains of the dead. I speculated about Rotten/Lydon, that perhaps after the ecstasy of blasting a world to bits he'd woken up in—guess what—a blasted world, his brilliant vacation from consequences over. What else could have made the originator of one of the most powerful vocal styles I'd ever heard sing in a frightened yelp that sounded as if he were afraid at any moment of having his balls yanked hard? What else could have diverted him from frontal assault to obscurish modern-poetic lyrics, avant-garde textures, in a word High Art? Or was he simply being perverse?

Still, he seemed real, a rarity in the pop world. Someone merely talented would have hired the right producer, put out acceptable product and taken his happy place with the other functionaries of the music business, with their okay records and okay bands. Lydon wasn't having any, and you had to respect that.

Now, years later, having heard the new album, seen a couple of videos and spent a couple of hours interviewing our hero, I'm ready to revise my estimate upward. *This Is What You Want, This Is What You Get*, though I enjoy it, especially the Wilson Pickettish R&B chart "This Is Not A Love Song," more than its predecessors, didn't turn the trick for me. An approximately hour-long concert video (that intercut footage from PiL appearances in Los Angeles and Japan) did. It helped that, live, the band was not a bunch of gloomy, droogy Second Avenue nihilists with Bad Hair but some good, typical rock 'n' rollers of the old school. Still, the nub was Lydon's performance. What on record sounded like Music to Commit Teenage Suicide By—or as a friend of mine quipped, Never Mind the Sex Pistols Here's the Bollocks—Lydon illuminated onstage by multiple ironies and flashes of wit. Public Image Ltd. was, among other things, devastatingly funny. Savage parody! Lydon tossed himself around the stage quite happily and ripped the songs out as suited him, and I wondered why I should have been surprised to learn that he knew how to enjoy himself in front of an audience. I particularly enjoyed "Religion," a scurrilous rant—"They take your money, and you take the *lie*!"—performed in blue light with Lydon wearing a circular fluorescent tube around his neck like a lapsed halo.

"THE SEX PISTOLS NEVER CHANGED THE WORLD UNTIL WE CEASED TO EXIST."

Maybe keeping Johnny Rotten alive would have been a disastrous mistake, the trap he'd always insisted it was. When I think of every kind of asshole an extended-run Johnny Rotten would have had abundant opportunity to be, I shudder. He could have gone on as the world's leading Scandal for Hire, a trick rabid monkey on a string, just the thing to enliven your parties and confirm straight society's complacent vision of itself—"he was just a demented little hate puppet after all, how irrelevant"—and, quick as you can say Hot Exploitation Item you would have had Instant Alice Cooper. People get eaten so quickly these days. Maybe Lydon took the smart way out and used the only means he had to get his privacy back. He has retained his status as an outsider, stalks the music like a conscience, and his abstention from the megastardom he could have anytime is a powerful statement in itself.

I caught up with him in the bar of the Hotel Berkshire. He was taller than I'd expected, and was the *whitest* man I had ever laid eyes on. The white suit was nothing—I'd seen one like it on Alec Guinness—but the phrase "waxen pallor" might have been sitting around unused since the Victorian age so it could be called up fresh to describe the effect produced by his physiognomy. I would not, however, call him cadaverous. He looks intensely vital. No doubt his veins are fairly bursting with high-grade Martian chlorophyll. He was easy to talk to—a very straight-ahead and undefensive sort of guy—but difficult to interview, giving short answers and declining to lengthen them when confronted with silence and an attentive expres-

sion. His manner of speech is exact and slightly vehement, his mind strong, clear, easily discontented, peremptory and impatient. Usually, when people make a point of their honesty, I find they're incredible, voluminous liars. He's not.

"I'VE NEVER MADE TWO ALBUMS THAT SOUND EVEN REMOTELY SIMILAR. I GET BORED."

MUSICIAN: *Most people seem more interested in the Sex Pistols than what you're doing now.*

LYDON: People don't seem to be able to handle an ongoing situation. Y'see, the Pistols are very good because they're defunct, therefore they're safe, therefore they can be handled. What I get up to these days is very much more radically different. I'm winning, slowly but surely.

MUSICIAN: *I was a big fan of the Pistols, but PiL doesn't do it for me, and not because it's too fragmented, dissonant. . . .*

LYDON: I wouldn't go out of my way to do that kind of stuff deliberately. I've never made any two albums that sound even slightly similar, and that's not deliberate either. I get bored and have to move on.

MUSICIAN: *In a TV interview yesterday you made a big point about how you had changed the music business entirely.*

LYDON: I did. I did it. I changed the business, I made doors open, I made it easier for up and coming bands. It was a Rolling Stones type monopoly of the entire business. Record companies would not sign up new acts. I opened that up.

MUSICIAN: *You also needed all that money for the kind of production they were doing at the time.*

LYDON: Yes. And it made the music utterly void and useless. I brought it back down to its grass roots again. Now the music business seems even more confusing than it was then.

MUSICIAN: *But you make a big point about how it was* you . . . .

LYDON: No, not me. I'm part of a whole generation. I just happen to be the best spokesman of it, let's put it that way. But we didn't do it to start out a bandwagon type mentality, and certainly didn't want to be imitated. There should be many different attitudes in music, and I think that's what a lot of the so-called punk movement misunderstood. The sleaziest, low-level at the moment is the Black Flag type movement; they're all into uniforms, they all look identical, the very things that these people say they're against. And that's not healthy.

MUSICIAN: *You were only seventeen when the Pistols started up. What did it feel like as it began to happen?*

LYDON: Very violent and frightening. I got physically injured quite a lot. I suppose in many ways it was the same as I'm going through now, with PiL. But with the Pistols, *we were hated*, absolutely *despised*. There was no audience there at all to any great extent. We sold a few records in a small banana republic called Britain. They never changed the world really until we became defunct and ceased to exist. Now it's seen in quite a different light. And that's not fair.

MUSICIAN: *We could tell that something large was happening over there, but it was hard to tell exactly what.*

LYDON: Something was happening, but it went corrupt. That's why it broke up. It wasn't meant to be a movement, we didn't want to change the world. We just wanted to change ourselves, initially.

MUSICIAN: *But something big did change. England was due at that moment to get its face ripped off.*

LYDON: And my God, didn't it deserve it. (laughs, sighs)

MUSICIAN: *Not being English I can't say.*

"WE WERE HATED, ABSOLUTELY DESPISED!"

LYDON: (giving me an especially dark look in response) During the Pistols days I lost many a record contract because of the big names on the label that would just ring up the boss and say, "I'm sorry, I don't want to be on the same label as *that* particular band." I mean, that was bad. People like Rick Wakeman, and that asshole from Cockney Rebel, Steve, Steve . . .[Harley].

MUSICIAN: *But how did you feel when the moment got big?*

LYDON: Bloody awful, because we were broke at the same time and people thought we were just doing it for the money. That's the joke, see; you can get all the coverage you like in the press and it doesn't make your financial situation any better. Then you find that the working-class people you come from and for whom you would like to make things better, can be your worst enemy, and that taught me a bitter lesson: *don't fly flags for anyone but yourself. It hurts.*

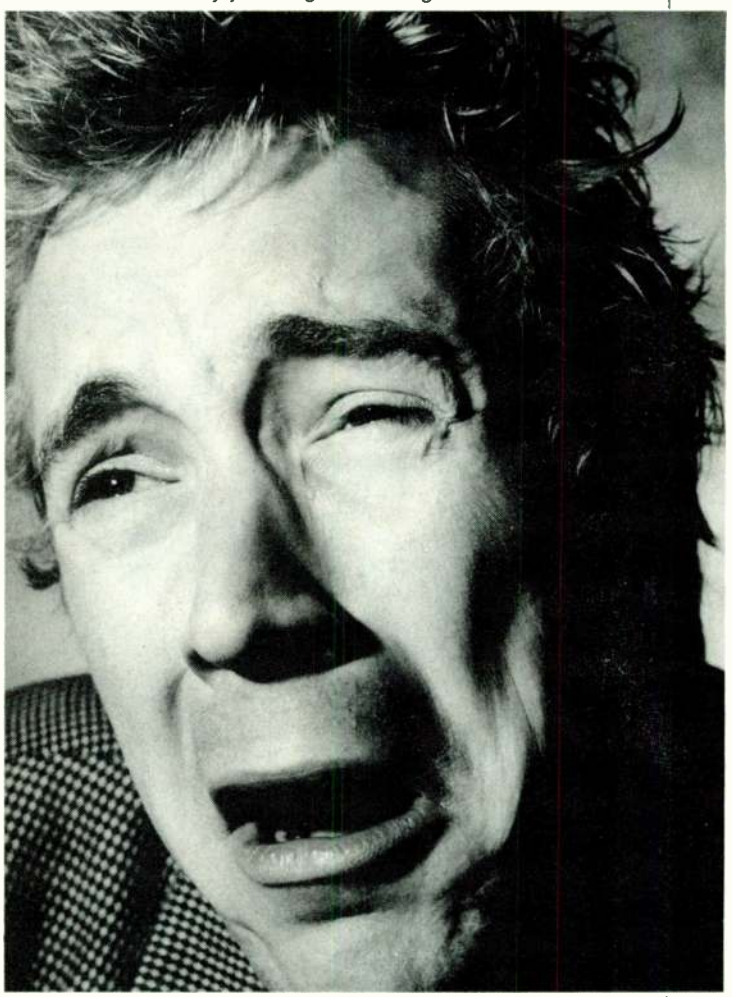
MUSICIAN: *Why were they the worst enemy? Because you were breaking the rules?*

LYDON: Because we were getting out of the ghetto.

MUSICIAN: *And they envied it?*

LYDON: Yes. Very much so.

MUSICIAN: *The way you sing has changed a lot since then.*



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

LYDON: I employ many styles. That was a rock 'n' roll rhythm. I've shifted. Now I'm into backbeats. It's more souly orientated. Much closer to myself. Look, *Never Mind The Bollocks* was the best rock record that could ever possibly be made. It was a full stop on a period, and the pressure from record companies to continually repeat that sound was just too demanding. I wouldn't have it. If I'd continued in that vein we'd be no more serious a threat than the Rolling Stones and nothing would have been achieved at all.

MUSICIAN: *Then what is being achieved?*

LYDON: *I'm doing what I want.* I'm just into making myself happy and doing records that *I like*, and hopefully they'll be liked. I'm not looking for number one records, I don't want that kind of pressure. I like my latest album very much. Everything I've done up till now has been hated on its initial release and looked back on four years later with glee. Maybe I should hold the next album four years and then release it.

MUSICIAN: *You're letting more elements back into the music now, being perhaps a bit less severe.*
LYDON: I had my fun with *that*. And that's the be-all and end-all. I'm going back to a more rocky, pop way.
MUSICIAN: *It suits me, not as a critic who's going to tell you what's good or bad, but as a listener.*
LYDON: Fine. That's your personal judgment then. The British musical ear is attuned to different things. It's quite difficult to get that across to a lot of Americans, because you're not brought up on reggae and the like. It's inherent in us. Not all of us, but most of us ghetto people. We're not into Jim Croce or *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*, it's not in us at all. The typical L.A. vocal harmonizing stuff makes rne cringe.

"ANGER IS NOT NEGATIVE IF YOU REALIZE WHAT IT IS AND FACE UP TO IT.

MUSICIAN: *So why are so many people into Boy George?*
LYDON: He's safe, he's a pantomime. Liberace. He's harmless as that. I'll tell you what fooled all of us. Helen Terry, the girl who sings backup for him—she's brilliant.
MUSICIAN: *Who else are people listening to in England?*
LYDON: I'm not sure at the moment. You know, you get to the New York discos and they play nothing but English records, as if that's something new and special. I hate the lot of them, I really do. They're weak and they're wanky and they have *no hard edge* to them. It's pap.
MUSICIAN: *Where does Malcolm McLaren fit into your story?*
LYDON: He was the manager of the Sex Pistols, and as such, speaking with great hindsight, told the world that he deliberately set the whole thing up as a scam, which wasn't true at all. I wrote the damn songs, not that fuckin' asshole. It was actually Bernie Rhodes, the Clash's manager, that got the Pistols together. He spotted me on the street and I looked like the worst thing he'd ever seen. I had an I Hate Pink Floyd T-shirt on, which he thought was highly humorous. And because I couldn't sing, not a note, it *had to be*.
MUSICIAN: *Between getting thrown out of your house by your father at fifteen and joining the Pistols two years later, what did you do?*
LYDON: Squatted in London in abject poverty. I didn't work. I refused. I never ever considered making records or even attempting anything of the like, so it was a marriage made in heaven, definitely not one planned.
MUSICIAN: *What did you have in mind?*
LYDON: Nothing. I had no prospects. They asked would I mime in front of a jukebox to Alice Cooper's "I'm Eighteen," so I did, and surprised them that I actually knew the words. I had bottle. And brains. Which is more than a lot of them had.
MUSICIAN: *I was struck by the humor of your live in L.A. and Japan video. It's a quality that doesn't come across on your PiL records, and I wish it did.*
LYDON: It would be very odd when you're making a record to be a stand-up comedian at the same time, if that's what you mean. Songs I've written like "I Wish I Could Die," *come on*, how funny can you get? The last thing I want to do is die.
MUSICIAN: *Those records just do not sound funny, whereas on stage the irony is obvious.*
LYDON: All right then, I have a very twisted version of humor. An Andy Kaufman of music.
MUSICIAN: *Did you go into Middle Eastern music very deeply before* Flowers Of Romance?
LYDON: No, it's not Middle Eastern. It's renaissance and Gaelic things. I mean, I am a Paddy. It's in my blood. I'd just come out of jail in Ireland and I was desperate to get into a studio and I did the whole thing in a week.
MUSICIAN: *Jail in Ireland? What happened?*
LYDON: Grievous bodily harm. It was just a barroom brawl. I was attacked, it was that simple, and I defended myself rather well and went to jail for it. The album's only connection to the Middle East is one song, "Four Enclosed Walls," where I'm using the theme of Allah, but it's against the Middle East, if anything. I don't believe what's going on there is healthy in any shape or form. I like that mosque singing, though.
MUSICIAN: *How many generations has your family been in England?*
LYDON: Just this, the first one.
MUSICIAN: *So as an Irishman you still find religion worth attacking. The song "Religion" for example.*
LYDON: Obviously it's against my Catholic background. What Catholics do in the name of religion is bloody cruel. For one, they send you to Catholic schools, and that is torture. But in a way it does teach you a sense of individuality. You come out of it either broken or completely, utterly against that bullshit; either way *you don't get religion*.
MUSICIAN: *Irish rebels make good, bracing haters. Jonathan Swift. Samuel Beckett's still alive. You strike me as being in that line.*
LYDON: Do I? Oh dear, I suppose so (laughs).
MUSICIAN: *A certain amount of revenge, of vengeance.*
LYDON: Yeah, all these are emotions people don't want to deal with and I definitely use them in songs. I find that more constructive than going out and shooting someone, don't you? I don't agree with the bombing in the North, either, it's a real coward's way out. Anger is not negative if you realize what it is and face up to it. Now you said hate. Hate is based on ignorance, and that's one thing I've tried not to be.
MUSICIAN: *In essence what you attack is illusion.*
LYDON: Yes. I've been labeled an anarchist; well, hold on, check my career so far. I don't just destroy things for the sake of it, I do try to come up with an alternative way of doing things. And even though that sometimes fails, at least I try. I wouldn't be an anarchist just for the pure hell of it. That's stupid.

BUT HATE IS BASED ON IGNORANCE, AND THAT'S ONE THING I'VE TRIED NOT TO HAVE."

MUSICIAN: *The Irish bardic tradition, more than most, is involved with humiliating and demolishing one's enemies with words. Perhaps you draw on that.*
LYDON: Yes, I must do, absolutely. There's nothing like a good Irish debate, and I do love doing it verbally. It gets a good interaction going.
MUSICIAN: *So it feels active and creative.*
LYDON: Yes, it does. The Irish aren't really that violent a nation, not at all. Maybe in the North, but that's because of outside influences. The South is perfect. It's heaven. There's no violence there, they just want to farm. Galway, that's where my family came from.
MUSICIAN: *Why'd they leave?*
LYDON: Poverty.
MUSICIAN: *One feeling I got from watching the live video is that in some of your bitterness you might be taking revenge on your own, more tender feelings. Were you by any chance a soft-hearted romantic sort of poof when you were a kid?*
LYDON: A poof? (incredulous laughter) No. I've never been into that kind of poetry. Maybe I'm a bit of an idealist. I do wish people wouldn't tell lies so frequently and with such fervor. I tell you, it's the hardest thing you can possibly do in your life, to make sure you never tell lies. I keep sticking to that, and it makes my life very difficult. I wouldn't call it romantic.
MUSICIAN: *So you just take a dim view of things.*
LYDON: I don't think I have a dim view at all. I'm just pointing out the mistakes. I don't think that's particularly dim.
MUSICIAN: *Do you still think that rock has had it, that "four wanky turds killed it dead as a doornail"?*
LYDON: Yes. It should be forgotten about for a while, maybe looked at again in ten or twenty years' time: "Oh, well yeah, there were some good things in there, maybe." The whole idea of rock 'n' roll, to make a fool of yourself with costumes, is not on to me.
MUSICIAN: *I really enjoyed the band you had on that L.A./*

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Japanese video. Sounded like a standard, good, pretty expensive pop/rock band.

LYDON: Actually, no, it wasn't expensive at all. They were Holiday Inn type people, they do the Jersey Holiday Inn circuit. It's a joke that they were the only people capable of understanding what the hell we were doing. We went through a year of trying to get, you know, the usual bunch of musos from New York to try and like . . . look, it's not your hairstyle, it's nothing to do with that—can you just play the tune? And they couldn't do it. Rimbaud poetry, boo. Holiday Inn cabaret, fine.

MUSICIAN: *Where would you most like to perform?*

LYDON: Where there's a more fun-type approach to life, so everyone's not so desperate to have a good time. Who the hell needs a rock club? They don't have anything to do with youth culture. They're about depressing people into spending money for something that isn't worth it. They're not for me. It seems to me to be a ludicrous way to have good fun, to stand in a dingy, dark, ill-lit corner listening to rubbish and paying double for drinks that you don't want or need. And there are always people with a chip on their shoulders, or a grudge. It's very difficult for me, for instance, to go to any of these places because it's, "What are *you* doing here? How dare you?" You're not meant to be there, apparently, according to the whims. I prefer the art of the individual. That's the best advice I can give to anybody. Don't do things in gangs. It's wrong, and you'll always be disappointed ultimately.

MUSICIAN: *With a song like "Religion," when you're attacking the church . . . .*

LYDON: I'm not attacking God, I'm attacking the priests. I watched my mother die because of those bastards. He wouldn't come to the hospital to give her last rites because he was too fucking drunk, the priest. He wouldn't turn up. Terrible. I mean, she believed heart and soul in this religion, and they insulted her in this particularly bad way (eyes flashing). They took away the last thing she believed in before she died. Don't you think that's cruel?

MUSICIAN: *Very cruel.*

LYDON: He went to a darts game. We found him later, he had several black eyes and broken jaws, 'cos that was nasty. That's his *duty*. I find it disgusting to see the priests own houses and be property speculators and have wealth. And it's against the idea, it goes against the grain. God must be turning in His grave (big laugh).

MUSICIAN: *Have you read much William Blake? No? He's very good on hating priests as the falsifiers of something real.*

LYDON: Yes. For that I'd agree with him, yes. That's yes, into essence, the purity.

MUSICIAN: *So you think there's something real back of it.*

LYDON: Yes. There must be. What's the point of it all otherwise? Not that that makes me a religious fool. I don't care about the name you apply to it, but there must be something better than this. You feel identity, therefore . . . .

MUSICIAN: *Therefore you know there's something to which it corresponds.*

LYDON: *Yes.*

MUSICIAN: *And you look around at the culture you woke up in and there's nothing for you, no reality.*

LYDON: You just keep going; every bloody day can teach you a new trick. There's two ways out. You can completely divorce yourself from the human race, or you can get well into it. I like to be well into it. Human beings, we're bastards. We're dreadful! (loud laughter) We're absolutely the lowest.

MUSICIAN: *In Islamic esotericism there's a tradition that God said, "We created man with all the highest spiritual faculties and realities in him, and then We brought him down to the lowest of the low." The deal is to find your way out, or back.*

LYDON: Yes. That's a sensible piece of writing. That's seeing it as it is. And here we go. What I believe in at the moment is probably naïve next year, *and I would hope so*. That's the point of it, surely.

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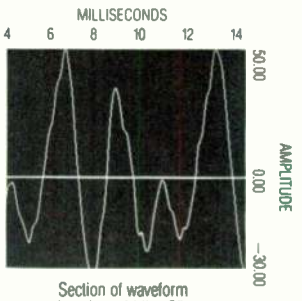

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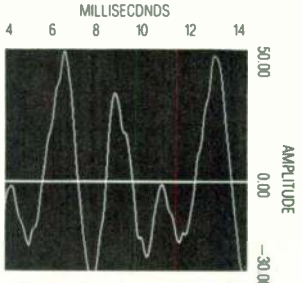

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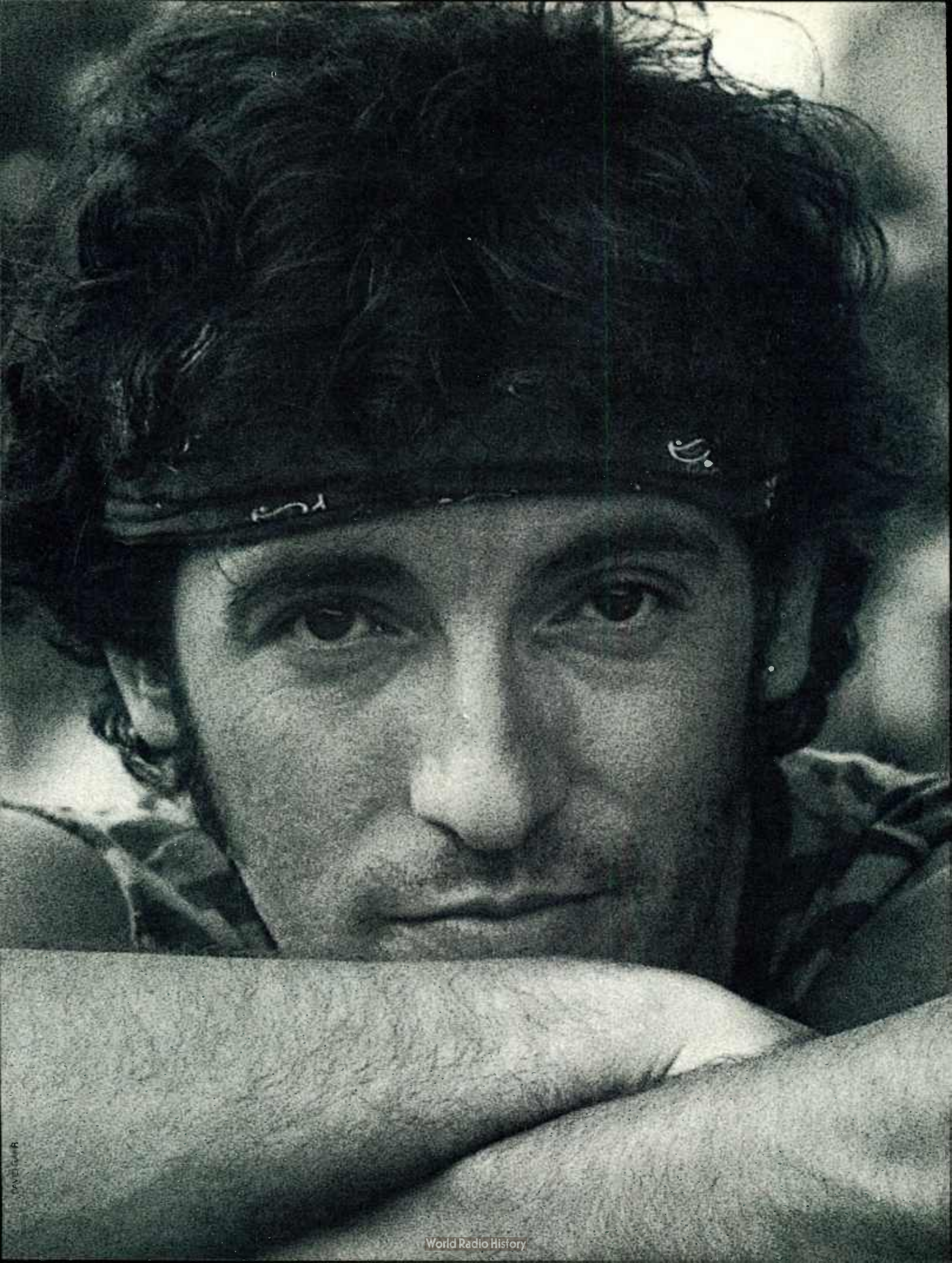


BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

A Rock 'n' Roll Evangelist for Our Times Crusades for Patriotism and Puritanism of a Different Stripe

By Chet Flippo

In a year when both political parties are fighting to see which can most reclaim the American flag and its attendant values as its own, how odd to see a rock 'n' roller predate them. Bruce Springsteen, as evidenced by *Born In The U.S.A.*'s introspective, even homey slice-of-American-life sagas, has created a curious but very real rock audience that might unknowingly have more in common with Cotton Mather than with Judas Priest, with Woody Guthrie than with Prince. Springsteen's shows, his music and his attitudes share with his audiences a sort of New Puritanism, a sense of a quasi-religious manifest destiny, and a fundamentalist acceptance of life and its troubles, along with the faith that true belief will bring a better way. When Springsteen ends his shows with a cry to "let freedom ring—that's what we're here for, even if we have to fight for it every day" there are no scoffers in his rock 'n' roll flock, only true believers.

Springsteen has the power and the touch. In many ways, he resembles the television evangelists riding the crest of a rebirth of religious fervor in this country. Unlike Jerry Falwell, though, Springsteen's message is that true salvation lies in a rock 'n' roll way of life. Articulating that

PAUL NATKIN

way is not easy; it seems to be an intuitive way of knowledge. How unusual it is to hear 20,000 rock fans cheer a performer's rap on why you should love your street and your hometown and your state and your country. Bruce talks more about family values than Reagan does. Yet none of this suggests jingoism so much as a pure yearning for a return to solid values. Of course any value is better than no value, as demagogues and hucksters have always known. Any shyster can flourish in a moral vacuum, and in the past rock 'n' roll has never gotten gold medals for presenting either wholesome role models or messages to young people. So what is *this* all about?

Part of Bruce Springsteen's current level of success must be attributed to his talent as an entertainer, and the absence of any real hard-edged competition. Even so, the oft-hesitant *New York Times* has flatly proclaimed Springsteen the "best rock performer ever." And there is no denying the fanatical intensity he brings to a show, the evangelical zeal of the true believer. Springsteen is the hardest-working white man in show business. His appeal transcends traditional rock 'n' roll parameters, though. He's selling something unique among rock superstars: a self-evident faith. And in performance, he manages to project a R&R greatest hits collage: a bit of Buddy Holly's innocence, some of the dark sensuality of Elvis, a bit of Bob Seger's blue collar integrity, and the exuberance and abandon of a Mitch Ryder.

That charisma is as strong offstage. I caught up with Springsteen at shows in Detroit and New Jersey and found the backstage atmosphere unusual for rock. No hysteria of any sort, no cocker-spaniel bed-wetting exuberance. The feeling was rather like being in a busy ant colony at work. (The parallel to the Crusades shall go unmentioned.) People around Bruce don't want reflected glamour so much as approval. The Springsteen work ethic is clearly palpable. MTV may offer its viewers a lost weekend with Van Halen—for Bruce, it's the chance to be a roadie.

"I WANTED *U.S.A.* TO FEEL LIKE EVERYDAY LIFE, NOT SOME BIG HEROIC THING."

Bruce does not behave like a star either. When he met me in his dressing room in Detroit after a show, his manner was that of an accomplice, a confidant, a comrade. For someone who seldom grants interviews, he was forthright, to the point, and funny. When I told him that he finally had a big enough constituency to either run for the Senate or start his own church, he laughed it off: "Naw, Clarence is gonna do that." That breezy Jersey Shore camaraderie does not disguise a manner that is so simple and direct that it's almost misleading. This is a man who clearly has thought out his position in the scheme of things and has some things to say about it.

MUSICIAN: *Aren't you offering uplifting rock 'n' roll? Isn't there a moral lesson involved with all that you do?*

SPRINGSTEEN: Yeah, I guess. The one thing that bothered me about the *Born To Run* record was that when it was initially criticized people thought it was a record about escape. To me, there was an aspect of that, but I always felt it was more about searching. After that, that's what I tried with *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* and *The River* and *Nebraska*. It was like: How real are these things in people's everyday lives? How important are they? I don't know exactly what I'd call it, but I know that most of my records after the *Born To Run* were somehow a reaction to the *Born To Run* album. To my own experience of it, which was really wild, it was really a big moment in my life. Now, "Born To Run," the song means a lot more to me than it did then. I can sing it tonight and feel like it breathes in all those extra years. It's been, like—I wrote it ten years ago now. But it still feels really real. Very real, for me. It's one of the most emotional moments of the night. I can see all of those people and that song to them is like—that's their song, man. It's almost as much the audience's as it is mine. I like it when the lights are up because you can see so much from people's faces. That's what it's about. But I like doing the old songs now, because I really feel they let the years in, they don't feel limiting. Like, I hear part of *Nebraska* in *Born To Run* now.

MUSICIAN: *Is* Born In The U.S.A. *primarily about, as it suggests, blue-collar patriotic values and rock 'n' roll realism?*

SPRINGSTEEN: That was the direction I was going in. It was kind of hard to get there because I was just learning the importance of certain types of detail, which I began to get a handle on, I think, in "Darkness On The Edge Of Town." And "Stolen Car" and "Wreck On The Highway," which was kind of country-music-influenced stuff. I wanted the record to feel like what life felt like. You know, not romantic and not some sort of big heroic thing. I just wanted it to feel like an everyday, Darlington County kind of thing. Like in "Glory Days," it sounds like you're just talking to somebody; that's what I wanted to do. Wanted to make it feel like you meet somebody. The *Nebraska* stuff was like that: you meet somebody and you walk a little while in their shoes and see what their life is like. And then what does that mean to you? That's kind of the direction my writing's going in and in general it's just the thing I end up finding most satisfying. Just saying what somebody had to say and not making too big a deal out of it.

MUSICIAN: *Do you feel that you have real, believable characters now that people your songs?*

SPRINGSTEEN: That's the hardest thing to do, the very hardest. When I wrote the *Nebraska* stuff, there were songs that I really didn't get, because I didn't get the people. I had all the detail, but if you don't have that underlying emotional connection that connects the details together, then you don't have anything. There were songs that didn't get onto *Nebraska* because they didn't say anything in the end. They had no meaning. That's the trickiest thing to do and that was my only test of songs: is this believable? Is this real? Do I know this person? I was real lucky because I wrote almost all the *Nebraska* songs in about two months. Which is really fast for me. I just locked in and it was really different for me. I stayed in my house. I just worked all the time. Sat at a table or with the guitar. It was exciting because I realized that this was different from stuff I'd done before and I didn't know what it was. But with songs like "Highway Patrolman" and the "Nebraska" song itself, writing like that, I was real happy with it. It just felt real. I didn't know I was gonna do that, but I knew I was going somewhere in that direction.

MUSICIAN: *Are those songs a reaction to what is happening in America? To American values?*

SPRINGSTEEN: I don't know. I think that what happened during the Seventies was that, first of all, the hustle became legitimized. First through Watergate. That was a real hurting thing, in that the cheater, the hustler, the dope pusher on the street—that was legitimization for him. It was: you can do it, just don't get caught. Someone will ask, what did you do wrong? And you'll say, I got caught. In a funny kind of way, *Born To Run* was a spiritual record in dealing with values. And then *Nebraska* was about the breakdown of all those values, of all those things. It was kind of about a spiritual crisis, in which man is left lost. It's like he has nothing left to tie him into society anymore. He's isolated from the government. Isolated from his job. Isolated from his family. And, in something like

More bang for the buck: Bruce's marathon concerts are powered by his imaginary view from the fifth row.

"Highway Patrolman," isolated from his friends. That's what the record is all about. That happens in this country, don't you see, all the time. You see it on the news. And it seems to be a part of modern society. I don't know what anybody can do about it. There is a lot of that happening. When you get to the point where nothing makes sense. Where you don't feel connected to your family, where you don't feel any real connection to your friends. You just feel that alone thing, that loneness. That's the beginning of the end. It's like you start existing outside of all those things. So *Born To Run* and *Nebraska* were kind of at opposite poles. I think *Born In The U.S.A.* kind of casts a suspicious eye on a lot of things. That's the idea. These are not the same people anymore and it's not the same situation. These are survivors and I guess that's the bottom line. That's what a lot of those characters are saying in "Glory Days" or "Darlington County" or "Working On The Highway." It certainly is not as innocent anymore. But, like I said, it's ten years down the line now.

MUSICIAN: *So you and your characters are facing adulthood?*

SPRINGSTEEN: That's kind of where I'm at right now. I wanted to make the characters grow up. You got to. Everybody has to. It was something I wanted to do right after *Born To Run*. I was thinking about it then. I said, Well, how old am I? I'm this old, so I wanna address that in some fashion. Address it as it is and I didn't see that that was done a whole lot [in rock lyrics]. To me it seemed like, hey, it's just life, you know. It's nothin' but life. Let's get it in there. I wrote "Racing In The Street" kind of about that. See I love all those Beach Boys songs. I love "Don't Worry, Baby." If I hear that thing in the right mood, forget it. I go over the edge, you know? But I said: How does it feel for you right now? So I wrote "Racing In The Street" and that felt good. As I get older I write about me, I guess, and what I see happening around me and my family. So that's *Born In The U.S.A. Born To Run* was the beginning of that and it's funny because I always felt that was my birthday album. All of a sudden, *bang*! Something happened, something crystallized and you don't even know what. And now what are you gonna do? That's the big question. You have an audience; you have a relationship with that audience; it's just as real as any relationship you have with your friends. It's funny. I wrote "Born To Run" in 1974 and now it's 1984 and you can kind of see that something happened along the way. That's a good feeling.

MUSICIAN: *How do your rock values apply to your audience? What can you tell them of what you've learned?*

SPRINGSTEEN: I think it's different for every performer. I don't think it's any one thing anymore. You really can't tell people what to hold onto—you can only tell your story. Whether it's to tell it to just one person or to a bunch of people. There's nothing more satisfying to me than coming in and playing really hard . . . and watching people—watching their faces. And then going home and feeling real tired at the end of the day but knowing that something happened. So, I don't know about the question of what rock 'n' roll means to anyone. I think every individual has got to answer that question for themselves at this point. I don't think there ever was anyone with an answer. It's like the difference between Jerry Lee and Elvis. At the time, they were both great. It's just that you've got to take it for what it is and see if you can make something out of it. Some people, they don't even hear it. It just goes over their heads or something. So I don't think you can really generalize.

MUSICIAN: *So, is your music just about girls and cars?*

SPRINGSTEEN: That's what everybody is saying. I always like those reviews. It's funny, because I remember that when I was about twenty-four and I said, "I don't want to write about girls and cars anymore." Then I realized, "Hey! That's what Chuck Berry wrote about!" So, it wasn't my idea. It was a genre thing. Like detective movies. I used to compare it to spaghetti westerns.

MUSICIAN: *Or morality plays, maybe?*

SPRINGSTEEN: Yeah. It's probably less like that now than it was at one time. But I was always very interested in keeping a continuity in the whole thing. Part of it for me was the John Ford westerns, where I studied how he did it, how he carried it off. And then I got into this writer, William Price Fox, who wrote *Dixiana Moon* and a lot of short stories. He's just great with detail. In "Open All Night" I remember he had some story that inspired me, I forget what it was. But I was just interested in maintaining a real line through the thing. If you look just beneath the immediate surface, it's usually right there. So I like the girls and cars idea.

MUSICIAN: *But you consciously write images.*

SPRINGSTEEN: Oh yeah, I always loved the movies. And, after all, music is evocative. That's the beauty of it. Which is also the danger of video. The tools can be great there and obviously it can be used real well. But it can also be used badly because it's an inanimate thing in and of itself. The thing about a good song is its evocative power. What does it evoke in the listener?

"NEBRASKA WAS ABOUT A BREAKDOWN IN VALUES, A SPIRITUAL CRISIS."

A song like "Mansion On The Hill"—it's different to everybody. It's in people's lives, in that sense. That's what I always want my songs to do: to kind of just pan out and be very cinematic. The *Nebraska* record had that cinematic quality, where you get in there and you get the feel of life. Just some of the grit and some of the beauty. I was thinking in a way of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, because in that movie there was a child's eye view. And *Night Of The Hunter* also had that—I'm not sure if surrealistic is the right word. But that was poetic when the little girl was running through the woods. I was thinking of scenes like that.

MUSICIAN: *What about your relationship with video, from "Atlantic City" filmed without you in it to "Dancing In The Dark?"*

SPRINGSTEEN: Well, when I did the *Nebraska* record they didn't want it. I really didn't have anything to do with the Atlantic City video. The only direction I gave was to say that it should be kind of gritty-looking and it should have no images that matched up to images in the songs. I was really happy with it. I liked the way it came out. "Dancing In The Dark" was Brian DePalma. That was interesting, working with him. I really haven't gotten into video as of yet. We did that one around the time we were starting the tour and putting together the show. And that is the center of what we do. That has to be right. I look forward to getting into video, to see what can be done with it.

"I REALIZED THAT'S WHAT CHUCK BERRY WROTE ABOUT: GIRLS AND CARS."

MUSICIAN: *What about reactions to the blaster mix of "Dancin' In The Dark?"*

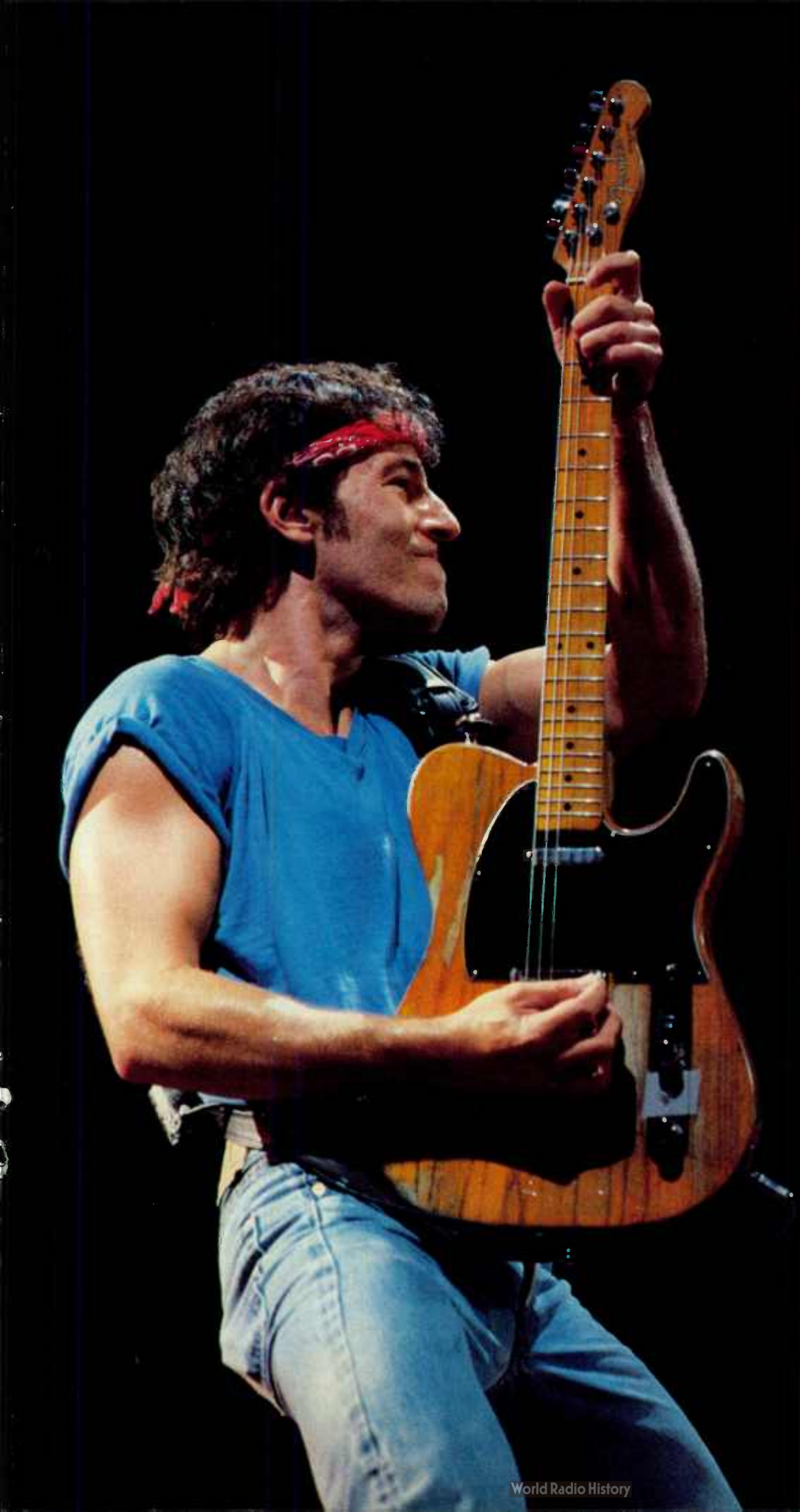
SPRINGSTEEN: People kind of get a rigid view of certain things. That mix was an experimental thing initially. I heard one on the radio and I said, "Man, that sounds like fun! Let's do one of those." And so we got it to (producer) Arthur Baker and he was great, he was tremendous. I had a good time with it. He did the whole thing. His overdubs were kind of connected to my songs. He would put in something that sounded like a glock (glockenspiel) or a twangy guitar. When I heard it I just thought it was fun. This was kind of wild, man, this guy, he's got an unchained imagination. I thought it was real creative. You've gotta do different things and try stuff. I figured that a lot of people would like it and that the people that didn't like it would get over it. My audience is not that fragile, you know. They can take it. I'm just into seeing some different things. I could easily go out and do just what I did before. But now we're playing outdoors on this tour, which I hadn't done before. And we did the blaster thing and the video thing. I want to learn it myself. I want to just step out and see what works. If something doesn't work, that's okay and if something does, great. In ten years I've built up a relationship with my audience.

MUSICIAN: *To the point where they would support a quasi-commercial risk such as* Nebraska?

SPRINGSTEEN: Yeah! It was really well-supported by my audience, which was real satisfying and in tune. So, I say, hey, let's do some things, get in there. I can't stand in one place. You've got to take some chances.

MUSICIAN: *What about fans' expectations? Especially the assumption that you've inherited the rock 'n' roll crown.*

SPRINGSTEEN: I don't think you can ever think about that. I certainly would never think that. All those people were my heroes at one point or another. I still love Dylan, love the Stones. I kind of look at what I do in a couple of different ways. One is that it's my job and it's something I like doing and I do it the best that I can. Obviously I'm aware of people's expectations and you gotta wrestle with that. But at the same time you gotta say, I write songs and we got a band, and that's who



TYPE-E BEHAVIOR

Bruce Springsteen's main guitar is a '57 Fender Esquire. He uses Boogie heads through a Prime Time digital delay. He uses an SAE third-octave equalizer and Nady tube distortion. All his guitars are Telecasters and all have custom built pre-amps inside 'em. He has an Obie F.R.C. to eliminate static. Both Bruce and Nils use Takamine acoustics, 6 & 12 strings.

Nils Lofgren mainly plays a '59 Stratocaster with old Bill Lawrence pickups (they eliminate the field, says Nils). He has a Strato-blaster in the guitar which he keeps turned all the way down (adds brightness, says Nils). He plays through a Fender Reverb and a Music Man run together. "I use an MXR for distortion. I keep the fuzz as low as possible and the gain on full for a thicker, smoother sound." He also uses a Guild Rotoverb. Buy it if ya find it.

Garry W. Tallent plays a new Guild SB602 bass with standard EMG pickups ("It weighs ten pounds less than the one from the last tour and I'm a happy man"). He uses three MESA Boogie amps through four Boogie 1x15 cabinets, as well as Guild bottoms.

Roy Bittan plays a Yamaha grand piano, a Yamaha DX7 and a Yamaha CS80 synthesizer. "The CS80 is one of the warmest synthesizers," says Roy. "Certain synths sound extremely electronic. That gives them a certain coldness. For this application the CS80 turned out to be a real good choice. To fit the synths into Bruce's thing, warmth was an important quality to have. The DX7 has a cleanness and sometimes starkness the CS80 doesn't have."

Danny Federici plays a Hammond B-3 and a Yamaha DX7 and a weird, hand-made glock in a box. Sounds like a celeste, but it's actually a glockenspiel stuck in a box and played with keys. All attempts to get the glock's sound captured on synth tape have eluded musical science.

Clarence Clemons plays three early model Selmer Mark 6's; his soprano and baritones are Yamaha, both new. The Big Man and music designer Tim Holland designed a guitar-like strap that conforms to Clarence's Olympian proportions and allows him to swing the sax on his back like Johnny Cash.

Max Weinberg plays Ludwig drums with Remo Emperor heads and Zildjian cymbals.

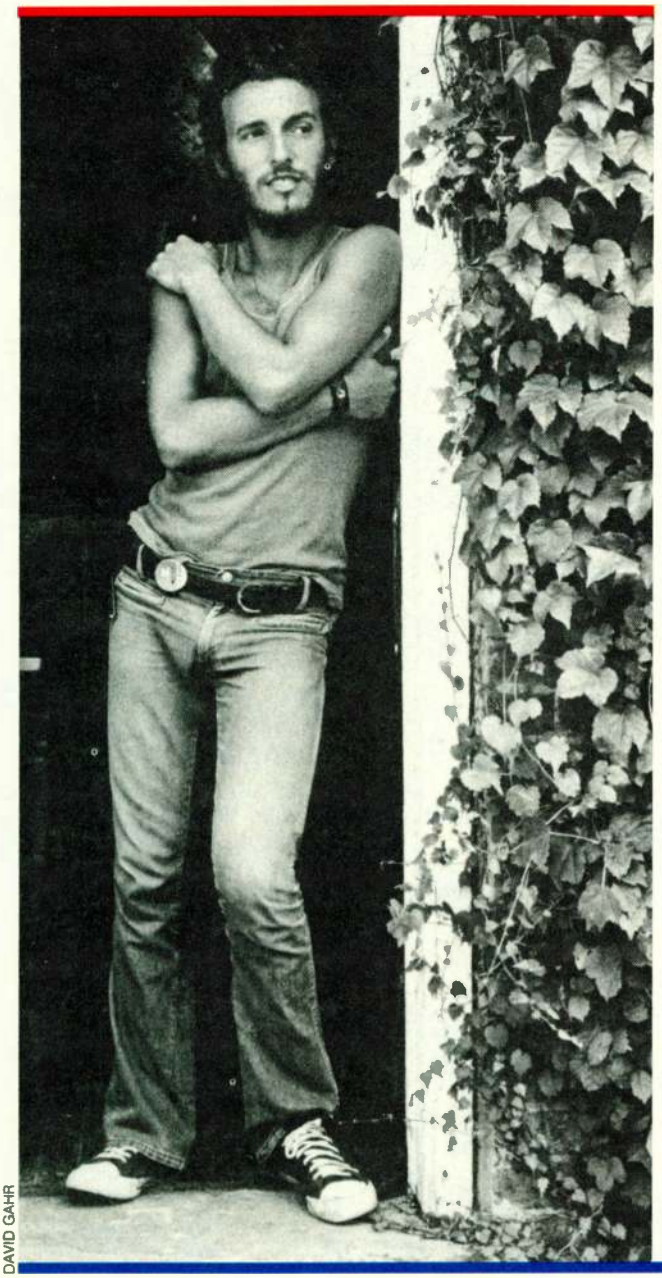
you are, you know? I don't think you can carry that kind of thing around with you. I just want to do what I can do. At different times I allowed myself to live under those types of pressures, of expectations.

I think that the audience and the performer must allow each other room to be human and to make mistakes. If not, then they don't deserve each other. That's what I wanted our band to be like. When I'm onstage I always feel, "What would I want to see if I was the guy in the fifth row?" I'm watching it and being up there and doing it at the same time. I still feel like such a big fan myself of all music.

MUSICIAN: *What happened with Steve van Zandt?*

SPRINGSTEEN: It was real emotional, him going, and I'll certainly miss him. But he had to. He had written a lot of real good songs; he had something to say and he has for quite a while. And it was time that he stepped out and did what he had to do. But I talk to him all the time. Nils (Lofgren) I'd known on and off. Me and Nils auditioned the same night at the Fillmore West in 1969. When the situation came up, I had spent some time with him and I knew that he thought and felt about music and rock 'n' roll the way that I did. So that was kind of it. We never auditioned anybody or anything. He really brought an emotional thing to the band. At this point I think that the band is the only thing that counts. It's the emotional commitment you gotta have to get on that stage.

*Pre-*Born-*again Springsteen at home in Jersey.*



DAVID GAHR

"I WANTED TO MAKE MY CHARACTERS GROW UP. EVERYBODY HAS TO."

MUSICIAN: *Are you going to vote this year?*

SPRINGSTEEN: I'm not registered yet. I think I am gonna register and vote my conscience. I don't know that much about politics. I guess my politics are in my songs, whatever they may be. My basic attitude is people-oriented, you know. Kind of like human politics. I feel that I can do my best by making songs. Make some difference that way.

MUSICIAN: *You have no perfume or beer companies or anybody sponsoring your tour. Would you ever?*

SPRINGSTEEN: We get approached by corporations. It's just not something that struck me as the thing that I wanted to do. Independence is nice. That's why I started this. For the independence. I'm telling my story out there. I'm not telling somebody else's. I'm saying what I want to say. That's the only thing I'm selling. I had a few small jobs before I started playing but when I picked up that guitar, that was when I could walk down my own path. That's just the way I like it. It's a lucky feeling, you know, because how many people get to set their own standards and kind of run their own circus?

MUSICIAN: *You're doing the Rolling Stones' "Street Fighting Man" as an encore. Is that a political statement?*

SPRINGSTEEN: I don't know. I like that one line in the song, "What can a poor boy do but play for a rock 'n' roll band?" It's one of the greatest rock 'n' roll lines of all time. It just seemed right for me to do it. It's just fun. In that spot of the night it just fits in there. It's just so driving, man. After "Born To Run," we got to go up. That's the trick. 'Cause it's hard to find songs for our encore. You gotta go up and then you gotta go up again. It has tremendous chord changes, that song.

MUSICIAN: *Is this another tour that lasts forever?*

SPRINGSTEEN: Well, it's just the way we've always done it. It's partly because the records take a while and by the time we get out, you want to go everyplace. But that was the original idea: this is a traveling band. You gotta bring it to people. Up real close, as close as you can get. That's what I like to do. 'Cause if you want it for yourself, you gotta want it for everybody, 'cause it's all connected. In the end it's all part of the same thing. Which is why Elvis' message was so profound. It reaches everybody, everywhere. Doesn't matter where or what the problems are or what the government is like. It bypasses those things. It's a heart to heart. It's a human thing. That's why it should go out. Somebody comes out, they shout and yell, they have a great night, it's a rock 'n' roll show. It makes a difference, makes them think about something different. If I walk out on that stage and I feel it, there's a moment here that can't be recaptured. This is the night that they meet you and you meet them, head on. That chance only comes once. One time. And you gotta take advantage of it. Some nights, like tonight in that Detroit medley, you can hear the scream and that captures the entire night. That's what I came to do. That's all I wanted to say. ■

DAVID GAHR

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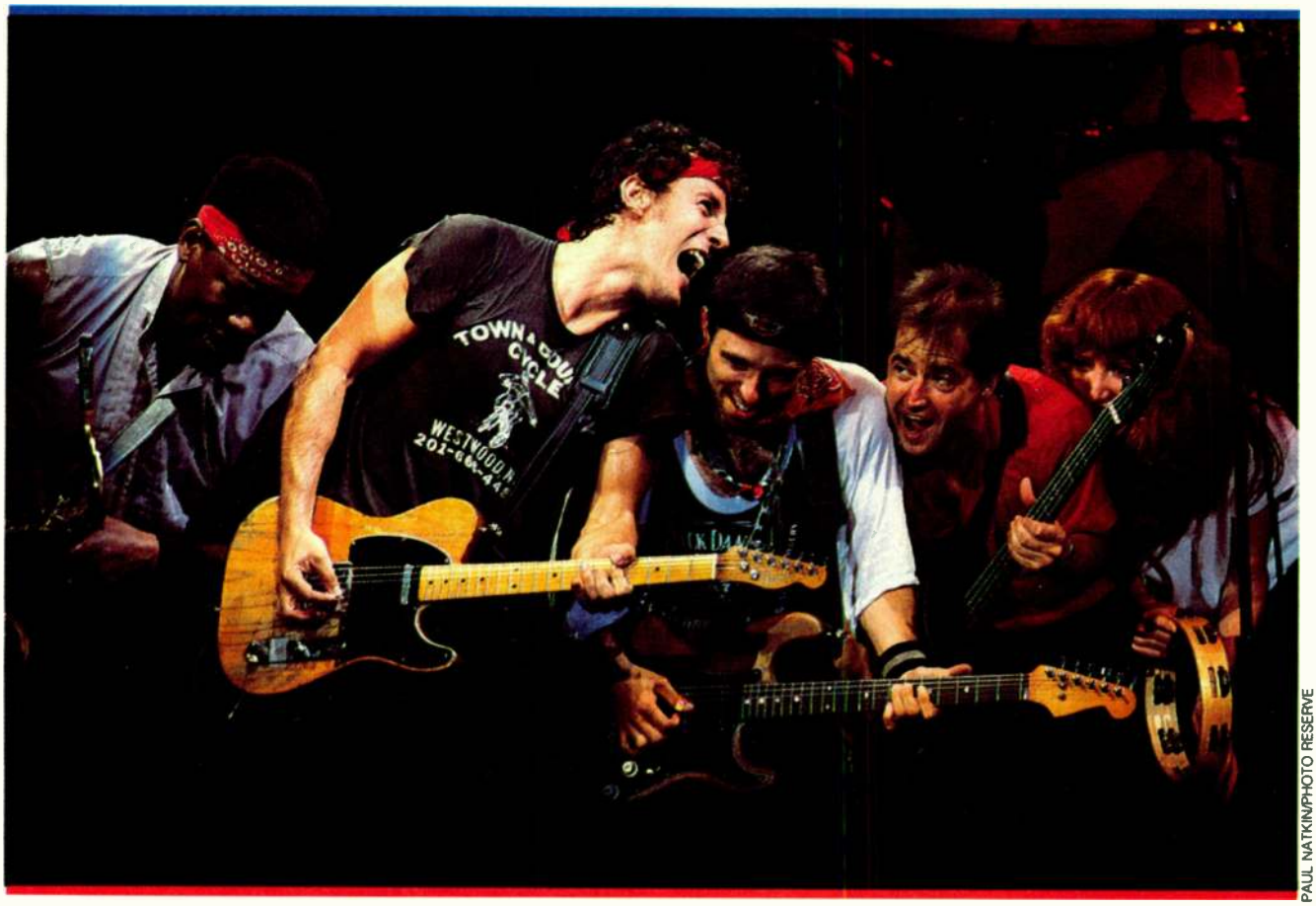


PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

PLAYING IN THE BAND

Getting the E Street Shuffle Down Tight

By Bill Flanagan

Recording *Born In The U.S.A.* really depended on the band playing at its full potential all the time," says Max Weinberg. "Because there was very little rehearsal. We just went in without ever really running the songs down and recorded everything live. We cut seventy or seventy-five songs. Sometimes the band didn't even know the chords. They'd be looking at Bruce's hands. Bruce always sings live. We really depended on linking up.

"It was funny about this record," the drummer went on. "Most of it was recorded before MTV, before the Police got really big. 'Born In The U.S.A.,' 'Darlington County,' 'Glory Days,' 'I'm On Fire'—all those songs were recorded in the original sessions. This is more of a true American rock 'n' roll band sound. It's the way we always sounded in rehearsal.

"We hadn't played in six months and suddenly we came together and played. So it was very loose, very relaxed. We didn't even work it out. That makes more sense for a band like us, trying to capture the heat of the moment. It took us ten years to get to the point where we could really do that. We've always tried, but it didn't come off. That's one of the reasons I think my drumming on *Darkness At The Edge Of Town* leaves a bit to be desired. You've got to make it as immediate as possible. As Bruce says, 'We don't make records, we make music.'"

It's July. Max Weinberg and the rest of the E Street Band are in Canada to play three nights in the Toronto Blue Jays' baseball stadium. "Dancing In The Dark" has been all over the radio since early May. *Born In The U.S.A.*, the new album, has been in the stores for a couple of weeks. The Bruce Springsteen tour, which will last more than a year, is just getting underway.

Like this tour, the E Street Band has been over a decade in the making. Organist Danny Federici has been playing with Bruce for fifteen years. Garry Tallent (bass) and Clarence Clemons (sax) came aboard before Springsteen's first album was recorded in 1973. Weinberg and pianist Roy Bittan started in late '74, in time to play on all of *Born To Run* except the title track. The band has two new members tonight. Nils Lofgren is a star in his own right, almost as well known for his work with Neil Young as for his own albums. Also new is back-

ground vocalist Patti Scialfa, a striking young woman with a powerful voice and southern New Jersey origin. By the end of a three and a half hour concert, it's obvious that one of rock's best bands has gotten better. At a point when any ambitious musician would be content to maintain his level, Springsteen's group has made a leap forward.

"I've seen Bruce's show a lot over the last ten years," Nils Lofgren comments. "As good as the band has always been, they're certainly better now. They've really matured. The first time Bruce played the new album for me, I especially noticed how good the band had gotten. They needed all that time, ten or fifteen years, to all progress to that stage. There's no short cuts to where they are. To walk into the band at this moment is just fantastic."

There's a wonderful moment toward the end of "Born In The U.S.A." when the whole band sounds as if they're teetering, about to lose it, then pull back together with the exhilaration of an airplane pulling out of a nosedive. Compliment Springsteen on that track and he says, "That's Max. Max was the best thing on that song. That was only the second take, and it's Max's best ever."

Weinberg recalls the moment: "We all thought the song was over. I was just about to stop playing. Then we went on for another eight minutes. There's a long jam that's not on the record. It was very exciting. At the point when we started recording *Born In The U.S.A.*, my style was very stripped down. I made a conscious effort not to do as many fills. That particular song was a real fluke because I wasn't into playing that way. It was real late at night, the session was over, and Bruce just started playing this guitar rhythm. That day on the way to New York I'd been listening to a Stones tape. I had the 'Street Fighting Man' groove in my mind. Roy came up with the line that he plays and it just fell into place. It was the simplest, quickest thing that I've ever had happen to me in the studio."

Weinberg's sparser approach was influenced by his research for *The Big Beat*, his book of interviews with the greatest rock drummers. Talking to his heroes and studying their work gave Weinberg new insights. Max spent a day with Ringo, came back to the States, and played like Ringo on the next song the band cut, "Bobby Jean." Listening to *Who's Next* led to approximating Keith Moon on the end of "No Surrender." "I used to overplay terribly," Weinberg volunteers. It's a surprising admission from one of the most imitated—and sought after—rock drummers of the last ten years. Wasn't that big drum presence part of the Springsteen sound?

"I was never comfortable with that," Max declares. "There's certain tracks I listen to I know I could have done better on. I played badly on 'Prove It All Night.' I just wasn't hitting the mark that day."

Clarence Clemons doesn't disagree. "Like Max says," the sax player shrugs. "He was over-playing. He was over-anxious to do everything just right instead of relaxing and letting it happen. In the three years we were off the road everybody grew so much, musically and emotionally. And it shows. Now everybody's sure of themselves, of their abilities. You just play. It's a lot easier now."

Bruce Springsteen has grown. And not just as an artist, as an influence, and as a commercial force. Springsteen has GROWN. He's taller. After the first of the Toronto concerts, my buddies and I were at the hotel pool when the Boss came out to join us for a swim. Heavy exercise and proper diet has transformed a once Jaggeresque physique into He-man proportions. The word around the dressing room is that with his new muscles, Bruce's once horrible posture got unbent, and new inches were unfurled. The morning after one of his marathon shows leaves him exhausted, Springsteen drags himself out of bed and heads for the gym.

All of which brings us to the E Street Band's role as New Prototype for rock 'n' roll habits. *People* magazine compared the clean-living band to the Hardy Boys. Intoxicants stronger than beer can't be found backstage, and workouts are the hot pursuit. Moms and dads who fell in love to the music and image of the Rolling Stones must wonder what to make of kids who celebrate being "Born In The U.S.A.," bring American flags to rock concerts, and make a drugless guy like Springsteen the country's top rocker. Whatever happened to decadence? [*You wanna take that one, David Lee? –Ed.*]

During intermission at one of the four-hour concerts Clarence Clemons stretches out on a rub-down table and says, "This tour, everybody's physically fit. Everybody's into being in shape, being aware of what you're putting in your body." To the suggestion that, in a high-glamour era, the E Streeters project a regular guy image, Clarence says, "That's the fun of it. To be a regular guy and to generate such enthusiasm. And not lose touch with your reality. We've all been around. We've seen it. And it's no big deal. I hate that decadence. Some bands go out and play forty-five minutes. They've got limousines and caviar and champagne." Clemons makes each luxury sound like a communicable social disease. "Forget that. I just want to do my job and make people happy."

Confronted with accusations of temperance, bassist Garry Tallent flops back in his chair feigning drunken incoherence. "No," he smiles as he straightens up. "It's true but, especially since *People* magazine, it's become a *thing*. There's a lot of bands out there who aren't zonked every night. We're not the only ones. I just don't want it to become a big thing: 'Oh. These guys are straight.' That's silly. Then it becomes something that it's not intended to be. To my way of lookin', it sort of fits. All of a sudden people are taking care of themselves, running, working out. If anything," Tallent smiles, "I think the times have caught up with us. We're the band of the 80s."

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Working out: Clarence Clemons, the Boss and Garry Tallent.

Garry Tallent joined the band in January of 1971. "Bruce always did originals," Tallent says. "As long as I've known him. When I started playing with him the idea was, 'Strictly originals.' And we didn't work. I think we were together nine months, rehearsing in the garage, working just once in a while. Then we decided to play some clubs. So we learned some Rolling Stones songs and some Chuck Berry songs," Tallent laughs, "which were basically the same—so we could fill out five sets."

What's most different now?

"Being accepted," Tallent smiles. "Even in the little clubs,

the acceptance has been there quite a while. This scale, worldwide, is great. But I can't remember too many times it was really a bummer 'cause people didn't accept us. I remember a couple of occasions early on when people wanted to hear Steel Mill (Bruce's hard rock band) and we weren't giving them that kind of stuff any more. We had trouble playing in

LARRY BUSACCA

Max Weinberg feels his new, uncluttered playing is his best.

places where he was once very popular. But that was a long time ago. What's the same is feeling that what you're doing is great. I've always loved Bruce's writing and I've always loved playing in a band with him. That has always been."

It's twenty-five minutes before showtime the next evening. Springsteen wanders out of the dining room backstage, and toward his dressing room. Lofgren paces up and down the hall, strumming the Chuck Berry rhythm of "Open All Night" on an acoustic guitar. From out of a side door emerges crew member Terry MaGovern—a big, dignified man with a gray beard—dressed in a large foam-rubber tree costume. During "Growin' Up" Bruce will launch into a monologue about Clarence and he being lost in the Jersey woods. MaGovern has been drafted into portraying the woods. His partner Jim McDuffie will represent the animal kingdom, dressed as a bear. Roy Bittan comes out, sees MaGovern and goes into hysterics. While Nils still strums to himself, Roy grabs his camera and gets his wife Amy to pose with the forest primeval.

In the dressing room across the hall, Patti Scialfa lines her eyes and searches for her toothpaste. "I always take my work seriously," Scialfa says. "But working for Bruce is real different. I want to be as good as I can possibly be. I've never been as disciplined as right now. I do a voice lesson every day. I work out. I feel a real responsibility to give a hundred percent. Bruce makes me feel that in a very positive way.

"Some people you work for are crabby, or they have a lot of problems that come out. That makes it hard to feel good about yourself. But Bruce is a great leader. He's *fearless*." Patti laughs. "He gets up there and he's calm, he looks very centered. It's like, 'This is it. This is what we're going to do.' Working for somebody like that enables me to rise to my best. He brings out a purity. There's nothing putting up blocks."

Patti had seen Bruce play only once before joining the band. She met him in the summer of 1983, while sitting in with a local bar band, Cats on a Smooth Surface, in Asbury Park. (She had left a gig with Southside Johnny a year earlier.) At the beginning of the summer of '84, Bruce invited her over to his house to sing with Nils, Roy and him. "We just sat around with acoustic guitars," Scialfa remembers. "It was very casual, which I thought was nice. He called about two days later and asked if I wanted to come up and sing with the whole band." Patti passed the audition, and was asked to join the E Street Band on a Sunday night. The tour began that Wednesday. She got through the first show using crib notes. Patti still hasn't told Bruce that she's one of the girls who auditioned to join the band when *Born To Run* came out.

Is there a greater lesson in Patti's story? She thinks so: "You *can* meet somebody nice in a bar."

Nils Lofgren was about to start work on an album for a European label when he got the call, in May. Last winter Nils spent some time at Bruce's house. "I'd heard these stories that Steve (Van Zandt) might not be able to stay," Lofgren explains. "So just for my own head, I told Bruce that if it got to the point where he actually had to find another guitar player, to keep me in mind. I just said it and dismissed it."

When Bruce asked Nils to join, he jumped at the chance. "I love bands," Lofgren says. "Grin had to break up 'cause we did four albums and none of them did well enough on the business end for us to stay together. That was a real painful thing. It had been ten years since that break up, and to get a chance to play in a great band was really fantastic. It's exciting for me to be in a band and not be the leader."

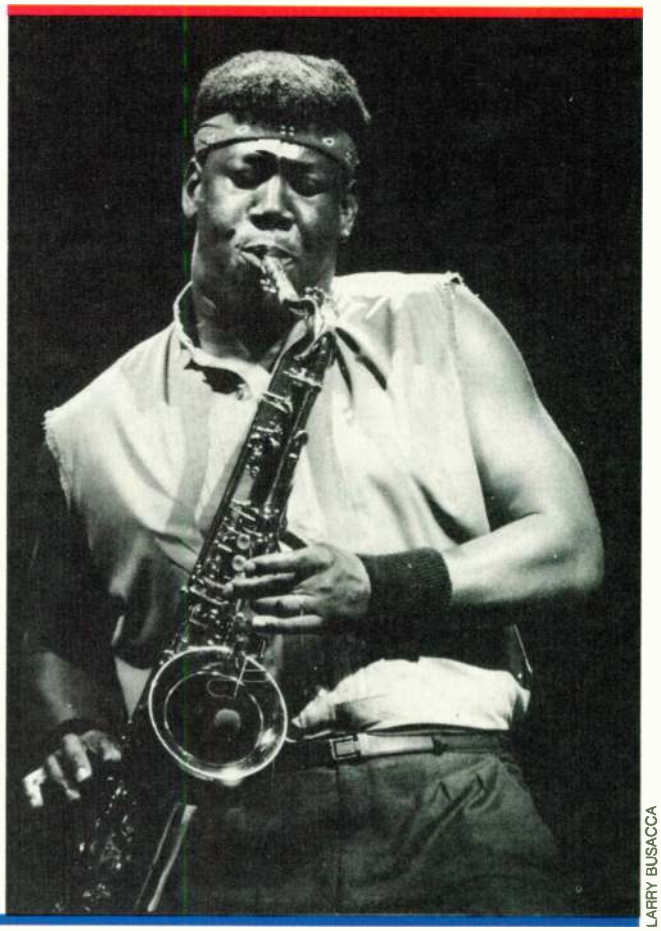
On their night off, several E Streeters went to see Difford and Tilbrook. As Glenn Tilbrook was ill, the former Squeeze leaders played, with their encore, only about sixty minutes. Afterwards Garry Tallent went backstage to pay his compliments and invite them to the following night's Springsteen concert. "I'd love to go," Tilbrook said, "but we've got to play here again tomorrow at eleven."

"Well," Tallent replied, "We go on about 8:15."

"Oh great, then we'll come see the first part of your show before we play."

"Yeah," some wise-ass piped up. "and then when you're

Regular guy Clarence isn't into decadence.



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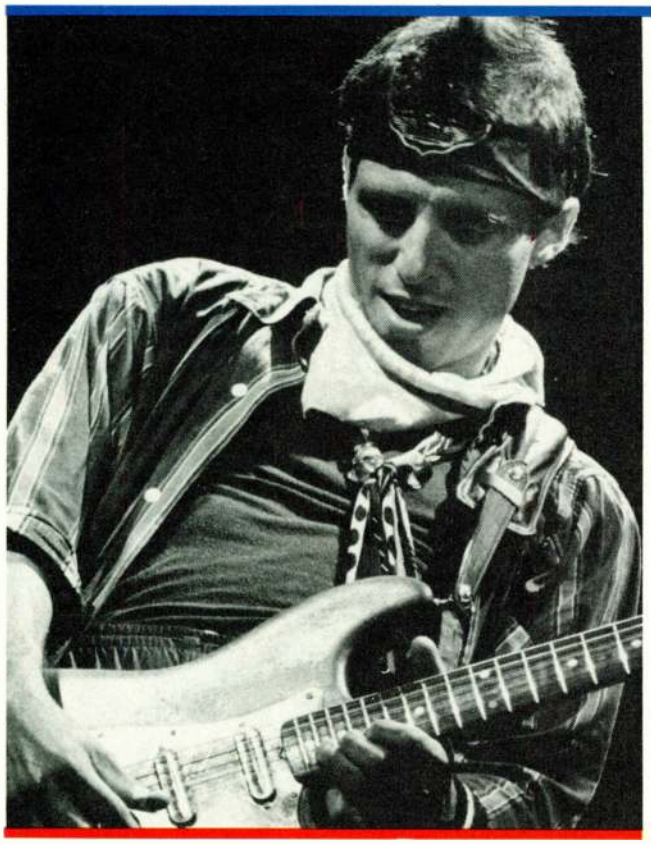

LARRY BUSACCA

Nils Lofgren jumped at the chance to be in a band again.

done you can go back and see the rest."

No one's worked as hard to bring intimacy into arenas as Bruce Springsteen. He still runs all over the hall during soundcheck to check out acoustics in the cheap seats. Every time Springsteen has moved up—from clubs to 3,000 seat theatres, from theatres to civic centers, he's delayed the move way past the point where ticket demand warranted an escalation.

Rather than play one night to the whole Toronto ballpark, Springsteen had chosen to play to part of the stadium for three nights. But he was uncomfortable with the video screen that was used to give those far off a good look. Although assured that the multiple cameras and sympathetic direction had made the movie screen a valuable addition, Bruce sighed that he had doubts about it. The whole show was an experiment, an attempt to see if it was possible to achieve in a ball park anything like the intimacy he'd maintained on the slow climb from bars to arenas. Springsteen is again at a point where his audience has gotten too big for the halls he wants to play.

"As far as interaction with the audience goes," Roy Bittan says over dinner a few weeks later, "I do not feel Bruce has lost anything. Some people say, 'Oh, it was so much better when we played in little clubs.' I don't perceive any difference. Bruce relates to the entire audience, whether it's 50 people or 3,000 or 25,000. I don't believe he increases the size of the places we play until he feels that, sound-wise, production-wise, and with his own particular way of performing, he's positive he can project to that last person in the last row.

"I like sound outdoors," Bittan continues. "It's real clear. It has a real stereo quality about it. Technology today has reached the point where you can play those large places. It's not like the Beatles playing Shea Stadium with two little P.A. columns and 64,000 screaming people. I want to see us in a 60,000 seat arena. I know people are going to react in the same way. That interaction between Bruce and his audience isn't going to change. I'm looking forward to that. I think it's a positive step. I think the video screen is great. I love it. I think you do reach a point where the visual element is reduced to a bunch of ants on a postage stamp. That's the point where the video screen really enhances it."

Even at Blue Jays Stadium, the crowd hushed when Springsteen dismissed the band to sing "No Surrender" with his acoustic guitar. They also paid strict attention to his long stories about growing up. Springsteen demands a lot of his audience, and he usually gets it. He began to tell a story about his hometown:

"When I was a kid, I lived by this park. And in the park was a monument. My mother used to always say, 'Where are you going?' We'd say, 'We're gonna go play around the monument.' Then when I was fifteen and in my first band, we needed our publicity pictures taken. We all had these plastic leather snakeskin vests we got at the auction. And we had these frilly shirts like the Kinks used to wear. Beatle boots. We went down to the monument and we did all our poses. Had to have all those poses down exactly. It wasn't till I was older that I found out there'd been this Revolutionary War battle fought outside my town . . . ."

At that point one kid yelled, "Rock 'n' roll." One kid out of 22,000. Springsteen instantly cut short the story and, with a signal to the band, began playing.

The day after Labor Day, the last night of summer vacation, Springsteen played the first of two shows at the Centrum in Worcester, Massachusetts. "Dancing In The Dark" had lasted a whole summer on the radio. That night, Springsteen finished the story of the monument.

"It wasn't till I got in my late teens that I even knew what it was a monument to. There was a Revolutionary War battle fought outside my town. Before this tour I went down to Washington and I visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It's a big walk and a lot of years between those two places. One of the guys, the drummer, who was in my first band's name is in the stone down there. I guess that's what monuments are for. So that you'll always, always remember. So that you never forget. That this is your hometown."

In the summer of '75, just after he finished mixing *Born To Run*, I approached Springsteen after a gig and asked him about the buzz that he was going to be a really big star.

"I don't think about it, man," Bruce shrugged. Then he admitted, "Well, I do think about it, I guess. But . . . you do what you do. And whatever comes from that, then that's what happens. Whether it's a big place or a little place, it's great." He looked at his feet and explained, "See, what it is is, I'm always happy when I play with the band." M

DAVID GAHR

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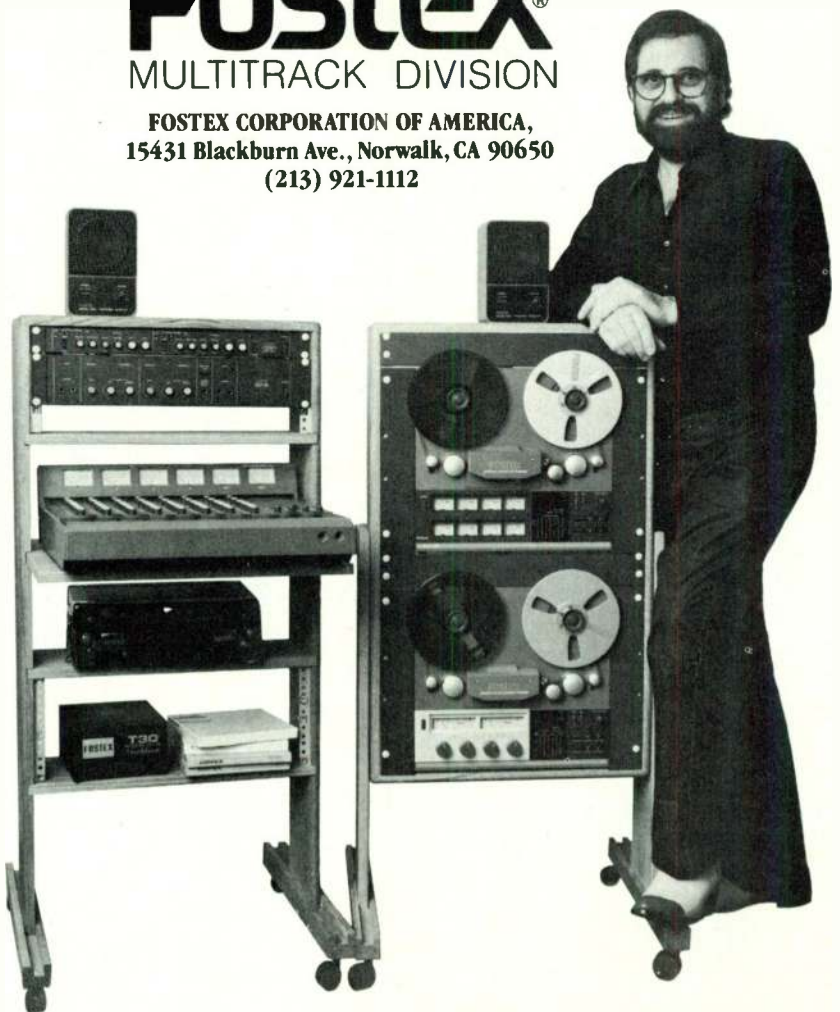

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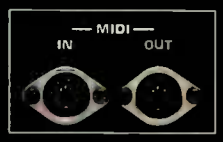

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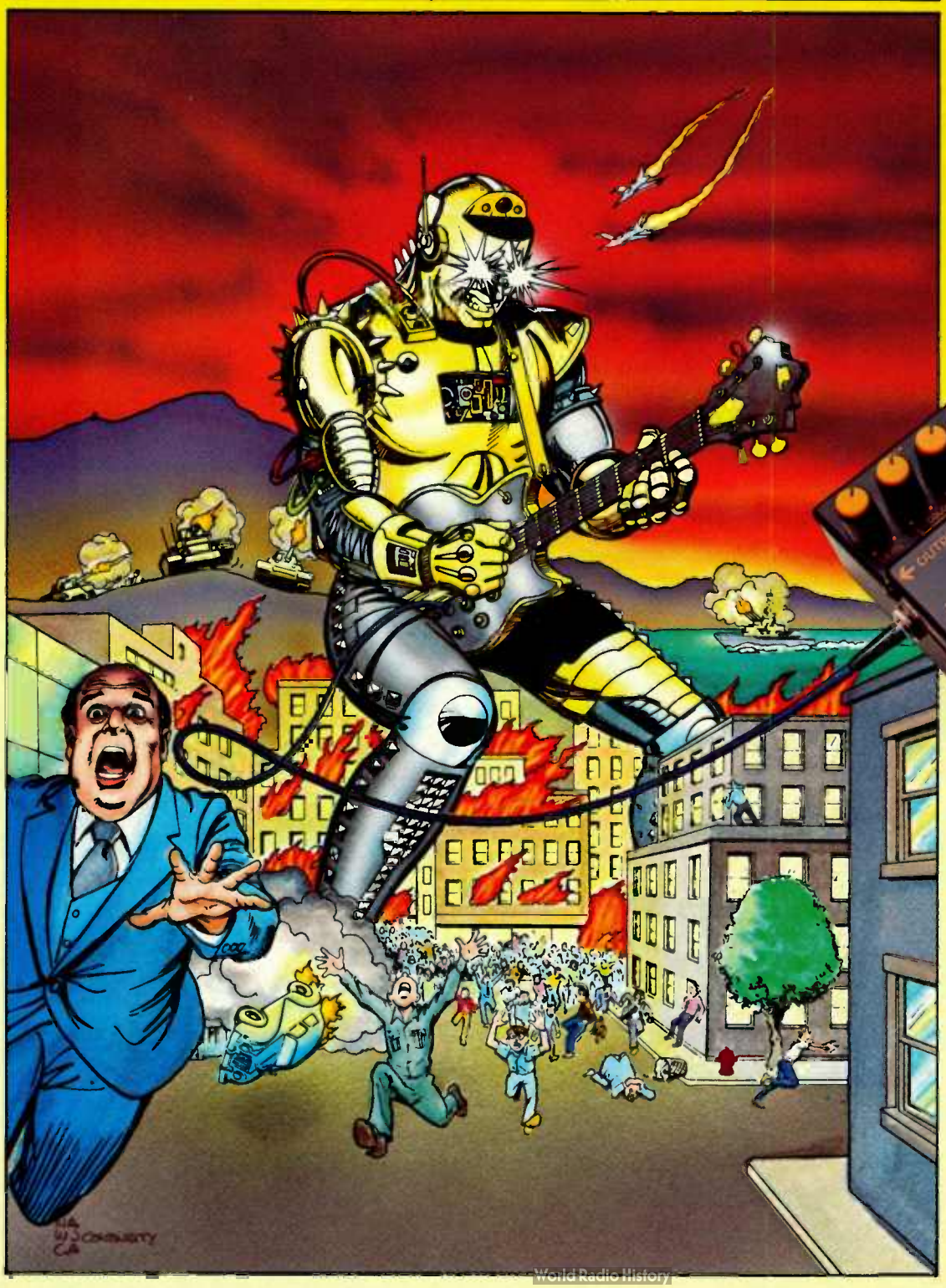

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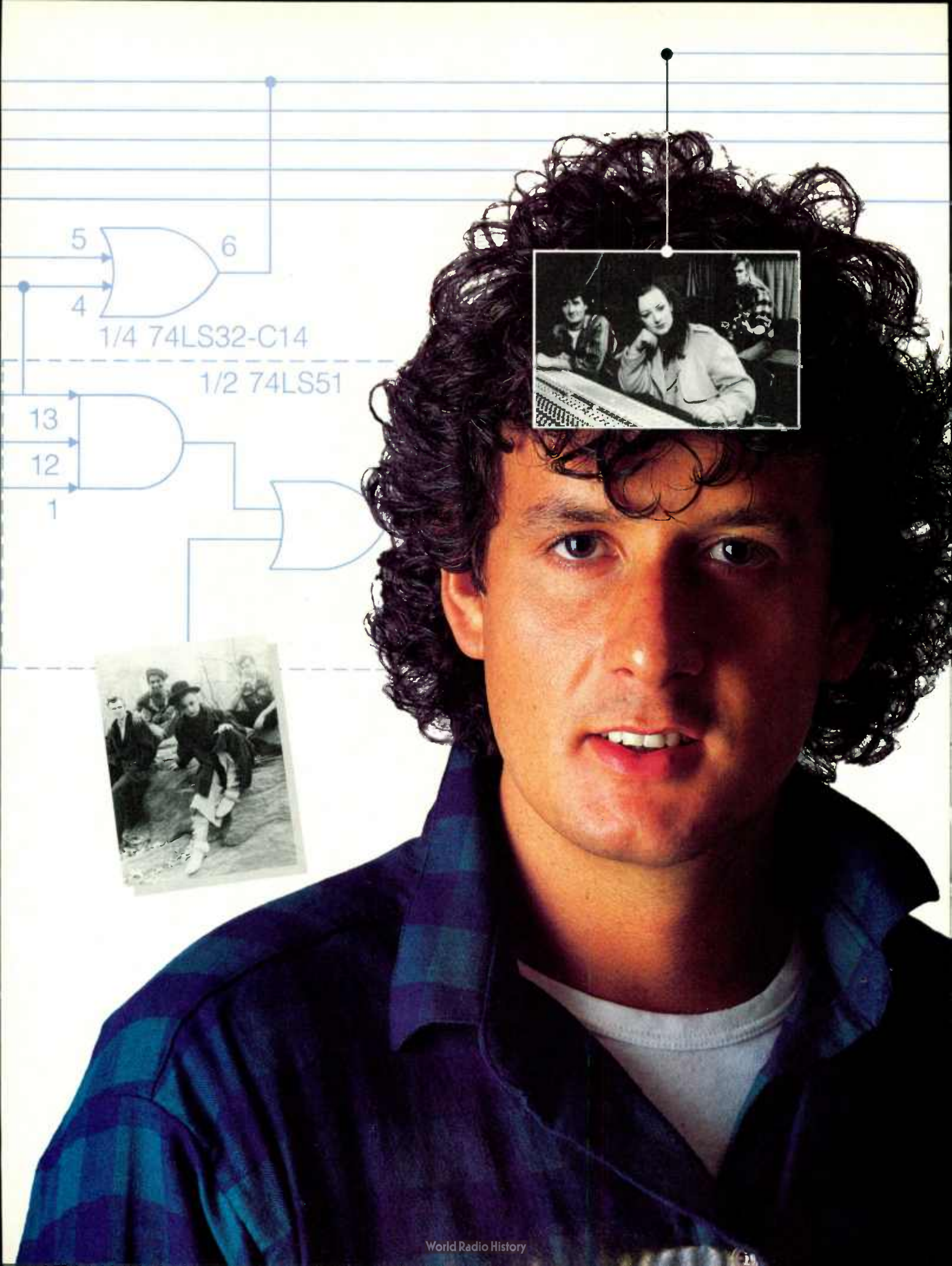
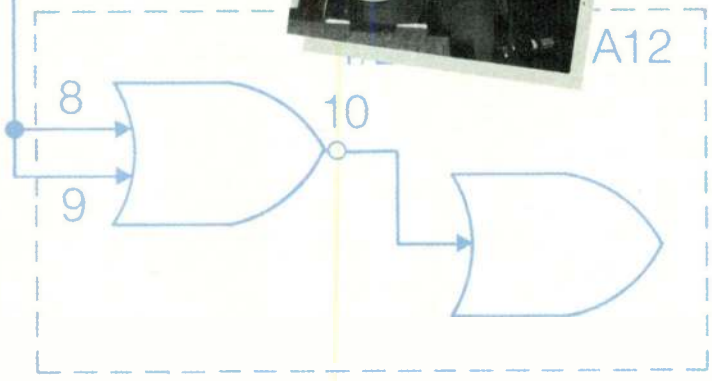
STEVE MARSEL





It's a Clean Machine, Very Clean: The Digital Powerhouse Behind Queen George's Platinum Throne

STEVE LEVINE'S CROSS-CULTURAL NEW AGE

Rob Tannenbaum

Carl Wilson of the Beach Boys is exploring Red Bus Studio One, and his reaction is like that of Woody Allen awakening to the future in *Sleeper*. Wilson strums a chord on the Roland G-707 guitar synthesizer, pushes a button, strums again, and ejaculates ("Wow"). He switches to a Yamaha DX1 digital synthesizer, playing a delicate two-bar melody and adding different effects ("Gosh!"). An engineer suggests another setting, and the result astonishes Carl further ("Golly!"). The man who was involved in some of the most ground-breaking production techniques in rock history is speechless, except for a few wholesomely Californian interjections. He looks around the electric sandbox-*cum*-recording studio and shakes his head. "The technology in this room is really quite amazing," he finally exclaims.

Close your eyes and imagine the studio of your most frivolous dreams. It's completely digital, of course, stocked with enough effects to make a kazoo sound like the London Symphony Orchestra, several drum machines with more chips than a room of poker players, and prototypes of synthesizers you've only read about. Now open your eyes, and see if you can find Steve Levine buried among his armory of expensive equipment in Red Bus Studios.

"I'm pioneering a new age of recording," Levine declares, sitting in the live area of the studio as Carl Wilson's hushed exclamations drift through an open door. If you doubt the heady claim of this effusive twenty-six-year-old Englishman, just listen to his crystalline production of the first two Culture Club albums, or the equally immaculate sides he's produced for David Grant, Jimmy the Hoover, the Melody Makers, and singer Helen Terry. Levine's production successes are not merely the result of owning state-of-the-art equipment, though; like many of the best producers, he combines the high-tech proficiency of an experienced engineer with the creative ingenuity of a masterful melodicist and arranger. He is a

Future shock: Levine introduces Carl Wilson to digital surfing.

prototype of the digital-age producer, and on this first day of pre-production for the next Beach Boys album, all of Levine's abilities are being challenged by the difficult task of bringing that band into the modern era, of helping them to have their first hit since they really *were* boys.

Levine first began to interface technology and music at age thirteen by building a discotheque ("the whole thing—a console and the lighting equipment"), and soon after that he decided that he "wanted to be a producer, although at that time I didn't know it was called 'a producer.' In fact initially, I thought it was an engineer."

And so, at seventeen, a misinformed Levine started his apprenticeship at CBS as a tape operator. One of his first jobs matched him with Bruce Johnston, the American who joined the Beach Boys in 1965 after Brian Wilson quit touring. Johnston was so impressed with Levine that he encouraged him to experiment with producing, and so Steve and fellow engineer Simon Humphrey began using the studio late at night when no one was around. Levine tried to teach himself to play guitar but found that "my hands wouldn't stand the cutting," so instead he began to practice on the keyboards.

The result of this was a disco-oriented album that received good reviews, although Levine doesn't like to discuss the record now, and even insists that the group's name not be printed (hint: it starts with a D). "The contract was terrible and I really don't want it rereleased. Still, it was good for us to have done it, because we got ripped off straight away and realized you've got to really be on the ball. Everyone gets their fingers burnt; I'm glad I got mine burnt when it didn't matter."

Determined to work only with people they could trust, Levine and Humphrey formed their own production company and had some success working with Secret Affair (a soulful neo-Mod band) and one-hit wonders the Jags before financial difficulties forced the two partners to split. By now Levine had learned enough about playing and producing to go solo. He started his own record label and released a 45 under the name of Quizz. Someone at EMI heard the song late one night on BBC radio and was half-impressed. "They didn't like the song," Levine laughs, "but they liked the production." EMI hired him to work with the Angelic Upstarts, a punk outfit whose loudandfast sound was softened by Levine's production. The press slagged the resulting album, but Levine's attention had already turned to a four-piece pop band with a flamboyant singer named George.

Early in 1982, Levine and Culture Club recorded demos of "White Boy" and "I'm Afraid Of Me," and although the producer "thought they were brilliant," EMI wasn't impressed. Levine turned out to be right; Virgin released *Kissing To Be Clever*, a multi-platinum album with three top ten singles. The master versions of "White Boy" and "I'm Afraid Of Me" were "carbons of the demos" that EMI had rejected. Suddenly Steve Levine had more offers than he knew what to do with.

He also had more money than he knew what to do with—at least temporarily. Levine invested his substantial Club dividends in sophisticated musical hardware. He may not own Red Bus Studios, but if you removed his personal equipment from Studio One it would be bare except for a pair of monitors and a few dozen patch cords. The growing sophistication of Levine's collection is reflected in the upgraded production of Culture Club albums: *Kissing To Be Clever* was a 24-track analog recording, while the follow-up, *Colour By Numbers*, was a 48-track production mixed digitally, and the band's new album is one of the first to be entirely digital, from start to finish. "Digital recording is here to stay," Levine asserts.

Levine's role in his various production jobs is dictated by the necessity of the session. "With a solo artist like David Grant you tend to get involved right from the songwriting. Culture Club already has song ideas, but a lot of the arrangements are done in the studio." Levine became "closely involved" in arranging "Do You Really Want To Hurt Me" because the song needed his input, and, he says, "that's the job of a producer. If it's necessary for you to be involved in the arrangement, then do so."

But whether he's playing on and co-writing techno-funk hits for Grant or helping to arrange four-part harmony for Culture Club, Levine's input is valuable not because he owns complex recording equipment, but because he fully understands the possibilities it provides. "If you have the knowledge and understanding of the equipment, you can get really good musical results. That's the secret."

As the recording technology becomes more complex, the role of engineers and producers will become even more important. Already, I suggest to Levine, a production team is more crucial to the success of a record than it was during the Spector/Motown heyday of the mid-60s. "I agree with that one hundred percent," he nods, "though it's in a slightly different way. With the sheer cost of making a record, it's looked on as important to get the right producer for the record. That may or may not be a good thing. Second, with the ever-increasing technology, groups are financially not in the position to get equipment and then have the knowledge."

This situation creates certain problems, though, for it might soon reach the point where a few dozen producers have an extraordinary amount of influence in the music business, and a band's success depends on whether a Levine, a Steve Lillywhite, a Hugh Jones, or a Martin Rushent will work with the band. "But it's the same in any industry," Levine argues. "You look at the most successful films and it's a set of five or six people. The most successful session musicians—a set of five or six people."

Even the world's top technocrats have moments of total bewilderment in the studio, and one of Levine's toughest problems was how to simulate the reggae dub effects on "Love Twist" and "Do You Really Want To Hurt Me" for *Kissing To Be Clever*. The recorded result came from "Just experimenting. I thought they did it that way." When he went to Jamaica to produce a record for the Melody Makers, the four children of Rita and Bob Marley, Levine discovered "that they *didn't* do it that way. The quality of dub effects in Jamaica is so [here Levine makes an unrepeatable sound, akin to a parrot choking on static], and the Marleys said to me, 'God is that a really weird sound. But what a good effect.'"

ROB TANNENBAUM

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Taking this last confession as a chance to pry away some of his recording secrets, I asked Levine how he managed to get such a remarkably lustrous guitar sound on *Colour By Numbers*. The shimmering acoustic guitar that jumps out of the chorus of "Karma Chameleon," he explains, pointing, "is due to that microphone, the AKG Tube, which has got the most brilliant sound on acoustic guitars and vocals. What you've hit on is the smoothness, which is due to that mike. And when you put that microphone on digital tape, where there's no noise, the results are just absolutely staggering." One of Levine's other trademarks is a clean, one-tracked lead vocal. "I think that's very important. When you double-track a lead vocal it can sound great on certain things, but you lose the identity of the voice. I'd rather have a single-track lead vocal with multi-tracked harmonies for a more wall-of-sound effect."

In addition to the band's four musicians, Culture Club frequently uses a stable of studio musicians, including singer Helen Terry (who electrifies "Church Of The Poison Mind") and keyboardist Phil Pickett. But Levine has a personal safeguard against using too much studio ornamentation: "I record every [instrument] in stereo, which uses up the tracks a lot quicker and stops you from going too mad with overdubbing." Levine does not sing, and he thinks this deficiency "stops my records from sounding 'samey.' Producers who can sing tend to influence the way a band sings harmonies. They influence vocals too much; you end up with every record sounding the same." If there is any sameness in Levine's productions, it's in their very meticulous iridescence. "That's definitely intentional," he agrees. "A very, very highly polished recording. Very technically clean. It's something very few producers go for."

Levine's success as a producer has given him the opportunity to renew his solo career, although his upcoming album, *Across The Board*, is more like a group project. Many of the songs on the record were co-written with Boy George and David Grant (who sings on a few songs), while Mikey Craig of Culture Club plays bass, John Alder (formerly of the Jags) plays guitar and sings, and Rita Marley appears as a background vocalist on "Believin' It All," already "a medium hit" in England. Like more and more musicians, Levine has no desire to tour once his album is released. His one touring experience, as Culture Club's soundman, was enough to convince him to stay home. "I like making records and I think touring is often a compromise of the recorded sound. It's just a bit better than doing TV."

Steve Levine won several awards at the end of last year as the best producer of 1983, but the biggest testament to his talent came when his experienced mentor, Bruce Johnston, asked him to produce the next Beach Boys album. "I'm over the moon," Levine says of working with the band. "It's a very prestigious project, and there's so much potential because it's almost like a new group."

That, of course, depends on the Beach Boys, whose last several albums have been less than inspired. "We're gonna get a real fresh energy on it," Carl Wilson says of the album, "not just redo a tune written from some other time." He is polite and relaxed, almost to the point of seeming distracted or absent-minded. It is not surprising that Carl is in the studio before the rest of the band, given his well-publicized attempts to get the band off of the nostalgia circuit. "The guys just weren't into recording at that time, so I went ahead and did a couple solo albums. It's an old story and everybody knows it, so you don't need to go into it," he laughs.

As Wilson goes back to exploring the future, Steve Levine

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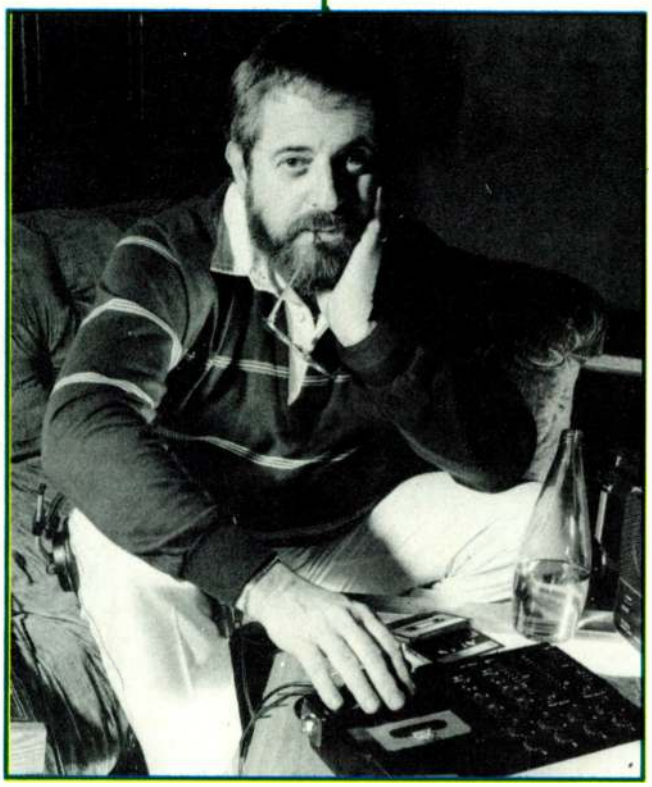
PHIL RAMONE

Billy Joel
Paul Simon
Barbra Streisand
Michael Sembello
Phoebe Snow
Julian Lennon

Jock Baird



Not much of Phil Ramone is what it first seems. After all, wouldn't you expect a guy with a client list like Billy Joel, Paul Simon, Barbra Streisand, Kenny Loggins, Chicago, Michael Sembello, Julian Lennon, Martin Briley, Phoebe Snow and more (he can't even remember) to be a bit conservative? Spoiled by sky's-the-limit budgets? Maybe thinks he has the *Phil Ramone Sound*? More powerful than three Sony digital decks? Able to fix all boo-boos in a single mix? Look! Up in the charts! It's moolah-man!

Phil Ramone is the exact opposite of each of those super-producer attributes. He rolls the dice even while the tape is rolling—hell, especially when the tape is rolling. He likes to work quickly and prefers tight, feisty rhythm sections. He puts his wide range of skills entirely in the service of his artists and ruthlessly avoids auteur-ism. He does record in digital, but then proceeds to plug in a forty-dollar analog phase shifter. And all the money, the Grammies, the accolades, the growing deluge of film projects, seem to have rolled off him like radio warm-up jokes roll off the President. Although recently past forty, Ramone is still very much the flexible, idealistic young demo engineer who started making unforgettable records over twenty years ago.

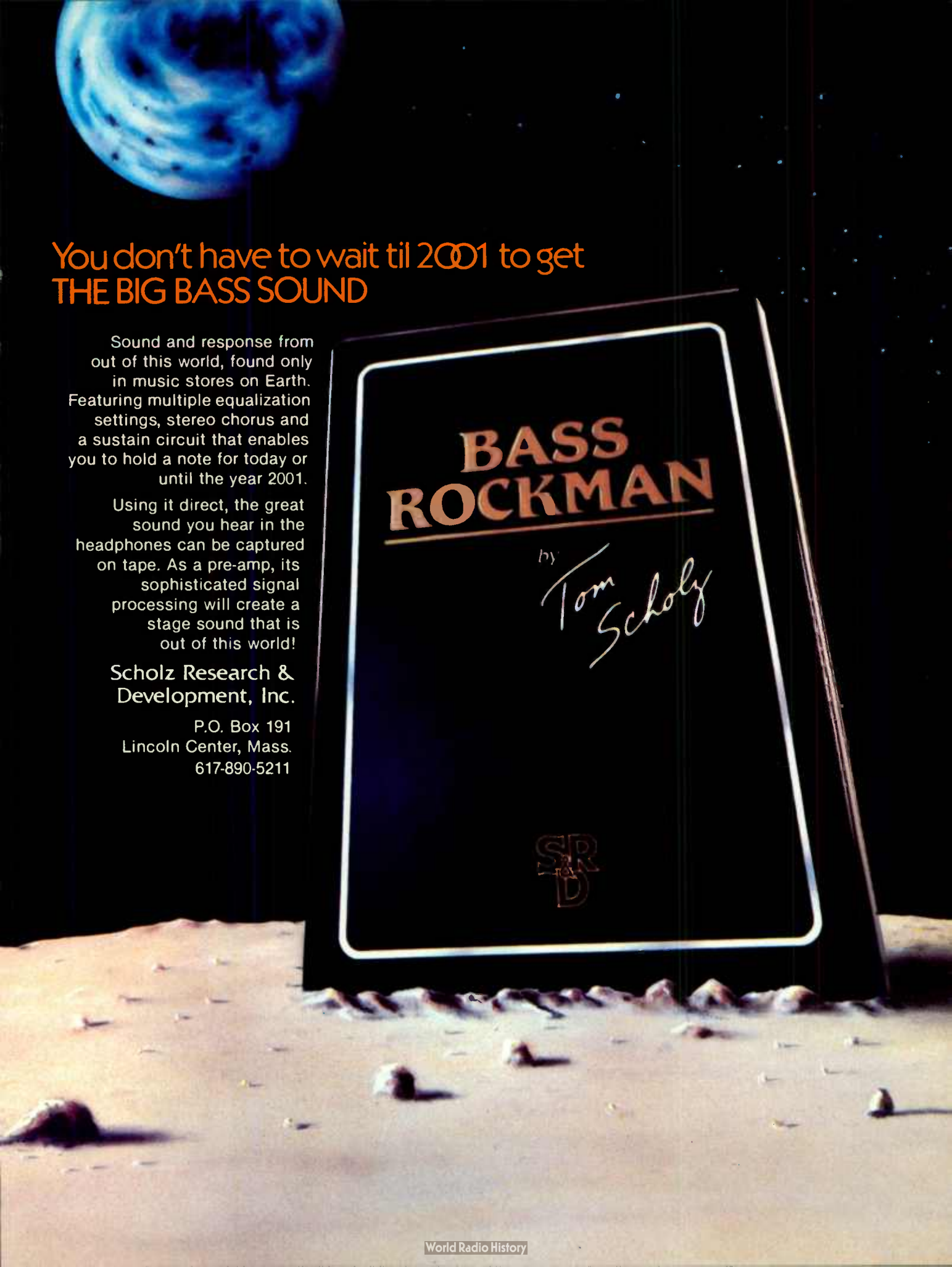
Raised in Manhattan, young Phil was a classical violin prodigy, beginning at age four and entering Juilliard at age thirteen. The best traditional classical education did not take: at seventeen, an unrepentant Ramone was tossed out of Juilliard "basically for playing rock 'n' roll and jazz." Out on the streets, he became a jack of all trades, working one night as an MC, another as a jazz band leader, another as a shiner of shoes in back of major studios. He gradually fell in as a demo engineer, striving mightily to become the "final" engineer. When the regulars got too tired, Ramone would take over to work sessions with the likes of Ellie Greenwich, Leiber & Stoller, Bacharach & David—he engineered a good many of Dionne Warwick's classic singles. As a top independent engineer, he also did recordings for Creed Taylor, including most of the CTI roster. His interest in live reinforcement—he calls himself one of the earliest "fusspots"—led him not only to sound consultation for Kennedy Administration functions, but doing the live recording of the Band's epic *Rock Of Ages*; he also did Dylan's *Blood On The Tracks*.

His first real production was Phoebe Snow's understated debut album, which became a big hit. Soon after, he was hired by Paul Simon when his regular producer was too busy with Art Garfunkel. The relationship has bloomed and prospered right through last year's *Hearts And Bones*. Phil worked with Jimmy Guercio on mid-70s Chicago. He did Kenny Loggins' classic *Celebrate Me Home* record. In 1976 he produced Barbra Streisand's *A Star Is Born* with its Grammy winning single, "Evergreen"; more recently he produced *Yentl*. He also did sound work for Quincy on the new Sinatra record. In 1977 he did *The Stranger* with Billy Joel, a record that was to catapult Joel into continuing superstardom in the good hands of Ramone.

Keeping many of his older friends/clients, Ramone has lately begun working with younger artists, including albums for Michael Sembello, Julian Lennon, Martin Briley and Karen Kamon, who did "Manhunt" from the Ramone-produced soundtrack for *Flashdance*. That last project is a higher collaboration: Kamon is also Ramone's wife. Phil certainly has had a hot hand doing rock film soundtracks: he's just executive produced a new film called *Body Rocks* (which includes music written by Ashford & Simpson) and is starting work on yet another called *White Knights*. With a schedule like that, you can discern one more thing about Ramone that belies the big-budget producer stereotype: the man works his butt off.

●

MUSICIAN: *What's the producer's primary responsibility?*
RAMONE: The primary responsibility is to be truthful to the artist. If you're going to sit in a producer's chair, you better take your ego and put it someplace where it doesn't interfere with what the artist or the writer or the musician is about. I think a producer's responsibility is misunderstood for people who say "I" a lot: "I did this," rather than, "If it wasn't for Liberty DeVito or Steve Gadd or some bass player who contributed something at that moment, I wouldn't be a hero." You start by getting the music right; if you have to put some kind of stamp on it, the music's probably weaker than it should be.
MUSICIAN: *Are albums with some of your artists more collaborative than others?*



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RAMONE: Almost everything is collaborative. You try to create a mirror image between the artist and the producer. It's hard for the artist to not be egotistical, to have a view of the whole forest. The structure of the relationship is that no matter how big a star they are, you tell them the truth. You're dealing with a song that they wrote and love and that you care about; they'll listen. It's real difficult for anybody that's good to know what they're about. You have to take a quiet position, look at what they're saying, and just be totally honest about what you believe in. It's a filtering process between yourself and them, with you taking the objective chair. I've never worked where someone doesn't get the chance to say what they want to say first. And then I think there's always an alternative. And if you try the alternative and the original, you may come up with something better. But you always have to remember that their name is on the album first and they have to live with it.

MUSICIAN: *Do you tend to work with your artists while the songs are still under construction?*

RAMONE: Yeah. I think that's probably the most exciting part for me as a producer. Being handed twelve or fifteen songs and having to choose nine is not as much fun as having the song in pieces and in the draftboard stage. And I get to do that with most of my acts. After working with Paul Simon for ten years and Billy Joel for eight, you learn a lot about what it is you can do for them. It's a very private kind of relationship. You may work together for four months straight and then not see each other for two months, and the conversation picks up like you left off at dinner the night before.

MUSICIAN: *Will this exchange happen more during pre-production or more in the studio?*

RAMONE: (laughing) I pre-produce right in the studio, to be honest with you. The real pre-production is between the writer and me, and the surprise is in the first effort that a person plays, in the first twenty minutes of playing the song. You get that as your first raw architectural drawing—it's a sketch. You may perfect it or you may overperfect it, and the people who are playing it will tend to want to overdo it, until it's past the point, maybe until it's too pristine, too clean. Billy Joel, for instance, will write sixty or seventy percent of his stuff in the studio. He doesn't go in without a song that's almost done, but he could go three days and have two songs and then be dry for two days. He likes to work where the pressure is on and the band's gonna show up and he better have a song. He doesn't want to be sitting there with mud on his face—he's gotta come up with a song. There's no star bullshit in the studio. That's true of everybody I work with, because if that becomes part of your reality, you have to get rid of all the road people and tell them to stay out. It's always a danger.

MUSICIAN: *You're probably accustomed to stardom now, but did your pulse rate go up a little bit the first time you worked with a Paul Simon or a Streisand?*

RAMONE: Oh absolutely. I still find if I don't get chills, if the hairs don't stand up on my arms every once in a while, I think you're jaded. You really have to realize how exciting it is when a musical phrase or something new comes in at the time you're working. That's the reward. It's like the best love affair in the world.

MUSICIAN: *You're a string player and Juilliard graduate. Did that help?*

RAMONE: I never found any of that worked for me, to be honest. Most of what I needed I wish had been taught in a concise way. I wish I'd been given a more adventuresome approach. What I reject is pretty much what Billy Joel rejects: obviously the classical piano lessons paid off, but you're better off faking a piece that sounds like Mozart than you are trying to pretend that you can play like Mozart, when the kid next to you is really a killer. I don't disagree with those schools, but I disagree with a system that says by the time you're twenty you

continued on page 94

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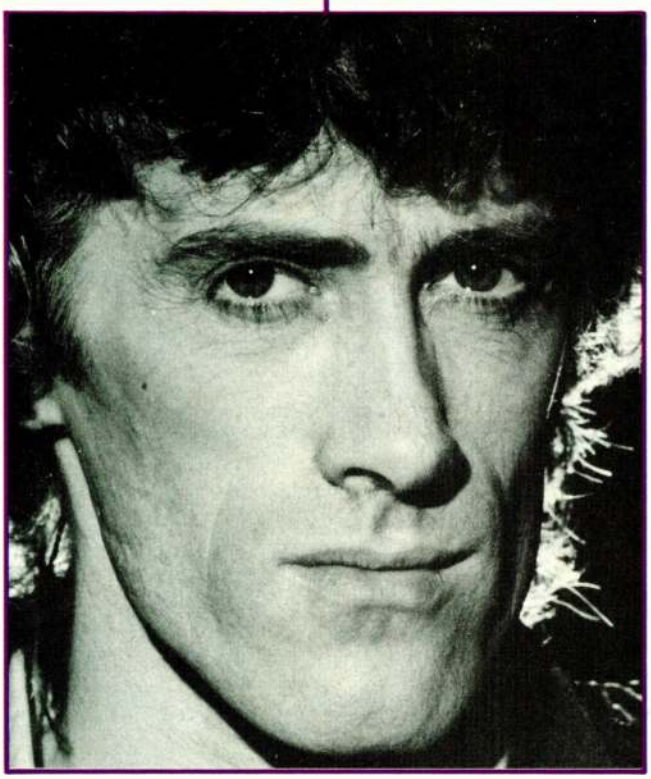

CHRIS PARKER

There are a growing number of top producers who wear more than one hat in the studio, but few have worn so many hats so successfully as Rupert Hine: artist, musician, producer/engineer, video director, soundtrack maker ...he even tried acting and stunt work. It was as producer of the Fixx that his name began appearing last year on the *Billboard* Hot 100 charts—in the crucial parentheses right below the song title. Hine has since regularly returned his name to those parentheses with tracks for Chris DeBurgh, Howard Jones and Tina Turner, with the Fixx's third LP, *Phantoms*, just unleashed.

Hine's own new solo album, *The Wildest Wish To Fly* (Island), may not join that more notorious crowd in Hot 100 heaven, but that's no reflection on the record's virtues. It's a shimmering song cycle, built on skilled, original synth textures and altered real-world sounds. Hine's penetrating, musical rasp delivers a set of ambitious, often inflammatory lyrics by poet/film editor Jeanette Obstoj—the title track, for example, is an anti-war requiem for an R.A.F. pilot downed in the Falklands War. The album's tight, cinematic focus and slab-of-sound intensity is vintage Hine.

Regrettably, neither the album nor the single/video "Misplaced Love" has given the thirty-six-year-old Hine American stardom, but after all, he already knows how it feels. In the early 70s, great records by Hine and his band Quantum Jump on Roger Glover's Purple label transformed Hine into a British cult figure, culminating in a semi-satiric top-three hit, "The Lone Ranger." Hine struck up a subsequent partnership with all-world rocker/talent scout Robert Palmer, with Hine co-writing a song and doing all the keyboard work on Palmer's *Pride* LP, recorded at Hine's Farmyard Studios (Palmer repays with a guest-shot on *Wildest Wish*). Hine's first producing client, over ten years ago, was Yvonne Elliman, followed by the likes of After The Fire, Kevin Ayers and Camel. Following his 1981 solo LP *Immunity*, whose central theme was viewing the world from a removed, interior space, he began working with the Fixx, producing their debut LP, whose central theme was remarkably similar.

Hine's relationship to the Fixx remains about as close as a producer can get. Though they came to him as pliant clients, they are now weekend friends and mutual idea laboratories, sharing an acute interest in film. Hine was and is present at the conception of much of the Fixx's music, and they in turn have influenced *Wildest Wish*—guitarist Jamie West-Oram plays on two cuts and other Fixxisms abound. Hine also uses his two-way connection with the band to good advantage as their video director; his tasteful, understated clips include the nuclear nightmares of "Red Skies At Night" and "Are We Ourselves?" and the kinetic minimalism of "One Thing Leads To Another. Anthropologists would be hard pressed to find a more perfect specimen of 80s Renaissance Man Producer.

●

MUSICIAN: *What are a producer's most important and most overrated functions?*
HINE: The most overrated function would be drum sounds. I think the producer's primary responsibility would be to achieve the best record possible at any given time, the record that brings out that artist's particular idiosyncrasies, which means less of the producer's ego and input and more extracting of every last ounce of the artist's individuality.
MUSICIAN: *What if the artist seeks out the producer especially for his particular sound or musical statement? The Fixx have said they came to you because they admired your records with Quantum Jump. Did you bring more input to that situation than usual?*
HINE: The Fixx had the right motivation when they came to me, that is they first and foremost had *ideas* that they wanted to turn into songs. Ideas—and believe me, ninety-five percent of all records put out are not born out of ideas—are the crucial starting point for me. There's no mystique in spotting whether someone has real motivation or whether their songs are simply born out of doodling. And I'm not interested in the latter; I'm only interested in music that's used as a means of communication. The Fixx were like that as people, that was their motivation. They may've lacked some of the experience in the studio to achieve that. They also lacked the objectivity to criticize their own writings, as most artists do. That was really my job with them and we grew very much together as friends. I see them a lot on a social level, therefore conversations about what's going on in the world–the real world, not the

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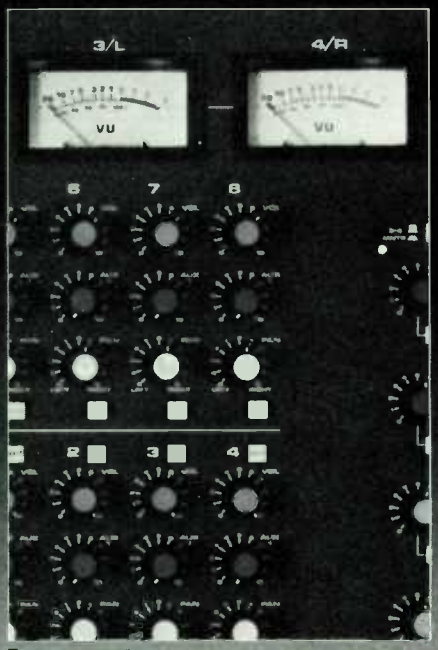
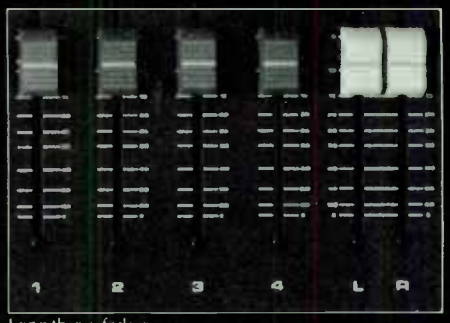
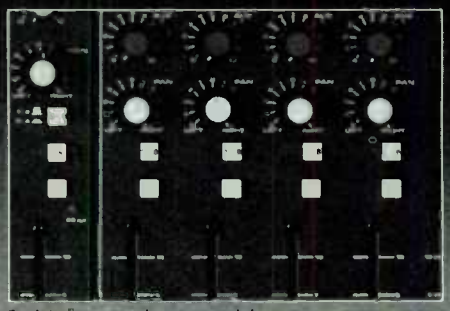


Tape returns 1-8



Long throw faders



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music industry–get talked about and ideas for songs can grow from that. We have a parallel understanding.

MUSICIAN: *What's the difference between producing yourself and producing others?*

HINE: Obviously objectivity is the one thing you can't possibly achieve easily. The only knack I've managed to put together over the last three solo albums is making the album over a period of time, never doing more than about four days in the studio at a go, and using the time in between to involve myself in all the other kinds of projects that keep the brain freer but still active. And when returning to listen to the products of the last bout, be a lot more critical because you're not just constantly sitting in the build-up, the Rolling Stones factor. But objectivity is the hardest single thing about self-producing.

MUSICIAN: *Is there any temptation to go back to being just an artist and not a producer or video director?*

HINE: Not just an artist. I wouldn't like to be just an anything. The best way of getting the most out of the individual things you do is not to become systematized. If you do any one single job continuously, your attitude will become more and more refined, and like sugar, refinement is taking the goodness out of things. The natural element in what you do when you come to something for the first time is very hard to sustain, but the closest simulation of that is to make sure that you zip in other directions and do other things, and each time you return, you have the experience in other fields to then put back into that same idea.

MUSICIAN: *Do you see a great difference between American and British production styles?*

HINE: I think it's exemplified by the studio trade magazines. In America they're full of articles about how engineers recorded a particular session, the instruments or console settings. They're to do with the precise details of something that's already occurred and been a hit. The English equivalent of those magazines have no such articles. They're always talking about new pieces of equipment and what might be achieved on them. There's very little analysis of what's gone before. It reflects the fact that from a technical viewpoint, production is much more spontaneous in England. There's much less planning, much more improvisation, and essentially albums are made *much* more quickly and with more energy. I think there's far too much calculation in the States, far too much emphasis put on how you record, how many channels, whether it's digital or analog. These things are so secondary to the music.

MUSICIAN: *Does that mean less pre-production?*

HINE: No, I think that a lot of pre-production is essential, to make sure everybody has a total understanding of what each song is going to be doing, what we're attempting to communicate to an audience at the end of the day. We go over what we feel the overall effect of the album should be, both emotionally and dynamically, what are going to be the most prominent moments and what are going to be the very essential low-key moments. Once all that's decided, then we go into the studio with the maximum energy and spontaneity as far as ways of recording, which are so secondary. Usually I try something for ten minutes and if it doesn't happen, I switch. I have only one rule in the studio: I never do more than three takes of anything at one time.

MUSICIAN: *There are several songs on* The Wildest Wish To Fly *that have a psychedelic, "Strawberry Fields Forever" quality to them. Did you listen to a lot of that stuff?*

HINE: I did. I mean, it's hard to say whether it was specifically an influence; what I liked about it was that it was a form of music that inevitably people had to categorize, and the things that became "psychedelic" by category were invariably the

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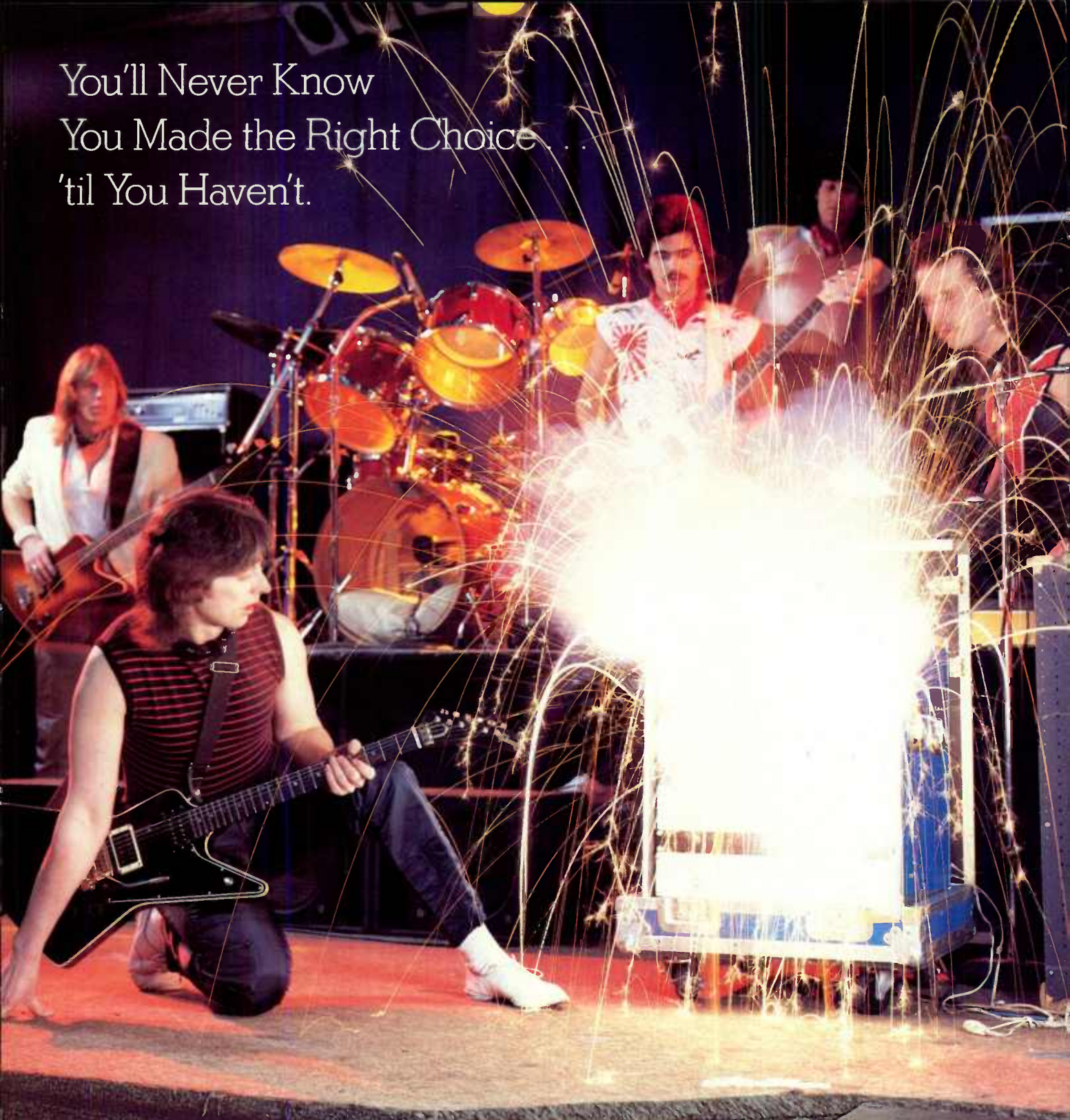

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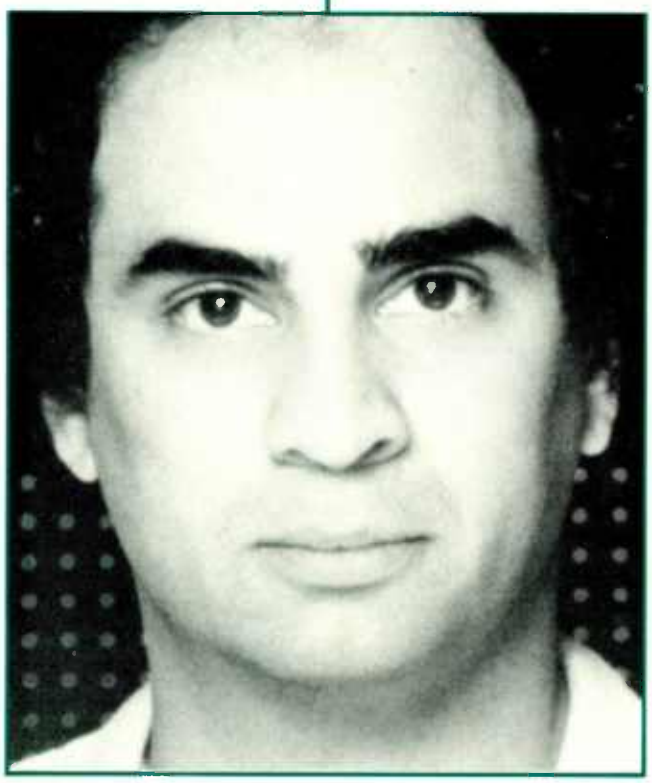

HARRY LANGDON

Michael Omartian, in the last few years, has assuredly taken his place among the inner circle of Hollywood pop producers. Like the tight roster of his producer peers–David Foster, George Duke, Jay Graydon and the almighty Quincy–Omartian amassed experience in other ends of the music business before settling squarely in production work. Migrating from his hometown of Evanston, Illinois to Los Angeles in 1970, Omartian the aspiring songwriter begat Omartian the studio keyboard player (remember the grand piano pearl in Steely Dan's "Aja"?) and staff producer for ABC and Warner Bros. in the late 70s. Omartian's balance of pop concision with subtle aural sophistication bore fruit with Christopher Cross' wildly successful debut album in '79. But it wasn't until this past year–during which Omartian produced parts of albums by Jermaine Jackson and the upcoming Kenny Loggins record, Rod Stewart's latest and the new Donna Summer work–that Omartian has secured his status as one of the most sought-after producers on the West Coast. In addition to his commercial work, Omartian, an ardent born-again Christian, continues to put out records in the alternate musical universe of the gospel market.

●

MUSICIAN: *How would you trace your path to the producer's chair? Was that a through-the-side-door affair or a long-standing ambition of yours?*

OMARTIAN: Well, I think I, along with a lot of other musicians, got to the place where we got called upon by various producers to contribute more than just as players. Producers were taking keyboard players and guitar players and saying, "Hey look, why don't you write up some charts?" So I'd get involved on that level, and pretty soon they'd say, "Why don't you be around when the vocalist is here to make sure everything is going down right?" Eventually all of us felt like we were being asked to kind of co-produce without getting credit for it. That's basically what got me into it–finding myself in situations where I was contributing more than what I was being paid for, being acknowledged for. That opened up a whole 'nother thing, which I wasn't at all ready for–being a psychiatrist also.

MUSICIAN: *There seems to be a new breed of producers working now, most of whom were decidedly players initially.*

OMARTIAN: It's a healthy trend as far as I'm concerned. The only thing we all need to learn, being musicians first, is the business end of it, which sometimes eludes us because we don't want to bother with it. Then you realize that you have to build relationships with promotion departments and various record people. To me, that's the painful side of it. It doesn't come really easy for me, but it's a part that you really have to devote time to in order to cultivate those relationships which really are necessary.

MUSICIAN: *Are you consciously pursuing a kind of pop sound you could call your own?*

OMARTIAN: I would have to say it's intuitive. And the thing I try to prevent is making everybody's records I'm involved with sound the same, but it's difficult because someone asks you to put your musical personality on what they're doing. It's a constant fight, because it's so easy to go for the same synthesizer sound. I don't want to interject a certain *type* of sound, even though people are now starting to tell me they can identify a record that I've done, just like they can identify a David Foster track or a George Duke track or whatever.

MUSICIAN: *Do you have any fundamental concepts or ground rules about what your role is as a producer?*

OMARTIAN: That changes, for me, according to whether the artist wants just strictly an overview, or if they want me as a player or a writer as well. Consequently the requirements change from album to album. But I've seen a trend, especially this last year with the co-writing of "She Works Hard For The Money," most of the people calling me want writer input. I'm always very cautious about that, too, because I don't want everything coming from one place there, either. There are so many great tunes roaming around. As a producer, if you're overseeing the album, playing on the album, writing on the album with the artist, you can get into some dangerous territory if you're not allowing an artist to express themself, number one, and you're imposing too many of your own ideas, and also if you're not exploring the kind of material the artist needs at the moment because you feel you need to impose your own material on them. It's a delicate balance.

MUSICIAN: *I know there was a sort of moral skirmish over Rod Stewart's tune "Bad For You." Has your Christianity re-*

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sulted in many working conflicts before?
OMARTIAN: No, it really hasn't. A lot of times you cut a track and it's sometime later that the lyrics come forth. With Rod, it sort of threw me for a loop. If you're standing for something, and you violate it, you come off looking like a hypocrite. I felt I had to add a disclaimer that I don't condone the lyrics.
MUSICIAN: *Could you give a rough sketch of how you go about building a track?*
OMARTIAN: In the last year, basically, if the song happens to be an up tune–medium to up–the way I've been doing almost everything is by getting a drummer with me in the room and keyboards and a drum machine. Then I use elements of the drum machine with the live drummer and starting with the keyboards, build up from there. I've never had more than maybe two or three people in the room at the same time to start. I'm not sure if that's going to last very long, because you get tired of the way you do things; you've got to move on.

It seems to be a formula that various people are using right now–to cut with as little stuff as possible and build from there. For me, being a keyboard player, I start getting a little bored with the same things all the time. I'd like to get involved in more guitary things in the future just for a change of pace. I don't claim to be a guitar player, but I did play a track on the Donna Summer album. I'd like to work closely with someone like a Mike Landau, to come from a different place.
MUSICIAN: *Do you like to use certain engineers and studio players consistently to keep the operations running smoothly?*
OMARTIAN: My problem is that I have a low threshold; I get bored spending hours and hours on something. So I work with an engineer–we don't even have to talk to each other. He knows basically where to go in a song to punch in something. He knows where the mistakes are. Even though I'm not into rushing through an album, I think certain stages don't need to take forever. Listening to loud rock 'n' roll guitar and synthesizers hour after hour gets really tiring. I like to work with certain people who I know can do all kinds of stuff. In drummers, I like Mike Baird and John Robinson.

The basic feel of it, I'm not as locked into one person as much as I am in some of the overdub stuff. A variety of drummers and bass players is good. I find myself doing a lot of synth bass lately. I haven't gotten to the point where I use other keyboard players yet, though I should consider doing that, to get some outside input. I don't consider myself much of a synthesizer programmer, so I believe in getting somebody out to help get sounds.
MUSICIAN: *You were talking about time efficiency. Do you indulge in much experimentation with synth sounds?*
OMARTIAN: That I'll spend some time on. But we don't do the kind of thing some people will do, where you put down forty-eight tracks of things and then just select what sounds good in various spots. As we go along in the recording end, we find something and say, "Yeah, that's great, let's go with that."
MUSICIAN: *Who would you like to produce who you haven't had the chance to yet?*
OMARTIAN: What I would like to do is a brand new group again. I would go crazy to be able to do something that nobody's heard and just start from scratch and get that energy going again that you feel when you get a band that's hot to do, and there's no preconceived notions, no image they're trying to live up to, no second album they're trying to better the first with. That's what I'd really like to do. Ⓜ

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ED STASIUM

The Ramones
Peter Wolf
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Gladys Knight & the Pips
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And now we'd like to bring up our Ass Prod," announces gleeful Swimming Pool Q's lead singer Anne Boston as board wiz Ed Stasium straps on a Strat to join the Q's onstage at Atlanta nightspot, 688. Taking a break from his official role as Ass(ociate) Prod(ucer) of the Q's major label debut LP being recorded at Axis Sound Studios, an obviously pumped-up Stasium burns through note-perfect leads on the Hendrix classics "Fire" and "Manic Depression."

Hendrix? What does the avant-guitar god have to do with a guy who honed his studio chops engineering carefully proportioned soul tracks (including Gladys Knight's "Midnight Train To Georgia") with vet producer Tony Camillo and who earned his control room rep committing the early new wave twitches of Talking Heads and the Ramones to vinyl?

"Hendrix knocked me out from a sonic point of view and a musician's point of view," the thirty-four-year-old New Jersey native explains. "Other people take drugs to get where I got on that first Hendrix album. The feedback! I would sit in my room when I was sixteen with my Strat and an old Gibson amp and make what I called 'car noises.' And this guy was doing it on a record! Knocked me out."

Versatility is an easy virtue for the blond, stocky Stasium, who arrived in Atlanta to work with producer David Anderle on the Q's sessions hot off five and a half months behind the console for Peter Wolf's funk-fired solo debut, *Lights Out*. While the stakes and intensity of engineering the Wolf sessions packed a high-wired kick—"Peter knew he had to make a record that was better than anything he had done before with the Geils band"—Stasium got just as up to work with the Q's, whose only previous LP was the funny/edgy 1981 indie release, *The Deep End*.

"On Pete's record I provided technical direction," Stasium explains. "I was only in charge of the engineering department. Since I was brought in from a production point with the Q's, I had a specific type of sound, specific arrangement changes, and a specific recording technique that I had preplanned. In that sense, it was artistically very gratifying for me to work with them."

Because the Q's are a guitar band and "Eddy Loud," as Stasium was called in his performing days, wields the axe himself, much attention was devoted to the band's twin-guitar attack squad of Bob Elsey and Jeff Calder. "My main concern was getting different guitar sounds, mostly through using microphone positions," says Stasium. "During two weeks of pre-production with the Q's, we broke down all the basic guitar parts of the songs we wanted to do. There were a lot of excellent guitar parts, but if they're played all at one time in one sound they could all go by you.

"For example, there's a sneaky little snake guitar by Bob that starts off 'She's Bringing Down The Poison.' That's a direct sound gotten through a (Shure) SM57 placed close to the amplifier, and I used a slap tape and timed it to the beat of the song—an old trick I learned from Phil Spector. Then Jeff comes in with another, separate sound. When Jeff goes to his rhythm right after that, we got a different sound for that. Each part has to be heard equally, with its own specific sound."

Although he got his first tape recorder at age eleven, Stasium's engineering career did not formally begin until after his band Brandywine broke up (they made one record in 1971). Stasium met Tony Camillo and ex-Motown engineer Tony Bongiovi, who were just launching their Venture Sound studio in Somerville, New Jersey. He hung out, helped assemble the room, and eventually became chief engineer, working on discs by the likes of Gladys Knight, Martha Reeves, the Chambers Brothers, Barry Miles and Sha Na Na.

After tiring of the sameness of his work at Venture Sound, Stasium snapped up a gig as staff engineer at Andre Perry's Le Studio Morin Heights in Quebec in 1975. Along with picking up his first production credits with a popular French Canadian combo called Garalou, Stasium got exposed to new and valuable influences at Le Studio. "One producer who really impressed me was Roy Thomas Baker, who came to Morin Heights to do a band called Pilot," Stasium recollects. "His techniques really turned me around. I was just used to close miking techniques, one mike on a guitar amp, and getting a really tight sound. In walks Roy Thomas Baker and tells me to put the mike on the other side of the room. He'd say, 'Get some of that lovely room sound in there!' We'd put up the drum mikes and then throw six other mikes around the room and mike the back of speaker cabinets and all these other

ANNE BOSTON

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bizarre things I'd never heard of before. With the Q's I set up eight different microphones and moved them around for every different part we'd do, and I have Roy Thomas Baker to thank for that."

While still on staff at Le Studio, Stasium came to New York and again ran into Tony Bongiovi, who was looking for an engineer for a new studio he was starting up with his Media Sound cohort, Bob Walters. So Stasium returned to New Jersey and began rounding up equipment and scouting Manhattan with fellow engineer Bob Clearmountain for a suitable studio site. 'Finally we found this abandoned TV studio at 53rd Street and 10th Avenue. Oh man, it was incredible," says Stasium. "Four stories, big old room. Bongiovi was with us and he said, 'We could put 12-foot ceilings in here and put something else up here....,' and I said, 'Nah, Tony, let's make a *big* room, let's make a pyramid, a dome-type of room.' Thus was born the famous Dome Room at the Power Station."

Meanwhile, Bongiovi had been asked to produce *Leave Home*, the second Ramones album, and called in a mystified Stasium to engineer: "I said, 'The Ramones, huh?' Tony said, 'Just think of being assaulted by a locomotive.'" Stasium hopped that locomotive and worked on seven straight Ramones' records—a streak that included the chance to engineer for idol Phil Spector on 1980's *End Of The Century*. With the eternal boy-genius of the Wall of Sound at the helm and the kings of noise on the other side of the glass, communication was predictably byzantine: "I was the go-between between the Ramones and Phil, both ways," reports Stasium. "We got everything done that way." The confabs with Spector also turned Stasium on to one of the maestro's key stratagems: "Phil's echo techniques! It all came into focus—all the Ronettes stuff and the Crystals stuff. He used to time the echoes with the beat of the song by using a snare drum. He said, 'Always have your echoes in time and you'll have a hit.' And that's what he *did*. They used to put foam in the room so it would decay in a certain amount of time and be in measure."

Stasium is currently in Media Sound with the Ramones producing their new LP with former Ramones drummer Tommy Erdelyi. (Eurythmic Dave Stewart will also be co-producing a track.) Stasium makes no bones about what we can look forward to from "da brudders": "We're basically doing a live setup—we're going for the throat here. I'm putting the drums in the room with the guitar amps. The bass amp is slightly, but not completely, isolated. Media Sound is an old church so it has a wonderful ambient sound to it. We're miking them close, but not with a lot of isolation, so we get the band just roaring through the room. We're getting all the tracks in one or two takes, not a lot of overdubs. It's *raw*."

Stasium's background as an "unschooled musician" who never trained to be an engineer helps him hold the reins on his fascination with what studio technology can accomplish. He's no circuit junkie. "I'm not saying that being technical and being an engineer is bad," Stasium reasons. "But I don't have a technical outlook of it. What I do, I do because it feels right and sounds right. I know there are transistors and chips in there, but if I open it up and look at it, it just looks like going to L.A.X. I know that if you turn it up it's louder, and if you turn it this way it's brighter. I think of an overall balance of sound. But as far as technical, forget it." Ⓜ

Stasium Stuff

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"For mixing, a Solid State Logic 6000E console; a Studer A-80 VU half-inch two-track at 30 ips, Kepex 2 noise gates; EMT 140 plate reverbs; Lexicon 224X digital reverb; Lexicon Prime Time 2; Eventide 910 and 949 harmonizers; AMS digital delay and reverb, and a Publison digital delay/pitch shifter."

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BEST BUYS

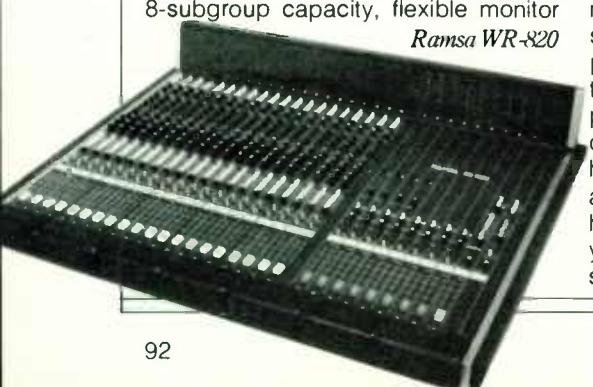
Peavey DECA amp

Trying to pick a few new product developments in the pro recording field is a bit like asking Carl Sagan what his favorite planets are. You'll hear about some interesting ones, but you know there'll be a lot more he has to leave out, including some still being created. For this October, the newest planet is Otari's MX-70. It's an attempt to get the best of Otari's $38,000 MTR-90 24-track deck into a $15,000 1-inch 16-track format, adding RS232 or RS422 ports for computer control and SMPTE-based editing. (An 8-track version goes for $12,500.) Like its older brother, the MX-70 comes with microprocessor-governed constant tension transport, timed-bias ramping for seamless inserts, and logic-interlocked controls. More affluent home recordists and video post-production houses will want to investigate closely. Another reel-world addition from a top-of-the-line house is Revox's update of their PR99 2-track mixing deck; it's now got an LED real-time counter, varispeed control, zero and address locate functions, and auto repeat capability. List is $2,250.

Otari MX-70

If you can't get a mortgage to buy an SSL board, you may be able to live with the alternative. More and more quality 16-track desks are popping up. Some of the most impressive? The Ramsa WR-820 ain't too shabby, with its twenty inputs, lots of patch-reducing features, and metering options, all for five grand. We also had a lot of fun at N.A.M.M. with the new Tascam M-520 16-track mixer with its multiple-input in each channel, 8-subgroup capacity, flexible monitor controls, PFL, multiple auxiliary mixes, and long-throw faders. The layout of the M-520 seemed particularly logical for complex patch configurations. Then there's the Yamaha RM1608 with its microscopic noise and crosstalk specs and equally serviceable layout.

Ramsa WR-820



The continued vigor of John Simonton's aptly named SMPL (pronounced simple) is fortuitous for those who want to take advantage of automatic computer-operated, SMPTE-based editing work without much of the astro-budget gear. Adapted from a Commodore VIC 20, SMPL is part synchronizer, part robot engineer, part track-combiner, and it's a must for artist/producers. Still under a grand after debuting last January at Winter N.A.M.M., you're going to see a lot more of it. Another less ambitious computer-linkup is an option on AHB's System 8 mixing console; it too uses a Commodore.

And now the outboard part of our program. Here's a cross section of essential mid-budget rack staples by category. In the compressor/limiter derby, there's the $425 Model 412A from Orban, with attack and release time, ratio and threshold controls, feedback and gain suppression circuitry, and output clip LED. The stereo model 414A is $799. The digital reverb heat includes the Ursa Major StarGate 323, with eight pre-tuned simulated rooms and lots of parameter control on the front panel. A non-encoding/decoding noise reduction system from MICMIX Audio called the Dynaflex is one of the season's best buys has set trade mag reviewers buzzing. Another noise squelcher, this one a gate, is just out from Furman; it's called the QN-4 Quad, and employs variable pulse width modulation to gate four channels, each with its own threshold and fade time controls. One enterprising little device from Rane is being billed as the "Swiss Army mixer"; it's a highly adaptable 6-channel splitter and sonic switching device for three bills that will ease the pain of not having some of the boards mentioned above.

They're still talking about Peavey's Digital Energy Conversion Amplification (or DECA) power amps. Boasting a remarkable ninety percent efficiency, the system is so new it's got six patent applications pending. There are no large transformers, heat sinks, humongous power supplies or related circuitry. The drawback is that you'll have to stop heating your studio with your monitor amp. If 300 watts per channel for seven hundred bucks isn't enough power for you, Hartley Peavey and the folks in Mississippi will soon have even bigger ones available.

In the rapidly developing studio monitor sweepstakes, JBL/Urei has come out with the 811B speaker. Not only did they double the sensitivity, raise the high end to 17.5 kHz, and beef up the power handling to 150 watts, they incorporated Urei's renown Time Aligned system to correct for "time smear." Standard equipment are JBL 2425H drivers and high-end horns with a diffraction buffer for smoother response and slots to eliminate midrange shadowing. For those who don't want to blast their eardrums all day, T.O.A. makes a nice little reference monitor pair called the RS-21M that sounds better than impressive.

But the most potentially revolutionary pro audio product this season has to be the Soundfield speaker system from dbx. Developed over the last two years by M.I.T. psychoacoustic specialist Mark Davis, the Soundfield is designed to eliminate the single "sweet spot" in any pair of stereo speakers, giving complete stereo imaging at any point in the room. Davis used a computer simulation of sound localization clues to build a working model of what someone will hear anywhere in the room. His solution involves four drivers and midranges, and six tweeters per speaker column, all augmented by an outboard analog signal processor that adjusts for different arrival times. The imaging on Davis' Soundfield system is said to be incredible. If you want to know more, dbx has reproduced a fascinating seventeen-page explanation written by Davis himself—ask for one by contacting dbx Inc., P.O. Box 100C, Newton, MA 02195. If you're getting heavy into digital and rapidly outgrowing your conventional monitors (or if you have to draw lots to see who gets to sit in the best chairs for a playback), these are the speakers for you. Of course, you don't even want to know what they cost. – **Jock Baird**

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could be a has-been before you've had a chance to say what you want to do. Someone says, "You can't have parallel octaves or parallel fifths, that's not right," and then two years later somebody says, "Well, that's okay if you're past Bach." So for me, it was kind of an enigma rather than a great help. I had to unlearn all of it.

The creative side of it was that I always objected to being restrained, and I was just one of those little brats who wanted to mess around with quadruple overdubs when there wasn't such a thing available. A lot of my early experimentation was based on my rebellion against rules. People like Quincy Jones and George Martin were a great influence on me, to hear that they would do things that were bizarre and oblique to the actual thing that one was recording. That's why I love the interaction between jazz and a fine musician sitting in the middle of a funky rock 'n' roll track. I learned a lot from engineering all those Creed Taylor records.

MUSICIAN: *Are you ever tempted to simply pull out a violin or dash off a written arrangement to show people what you want?*

RAMONE: God forbid! It's the one instrument that doesn't work in any form. No, I'll hum it, sing it, bang on a drum or percussion, any which way other than presenting myself as a musician to them. I can do an arrangement very quickly, because I was trained to do that, but that's not what I'm about. Therefore I took away the training and said, "I'd rather go with my ear," and if I have to hunt and peck with two fingers on the keyboard, I'll do that. Everything with me is in my ears and my head. I hear orchestrations, I hear all the lines and the inner lines *constantly*. But for me to sit and write them down I think is almost ludicrous.

I've always felt that you should take the true producer's role. I've written a couple of songs, but I don't try to be a singer/songwriter. If I felt that was my forte, I would've done it. The most important thing in all of it is to be true to what they've brought to you. A drummer may take another hour to find out what you're really talking about, but I'm not going to go out there and crash his cymbals and play him a lick better than he can. If I was in that bad shape about it, I'd hire a different drummer.

A lot of my attitude dates back to the fact that people hired me when I was real young as an engineer, when I was seventeen or eighteen. The fact that you care and you try and you experiment is what makes the difference between mediocrity and something that just shines. Given the chance, the musician can express a lot more of himself if you don't intimidate him. It's the same with an engineer. I could sit down and engineer a record. Many times I sit and impatiently wait while they try to find the sound, so that I don't destroy the very initiative that makes them what they are. Somebody gave me a chance; why shouldn't I give someone else a chance? And if they're in trouble, you step in and help them. It's kind of like a chief surgeon.

MUSICIAN: *How do get so much out of your rhythm sections?*

RAMONE: I don't use the same people all the time. I tend to try to pick the right players...like a baseball manager—put the right lineup with the right song. The key thing is not to have an all-star game on your hands. That's really difficult. I just don't believe that four .300 hitters are going to make a home run. I generally only cut with three or four people, and I prefer the singer be there right from the beginning, even if it's just with blah-blah lyrics, so the inspiration is given by the artist, not by the producer thinking, "That's a clever lick," or "That's a good one, I've used that before."

You must get as close to the finished song as possible, even though you may redo the vocal. Then you have a Polaroid of what you're looking for. Quincy Jones does it that way; I think it's much healthier. I'm not a good raw track producer. If you're dealing with a song, which has to have an *intent* and a moment that you either hit somebody's intellectual or emotional side, you gotta have that intent early, so you know what to build around it. Otherwise you're building a building with no core. And for me the artist is the core of the whole thing. I don't care how great the piece of production is, you just can't throw somebody into it. It just doesn't work.

MUSICIAN: *You've also done some pretty elaborate, orchestrated productions.*

RAMONE: I'm just not heavy into the highly overproduced things. Stylistically, I still believe in the song first, and the performance of the song. Then there are fun things, like *Nylon Curtain* or *Let's Go Crazy After All These Years* [*sic*] where you can do anything you feel. But generally I just don't like to do that. I think that the combination of the four or five elements in a basic rhythm section make the song work. Anything else is like a great bouillabaisse: you can make it work through good sauces and stuff, but you gotta start with the quality.

MUSICIAN: *You sound more like a hungry, young, miracles-on-a-shoestring producer than a mainstream big-budget one. Do your techniques transcend budget?*

RAMONE: I think they're fundamental, because they have to do with immediacy. They have to do with the honesty, with what the band believes in. If you

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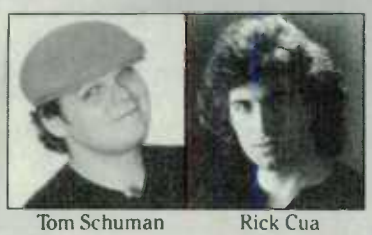
"IF IT WASN'T FOR CALZONE, WE'D PROBABLY BE WORKING A CAPELLA."



Tom Schuman Rick Cua

If you can identify with the unfortunate instrument pictured above, then you're bound to remember that sinking feeling when you realized that the show would be going on — without you and your instrument.

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Hine from page 82
most adventurous kinds of music in terms of atmosphere, space and less rigid form, and they were often called psychedelic when one had the feeling that the writers or originators hadn't seen a tab of acid in their entire lives, but were simply creating freer music.

MUSICIAN: *It seems like there's a conflict between that sense of psychedelic adventurism and being a mainstream producer? Obviously we're using a loose definition of "psychedelic"....*

HINE: Well, I think it's the looseness of it that's the key. If one made it too strongly in that area, you would lose it. It is ultimately a question of balance. As long as one's only really bringing in effects and sounds and atmospheres that are relevant to the song and are not just extreme for the sake of it, you might find that balance happens quite naturally.

MUSICIAN: *Does a keyboard player have a natural advantage when it comes to producing?*

HINE: The keyboard is, and has always been, the most complete compositional instrument. But I'm not a trained musician–I've never had one musical lesson in my life. I've tended to use only what I hear. I started concentrating on keyboard in 1970, using the big Moog and the Arp 2500 and 2600, which were all complex instruments; you had to know the basics about the eight primary modules involved in a modular synthesizer, which I think is essential. It's unfortunate that all the synths now are basically sophisticated electronic organs, because most bands would prefer to buy a preset synth than actually learn the essence of what you can do with electronics. For the last four years I've used a PPG Wave 2.1 and then a 2.2. The essence of the waveforms, the way they've constructed their partials, is really interesting to me. You can constantly surprise yourself–it'll pop up and give you things out of the blue. I also like using a Prophet T-8 as a master keyboard, MIDI'd up to two Yamaha DX7s. The DX7 by itself is far too overused, but if you manipulate some of its sounds together with analog oscillator centers, you get something quite staggering. I first discovered that on Howard (Jones') record.

MUSICIAN: *Can you think of other overused sounds you avoid at all costs?*

HINE: In England we've had a constant bashing of this hugely live ambient snare drum sound and it's just as tedious now as the classic disco snare drum. Any sound which becomes used for its own sake is undesirable. The first really high-profile, really ambient drum sound was David Bowie's *Sound And Vision* and you're talking about a good few years back now. It just shows most people's lack of imagination. If it represents this month or this year's current flavor, that's what they'll go for. They're not thinking, not using their own mind power; they're just borrowing.

MUSICIAN: *So what's next for Rupert Hine? A tour? More work with Robert Palmer? New clients?*

HINE: Nothing's planned, but everything is possible. Ⓜ

Down on the Farmyard

Farmyard Studios in Buckinghamshire uses a Solid State Logic main board and Studer 24-track and mastering decks. The monitor system is a custom job consisting of JBL and Altec components. Hine's favorite pieces of outboard gear are AMS digital delay units, which he uses for sampling and literally every overdub. He also likes Lexicons. Though Farmyard has a complete range of mikes, he prefers the AKG-414. He insists on Dolby noise reduction for everything even though he records at 30 ips. Preferred drum machine, while he'll "use any and all of them," is the LinnDrum, but he's currently trying a German-made SMPTE-reading Friendchip unit. Tape of choice is Ampex 456.

Because the Farmyard is getting so busy Hine has to book sessions five months in advance, he has a home studio at his London digs based around a 24-track Soundcraft board and deck ("it's excellent, a tremendous value; it saved me £3,000"). His *five* monitor systems are all Visonik-David speakers and Technics amps. He also keeps a Sony condenser mike around the house for his signature "strained" vocals.

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Ramone from page 94

spend seven hours on a song, something is not working, and maybe you have to bring it back a week later. But the actual take is like the actual love affair—it is planned and not planned and then the inspiration happens in certain areas one night. People have to digest the material. I don't want the drummer and the guitarist playing something they've done on someone else's date. I want them to understand the song.

Budgets are not what people think they are. A huge budget is a huge budget by the mere fact that they have to spend a lot of money to get it out there, promote it, and pay the proper royalties, but you still try to make a record within a reasonable sense that the artist and the record company both have a chance to recoup. So the more prepared you are, and the less studio time you waste, the better off you are. I mean, I can't overprepare, because it depends on the artist's time.

MUSICIAN: *Is there an unspoken assumption by the record company that a big name producer will maximize the commerciality of the project? Would you consciously steer a song toward some kind of airplay category?*

RAMONE: No. (laughs) No. You could become absorbed in this terrifying project of (rapidly) *what's gonna sell, how it's gonna be, who's gonna market it and what they're gonna say.* Your mind will not design properly if you're not simple and honest and direct about what you're hearing. You could just defeat every inch of what you're trying to do. Besides, if you walk down the hallways of any record company, you're going to hear many opinions, and the advantage of having a one-to-one relationship with the artist is that the record company entrusts you with the job of being close to

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Levine from page 72

anticipates the coming weeks. "I didn't know that the Beach Boys used to use studio musicians. When I found out, I said to Carl, 'See, with all these instruments, there's no need to call in outside people.' We've got the benefit of all these machines, plus you've got the greatest vocalists in the world. It's the ultimate, really." ◻

Levine's Machines

The centerpiece of Levine's recording equipment is a Sony 3324 digital 24-track recorder, "the greatest thing in the world." It's supplemented by a Sony 1610 digital audio processor, a Sony 110 digital audio editor, and the Sony F1 digital recorder.

"Each synthesizer has a different role to play," Levine explains, justifying his enviable collection. His current favorite is the Yamaha DX1 digital synthesizer. "The feel of the keyboard is unbelievable. I've never heard a synth sound so good." He also has a Fairlight CMI, a PPG 2.3, an Oberheim OB8 ("great for lush chords"), a Prophet T8, a Prophet 5 with MIDI, a Roland SH-101 and Jupiter 8, a Minimoog, an Emulator digital sound sampler, and a Korg Delta. The sequencer collection ain't too shabby either. There's a Roland MSQ-700 MIDI sequencer, a Roland CSQ 600, a Roland MC4 microcomposer, a Sequential Circuits Commodore 64, and an Oberheim DSX. There's also very little room to move around in the studio.

For a guy who says "The fidelity of a real drum kit is vastly superior to that of a machine," Levine still has a decent number of drum machines. He prefers the new Simmmons SDS7 digital/analog drum synthesizer, but still speaks fondly of his Linn LM-1 and LM-2 (including "thirty or forty chips"), and his Roland TR-909. The AKG Tube is Levine's choice for miking lead vocals ("it suits George's voice a treat"), while the Sanken CU 41 is used on background vocals. He also uses the Sony C48, C34P, and C36P.

The studio effect he is proudest of is a one-of-a-kind AMS DMX 1580 digital delay with lockable 25-second delay. He also relies on an AMS RMX 26 digital echo/reverb, an AMS DM2 20 flanger, a Quantec QRS room simulator, a Drawmer noise gate/compressor, and a Dynaflex dbx post-event noise reduction. That's a lot of equipment, isn't it, Steve? "London is a very good area with regard to technical equipment," he blushes. "Our relationship with Japan is very good, and we get a lot of things before America does."

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RECORD REVIEWS

Turning Point: U2 mixes textural growth with thematic ambiguity in a view of Mythical America.

U2

The Unforgettable Fire
(Island)

This isn't the U2 record anybody would have expected, and it's probably the better for it. Certainly, the band hasn't lost any of its fire—the jubilant vigor of "Pride (In The Name Of Love)" is proof enough of that—but neither do they feel compelled to burn at peak intensity throughout the album. And though not every chance the band takes pays off for them, this is an unmistakable turning point for U2.

To begin with, *The Unforgettable Fire* is utterly intent on making a point, but at the same time, equally determined not to make a big deal out of doing so. Thus, the album is given a potently metaphoric title, but counteracts that with a blithely solipsistic title song. It doesn't quite neuter the album's sense of purpose, but it does incline the listener to be cautious when leaping to conclusions about What It All Means. Which, I suppose, is only fair, because a great deal of the album focuses on America, a subject which Bono & the boys are better off *not* being decisive about. After all, part of the strength of the American myth is its indeterminacy, its underlying mystery, and by doing little more than dropping clues and making allusions, U2 manages to be more evocative than if they'd been specific.

This is breathtakingly true of "Pride (In The Name Of Love)," which sidetracks its tribute to the Reverend Martin Luther King's non-violent struggle for civil rights through brash sloganeering. In a way, it's almost a slap at their earlier songs, in which the desire to say something subsumed the message itself, until it sinks in that King died for ideas as basic as these slogans, a realization that's as invigorating as it is frightening.

U2 doesn't manage that level of revelation very often, though, and the album as easily lapses into the rambling reflections of "Elvis Presley And America," a song that couldn't possibly live up to its title (and God help Bono if he thinks it does, because he ought to know more about both). Still, where the power of the lyrics sometimes wavers, the dynamism of the music never falters. Part of this is because the Edge has expanded his keyboard forays to include synthesizer, an instrument he plays with the same sensitivity to texture as he does the guitar. He makes "4th Of July" wonderfully wistful, and adds a cinematic sweep to the middle of the title tracks that's the album's most majestic moment. Of course, the treatments producer Brian Eno has added help, too, although drummer Larry Mullen seems to benefit most from the sound-sculpture. Best of all, Bono himself has begun to use his voice to orchestral effect, playing with texture and phrasing as he layers his vocals, so that

he can deliver everything from the assured power of "A Sort Of Homecoming" to the raw agony of "Bed" to the raspy reflection of "Elvis Presley And America" with the expected verve.

It's that last, by the way, that makes me want to ignore the album's flaws, and which seems likely to ultimately put this band over the top in America, because it's the same unassuming confidence that has been a hallmark of all great rock acts. And if it comes through this strongly on an album that clearly falls short of their potential, just imagine how bright they'll burn when they do reach that peak. – **J.D. Considine**

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

Go Insane
(Elektra)

Every band needs its weirdo, and Lindsey Buckingham fills the bill in Fleetwood Mac. After providing the impetus for the sprawling bizarritudes of Mac's *Tusk*, Buckingham runs even farther afield on his second solo outing than he did in his 1981 one-man project *Law And Order*. Happily, much of this dizzying and risky venture skirts self indulgence—*Go Insane* is one of the most unusual and ravishing pop collections in recent memory.

The lanky guitarist works nearly single-handed, playing the recording studio like a Stradivarius, and sculpting some of the richest and most unexpected sound collages since Van Dyke Parks' *Song Cycle*. There's a lot of production *sturm und drang* here, and the album sometimes threatens to slide under an avalanche of sound effects, phasing, percussion, and synthesized zings and whirrs. But Buckingham is also a pop classicist who takes Brian Wilson as his major influence, and, like Wilson at his best, he manages to maintain a delicate balance between bright melodicism and arty experimentalism. The resulting work often sounds like an album-length extrapolation of "Heroes And Villains."

Go Insane is energetically thought out—it's practically a concept album about the distances created by love, estrangement, loss, and death. The songs veer from rhapsodic release to dreadful tension: the funky jubilation of "Slow Dancing" and the airy swing of the Beach Boys-like "Bang The Drum" are counterpoised by the nervous undercurrents of the title track and the furious Arabic drive of the two-part "Play In The Rain." Even at its most prickly, Buckingham's music is buoyed by his unescapable humor: "I Must Go," a stinging number about the drug-induced dissolution of a love affair, bounds along on sprung rhythms, boosted by a pulsating sing-along chorus.

Nowhere are his capabilities for warmth and humanity more apparent than in "D. W. Suite"; the elegaic triptych to Dennis Wilson which closes the album contains all of the sweetness and gentle generosity of the music that inspired it. The suite concludes with two heart-tugging bursts—the Wilsonian positivism of "The Prayer" (with its memorable lyric, "Pray for guidance from above/ Shadow all your hopes with love," framed by swooning Beach Boys harmonies), and the ebullient Highland fling instrumental, "Reflection." Few artists have so effectively mated technology and feeling since *Sunflower*.

Buckingham stumbles here and there—the stereophonic showboating on "I Want You" nearly sinks a serviceable melody, and the *musique concrète* nuttiness of "Play In The Rain" wears thin after a few spins—but the electronic playfulness and emotive depth of *Go Insane* triumph in the long run. By returning to his California roots and exploring the fringes of Brian Wilson's sunny surfin' psychedelia, Lindsey Buckingham is forging an original vocabulary for the 80s. Chalk this one up as a brilliant surprise. – **Chris Morris**

KEITH JARRETT

Flying
(ECM)

Colleagues and other criminals of opinion tell me I liked Jarrett's last album with Gary Peacock and Jack DeJohnette, *Standards*, better than was good for me, but I persist in finding it a refreshing and often inspired entertainment, an opportunity to hear a fine pianist at his unstuffiest and least oppressive, teamed with two ideally responsive virtuosi.

For most of its two-tune length, the new album applies some of the logic of Jarrett's solo concerts to trio playing, and the results are less successful. This is an awfully good trio and it should have come off better, but most of side one offers little more than Jarrett noodling-till-ready on one chord over a rapid pulse and drone. His touch is exquisite and four bars at a time it sounds marvelous—these are very elegant, very expensive noodles—but it goes on for acres, Peacock and DeJohnette lighting little campfires of event here and there, without finding either sufficient adventure or home. There are lovely episodes of course, especially one just before Peacock's solo, but the lack of development is pronounced and it doesn't make me want to trance. The side ends with a lovely, unaccompanied passage, so short.

Side two is pretty durn good. A 6/8 kicks in, Jarrett consents to actually solo, sounds fine, sounds better than fine, only why, just when he gets to his best playing on the date, does he have to start that damn singing? Nasal, whining, LOUD and a real distraction. DeJohnette takes a rousing solo, things go uptempo with good work from all hands, tonality is ruffled and scattered for a crisis effect I find perfunctory and the piece ends with a few spare chords and DeJohnette trying to tease the band into some kinda funk. No answer, fade. That was "Flying." The much shorter "Prism" closes the album, a pretty ballad, the playing full of exemplary interplay—this is, of course, a superb trio. I liked *Standards* better—is there another album's worth in the can maybe?—but then I generally prefer Jarrett in his lighter, less momentous moods. – **Rafi Zabor**

FRANK SINATRA

L.A. Is My Lady
(Q-West)

In the autumn of 1964, as the Beatles sailed up the charts with *Something*

New, another LP burning up the top fifteen was a lovely piece of work by Sinatra and Count Basie and his orchestra, *It Might As Well Be Swing*. Though a fine showcase for the playful side of Basie's sinuous economy and the trombone-like flow of Sinatra's saloon crooning, there was a third element that made these sessions sparkle—the arrangements and conducting of one Quincy Delight Jones. His elastic tempos and sure-shifting moods, by turns creamy and piquant, on tracks like "Fly Me To The Moon," "I Wish You Love" and "The Best Is Yet To Come," helped ensure that these songs would remain staples of Sinatra's concert repertoire.

Memories of former Sinatra-Jones successes were stirred by *L.A. Is My Lady*, unquestionably the Voice's best outing since the first two records in his 1980 *Trilogy* package. For a generation little exposed to the glories of his Columbia years (preserved on *The Frank Sinatra Story In Music*), his tenure (1953–1961) at Capitol and his many grand slams at Reprise (*All The Way, I Remember Tommy, September Of My Years*, etc.), *L.A. Is My Lady* is a timely reminder of the fabulous journey awaiting any souls, temporarily hoodwinked by the Julio Inglesiases of the world, who really want to experience trenchant jazz-inflected pop balladry at its apex. It can hardly be said too often: to journey through the Sinatra catalog is to steep the head and heartstrings in the saga of the greatest singer in American popular music.

People have been counting the man out since Columbia let him go in the early 1950s in the wake of failed forays into novelty tunes (under Mitch Miller's tutelage), yet he turns up thirty years later on MTV with this record's title track! The bracing dynamism of "It's All Right With Me," "Until The Real Thing Comes Along," as well as the bonhomie of "The Best Of Everything" make for saloon-wooing music of dependable impact. And it would be a damn shame if a pick-to-click like *Woman's* lovely, street-wry treatment of "Teach Me Tonight" couldn't prove out on the charts.

This energy is generated in no small part by Quincy Jones, who brings the vivid textures of his award-winning film scores (*In Cold Blood, In the Heat of the Night*, etc.) and the controlled combustion of Grammy-gaining solo LPs (*Walking In Space* and *Smackwater Jack*) to the task, evoking yet beautifully updating the Big Band brawn and end-of-the-bar intimacy that have always helped Sinatra shine.

This is an era in which Billy Joel breaks arena attendance records with performances that echo the Tin Pan Alley punch Sinatra first inserted into the popular musical lexicon, and Linda Ronstadt scores a smash with Sinatra field marshall Nelson Riddle. Do yourself a solid—let the old master himself teach you tonight. – **Timothy White**

TALKING HEADS

Stop Making Sense
(Sire)

They could have called it *Start Making Cents*. Recorded on last year's *Speaking In Tongues* tour, this obligatory soundtrack to yet another rock concert documentary captures Talking Heads at the height of their MTV appeal, radiating the confident glow of a band with a real hit record ("Burning Down The House") to supplement the accumulated devotion of student hipsters, bohemian patrons and coffeetable punks. It also follows too closely the 1982 live retrospective *The Name Of This Band Is Talking Heads*, which provided a more panoramic view of the Heads' evolution from nurd punk scientists to third world party people. Divorced from its film, though, the album is still an engrossing succession of quiet surprises and guilty pleasures.

Not the least of these is "Take Me To The River," a second big band reprise which radiates a celebratory glow much closer to Al Green's original Dixie Baptist undertow, and without negating David Byrne's earnest white soul. The frantic locomotion of "Life During Wartime," another repeat from *The Name Of This Band...*, is also more appropriate to the song's mix of half-comic apocalypse and light-headed confusion, with Edna Holt's and Lynn Nabry's background hurrahs adding some gospel zing.

More unexpected is Byrne's acoustic "Psycho Killer" at the top of side one; it's a disquieting intro to the dark anxiety central to Byrne's subsequent trips into the heart of funk, and his campfire strum jerks with a cagey malevolence. The song's comic obverse "Swamp"—a campy John Lee Hooker-style blues with a Volga boatmen chorus and cartoon Byrne vocal—relieves some of that tension. Essentially a trimming and fine-tuning of *Remain In Light*'s Afro-brain funk complications, *Stop Making Sense* succeeds by striking a nervy balance

between Byrne's private disturbances and the band's streetwise bop.

The charm of *Stop Making Sense* is the way they toy with that balance. "Once In A Lifetime" lightens up with a sunny vocal chorus and spare muscular propulsion. Jerry Harrison and Bernie Worrell synchronize their synths in "Burning Down The House" like a rogue New Orleans horn section. "What A Day That Was," one of the Heads-like highlights of Byrne's *Catherine Wheel* score, takes on a lively character of its own here, faster and less formal.

The way those little things add up makes *Stop Making Sense* welcome. But the ratio of two live albums and four offshoot records to only one fully-realized studio work in three years is plenty. After *Stop Making Sense*, Talking Heads should stop marking time. – **David Fricke**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Every Man Has A Woman Who Loves Him
(Polydor/PolyGram)

Whatever one thinks of Yoko Ono—sorceress / saint, dabbler / genius, bearer/exploiter of her late husband's legacy—this album sounds more vital, varied and with-it than anything recently released by any other ex-Beatle recently. And make no mistake about it, Yoko Ono is an ex-Beatle, perhaps The Ex-Beatle, toiling in the Fab Four's shadow every bit as much as Paul, George or Ringo.

Every Man Has A Woman was originally conceived by John as a fiftieth birthday gift to his wife, with other artists covering Yoko's material in an attempt to get her music across to an indifferent or hostile public. The result is at once a celebration of the woman and her man, an often emotional potpourri that showcases Yoko Ono's underrated skills as a lyricist and musician, skills previously obscured by people's prejudice against the singer.

The LP's major highlight, of course, is John Lennon's title track, originally sung by Yoko on *Double Fantasy*. Like his posthumous songs on *Milk And Honey*, Lennon's living, breathing vocals are almost too much to bear. But

the healing sets in quickly with Harry Nilsson's version of "Silver Horse" (from *Season Of Glass*), one of three Nilsson covers and a moving tribute to his old drinking buddy.

The rest of the record offers marvelously eclectic interpretations, from Eddie Money's AORave-up on "I'm Moving On" through Rosanne Cash's gently faithful crooning of "Nobody Sees Me Like You Do" to Elvis Costello's TKO Horn-punctuated soul reading of the dynamic "Walking On Thin Ice." Yoko's avant-annoying side is also given full rein on the *synthétique concrète* of "Dogtown," submitted by a novice L.A. artist named Gui Manganiello under the name Alternating Boxes, along with a robot *manqué* version of "Wake Up," performed by the Klaus Voorman-recommended German loonies, Trio. And while the album first summons the memory of Yoko's late husband, it ends very much in the present, as son Sean's improvisatory rap on "It's Alright" reaffirms life in the wake of loss.

If anybody still takes the spirit of what the Beatles and John Lennon represented seriously, it's the much maligned Yoko Ono. "A dream we dream together . . . is reality," sings the all-children Spirit Choir on "Now Or Never." No, the dream isn't over; thank Yoko for keeping it alive. – **Roy Trakin**

RICKIE LEE JONES

The Magazine
(Warner Bros.)

Blending early 60s R&B crack, beat-poet lyricism and cabaret jazz ease, Rickie Lee Jones' best tracks turn the tough trick of using entirely familiar elements to disorient listeners' expectations. Her infinitely elastic voice is the main instrument of this aural upset, wrapping itself around everyday words and feelings in ways that restore their meaning and wonder.

For example, the lines, "Hey, baby, you're my favorite boy/ And I think about you all the time," probably don't do much for you on the page. But when Jones effortlessly bends the two end-words into a slant rhyme on "Jukebox Fury" from her new LP, *The Magazine*, the effect awakens a cliché with mystery and feeling—and subtly reminds us of the strange renewals love makes possible.

The Magazine teems with such small, powerful pleasures, but one gets the discomforting sense that Jones is striving for *more* with this record. Ambition unmistakably rears its swelled head with two sensitively titled instrumentals (a rather lovely piece called "Prelude" and the brain-deadeningly pretentious "Theme") and a three-part suite that includes, ahem, a recitation.

Not that such urges for seriousness, or "Gravity" as one title here puns, aren't welcome from this songwriter, particularly after her release last year of the slim *Girl At Her Volcano*, an "interesting" but pretty much inessential collection of outtakes, live takes and covers. The upbeat, word-charged bop of her 1979 eponymous debut LP and the soul-stirring emotional sophistication of 1981's *Pirates* have already proved that Jones handles the weight as well as anyone.

In fact, the strongest cuts on *The Magazine* each distinctly recall one or the other of Jones' first two albums. In their floating seductiveness and passionate force, "Gravity," "It Must Be Love," "Magazine" and "Deep Space" call on the virtue of *Pirates*. Meanwhile, "Jukebox Fury," "Real End" and "Runaround" (with its catchy "hide your heart" tag copped from Laura Nyro) evoke the debut's horn-pumped street-rhythm raunchiness.

So, Rickie Lee Jones, a major talent who always seemed at least half-tempted to throw her talent away, is back and working near the height of her power. *The Magazine* fall short of its greatest artistic goals, but its many achievements wouldn't have meant so much within the context of any less full-hearted effort. – **Anthony DeCurtis**

HERBIE HANCOCK

Sound-System
(Columbia)

Don't make the mistake of turning up your nose at this because it's "another goddamn rock record." Don't

even fall for the line that *Sound-System* is nothing more than *Rockit, Vol. 2*. Granted, it makes no apologies about being a dance record, but then, neither did "One O'Clock Jump." Above all, this album marks the final revitalization of Hancock's recording career.

If that last claim strikes you as a bit extreme, think back a bit to his work from *Mwandishi* to *Sextant*, arguably his most creative period as a leader. The music he made then was dense, colorful, rhythmically inventive and culturally eclectic, but the subsequent success of *Headhunters* led Hancock to abandon his attempt to merge funk and jazz on his own terms, and to pursue a dual career as would-be funkster and part-time jazzbo.

Sound-System, like *Future Shock* before it, returns Hancock to a sort of musical universalism, but where the latter was too inclined to either/or constructions (the jazzy "TFS" versus the dance smash "Rockit"), the former finds him fusing his influences. This is most obvious with "Karabali," "Junku" and the title track, all of which mix in a healthy portion of percussive African all-spice to lend the brew an all-embracing tang redolent of *Crossings*. But it isn't just a matter of mix-and-match, either, because the real key to Hancock's success lies in the way the electronics of Bill Laswell's futuro-funk approach allows him to layer sounds for rhythmic complexity the way he once layered chords for harmonic depth. The heart of "Hardrock" and the other street-beat numbers is their interlocking pulse patterns, not the simple melodies Hancock has stitched over the groove, and once you start listening on that level, and then home in on touches like Wayne Shorter's lyricon in "Metal Beat," it quickly becomes clear that this is remarkable music indeed. – **J.D. Considine**

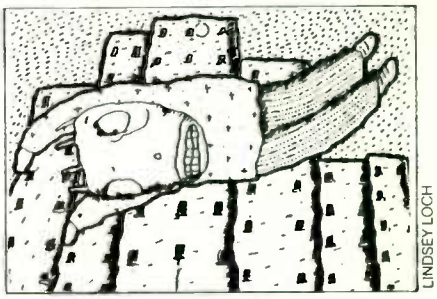
THE EVERLY BROTHERS

EB 84
(Mercury)

Despite a totally uninspiring title, *EB 84* represents an auspicious occasion: the Everly Brothers' first album of new material in over ten years. Last year's London concert reunion (and subsequent live LP) of the once-battling brothers showed their gorgeous vocal blend had survived intact. Could the golden-throated Everlys sound relevant as well?

EB 84's producer Dave Edmunds has made the relevance question irrelevant by depositing the brothers in an echoic Twilight Zone. A heavy hand on the reverb knob is an Edmunds trademark; here the echo and compressed dynamic range don't recall 1950s rock 'n' roll so much as blur boundaries between voices and instruments. Ironically, the Everlys' forthright vocals and simple arrangements on their hit oldies have a lot to do with their timeless appeal.

The album's song selection is also curious. *EB 84* breezes in with Paul McCartney's charming "On The Wings Of A Nightingale," which sounds custom tailored for Don and Phil. (It's the least Macca could do after the Everlys' influence on Beatles part-singing.) Other tunes don't always serve their need for melody, and the brothers' cruising elevation drops accordingly. Frankie Miller's "Danger Danger" is stompy and undistinguished, Jeff Lynne's "The Story Of Me" a mawkish ballad. Bob Dylan's "Lay Lady Lay" is an oddball choice, though its wealth of whole notes allows close inspection of the Everlys' harmonic alchemy.



LINDSEY LOCH

SOFTWARE CITY

By John Amaral

Music software is one of the most exciting developments on the scene. Rah, rah! In this column, expect to hear about applications for passive and interactive listening, learning, performance and composition.

Now: you've probably wondered about all those red and yellow MIDI packages from Passport that you may have seen in stores or ads, and what they could do for you. MIDI/4 operates like a 4-track tape deck for your MIDI-equipped instrument. Polywriter prints out whatever you play into standard musical notation. You also need an Apple or Commodore computer, and an interface card/cable which lets your equipment communicate.

If four MIDI tracks are all you need (remember *Sgt. Pepper*?), MIDI/4 will do you just fine. A key question is: "Does it record velocity information so that you can play with dynamics?" The answer is yes. You may find that you've outgrown four tracks rather quickly, however, and soon find yourself casting a longing eye at the 16-track software that's just around the bend.

Polywriter is beautiful! You get to select format. Someone put a lot of thought into providing for different types of scores, from standard piano notation to SATB with the inclusion of text. Okay, so you don't really get publishable music. But it's readable, and automatic transposition lets you score and print the parts for an entire orchestra if you want. On the realistic side, the charts will be pretty long, as you can't get a lot of bars on one page. But you can print sideways!

Now the bad news: a lot of people were very disappointed when they got their MIDI/4 and Polywriter home and found that Passport didn't provide a way for the two applications to work together! You can't record your masterpiece with MIDI/4 and then see it printed out with Polywriter. C'mon, guys!

The hippest idea I've heard in a long time came from Paul D. Lehrman in the Alpha Syntauri booth at N.A.M.M. Their MIDI recording software, Metatrak, runs sixteen voices on the Syntauri synthesizer at the same time as MIDI. Think of what you can do with that? Ⓜ

Ramone from page 98
that artist, which they may not have time to do, and then you and the artist together work as a team with the record company.

MUSICIAN: *You did "Maniac" and the ill-fated* Automatic Man *album with Michael Sembello. What went wrong there?*

RAMONE: I think it was what happens at times in the record business when there's a major change at the label and the record gets washed in with the wrong video and the wrong television appearances. It's just unfortunate. Sometimes the images that are thrown out for a person like that are too hard to live up to right away. Michael wasn't given a chance to perform. There was so much time spent on having to get the album together quickly and making visual appearances before he was ready; sometimes it's just too taxing on the artists. I think to make a consummate artist, for all these new young people that I'm working with now, you have to spend the months, not rush the record out, and make sure about what their live appearances and their videos will be like. I have to be a much bigger participant than I used to be. I've always been involved with people's live shows, but now I realize that working with good directors and video production is as much a part of the record as what I did originally.

MUSICIAN: *You're producing Julian Lennon's first album. Is it somewhat Beatlesque?*

RAMONE: Well, I mean he's twenty-one years old. Whatever he heard of his dad is what he heard. It's in the genes but I think one has to give credit to his own individuality. I think the pure individuality of the guy and his ability to write is what I believed in, otherwise I wouldn't do it. I'm not interested in a novelty—and neither is he. Except for one track, it's all original material. On *Nylon Curtain*, we were also accused of stealing from the Beatles, of course, and that was all *junk*. Everybody looks to throw flak.

MUSICIAN: *We've recently read in the* Stone *that Billy will have a new studio album out in early fall.*

RAMONE: I don't know anything about it. The guy just came off six months of touring; I think you should give him a rest. But there'll be another new concept, whatever it is. You can't predict what's gonna happen two months from now in your life. And you start from there. M

Phil in the Blanks

"I am a bit of a toy freak, but it's only because I'm interested in the next particular piece of gear that's been built. If someone wants to experiment, I'm usually the idiot they bring it to, from early digital to (laughs) late digital." Ramone works in so many different studios, though, it's hard to pin him down to what he prefers. He does bring a rack with him for his assortment of "tape slaps and live chambers and craziness that I'm always looking for." The rack has a Lexicon Prime Time, a Sony reverb, and a number of Audio Design noise gates and "vocal stressers." He adds that "I'll use an MXR phase pedal as much as I'll use something that costs $20,000." He wouldn't like to pick his favorite board, "because at this moment we're in a very major change. I've had wonderful success on Necam and Solid State Logic desks, and those are the two I use for automation. But we're going to have to make some more changes, getting the spirit of the digital format into more interplay with us. The key will be to not make it so expensive that you can't work."

His preferred decks are Studer, Mitsubishi and Sony ("a lot of Sony"). If he can afford it (giggle, giggle) he'll do an analog and a digital mix, so he can A-B it later to make sure the record is mastered correctly. His tape is Ampex 456 ("it holds up"). His preferred mikes are Neumann and Fostex; he's especially bullish on the latter: "I like the RP series a lot. I started with Fostex headphones, and I really loved them—there was a twenty percent improvement in the studio once I stopped hassling with the headset mix. Once I began to see how they manufactured that stuff, I believed the mikes could be in that same category." Ramone even forgoes the Neumann for Billy Joel's vocals, using instead a Fostex RP88. He also uses Fostex gear at home, including a 4-track cassette X-15 and 8301 Personal Monitors.

ROCK S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S

The Church – *Remote Luxury* (Warner Bros). With their melancholy melodies, jangly guitars and affectless vocals, the members of this Church could easily be taken for born-again psychedelic rockers. In a way they are, but rather than succumb to the orthodox revivalism of the California psychedelic sects, this Australian quartet opts instead for the reformed approach of Echo & the Bunnymen, although minus the guitar worship. The Church's canon emphasizes strong songs, so much so that each offering from these charismatics is utterly infectious. Once you've heard the call, you'll be playing it religiously.

Black Uhuru – *Anthem* (Island). Unlike earlier efforts, which matched Michael Rose's righteous Rasta wrath against the slippery kineticism of Sly & Robbie, this album finds that the fix is really in the mix. While on the one hand that softens Rose's thorny delivery, it adds emphasis to the warmth of his voice and the cool comfort of Duckie Simpson and Puma Jones' harmonies. Mostly, though, it shifts the focus of the album from vision to sound, especially with Eric Thorngren's remixes. While that may occasionally demean Rose's literal meanings, it ends up adding to the music's impact on a level that goes beyond words.

J.J. Cale – *Special Edition* (Mercury). Listening to this exemplary greatest hits collection, I was struck by the realization that, great though these performances are, none of them were really *hits*. Oh, sure, "Cocaine" was a smash for Eric Clapton, as was "After Midnight," but how many people appreciate how downright inferior those cover versions were? Point is, J.J. Cale is an American original, as noteworthy in his way as Robert Johnson, and if you still haven't given him a listen, this is the no-lose sampler you can't afford to pass by.

Jools Holland – *Jools Holland Meets Rockaboogie Billy* (IRS). A bit of everything here—imitation rockabilly, droll New Orleans piano, superficial cover versions and plenty of guests from Holland's last two bands, the Millionaires and Squeeze. It's that last which ultimately pulls the album through, though, for between Chris Difford's whimsical lyrics and Gilson Lavis' no-nonsense drumming, Holland never quite ends up in dutch.

Birdsongs of the Mesozoic – *Magnetic Flip* (Ace of Hearts). Instrumental rock groups are usually undone by excess ability; rock is, after all, a music of basics. Which wouldn't seem to bode well for these brainy Bostonians, who write tunes like "Terry Riley's House" and cover Stravinsky's "Rite Of Spring." But because the Birdsongs approach their avant-classical inclinations with a gung-ho minimalism that has more to do with surf music than the Soho scene, they rock just fine, thanks. Of course, it helps that the album's other cover version is the "Theme From 'Rocky And Bullwinkle.'" (P.O. Box 579, Kenmore Station, Boston MA 02215)

12" singles continue to purvey some of the best music to be heard these days. Take, for example, the **Afrika Bambaataa/James Brown** collaboration, "Unity (Pts. 1-6)" (Tommy Boy). Not only is this meeting of the funkmasters everything you could hope for in terms of groovemanship, but it quite neatly demonstrates that hip-hop is nowhere near as ahistoric as its technofetishes might suggest. Memory is an ironic concept for such a "disposable" medium, but that's also an undercurrent in **Gil Scott-Heron**'s biting election-analysis, "Re-Ron" (Arista). "Would we take Jesse Jackson?" he asks, over Bill Laswell's Material-isms. "Hell, we'd take *Michael* Jackson." Darker by far, and no less chilling, is "Two Tribes" (Island/ZTT), the melodramatic anti-nuke anthem that has raised **Frankie Goes To Hollywood** up out of the ranks of novelty, and demonstrates that Trevor Horn's sound can be more effective than mere artful noise. Finally, those who believe that it's the *lack* of money that causes us grief ought to adopt **Chuck Brown & the Soul Searchers**' "We Need Some Money" (T.T.E.D.) as their anthem. A rollicking go-go style throwdown that would do Barrett Strong proud.

Julio Iglesias – *1100 Bel Air Place* (Columbia). According to the industry, Iglesias is the most popular singer in the world, outside of the United States. Yet another reason not to trust foreigners.

Tracie – *Far From The Hurting Kind* (A&M). The funniest thing about Britain's current fondness for 50s-style hep is the blind determination with which they've resurrected the sort of tuneful treacle rock reacted against in the first place. Tracie Young, like Tracey Ullman, has a pretty voice but little else; give her a song as sweetly melodic as Elvis Costello's "(I Love You) When You Sleep," and she'll give you back a hit, as would any good singer. But if it's depth you want, stick with Cyndi Lauper.

Harold Budd – *Abandoned Cities* (Cantil); **With Brian Eno** – *The Pearl* (Editions EG). There seems to be something almost evasive about the way Budd's music tries to lead the listener away from simple song structure, but it's less a matter of trying to hide anything than an attempt to refocus our attention away from the melodies and onto the melodic diffusion. On *The Pearl*, that's simple enough, as Eno's atmospheric soundwash highlights the harmonics in each evanescent chord. But it's *Abandoned Cities*, with its dense electronics and forlorn romanticism, that really hits home, because it manages its melancholy like a downsized Bruckner symphony. Take that, Windham Hill! (Both available from Jem, 3619 Kennedy Rd., So. Plainfield, NJ 07080).

Richard James Burgess – *Richard James Burgess* (Capitol). Given that Burgess produced such glitz-fests as Adam Ant's *Strip* and the first two Spandau Ballet albums, it would be fair to expect his solo debut to be flash worth panning. As it turns out, though, *RJB* is immensely likable, because though content isn't exactly Burgess' long suit, popcraft is, and his affinity for irresistible hooks is almost frightening.

Kansas – *The Best Of Kansas* (CBS Associated). Why did I expect this to be blank on both sides?

Hank Williams – *40 Greatest Hits* (Polydor). They *don't* make 'em like this anymore, and more's the pity. Hank Will-

continued on page 114

J.D. Considine

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JAZZ

S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S

Modern Jazz Quartet – *Echoes* (Pablo). It should come as no surprise that the MJQ's first album since their reformation sounds as fertile and imaginative as their first record must have sounded three decades ago, because the integration of soloist into ensemble that represents the band's clearest strength is a virtue both timeless and ever in peril. To call *Echoes* one of 1984's finest releases hardly does it complete justice–this has been a great year for good records but a miserable year for great ones. To say, however, that the three new John Lewis pieces included here rank with his seminal work of the past in reconciling the primal and the elegant . . . well, that begins to suggest this album's majesty.

Bobby McFerrin – *The Voice* (Elektra/Musician). If you think the only "real" jazz singers are those who eschew lyrics to use their voices as horns, McFerrin is your man. But even if you agree with me that vocalese is generally a tiresome novelty act, McFerrin could make you change your mind. He's an irresistible one man band, blessed with such a natural pop sensibility (encompassing doo-wop, hip hop, the blues, and American popular song) that any attempt at selling out would probably limit, rather than broaden, his appeal—a lesson E/M seems to have learned, to judge from this gimmick-free a cappella concert recording, the first to capture a measure of this remarkable performer's range and perspicacity.

Chico Freeman – *Tangents* (Elektra/Musician); *Morning Prayer* (India Navigation). Any record that lists eight different studios and gives no clue of which musicians are playing on which tracks figures to be uneven, and *Tangents* certainly is. But the inspired far outweighs the mundane. The aforementioned McFerrin persuades the sometimes overly solemn tenorist to lighten up on three tracks, and two titles written by and featuring pianist Mark Thompson introduce a startling new talent. Freeman's own playing is fluent and admirably streamlined throughout. Meanwhile, the India Navigation is the first U.S. release of a 1977 session from Japan, notable for Henry Threadgill's fierce solos, as well as the leader's.

Ran Blake – *Suffield Gothic* (Soul Note/PolyGram Special Imports); **Don Pullen** – *Evidence Of Things Unseen* (Black Saint/PSI); **Tommy Flanagan** – *Thelonica* (Enja/PolyGram Classics); **Junior Mance & Martin Rivera** – *For Dancers Only* (Sackville); **John Hicks** – *John Hicks* (Theresa); **Michele Rosewoman** – *The Source* (Soul Note/PSI); **Denny Zeitlin** – *Tidal Wave* (Palo Alto). The best of this month's piano releases, ranked more or less in order of preference, though you can't go wrong with any of them, not even the Zeitlin (which boasts an indelible Zeitlin-Charlie Haden duet on "Chelsea Bridge," as well as a meandering quartet with John Abercrombie and Peter Erskine). Even within an idiom that prizes originality above all else, Blake is clearly a maverick. He's still pondering the imponderable in his owlish soliloquies, but the miracle of his style is that he's learned to voice even his most twisted musings in an airy, balanced manner. And tenor saxophonist Houston Person's unexpected transcendence on three duet tracks and an incandescent reading of Blake's "Vanguard" justifies the price of purchase all by itself. The most striking quality of *Things Unseen* is its boundless variety–remarkable given the presence of just one performer, and evidence of Pullen's compositional acumen as well as his color-sensitive improvisational touch. Flanagan's tribute to Monk (with bassist George Mraz and drummer Art Taylor) is one of the most warmly personal in what is rapidly coming to constitute a sub genre. The delightful Mance exudes soulfulness without indulging in soul cliché, and bassist Rivera paces him beautifully. Hicks' innate lyricism, sometimes put on hold when he's backing horns, comes to the fore on an album of solos, duos, and trios with vibist Bobby Hutcherson, bassist Walter Booker and pianist Olympia Hicks (the leader's wife). Rosewoman is a forceful soloist and a composer of slithering, serpentine themes whose debut album is further enlivened by the jabbing solos of trumpeter Baikida Carroll and the emphatic thrust of bassist Roberto Miranda and drummer Pheeroan Ak Laff.

Giants of Jazz – (George Wein Collection/Concord Jazz); **Thelonious Monk** – *Blues Five Spot* (Milestone). If the Giants of Jazz date had been released shortly after it was recorded in 1972, it might have been subjected to criticisms that seem irrelevant now. Who could have known then that this would be Monk's last date with horns? It's Monk's sensibility that pervades, although there are fine solos by Gillespie, Stitt, Winding, and Blakey as well, and so what if this all-star aggregation never quite succeeds in sounding like a band? (N.b. — Dizzy's feature is Gil Fuller's venerable "I Waited For You," not–God forbid–"I Will Wait For You," as listed on the jacket.) The Milestone collects hitherto unissued odds and ends from the late-50s, including two characteristic unaccompanied piano solos and some great stuff from the Five Spot date with tenor saxophist Johnny Griffin.

Errol Parker – *Tentet* (Sahara, 1143 First Ave., New York, NY 10021). The pianist's notions of polyrhythms and bitonality are so renunciatory and so peculiar that it was inevitable he would want to be his own drummer, and understandable that overdubbing would provide a temporary solution. But while the added horns are clearly responsible for some of the expansion one senses here, what finally gives this album more color and bite than its predecessors is Parker's decision to abandon keyboard altogether in order to give his band the benefit of an interactive real-time drummer. Parker is one of the most stimulating figures in jazz today, and this is a record you don't want to miss.

Robert Watson & Curtis Lundy – *Beatitudes* (New Note/N.M.D.S.). Altoist (and ex-Messenger) Watson and bassist Lundy's New Note sounds a lot like a Blue Note, which I guess was the idea and which is more than okay with me. A solid, invigorating album, also featuring pianist Mulgrew Miller and drummer Kenny Washington.

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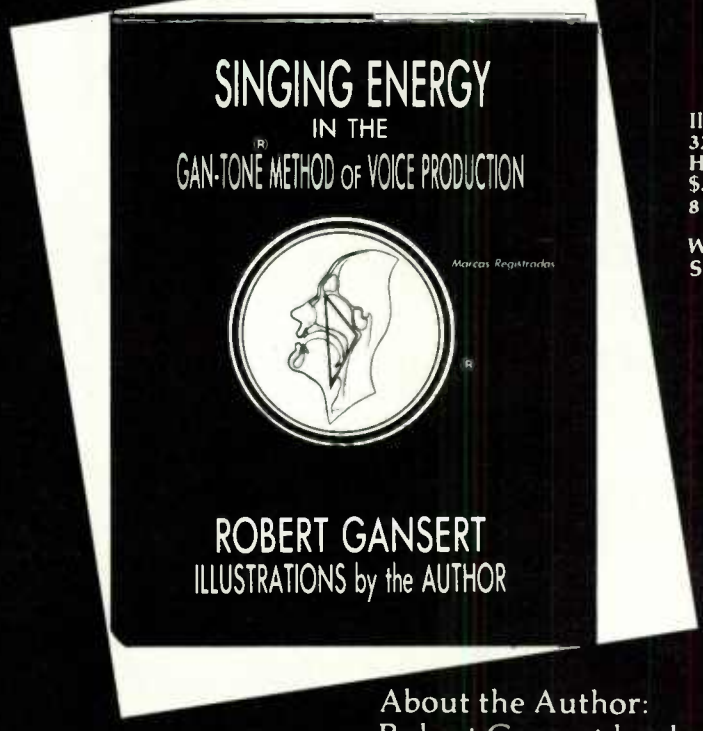

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Everly Bros. from page 105

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Rock Shorts from page 108

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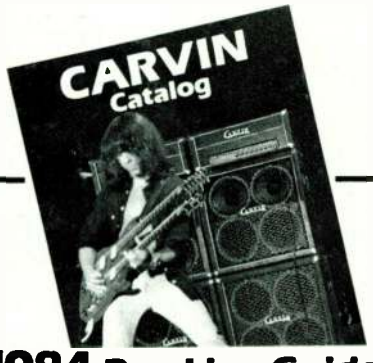

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