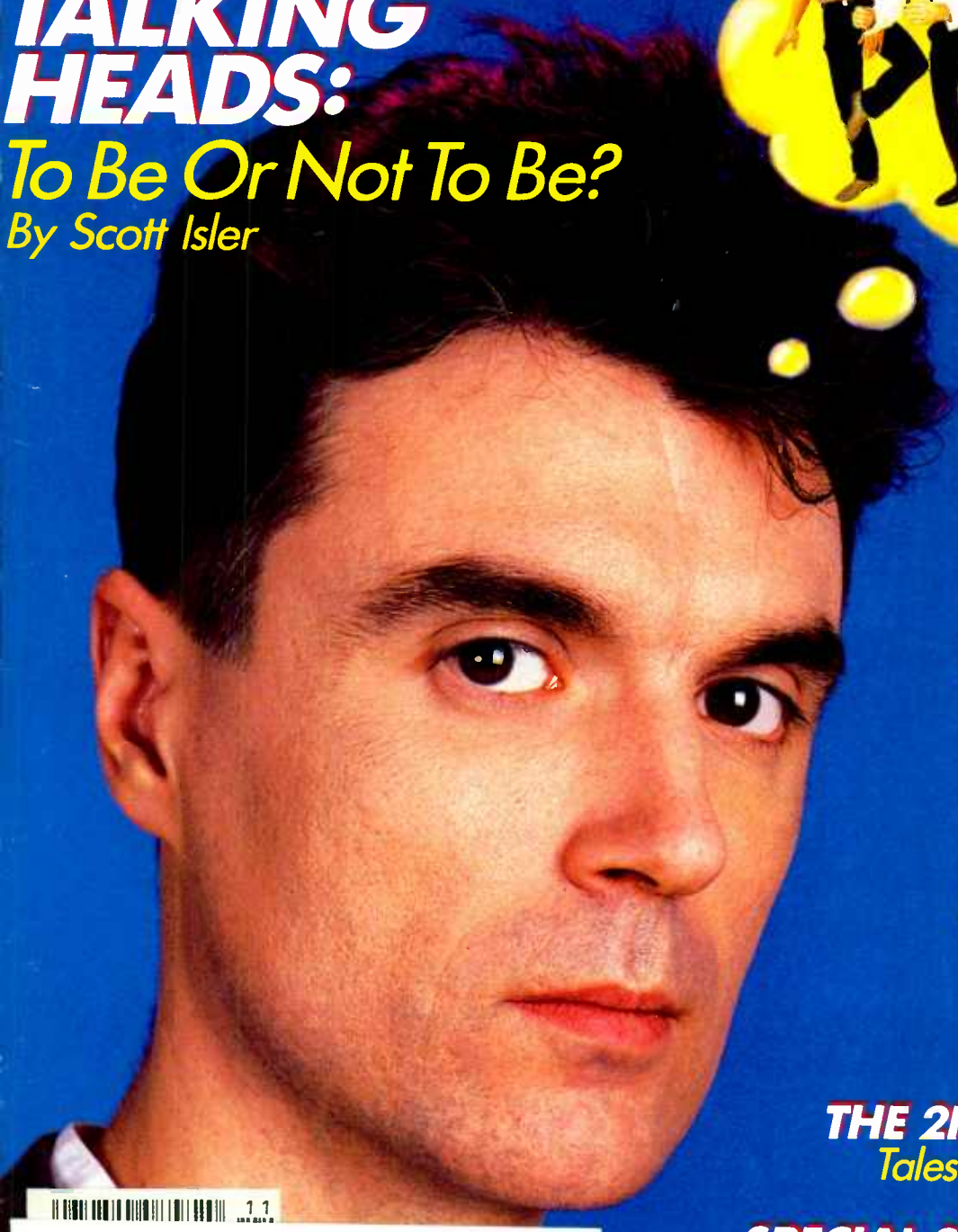
MUSICIAN

$2.25 NO. 85 NOVEMBER 1985

TALKING HEADS:
To Be Or Not To Be?
By Scott Isler



NEIL YOUNG
Talks about supporting Reagan, knowing Manson, payola, his suit with Geffen, CSNY, and how country music can save his life.

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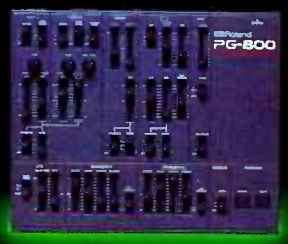

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A BILLBOARD PUBLICATION
MUSICIAN
NOVEMBER 1985 NO. 85

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

Talking Heads

The family that plays together stays separately. Chris and Tina in the Bahamas, Jerry Harrison in Wisconsin and David Byrne in Texas learn that absence makes the Heads grow fonder.

Eurythmics

Soul searching with Aretha and Stevie.

MUSICIAN

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In the years that I've known Jeff Beck, he's always demanded the most out of his playing and his equipment. You can hear it from the Yardbirds to his new album "Flash", from his pickups to his amps. Jeff's never been in an ad before. I've never had musicians in my ads. It's a first for both of us. But this seemed like a natural.

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 Photo: Robert Knight

LETTERS

Building the Beach

I have just finished Timothy White's article on Brian Wilson and I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed it: A fine piece of writing on one of rock 'n' roll's saddest enigmas. I learned a lot of stuff I didn't know, for example, that Brian's Pa was from Kansas and that his Ma was from Minnesota. This fortifies my somewhat controversial theory that there is no musical history in California save that of the Spaniards and the American Indian; that there is no "California Sound" (Oh weariest of weary phrases!), and that Los Angeles is just a melting pot—a sort of genetic finishing school (pun partially intended), if you will, for the rough musical seed brought over from the old country and left to mutate in the great heartland.

Don Henley
Colorado, USA

To me, there was no other band like The Beach Boys. They *were* summertime and fun! Back then I had no idea of some of the bad times that the group themselves were going through. You just didn't hear that news back then. I'm glad that the fact that the boys and their father didn't always get along as great as the press let on in the past was brought to the attention of your readers. This is something that was kept in very low profile for many years.

Carl has showed the listening public that he has a lot to offer on a solo basis and I'm sure that Brian's solo efforts will be just as great. I think that some of the Beach Boys best stuff is yet to come.

Beau Smith
Barboursville, WV

Many thanks to Timothy White on his excellent cover story on Brian Wilson. It ranks with the very best I've ever read on Brian & the Beach Boys. There are a certain few of us who *had not* given up on Brian, and we are so happy to have him healthy and happy again.

Christopher Beach Potter
Wickford, RI

Live Praise

I would like to express my appreciation for Fred Schruers' superb profile of Bob Geldof. Geldof's organization of the original Band Aid project certainly eclipses all other such efforts in sincerity and selflessness, if not necessarily in popularity. His exhausted but radiant face during the London finale showed clearly the physical and mental effort. Having already "made compassion fashionable," Geldof has now also proven that music *is* the universal language. Thank you, Bob Geldof—the world is now a better place for having experienced your presence and inspiration.

Lisa Wolfe

A big thanks to Fred Schruers! It's about time the Boomtown Rats got a little exposure.

Kelly Heneghan

Meat Beat Farmers??

Okay, repeat after me: *Meat. Beat.* Got that? Now how 'bout this: *Puppets. Farmers.* Now let's put them together properly: Meat Puppets. Beat Farmers. Got that? Good. Now in the future will you remember not to put a picture of the former with an article on the latter? Get some folks on your staff who aren't just new music dilettantes. Love and kisses.

Dan Epstein
Chicago, IL

This and That Chat

Tell me, is there a bigger fool involved in the music business today than Saul Zaentz? Of course, we (the great unwashed) would not have known this were it not for his lawsuit against John Fogerty. Thanks for the insight Sal (or whatever your name is). I thought it was just about a boy and his pig! It is abundantly clear as to who can dance, and who Kant.

D.L. Cameron
Pickle Lake, ONT

I thoroughly enjoyed Ben Sandmel's excellent article on Cajun and Zydeco music in your August issue. You mentioned Clifton Chenier, Dopsie and Buckwheat. We saw Buckwheat twice this spring here in Washington, D.C., and the joint was jumping. His mixture of rock, blues and jazz makes people happy anywhere. As an amateur accordion player, I'm glad to see and hear the increasing popularity of the instrument.

Bill Stannard
Washington, DC

For his review of Bob Dylan's *Empire Burlesque*, Charles M. Young gets my vote in the "Most Likely to Succeed Northrop Frye in the Popular Media" category.

Ever since Jann Wenner's strangely effusive review of *Slow Train* in *Rolling Stone*, and Vic Garbarini's sophomoric screed of spiritual condescension in *Musician* shortly after Dylan's conversion/betrayal, most critics have been ogling Dylan's contrariness for signs of a lapse in faith. They took it so personally!

Young is independent enough to acknowledge the spiritual value and cultural influence of Judeo-Christian faith and teaching (despite the shortcomings of contemporary religion) and Dylan's own admonition, "It ain't me, babe."

David Hicks
Toronto, ONT

I've been reading *Musician* now for about 6 months. Every time I read a review on a record by someone who professes to be a Christian (Philip Bailey, Amy Grant, Bob Dylan), there is always some tint of prejudice mixed into the review. What difference does it make if an artist professes to believe in Jesus?

George Del Signore
Franklin, MA

Thanks to Craig Anderton for the "MIDI Recording Studio" article. I had been forcing myself to read computer music articles in hopes of picking up a glimmer of understanding—it's apparent this is what the music world is going to be all about in the future. I can't wait to get rich and famous now so I can afford to buy all this new equipment!

Karen Byrde
Oakland, CA

Thanks for not writing anything about me!

Birge Seltzer
Redwood City, CA

[Our pleasure. It was all the news that was fit to print — Ed.]

The Envelope Please

Musician and JBL proudly announce the first finalist in the "Best Unsigned Band" contest—OHO from Baltimore, self-professed purveyors of Gothic pop, Slavic funk and Balkan bop at its best. Congrats, comrades. Keep those entries coming. (See page 111 for details.)

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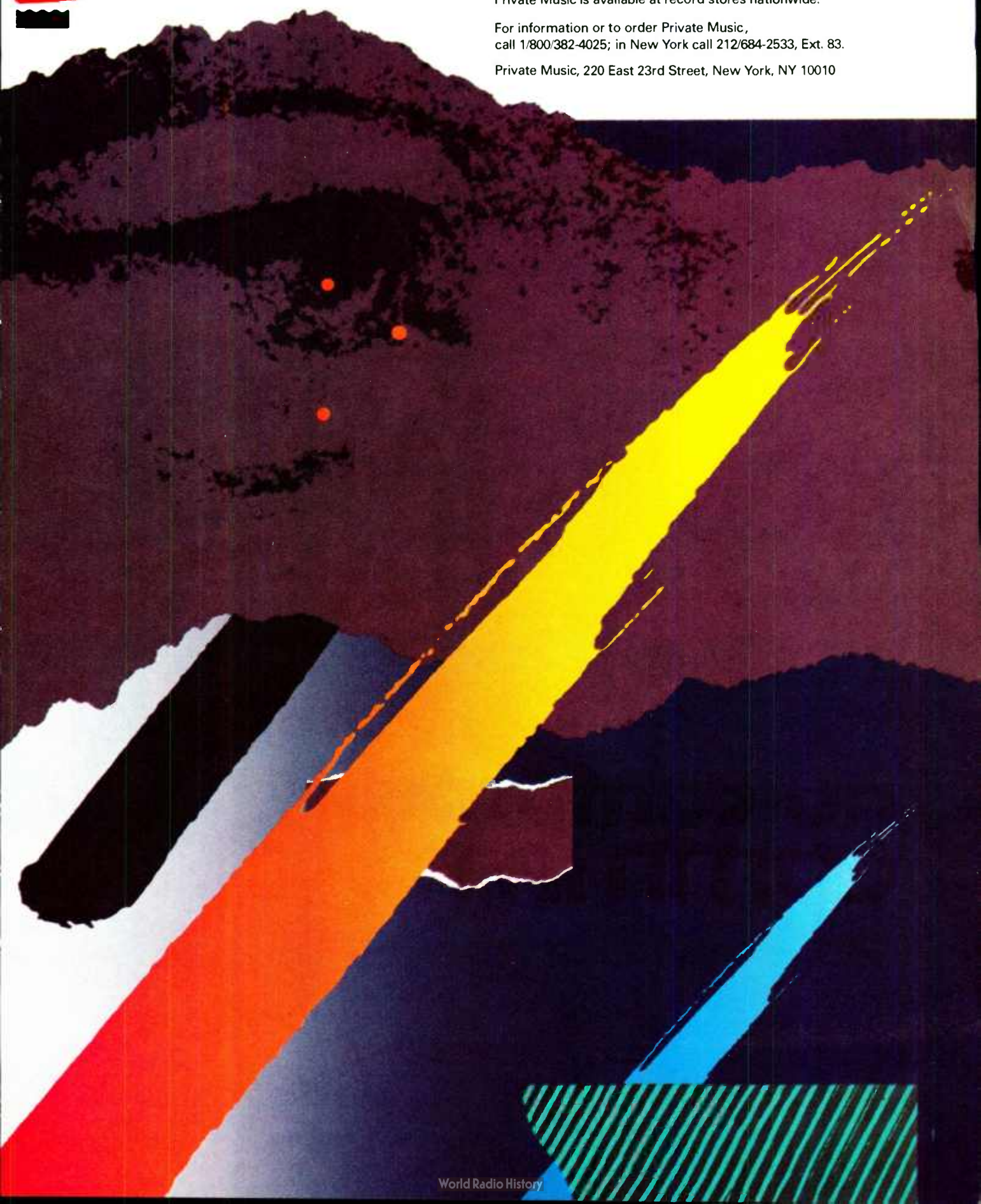

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DWIGHT YOAKAM

BY CHRIS MORRIS

COWPUNK NUTHIN'—THIS HOLLYWOOD HONKY-TONKER'S THE REAL McCOY

Honky-tonk bands were the first rock 'n' roll bands. That's where the first loud electric bands were. That's where the first rompin', stompin' dance music came from. Honky-tonkers were the rock 'n' rollers of their day. They were the ones that everybody belittled: 'Those terrible hillbillies, carrying on.' What I do is an absolute throwback to that."

Dwight Yoakam sits in the booth of a West Hollywood bar, not far from a glass display case containing a large collection of porcelain Elvis Presley wine decanters. He wears a loud Melrose Avenue-style shirt and a string tie—items of apparel emblematic of his position as the reigning king of Hollywood honky-tonk.

Yoakam, a twenty-nine-year-old native of Pikeville, Kentucky who still speaks with a pronounced Suthen drawl, is an exciting anomaly on the Los Angeles music scene. A veteran of pure hard country bands that played in bars and clubs in the San Fernando Valley, he has brought tough, traditional modern mountain music "over the hill" into Los Angeles. Opening both locally and out-of-town for such established roots-oriented acts as Los Lobos, the Blasters and Lone Justice, the singer has won an unexpected audience of hip young club-goers for his original neo-honky-tonk compositions. He's also won a contract from Warner Bros. Records' Nashville division.

"The whole premise for our success," Yoakam acknowledges, "has been coming out of Los Angeles and out of this particular scene—the scene that spawned cowpunk, that spawned Rank & File, Lone Justice, Blood on the Saddle, and numerous others. That audience accepted us first and was aware of us first.

"I remember when we started playing shows on the Hollywood side of the hill, the kids would come up and be very impressed. Wouldn't know what they had just heard, but they knew they liked it. They'd say, 'You're kinda rockabilly, but no, you're not rockabilly. You're kinda country, but no, you're not country.' To them, 'honky-tonk' was a lost term. We're dealing almost with reintroducing a lost form of American music to a whole segment of the population."

Yoakam was raised on that "lost" music in Kentucky and southern Ohio, via the radio and his father's record collection. The artists who had the greatest impact on his youthful sensibilities were Hank Williams and Elvis Presley; he was also exposed to the raw dance tunes and cry-in-your-beer weepers of 50s honky-tonkers Stonewall Jackson, Ray Price, Hank Thompson and Wynn Stewart. A cappella gospel, which he sang in the Church of Christ, was another powerful influence. He played in rockabilly bands as a teenager, but when Yoakam graduated from high school in 1974, the style of country music that he cherished had died out.

"Because of the political climate, the social changes and the cultural revolution we went through in the 60s, we all but lost a form of American music that was reacted against by the youth en masse," he says in typically thoughtful fashion. "In '66, '67, when there had to be a changing of the guard, there was nobody to hand the staff to."

After honing his style of country in bars and roadhouses along Route 23 in southern Ohio, Yoakam had to decide where to take his music. Instead of Nashville he chose Los Angeles, the incubator of the early-70s country-rock of Gram Parsons and the Eagles.

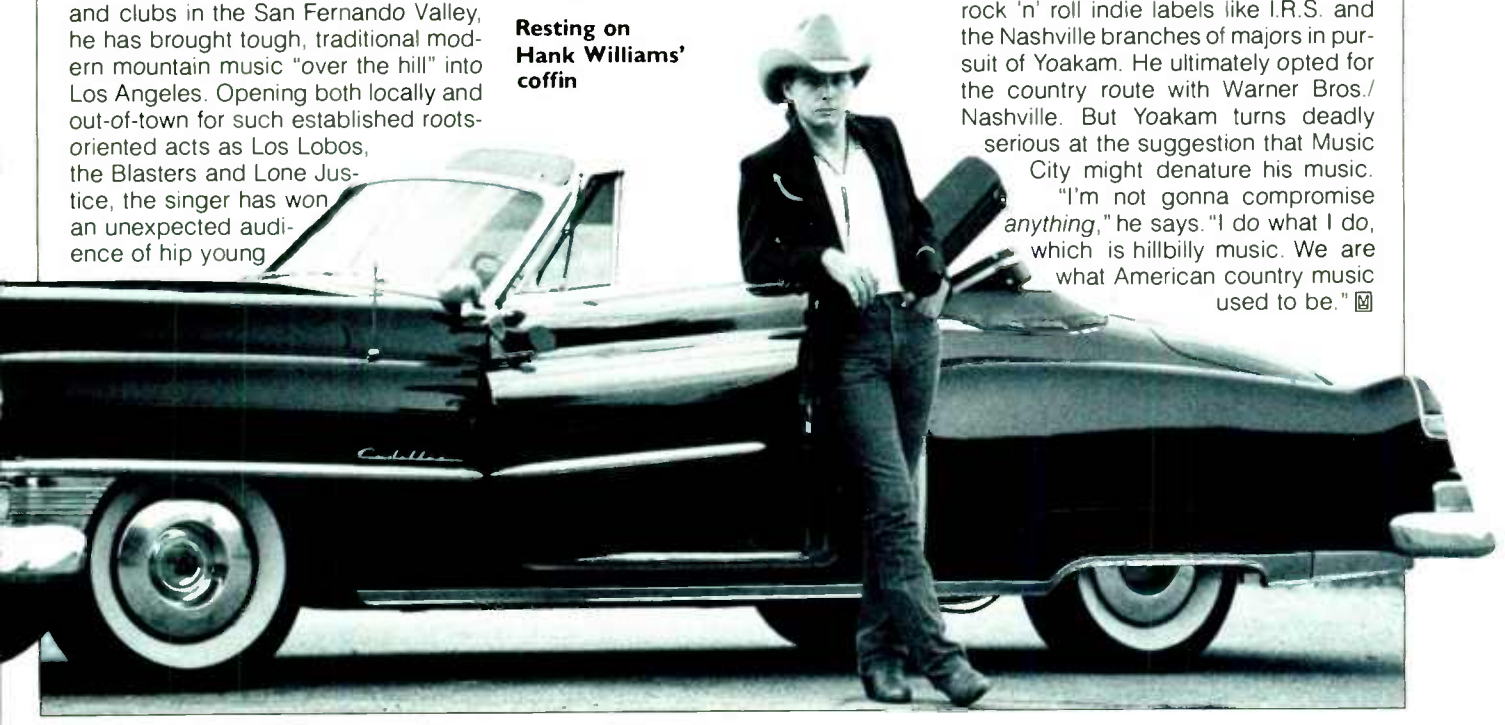
"With country-rock blossoming in the middle 70s, I saw the possibility of coming out here; I knew that what I was doing, even though it was country, was a little too risky for Nashville. I wanted it to have some edge. By then, Nashville had succumbed completely to country-politan slickness.

"One of the heads of the live entertainment department at the Grand Ole Opry gave me a good piece of advice," he adds. "He said, 'You're gonna *lose* jobs because of your voice, because you're a stylized singer. But go out there and figure it out.' Thank God I didn't have to do it in Macy's window."

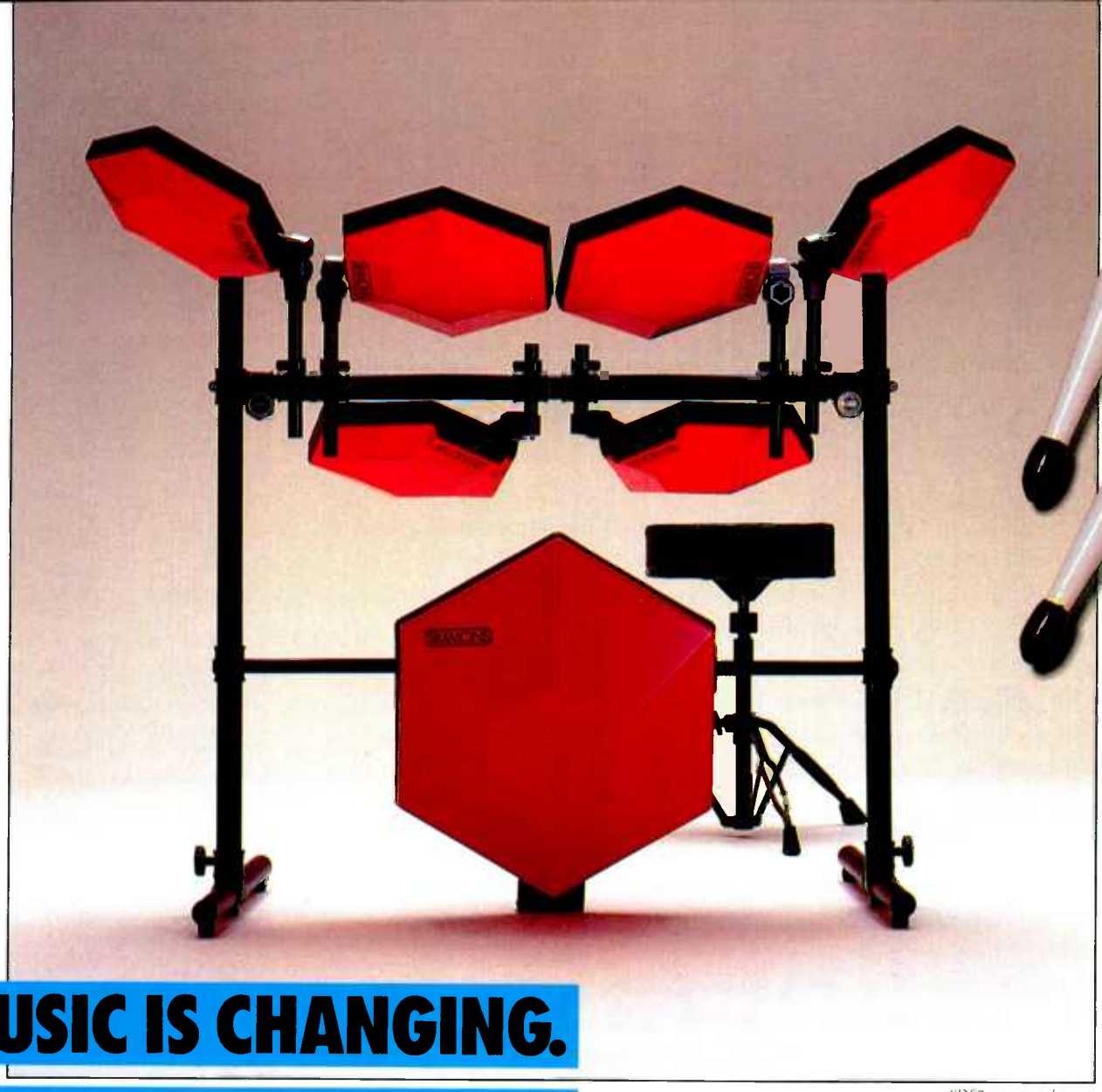
Playing country covers and honky-tonk styled originals in Valley bars from 1978 on, Yoakam slowly accumulated a band of like-minded musicians. They collaborated on the rugged original country songs, leaning heavily on the Bakersfield sound of Merle Haggard and Buck Owens, on Yoakam's independently released *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc.* EP.

That record's success and the band's Hollywood club popularity found both rock 'n' roll indie labels like I.R.S. and the Nashville branches of majors in pursuit of Yoakam. He ultimately opted for the country route with Warner Bros./Nashville. But Yoakam turns deadly serious at the suggestion that Music City might denature his music.

"I'm not gonna compromise *anything*," he says. "I do what I do, which is hillbilly music. We are what American country music used to be." Ⓜ



Resting on Hank Williams' coffin



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EURYTHMICS

BY BARBARA PEPE

TWO "TOTAL OPPOSITES" TRY A BIT OF SOUL SEARCHING.

"Give Stevie back his glasses or I'll break your neck."

Something I did recently was so helpful to me," Annie Lennox explains. "I went to see a psychotherapist. It's something that I've been a little bit unsure about for years. I did see a therapist once before, at a particularly tough time in my life. She didn't help at all, just sat and looked at me. I felt completely tongue-tied, like I was filling in all the spaces with words. I was more freaked out when I left than when I came in.

"This time I was very fortunate. I met a woman in Los Angeles, of all places, where you always expect a load of hype and nonsense. She was so helpful to me, just in terms of going and talking to her and asking, 'Am I mad? Am I going to go insane, or am I all right, really?' To have an unbiased opinion, a genuine opinion given back to me was the best $500 I ever spent."

Annie Lennox is sitting on a blue cushion, spine erect, in the Church, Eurythmics' London office/studio/workshop/sanctuary. The bright-white walls are lined with forty-four gold and platinum records from five countries, and framed magazine covers from around the world. Surrounded by these reflections of glory the singer rivets her questioner with clear gray eyes and offers, "We are living in this crazy, super fast, hyped-up society. There's this superconsciousness, which before, we never really had. We just did what we were doing and didn't ask too many questions. Now we're full of self-doubt. Neurosis is a common disease. We used to have scurvy, now we have neurosis."

Neurosis is something the sometimes moody, always passionate musician has spent a lot of time studying, in and out of the therapist's office. Hers is the palette that paints the brooding, darker colors in Eurythmics' distinctive sound. "I'm very secretive in my lyrics," she says. "Everything's there but it's so masked. I can't write a song about, 'Oh god you cut me up and I'm hurting.' I write more from the overview that our lives, our destinies, are already mapped out for us and that we're just unfolding them. Whatever we do, whatever happens to us at any given minute, *had* to be.

"I've experienced the pains of these relationships, and in a way it is a kind of a catharsis for me to write about it, but it's not just *my* experience. It's a whole load, these plays that had to be re-enacted. I could choose a lover who was masochistic and I was sadistic and somehow or other it had to be that person. I had to be the one for them and they had to be the one for me. This might sound a bit funny, but that's what fascinates me."

Dave Stewart has another point of view. But then, that's not unusual for these two separate but equal partners. "We're totally opposite," he insists. "If I speak to Annie for more than five minutes she sometimes gets really confused and tells me to stop it. We are complete, I think. That's why it works a lot of the time.

"Annie's often very quiet," explains the male half of the duo. "Before we go onstage, my dressing room's always full and there's always tons of people comin' in and out, people cracking jokes, the trumpet player's doing a dance in his kilt.... In Annie's dressing room it's always totally quiet and sort of empty. That kind of represents a similar thing to how it works, really. When we're onstage and in photos, Annie seems like the real extrovert. She's at the front and I'm the guy behind. But that's a very classic thing, isn't it? There aren't many people who are the same in the dressing room and onstage."

Lennox traces this offstage isolation to her early teens: "My childhood was relatively happy, sort of normal, nothing traumatic. But at the age of thirteen or fourteen, everything changed. I be-

DAVIES & STARR

came very moody, very easily depressed, a bit withdrawn. Although I *seemed* to be an extrovert, in my own inner world I was much more withdrawn, watching the world, trying to cope with who I was and really very confused about it. That went on from the year fourteen right up to thirty. It's been incredibly hard to deal with, but something is starting to dawn on me, that it doesn't have to be like this, it doesn't have to be all negative. It *is* possible for me to turn what seems to be useless, hopeless and despairing into something that is valuable. What I'm feeling about growing up, is that ultimately we take responsibility for our actions. You can't run away and hide anymore, you can't pretend, 'Oh I won't talk to this person, it'll all go away, because it doesn't. It gets worse.'

Lennox's private/public dichotomy extends to her general perception as a stand-up singer, belying her well-trained musicianship: "I started playing piano when I was seven because there were lessons available at school. Also my grandmother had a piano. I got the chance to learn the flute when I was eleven years old. I started to play in local school orchestras and military bands, and later smaller chamber groups and ensembles. When I realized that I wanted to play the flute professionally—or so I thought—I went on to the Royal Academy. There I actually took up the harpsichord because I enjoyed it—it's a beautiful instrument."

Dave Stewart reveals, "It was Stevie Wonder that turned Annie on to singing. She was totally into being a flute player in a classical orchestra until she was stoned for the first time. Somebody put headphones on her head and played her *Talking Book*. From that moment on she left the Royal Academy and just wanted to sing."

"It was such a revelation to me to listen with very heightened senses to that record," recalls Lennox. "It was an extraordinary experience to me at the time. I held that very dear, as something that had touched me, made a profound impact on me. It was something that in the future I wanted to aspire to, that kind of depth of subtlety and profound statement through music.

"You use your instinct and you also use your intellect. Hopefully one doesn't outweigh the other. If you go by your instinct too much, the overall shape and form can suffer. Likewise the other way around. Too much into the intellect and it becomes a clinical exercise. So hopefully we finely balance the two things. That's what we aim to do."

Be Yourself Tonight, Eurythmics' third hit album, show Dave and Annie shading the instinct side of that balancing act, aided and abetted by a move toward out-and-out soul. Like most Eurythmic activity, it was unplanned; neither Eurythmic is a particularly avid soul freak, notwithstanding Annie's seminal encounter with Stevie. The record was originally conceived as a mingling of Indian and pop music. Then, during a 1984 tour that took them through Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Europe and North America, "we just naturally progressed into a soul orientation," Dave explains. "The instruments we put together, the horns, Annie's voice, the backing vocalists, kind of got us into it. We came straight from all those gigs to make this album," mostly recorded in a derelict section of Paris on 8-track equipment lugged over from the Church.

The duo made special pilgrimages to two soulful deities, the first being Stevie himself, who added the harmonica solo to "There Must Be An Angel" while Lennox, according to Stewart, "sat at his feet the whole time looking up in amazement." "Meeting him *was* very daunting," admits Annie. "I was a little nervous about it. There was nobody but me and him. But it was wonderful. He's got true command. It was rather humbling."

The second pligrimage was to Detroit and the court of Lady Soul Aretha Franklin, who joined Lennox in a duet on "Sisters (Are Doing It For Them-

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selves)." (In their excitement about the impending session, Dave and Annie almost left the 24-track master on the plane.) "Annie was very nervous, naturally," Stewart recalls. "She felt Aretha might think she was just a white girl trying to sing the blues or something. Yet Annie, believe me, was heavily convicted in everything she was doing. Aretha'd never heard Annie sing anywhere. The first take, the tape started, and you could see Aretha sort of go, 'Wow, check this out.' Annie was really singing.

"They're very alike, it's funny," Dave muses."They're from different places completely, but they've got a very similar point where they come from, soulwise. Annie's from a kind of very depressed working-class background in Aberdeen where there's lots of unemployment and her father was out of work a lot of the time. A lot of Scottish people have got this soul, you know, like the Average White Band.

"Annie was very friendly that day—she wanted everything to be all right. But Annie's very moody and Aretha's very moody. If she thinks something she'll say it. Aretha started arguing about one line in the song. She didn't want to sing the line, 'The inferior sex are still superior.' Aretha thought that was a bit strong. Well, it is, but Annie didn't really mean it like that. The next line was 'We've got doctors, lawyers, politicians too,' meaning that women might be regarded as the inferior sex, but Annie's point was, 'Look we're really on equal terms.' Annie came up with a great new line that Aretha liked, which was 'The inferior sex have got a new exterior. We've got doctors, lawyers, politicians too.'"

Despite suggestions to the contrary, Aretha was not a musical influence on Lennox: "To be honest with you, and I'm embarrassed to say this, I'm not that familiar with Aretha's records," Annie admits. "In fact, I don't have any of them. In the *Rolling Stone* review the woman criticized my singing, said I'd just aped Aretha Franklin all through the record. It is so contrary to what really happened.

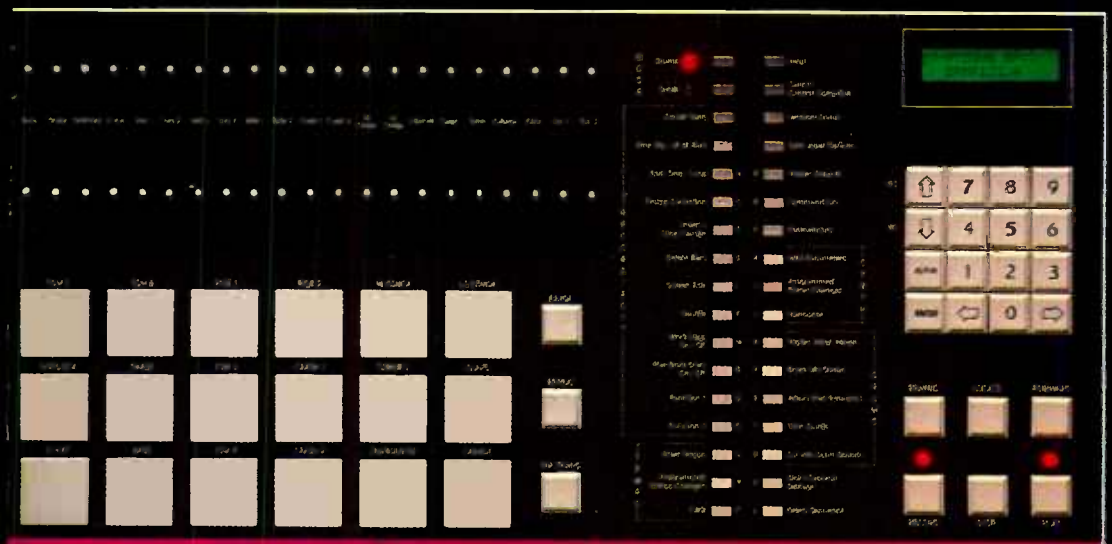
"Aretha's a much more fluid singer. My melodic lines are far more clear-cut. These are just personal differences in style, like the color of the shoes I might choose to wear. She's very florid, very decorative. She also sings with very little effort. Watching her was very interesting, technically, because I find singing hard."

"Annie's best when she can improvise," Dave comments. "Soul is one of the best mediums to improvise in because the rhythm is so hypnotic. It's got its own pulse and Annie can kind of let loose, do all the little asides. I loved when Van Morrison used to sing the brass section like 'doo do la dooop do, doo do la do.' These are often the things that give you the feel of the record, not the words."

One uncalculated benefit from the band's emphasis on soul has been the successful eradication of a "synth/pop" tag Dave and Annie believe was unfairly hung on their music when *Sweet Dreams (Are Made Of This)* was released in the U.S. in 1983. "I thought at one point the Americans were making us part of a fad by putting us alongside Tears for Fears, Yazoo and all these bands who came out at once," Stewart decares. "Annie and I realized that when we went to the New Music Seminar. We never went to it again because we thought, 'Hang on, we're not part of this.' How can you say what's 'new music'? It's all new music. Some early records of Bowie or Dr. John the Night Tripper sound like they could've been recorded yesterday. I'd rather go to the Timeless Music Seminar.

"People still call us a synth-pop duo even though they'll get sent a photo with a band that's got ten people onstage, even with brass and orchestras on the album. They still can't get it into their heads that we aren't sitting there like Kraftwerk with a drum machine."

One look around Stewart's main



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workroom upstairs at the Church bears out the statement. Amidst the litter of keyboards and guitars are trap sets, basses, trumpets, flutes and an array of "squinky" instruments from which he elicits the stray sounds he loves dropping into the records he produces. At the moment, he's working with Feargal Sharkey, producing the former Undertones singer's solo debut. Session musicians? They just sort of show up. "You see, we've got a launderette in the Church, basically for our costumes," Dave laughs. "All the musicians who live around here, like Paul Young's band and a load of others, come in and do their washing before they go off on tour. While they do their spin dry they come up and put on a sax solo or something."

As he did during his collaboration with Tom Petty, Stewart is co-writing with Sharkey, a process that's one part mayhem, one part deliberation and three parts talent. Putting together "A Bitter Man," for example, was done with Feargal and Dave in the studio, playing a tape over the phone to lyricist Tim Daly (who Dave says spent five years in prison for blowing up part of the Imperial War Museum). Daly free-associated syllables to the track while Sharkey transcribed potential lyrics and sang them back into the phone.

Songwriting with Annie isn't quite as manic a process, but Dave explains that it, too, is "all mixed up. Sometimes she'll have four lines on a bus ticket and I'll have a tape of me playing bass in a bathroom, which somehow fits together." Two key elements are minimalism in the song structures and spontaneity in the writing process itself. And almost all their songs share a characteristic Eurythmics twist. "We've always had this bittersweet sort of thing where one minute it's really good and the next it's really bad," Dave notes.

Despite the diversity of their individual personalities, Eurythmics' musical marriage somehow succeeds. "We're very much a bonded unit," Annie asserts. "It's a very good relationship. I suppose it's like your mother and father. You know they're always going to be your mother and father. Ultimately, Dave and I know this is a partnership that's here to stay, unless we get run down by a bus or something. All through this chaos he gets an awful lot done. It takes me longer to come up with results. With the two of us, it's like him pulling me along. It works. I don't know how, but it's the right kind of combination."

The two aren't engaged in a joint project at the moment only because Lennox, who has a history of throat trouble, developed a node on her vocal chords. "The doctor showed me it in a photograph," confirms Dave. "You either have to have an operation or stop, and she doesn't want to tour with her throat wrecked." To save her meal ticket, Annie's planning a two-month retreat to her home in Switzerland.

The only other escape from public view Eurythmics have been able to effect in the past year has been into the studio. "There are so few places for us to actually go away and be quiet." Annie shakes her head. "More and more for us, the studio is becoming a retreat where the phones don't ring, where nobody is allowed to come and interrupt us. Hopefully Kenny [Smith, their English manager] will move his offices out of these premises and this will be a solely creative space. The telephone rings all the time, there's a lot of demand. There's always a country that we aren't able to get 'round to. In Italy, for example, they think we're cold-shouldering them. The truth is, there just isn't time."

Stewart takes to the tennis court or, these days, to the recipe book to relieve any stress of stardom. Not Lennox. Smiling she says, "Actually, I drink to relax. I wouldn't endorse it for everybody but I must admit I'm a better person when I've had a drink. I'm afraid I don't meditate or do anything like that and I don't go to the health club that often. I wish I did. I think hugging a friend is a good way to relax.

"I have a strange dichotomy. You

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know those funny cuckoo clocks in Switzerland where on sunny days the woman comes out and on cold days the man does? I'm a bit like that. I can be very icy. It's either my defense mechanism or because I really don't like that person and I want them to go away. At heart, I think I'm a generous spirit. I don't think I'm a mean, cold person.

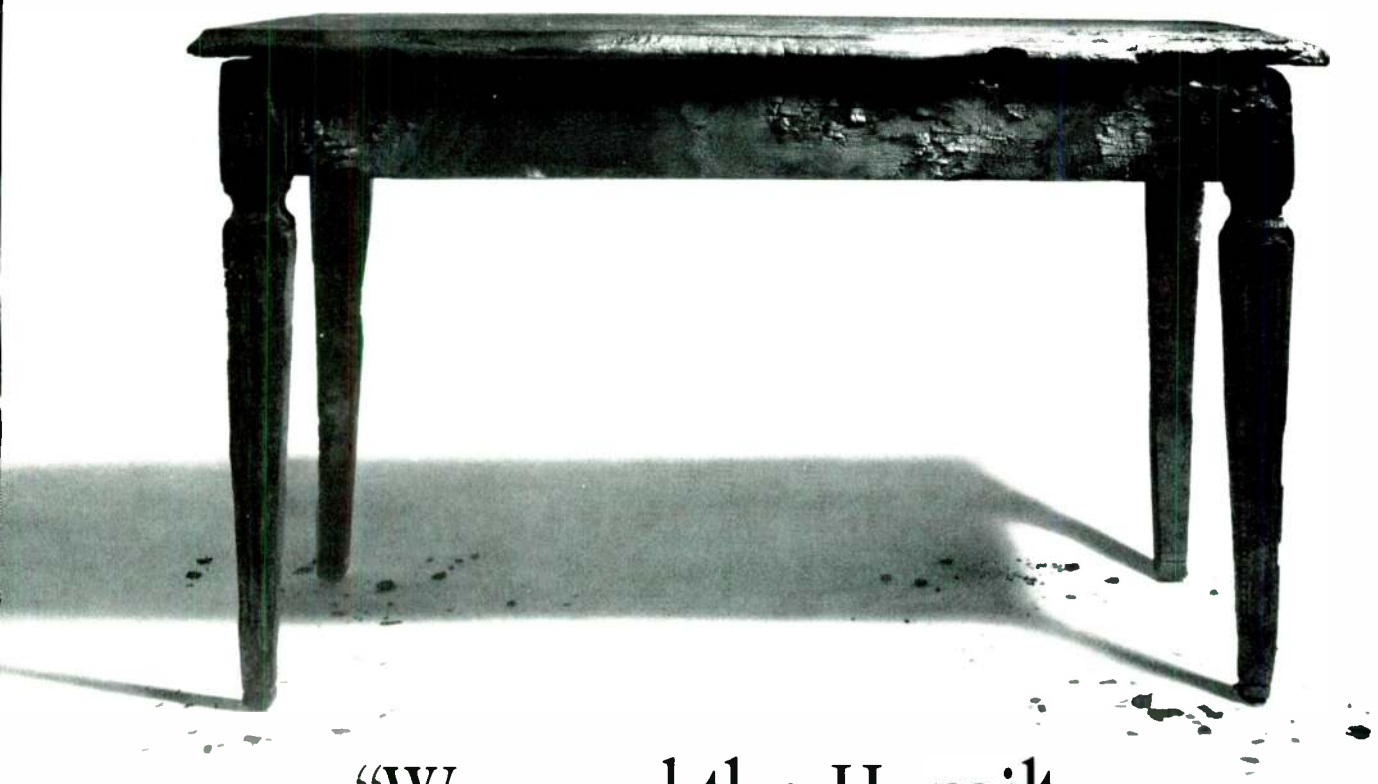
"Something happened to me on my thirtieth birthday that changed me. I feel more positive than I ever did before. So now I'm trying to wade through and get my voice rested, which is the only important thing to me. Unless I do that, I can't sing live." She smiles. "All I want is to shut up, go away, and just rest."

Icons in the Church

Dave Stewart offers a tour of the Church, pointing out "me favorite things. Here's the Octave-Plateau Voyetra. It doesn't sound like a synthesizer, it sounds like an orchestra from outer space. Here's my big Gretsch Country Gent 1950-something guitar. All the riffs for 'Adrian' and 'Ball And Chain' are played on that. The Oberheim DMX drum computer has really quick and efficient ways of writing in rhythms, getting a track down. The Movement audio-visual drum computer I love because you can see the bars on the screen as it's playing. Then I love all the Roland keyboard range, and the little Casios. Sometimes I'll buy a keyboard just for the inspiration of all the new sounds on it. Then there's the Tascam Portastudio, which is fantastic for making home demos. Fostex is good too. This is the Bond guitar," he continues. "It's just been invented. If you notice it doesn't have any frets, just steps."

The tour continues. "Fender Telecaster. The Roland G-505 guitar synth, which I use onstage. Simmons drums." He stops to open the lid of a Yamaha PS-6100 keyboard. "It's all in a lid and it's got the Yamaha drum machine sound mixed with all of the nice Yamaha DX7 kind of sounds. I had it in L.A. when we were doing the Stevie Wonder stuff." Recording equipment? "Soundcraft series 760. Soundcraft 24-track digital. The old Tascam 8-track. And Soundcraft 2400 desk. That's what we made all our albums on, Soundcraft equipment. A roadie later provides a complete catalog: Custom Gretsch semi-acoustic guitar (ex-Scotty Moore), Eventide Clockworks harmonizer H910, Fender Mustang bass, Ibanez UE-400 multi-effects unit, Klark-Teknik DN300 graphic equalizer, and DN 780 digital reverb/processor, Korg digital delay and dual footswitch, Ludwig congas and timbales, Nakamichi MXDU1 drum computer, Paiste high-hats and 2002 crash cymbal, Avedis Zildjian high-hat, Roland Juno 60, SH-09 and SH-101 synths, MSQ 700, CSQ-100, and -600 sequencers, and Cube keyboard amp, plus a Schecter Tele and a Takemine electro-acoustic guitar.

Annie Lennox plays Yamaha YFL 225S and YFL silver flutes: Economically, they give very good value for the money—I get a very lovely sound out of them." Her acoustic piano is a Beckstein.



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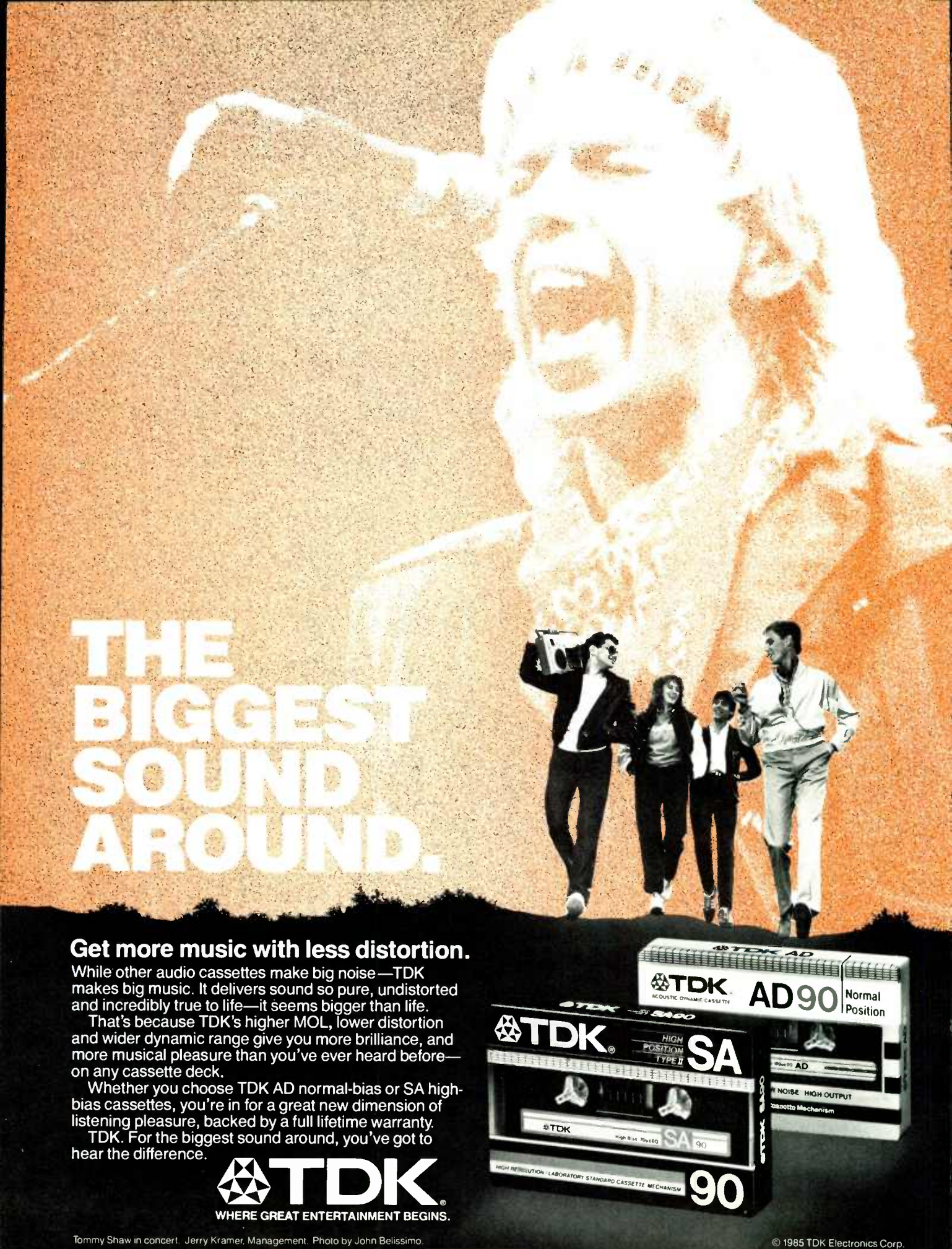

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DAVID MURRAY

BY PETER WATROUS

IS IT A BIRD? IS IT A TRANE? NO IT'S SUPERSAX

Murray looks for heaven in the upper register.

David Murray sits in a bar watching the Yankees axe the Angels. Clark is pitching to Winfield, who has already hit for six RBIs and two homers. Clark throws the ball so far below the strike zone he looks like he's bowling. Ball four; Winfield walks. "What bullshit," snorts David Murray. "Instead of just giving him an intentional walk, they pull a charade."

David Murray shows little tolerance for pretense. Not tall, but definitely imposing because of the size of his chest and shoulders, Murray exudes power. Arriving at Sweet Basil's, he barely pauses to gladhand or politic with the resident critics, hangers-on, fans and assorted jazz rabble as he moves purposefully through the audience. His glare wilts the groupies, a glare that vanishes when he talks to friends. Murray can be charming, leavening an acerbic sense of humor with a quick-witted, probing intelligence, but coyness isn't part of his personality. And it's not part of his music either.

Rocking back and forth on the bandstand at Basil's, Murray closes his eyes, his horn rising slowly toward the heavens. He opens with slap-tongued, creamy notes, but as his solo begins to take shape he glides into his upper register, all the while playing off contrasting rhythms. Finally he rips into the upper reaches of the horn, or plummets into the lower, shearing away the narrative line of his solo entirely, and making sounds that would make Adolph Sax shit in his pants. Yet each flight is really a construct of tempered feeling; while other musicians coast on mannerisms or elliptical irony, Murray forcefully shreds the barriers between player and listener. You *could* spend hours analyzing his solos for intellectual balance, logic, harmonic intrigue and technique, and you could also miss the point. Murray's music is there to be felt, to be assimilated into the dank, scary murk of the emotions.

Murray, thirty, is the finest saxophonist of his generation. He's also considered a leader of the avant-garde, an association that, Murray notes drily, "is like somebody saying you're a murderer." From his fierce improvising with the stately World Saxophone Quartet and James "Blood" Ulmer's hard-funk harmolodic groups to the turbulent arrangements and compositions for his big band, Octet, and Quartet, Murray has seamlessly integrated the bulk of jazz tradition with the self-conscious experimentalism of the 60s avant-garde. But Murray's appeal also stems in part from his ability to suggest the euphoria generated by transcendental booty musics from funk to gospel: He can call on the gods to cleanse and relieve the burdens of his flock.

"After you get to a certain point in your solo," Murray explains, "you feel suspended in air. Some people may get it when they're doing other things. When a fighter is really into his stuff, or when Reggie Jackson hits three home runs in a row; he was there. You get a definite hook-up with your creator, for a hot minute or a few seconds, and that's worth the whole process. Beam me up Scotty, beam me up."

Murray knows a thing or two about transcendence. Born in Oakland, he was introduced to music early because the Murray family was the church band. His father played guitar, two brothers played drums and horn, and his mother—who, according to David, displayed enormous power as an instrumentalist—played piano and led the ensemble. He was given his first musical instrument, an alto saxophone, at the age of nine. "I could play it as soon as I picked it up," he remembers. "I wasn't that good or anything, but I could play songs right away; that first night I played it in church. Nobody said it sounded horrible, so I figured I sounded alright.

"Being in church has had a great effect on me," Murray reveals. "I had so much religion when I was a kid that I know right from wrong at every moment; I know how to make decisions. And having things kept from me made me want them more. When my parents said, 'You can't watch *Hullabaloo* on TV,' I'd sneak over to my friend's house. 'Don't play that music in the house,' they'd say, and I'd go in the back and do it, and do it again. I was a very precocious kid anyway, so it was my nature to seek things out. And I sought out music."

No kidding. Murray wrote his first big band arrangement—for nine saxo-

TERRY BLOOM

phones—while in the fourth grade. By the time he enrolled in California's Claremont College in 1973, he'd also absorbed R&B honkers Jr. Walker and Maceo Parker, co-written and arranged a pop song, "Love Machine," which had been thefted and sold to the Miracles, and switched from alto saxophone to tenor, one day after hearing Sonny Rollins perform solo.

"I didn't have any problems making a switch," says Murray of his transition from R&B to jazz. "It's like growing up: When you're young you eat Cheerios, when you grow up you eat steaks." At Claremont, Murray joined forces with some of the more formidable young players of his generation—Arthur Blythe, James Newton, Butch Morris. Writer Stanley Crouch, who was teaching and leading a big band at Claremont, remembers their first meeting. "In March of '73, on his eighteenth birthday. I was rehearsing my band at the time, which included Arthur, Mark Dresser, Frank Lowe and maybe James Newton. When David took out his saxophone and started to warm up I thought, 'Hmm, this guy has something going.' The sound was remarkable. Arthur used to say to him, 'Damn, you sound like an old man,' because of the quality he had on the tenor."

In 1975, Murray moved to New York, ostensibly to write a paper on the evolution of the tenor sax from 1958. But he got sucked into the burgeoning loft scene instead, and soon was working with Crouch and Mark Dresser in a trio, playing his own compositions along with tunes by Butch Morris, Crouch and others. "Reading the magazines," says Crouch, "you'd think something big was going on, like Wynton Marsalis. But it was a small scene, revolving around Studio Infinity (which Crouch and Murray ran), Studio Rivbea (run by Sam Rivers), and then Joe Lee Wilson's Ladies Fort. David's attentiveness to the timbres of the drums and bass, and the fact that Mark Dresser and I would play together all day long and figure out different ways to match colors made it work; we could do this and swing, too."

In 1978, Murray spent three months married to poet and playwright Ntozake Shange, who brought him to the attention of the Public Theater, where he put on a now legendary big band performance. Though Murray is an extraordinary soloist in an age of few powerful new soloists, his most tangible contributions to jazz include his writing, with its emphasis on melody, swing and excitement, and his collaboration with conductor Butch Morris, a collaboration which could profoundly affect the way large ensembles work. Their system (which Morris learned in a rudimentary form from drummer Charles Moffet in California) works roughly like this: Murray writes an arrangement which is then adjusted somewhat by the comments and interpretations of his band members. Then comes the radical stuff. By using the same core of musicians, Morris, who has developed an arsenal of conducting gestures, may bring in background riffs, call for sections to be repeated or give a soloist more room to play—essentially improvising with a large ensemble. While free orchestras often sound chaotic, and big bands using stock arrangements rely on precision and fiery soloists for excitement, the Murray big band can rely not only on soloists, but also on a conductor who can vary the formal content of the music as it suits each occasion, guaranteeing a different, fresh piece every night.

"The way we use charts is completely new," Butch Morris observes. "There hasn't been a new development in conducting in one hundred years either here or in Europe, and we're taking the conductor out of the role of setting time. With Ed Blackwell or Billy Higgins, or Smitty Smith [all of whom have played with the big band or Murray's octet], time is the *last* thing I worry about."

Murray likes the system because he can concentrate less on keeping order and more on playing. "A lot of cats direct their own music, and usually it

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doesn't work because you're moving your hands around instead of putting them on the notes. You're disoriented. You can't do two things at once; I'm surprised Duke Ellington didn't have Billy Strayhorn conduct. They could've accomplished a few things."

Since the economics of the big band made touring unfeasible, Murray put together an octet featuring the best of the new young jazz musicians plus some old masters: Henry Threadgill, Olu Dara, George Lewis, Anthony Davis, Wilbur Morris and Steve McCall. The octet's debut LP *Ming* (named after his second and present wife; they have a young son, David Mingus Murray), appeared in 1980, followed by *Home* in 1981, and *Murray's Steps* in 1982. Along with the 1985 big band LP *Live At Sweet Basil's*, this constitutes one of the most important bodies of jazz recordings in the 80s. The octet at once shows off Murray's metamorphosis from an instrumentalist to a conceptualist/arranger and helps define the direction of contemporary jazz, all while laying down some ferocious music.

Which brings up a paradox. Here's David Murray, the most important young player on the scene in New York for ten years; he's played with Cecil Taylor, Blood Ulmer and the World Saxophone Quartet; collaborated on countless special projects, including the legendary clarinet summit and string nonet concerts at New York's Public Theater; he's worked with genre experimentalist Kip Hanrahan, evolved the most important large ensemble approach to form since head arrangements, integrated about all of jazz history into his playing and composing, taught Dwight Gooden how to throw a curve, and, just recently, scored a coup by getting a commission to write—using his big band and an orchestra—tributes to Paul Gonsalves, Lester Young and Ben Webster. Yet Murray's octet, much less his big band, can't find steady work.

"The octet scares people," Murray muses. "It's the numbers. Last year I came back eight grand in the hole after a tour. My adventurism got me fucked up.

"And the big band suffers from lack of gigs. We never did twelve nights at Sweet Basil's, we've never done a week in a club. Give me a hundred nights on the road, or *fifty* nights, and I'll put my band up against anybody's, I don't care whose it is. That's how you learn.

"I thought I was ready to really get over," he admits drily. "But you know how the record business is, they always pick one star and they go with that until

continued on page 111

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ANDRE CYMONE

Back to the Groove

"I'm a pretty versatile, pretty talented kind of a musician, in that I can basically do whatever kind of music I want. I could be a jazz musician if I really wanted to. I'm pretty versatile as far as the different instruments I can play. I can create different sorts of moods, so I picked and chose what I wanted to do, what direction I wanted to head in."

With all that self-proclaimed ability and versatility going for him, it's pretty ironic that the first "direction" Andre Cymone chose led straight into a dead end. His first two solo albums, *Livin' In The New Wave* and *Survivin' In The '80s*, can be described by a variety of adjectives: "experimental," "progressive," "strange." Accountants at CBS Records, though, probably prefer terms like "flop," "bomb" or "brick."

Cymone has taken the hint. His current single, "The Dance Electric," reunites him with childhood pal and musical partner Prince for a relatively basic exercise in relentless danceability. The self-titled new album, he says, is more of the same, a "really down-to-earth groove."

Still, Cymone professes not to have been disappointed with the sales of his more experimental first two albums. "I was really happy with what I was doing and probably will continue to do it at some later point. But, I mean, I think that (experimentation) was part of trying to get away from what I was into...coming out of the Prince thing. I wanted to get away from that and disassociate myself. I thought, maybe if I get into something all the way on the other side, people won't compare me and put us in the same thing. I think I realized after my second album that it didn't matter what I did. I was a part of all that. People still associate it with me, no matter what kind of outfit I put on."

Prince's looming shadow is something every member of the "Minneapolis Mafia" has had to contend with in carving a solo niche, and Cymone more than most. Prince practically grew up in Cymone's house; when the two weren't hosting orgies down in that infamous basement, they were listening to music and making their own.

Cymone feels his career is following the pattern set by Prince: poor-selling first albums followed by more accessible later releases. He says musicians in general (including Prince) have no trouble understanding "where I was trying to come from" with those first two albums. "But the thing is, musicians don't buy a whole lot of albums. And once you realize that, you come back and make the album I'm making with this one."

– Leonard Pitts, Jr.

BRADFORD BONCON

LAURA LEVINE

SCRITTI POLITTI

Signifyin' and Theorizin'

"This LP is an experiment in toying with dominant pop ideology, dominant pop forms." So says **Green** Strohmeyer-Gartside of Scritti Politti, thereby dispelling all notions that the band's new *Cupid & Psyche 85* LP is actually, as on first blush it appears to be, an innocuous collection of pop-soul grooves about cute girls. "It's self-conscious about its involvement with pop music. It's self-reflective. It's invested with some degree of irony. Sprinkled throughout are references to things political and philosophical."

This is where matters get thorny. Because Green, who once considered Scritti Politti a vehicle for Marxist ideas, now takes a more academic view of pop music's political content. Which means that the references are couched in the pop forms, not launched by them. "I don't think that pop music is a vehicle for making statements," he explains. "It isn't

a vehicle for a body of ideas. I think that pop music is innately interesting politically. It is the business of making pop music that interests me.

"Pop music is very powerful. It's politically significant because of its mass popularity. Since the development of youth as a market category, pop music has been central to it. Aside from that, it's politically *interesting* because of its relationship with language and ideology. Language is a set of arbitrary signifiers that depends on conscious, mutually-agreed-upon convention. Pop music is not a set of arbitrary signifiers, it does not depend on a conscious decision about the mutual terms of its usage, and yet we all respond to it in a tangible way.

"Language provides you with certain ways of thinking. It tends to homogenize people. It's very normative, and implicitly bound up in capitalism. Music is contrary to that. The fact that music is sold by Warner Bros. is another issue. But it is essentially revolutionary."

That Green is obsessed with post-structuralist ideas about language and ideology isn't so extraordinary. What is extraordinary is that he gets these ideas over on the dance floor. Last year he cracked the club circuit with two involuted but fey disco hits, "Wood Beez (Pray Like Aretha Franklin)"/"Absolute" and "Hypnotize"; the new "Word Girl" and "Perfect Way" have followed in their dancesteps. But do the masses get the point?

"The point of what I'm doing," he says, "is realized by the people who buy my records. They are the point. And if it's a succession of fifteen-year-old girls who don't have any interest in French writers, I still don't think they're missing it."

– *John Leland*

GODLEY & CREME

The Eyes Have It

"We're not in the music *business*," proclaims Lol Creme of Godley & Creme. "We left it in 1976 and we haven't taken it seriously since."

That might come as a surprise to the record company that released the duo's new LP, *The History Mix Volume 1*. But Creme isn't kidding. The duo, feeling they were on a treadmill, departed the successful British pop band 10cc nine years ago and have subsequently dabbled in music only when the mood strikes. *The History Mix* is one of those occasions; the album commemorates their quarter-century creative partnership.

"We decided to celebrate our twenty-five years together," Creme explains, "by taking all the music we've ever done—demos, masters, whatever—and putting it in a musical blender, the Fairlight. Then we got J.J. [Jeczalik] of the Art of Noise to reprogram the sounds to a disco beat so we could dance at our party." The U.K. version of *The History Mix* extends to two LP sides and includes bits of such Godley & Creme "greatest hits" as Hotlegs' "Neanderthal Man" (1970), 10cc's "Rubber Bullets" (1973), and their 1985 single "Cry." In the U.S., the piece has been trimmed to one side to make room for other tracks.

LISA HAUN

"We haven't got a lot to say about music, really, but we'll talk our asses off about video," Kevin Godley says. And no wonder: While the twosome has been neglecting rock 'n' roll, they've built a reputation as perhaps the most inventive makers of music videos today. Among their works are Herbie Hancock's "Rockit," the Police's "Every Breath You Take," Frankie Goes To Hollywood's "Two Tribes," and Duran Duran's "A View To A Kill."

The amazing thing is that no two of these striking videos are alike. "We have a nonstyle," Godley notes. "We rarely do a literal video or tell a story. Instead, we try to give each song an atmosphere without destroying any images you may have already created for yourself."

Asked who they'd like to take on next, Godley volunteers Dylan and Springsteen. "Those old dudes need help," he observes.

"I'm sure they dread doing videos," Creme adds, "because they know they're gonna get butchered. If you watched MTV day in, day out, would you have confidence in the people who made those things? Of course not!" He's especially disdainful of Hollywood movie directors' efforts in the field. "What do we need all those old farts with their clichés for? Video is a wonderful new medium. There should be new minds, new ideas in it."

Laughing, he continues, "Actually, we're too old, probably."

– *Jon Young*

KRONOS QUARTET

Monk with Strings

You want eclectic? On their recently completed recording for the Nonesuch label, the Kronos Quartet plays compositions varying in origin from avant-garde recluse Conlon Nancarrow to Jimi Hendrix. A summer Gramavision double-album celebrated proto-minimalist Terry Riley. But the San Francisco-based string quartet's most groundbreaking album this year is a tribute to Thelonious Monk on the Landmark label. With the aid of jazz bassist Ron Carter and arranger Tom Darter, the Kronos—ever the foe of classical purism— sketches Monk's eccentric genius with formalist bravura.

It's a bonafide crossover coup, which couldn't make the foursome happier. "After making that record and working on Monk, I think we play a lot of our music slightly differently," violinist David Harrington says. "You could say that Bartók influenced our performance of Monk, but I think that Monk has influenced our performance of Bartók, as well."

In its present incarnation since 1978, the Kronos is currently in full swing, handling a harried schedule of concerts and record projects. In addition to a library of works some 3,000 strong—from composers as diverse as John Cage, Philip Glass and Frank Zappa—they are constantly recruiting new composers into the expanding repertoire. Harrington met Jon Hassel for example, "and decided he had to write a string quartet."

Essentially, the Kronos is out to make the music world safe for contemporary string quartets. "We're not trying to be teachers," Harrington says, "just ear-openers." Does this cutting-edge fixation extend toward revising the classics of the past?

"You mean like playing the late Beethoven quartets with a wah-wah? We're seriously considering that."

Is nothing sacred?

"Oh, I think everything is sacred. That's why we want to make sure it's kept lively." – *Josef Woodard*

Booting the Freebooters

The term "pirate" may conjure up romantic images of swashbucklers, but not where the recording industry is concerned. Several issues in the news recently draw attention to the easy lure of copyright infringement.

The industry has long harped on home taping as an illegal drain of funds. On June 27 Rep. Bruce Morrison (D-Conn.) introduced a bill into the House of Representatives that would require audio tape and tape recorder importers and manufacturers to be licensed for U.S. distribution. Manufacturers would also have to pay royalties to music copyright owners: twenty-five percent of wholesale for dual cassette recorders, ten percent of wholesale for other recorders, and a penny a minute on blank tape. The money would be held in the U.S. Treasury before being handed to copyright owners who would "negotiate...a voluntary proposal" for dispersing the largesse.

On the other hand, the Audio Recording Rights Coalition, which represents manufacturers and retailers, opposes the bill. They counter that the record business profits handsomely from electronics-industry advances like the Walkman and Compact Discs; that the royalty would mean higher prices for consumers; and that non-music tapers would be unfairly punished. (The bill exempts tapes and machines "unsuitable for music home taping.")

The Home Audio Recording Act was proposed a week after France passed legislation for royalties on blank audio and video tape. Six other countries, including West Germany and Austria, exact royalties on blank tape.

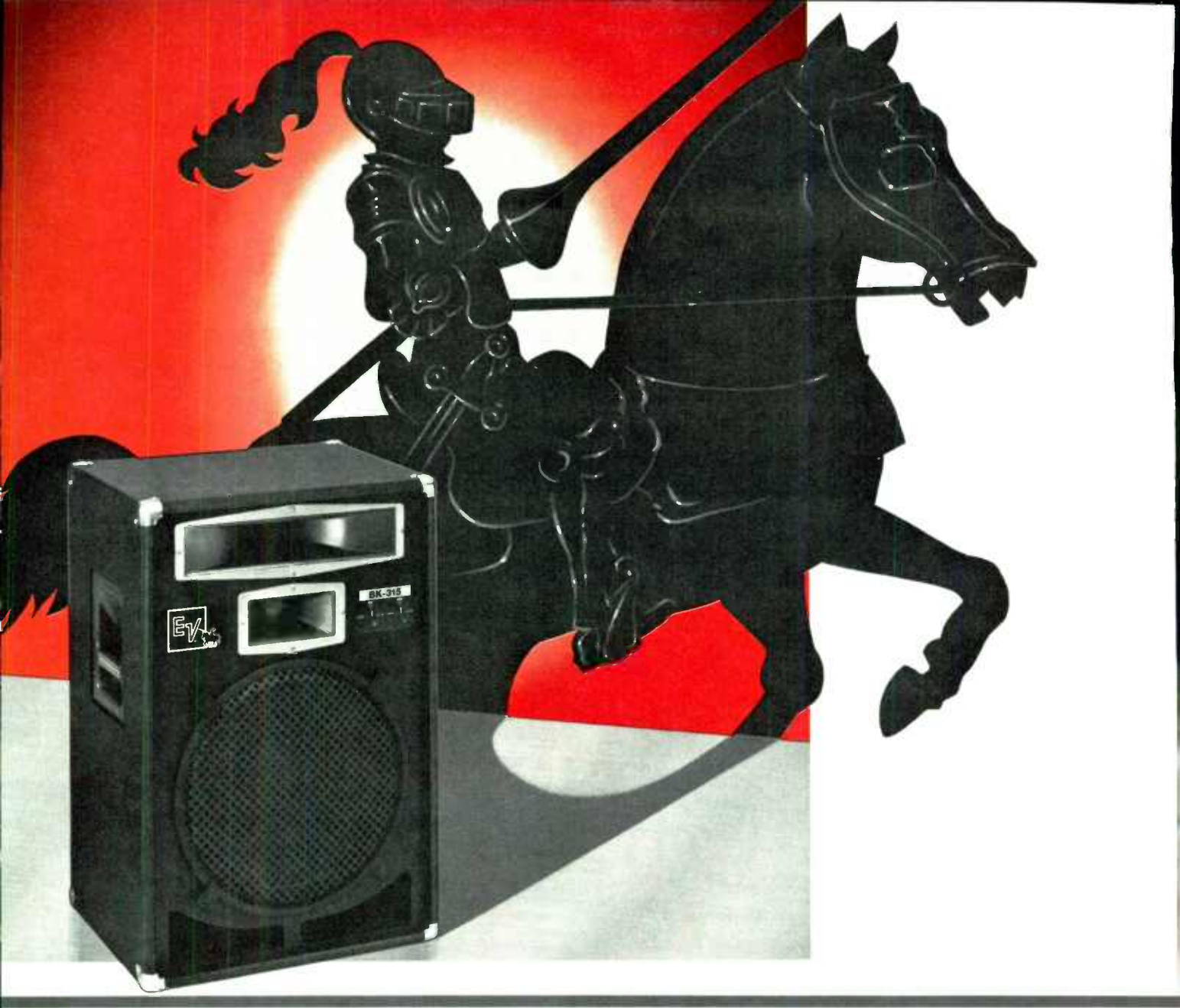
The dual (or double-well) cassette deck, another prime suspect, received its comeuppance in London. In June a High Court judge ruled that the Amstrad company had "incited the procurement of copyright infringement" in marketing its two-tape deck. Amstrad will appeal. Flushed with success, the British Phonographic Industry is looking to eliminate all such decks unless they are modified to prevent, or at least discourage, dubbing from prerecorded tapes. Aiwa voluntarily withdrew one such deck, which copied tapes in quadruple-time, from the British market.

But dual-cassette decks are kids' stuff when it comes to serious tape duping. In 1983 police raids in Singapore netted almost a quarter-million pirate cassette tapes. The International Federation of Phonogram and Videogram Producers (IFPI), who organized the raids, estimates at least 200 times that amount of pirate tape emanates yearly from Singapore. Most are exported to third world countries in "units" of 180,000 cassettes each. Earlier this year, raids in west Africa yielded over a million pirate tapes.

Singapore may be the most blatant example of the tape-pirating "industry," but it's hardly alone. The IFPI estimates losses to the record companies of over one billion dollars annually due to unauthorized tape duplication. Last year, though, recording artists contributed less than one percent of the four million dollars spent to fight the menace. To raise consciousness on the issue, George Benson is donating a percentage of his international royalties to the IFPI's antipiracy fund.

Benson affirmed his commitment at a New York press conference July 10, conditional upon ten other major acts joining him. At the conference, representatives pledged the support of Frankie Valli, Manhattan Transfer, Chaka Khan, Michael Sembello, and Eric Mercury and Thelonious Monk III. Whether these all count as major artists is yet to be determined.

As if the recording industry weren't already paranoid, on June 28 the Supreme Court ruled that record bootlegging is not a felony. An appeals court had ruled that, besides a copyright-infringement misdemeanor, bootlegging could also fall under the Stolen Property Act. The Supreme Court narrowly decided that copyright infringement "does not easily equate with theft, conversion, or fraud." (Bootlegs, as opposed to pirated recordings, contain commercially unreleased performances.) Members of Congress subsequently expressed interest in revising the 1982 Piracy & Counterfeiting Act to bring bootleg penalties more in line with piracy and counterfeiting measures.



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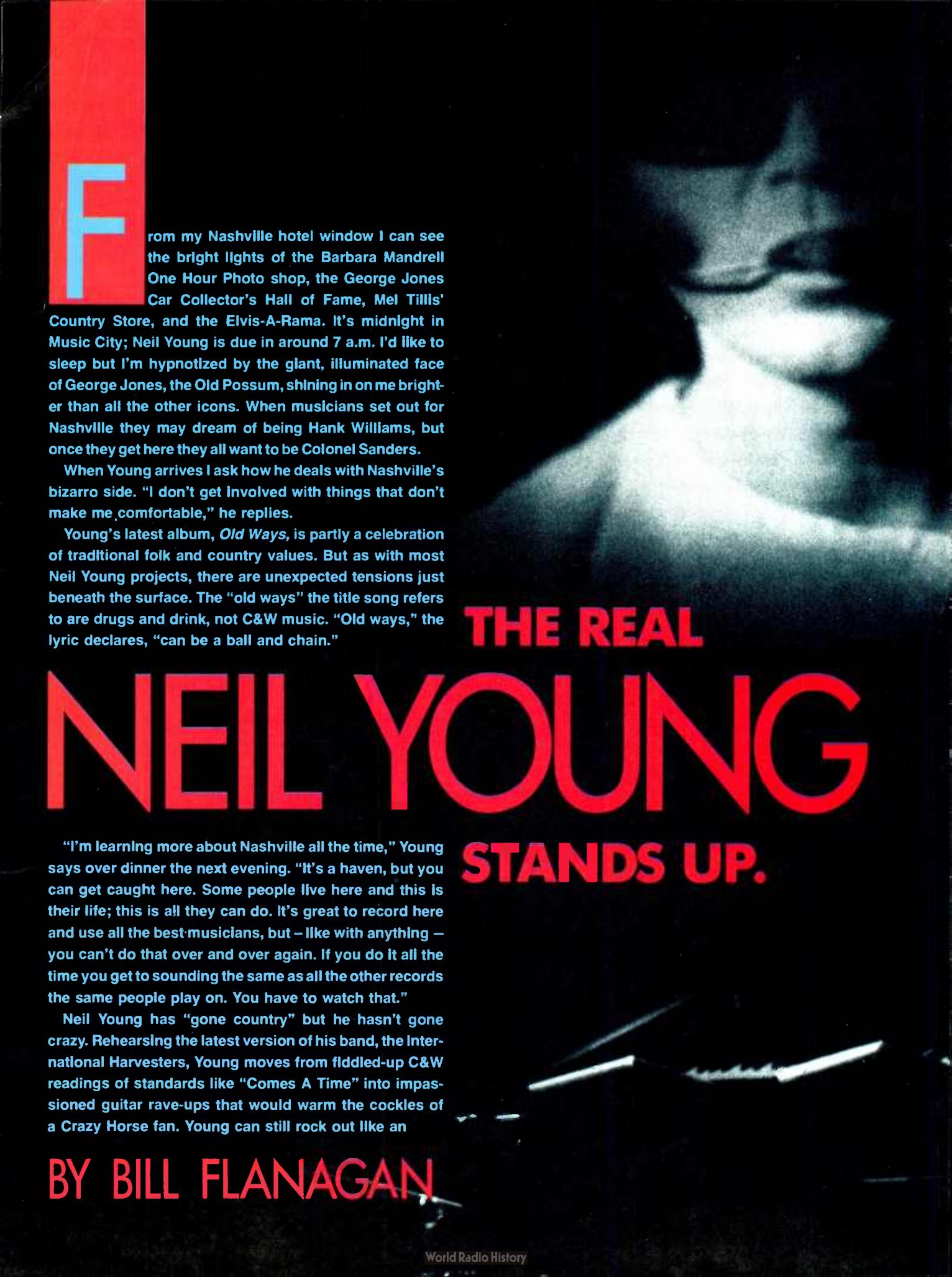


THE REAL NEIL YOUNG STANDS UP.

BY BILL FLANAGAN

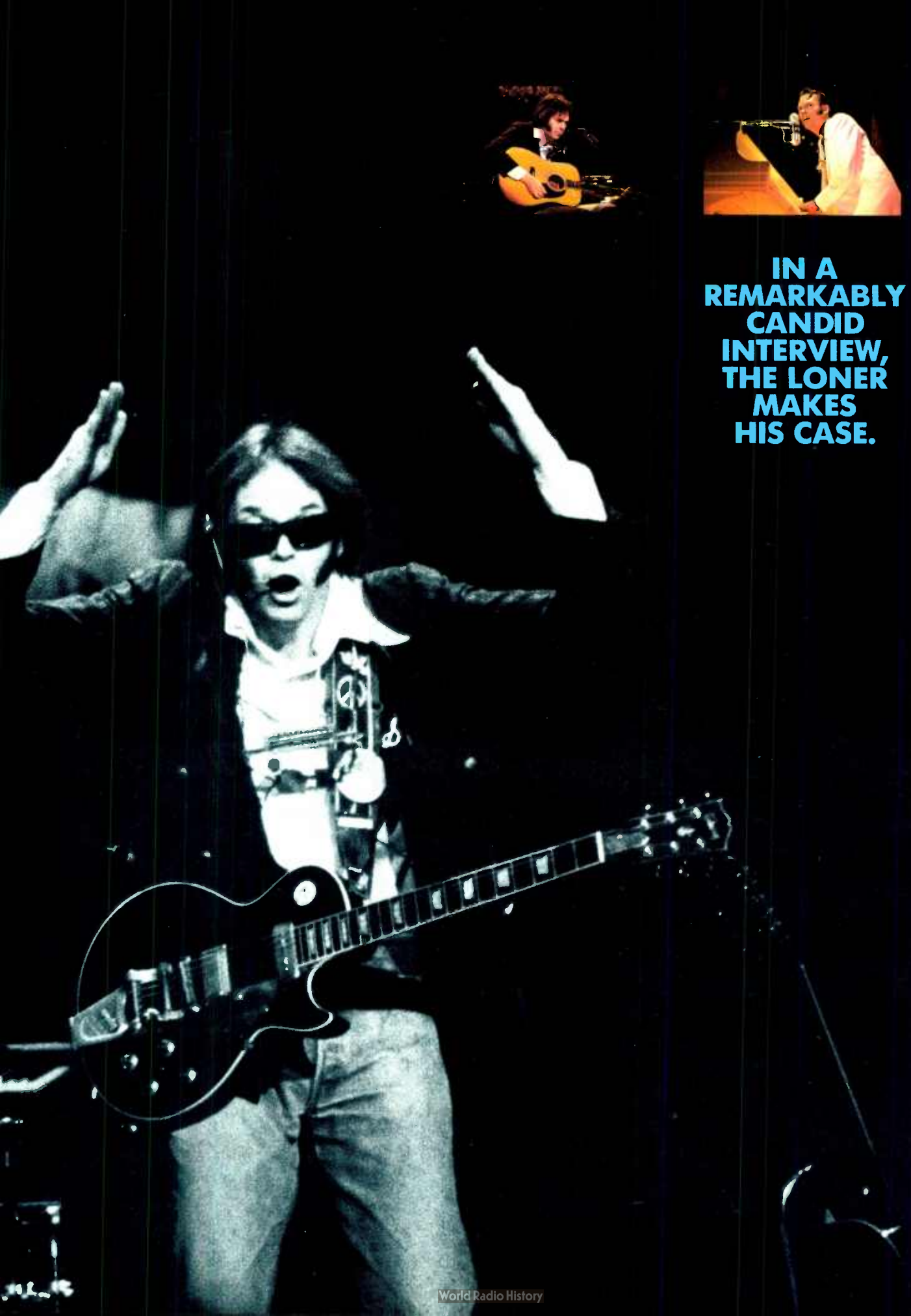
From my Nashville hotel window I can see the bright lights of the Barbara Mandrell One Hour Photo shop, the George Jones Car Collector's Hall of Fame, Mel Tillis' Country Store, and the Elvis-A-Rama. It's midnight in Music City; Neil Young is due in around 7 a.m. I'd like to sleep but I'm hypnotized by the giant, illuminated face of George Jones, the Old Possum, shining in on me brighter than all the other icons. When musicians set out for Nashville they may dream of being Hank Williams, but once they get here they all want to be Colonel Sanders.

When Young arrives I ask how he deals with Nashville's bizarro side. "I don't get involved with things that don't make me comfortable," he replies.

Young's latest album, *Old Ways*, is partly a celebration of traditional folk and country values. But as with most Neil Young projects, there are unexpected tensions just beneath the surface. The "old ways" the title song refers to are drugs and drink, not C&W music. "Old ways," the lyric declares, "can be a ball and chain."

"I'm learning more about Nashville all the time," Young says over dinner the next evening. "It's a haven, but you can get caught here. Some people live here and this is their life; this is all they can do. It's great to record here and use all the best musicians, but – like with anything – you can't do that over and over again. If you do it all the time you get to sounding the same as all the other records the same people play on. You have to watch that."

Neil Young has "gone country" but he hasn't gone crazy. Rehearsing the latest version of his band, the International Harvesters, Young moves from fiddled-up C&W readings of standards like "Comes A Time" into impassioned guitar rave-ups that would warm the cockles of a Crazy Horse fan. Young can still rock out like an



IN A REMARKABLY CANDID INTERVIEW, THE LONER MAKES HIS CASE.

epileptic in a wind tunnel, and if a lot of his new material is labeled country, well, that says as much about the changes in country as about the changes in Neil Young.

"Country music is not as traditional as it was before," Young observes. "Parts of *Harvest* would be considered country today." Good news, right? Wrong. "I think a lot of the pop cross-over has really screwed up country," Young declares. "Country's suffered from this watering down, this vanilla-ing that's happened from the 'L.A. country sound' and all that crap. That's not the kind of country I like."

Young doesn't mince words. Nashville finds him ready to set the record straight about his lawsuit with his label, Geffen Records (Geffen sued Young for giving them uncommercial and "uncharacteristic" albums) and his much publicized but until now unexplained support of the Reagan presidency. Young also reflects on the drastic stylistic changes in his recent albums. "In the last three or four years I was searching for where I belonged," he explains after rehearsal one night. "Really searching. Because I've been around a long time and things have really changed. That's what you saw at Live Aid: a lot of searching faces, a lot of groups that were huge at one time and didn't even know if they'd fit in now. It was a forum for all those people who wondered if they fit with what's happening today."

Live Aid also emphasized how much better the years have treated Young than most of his contemporaries. In 1986 it will be twenty years since the singer/guitarist debuted on the first Buffalo Springfield album, yet Young's never ridden nostalgia or stopped surprising his audience.

Recalling his version of one of the old Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young feuds he concluded, "Stephen might recall it a little differently, but not much I don't think. Graham and David might recall it totally differently. It's hard to say how many of the brain cells are still happening." Young smiled awkwardly, as if regretting the joke. Then he shrugged and said, "I'm sure I won't be the only one saying that."

Young's honesty shouldn't be startling. Honesty, more than any other quality, has kept his music vital.

MUSICIAN: *Some listeners have been confused by the drastic changes of direction on your recent albums.* Reactor *was heavy guitar rock,* Trans *computer music,* Everybody's Rockin' *rockabilly, and* Old Ways *is country. In the 70s your changes seemed natural, and their effects afterthoughts. In the 80s there's been a sense of you forcing change.*

YOUNG: I think that on my last four albums the change has been kind of like a moth banging on a light bulb, this fast flitting from one thing to another. Not more change, but more extreme change. There wasn't much relief—the change was obvious, then bang!—over here, bang!—over there. Well, that's not so much somebody trying to change consciously as it is somebody who doesn't know where to go. If you don't know where to go and you're aggressive, you go a lot of places to see what's happening. You try things and you get lost in different trips. Rather than a conscious effort to do different things every time, maybe it's just a sign that I was lost and I was searching for new directions, wondering about my own relevance and the continuance of my work; all of the things that one would think about when they've been doing something as long as I have. Where do I fit? That's where a lot of this country thing comes from. How can I do everything I love to do and still keep going? Now, I feel like it doesn't matter, I just want to do everything I feel like. If I want to do two kinds of music, three kinds of music, or a whole blend of different kinds of music all at once, then that's fine. I talked myself into only doing certain things at a time, so I can just as easy talk myself out of it. I'm just very extreme.

MUSICIAN: *Yet just before you started these experiments you'd had success with* Comes A Time *and* Rust Never Sleeps. *After* Rust *your stock seemed real high: The* Village Voice *named you rock artist of the decade and it seemed like the last resisters were converted. It was a strange time to start having self-doubts.*

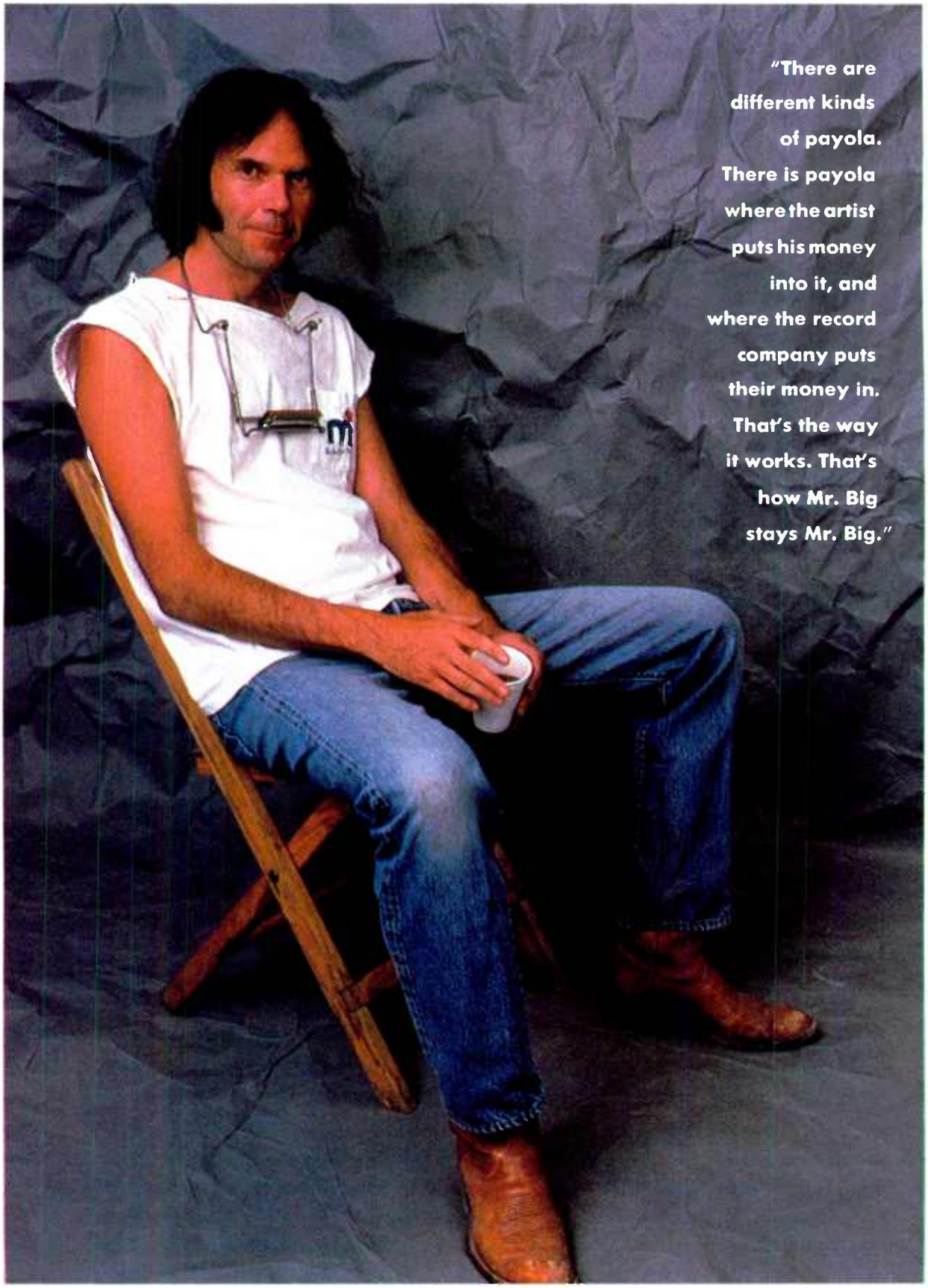
YOUNG: Well, you know, last time I started doing that was after I had *Harvest*. After I have a big peak it seems like I don't want to be there anymore. It's like "Get out of there. Don't do that again." It's too dangerous. It's like looking the Devil in the eye. Sure, I can just do this over and over for a while and that would be an easy way out. Financially, I'd have everything I wanted because the idea, business-wise, is to go with a winner. But even more than money and everything, I just hate being labeled. I hate to be stuck in one thing. I just don't want to be anything for very long. I don't know why. I just want to keep moving, keep running, play my guitar. I didn't want to play electric guitar last year. I hardly played it. Didn't do "Powderfinger" in the set. When I started with the Harvesters it was extremely traditional.

MUSICIAN: *You started writing and recording the* Old Ways *material during the* Trans *solo tour. So even then you had it in your head that you were not going to be sticking with the* Trans *stuff, that you were going to be moving on to this?*

YOUNG: Well, no, I had it in my head that I was really into the *Trans* thing. But nothing lasts forever. We started *Old Ways* right after *Trans* and before *Everybody's Rockin'.* We recorded "Real Cowboys" and eight other songs in Nashville. And then I decided, "Hey I want to put some old rock 'n' roll in there 'cause that's old ways. I want to show some roots. I want to get back." We did a couple of songs like that and we just got carried away. We did a whole album like that. Then I figured, well, this is not the kind of thing that I want to do all the time, and this seems to be a unified thing here so let's just do it. That was *Everybody's Rockin'*. After that, I got back into *Old Ways* again and I said "This is what I want to do." I handed in the record and they sued me. They said, "We don't know what you're doing. We're scared! You did a *Trans* and then you did *Everybody's Rockin'* and now you want to do a country album. We want Neil Young!" That was confusing to me because I'd always thought that I *was* Neil Young. But it turns out that when I do certain things, I'm not Neil Young. Well, to get sued for being non-commercial after twenty years of making records, I thought was better than a Grammy.

MUSICIAN: *We talked about doing a piece in* Musician *called "The Trial of Neil Young," just a totally fictional piece, with the defense submitting* Tonight's The Night *and* Reactor.

YOUNG: You should have done it! Enough people wrote things along that line but nobody took it out the window. The articles that we got made our case so strong. I said, public knowledge here. You're dealing with a reputation so you have to find out what the reputation is. If you're suing me for not being what I'm reputed to be then we have to check with the people. So everybody helped me by writing the stories. I believe that those stories and the public reaction changed the record company's mind and let me go ahead and do what I wanted. But they still are worried about my career.



Backstage at Live Aid

KEN REGAN CAMERA 5

They think I should have a huge pop record. They think if I really applied myself to doing one that I could. David (Geffen) is genuinely worried about me. He wants to see me succeed just as much as he wants himself to succeed. So he's not coming from a bad place, but they did it in a way that I couldn't compromise myself on. They pushed me into a corner and that was a bad idea. So we had a lawsuit and all this shit. It was finally resolved that I could do what I

"Rock 'n' roll is like a drug. I don't take very much."

wanted to do, with the promise from me that somewhere down the road I will connect up with a real great producer and make a *Neil Young* album. I think that they don't understand that *Old Ways* really is a Neil Young album. Just because it's got steel and fiddle on it. I think *Harvest*, *Comes A Time* and *Old Ways* fit like a glove together. My original concept in doing *Old Ways* was to make it another of those. Different but still the same feeling. I'm not trying to change the world. I'm just doing what I do. And the idea of doing a rock 'n' roll record somewhere down the line is interesting. If I'm lucky enough to work with somebody like Mutt Lange, I have all the songs written. It's a different kind of material and I keep writing it. I just don't feel like doing it. I don't like the arena. So I'm just holding onto the songs. When I feel like moving into that arena again, I'll have those things and I'll record them and then I'll decide what I'm going to do with them. So I'll be helping myself and helping the record company. But it's all stipulated on the fact that I can still go to Nashville and I can still record wherever I want, whatever kind of music I want, when I want. I can continue to make country music with the Harvesters.

MUSICIAN: *Funny it should get Geffen so upset. Old Ways doesn't sound very out-of-character to me.*

YOUNG: It doesn't to me either. But it does to them. Because they've never had a country record before. Their whole thing is geared towards pop, so from a business standpoint, they can't do the best job for me in country. Warner Bros./Country here in Nashville came to the rescue of the Geffen company in promoting and presenting this record to the market in the United States. Because Geffen felt they had their hands tied trying to present this record to pop stations. It's just not compatible with their playlists. So in that way I must be more country than rock 'n' roll already. Rock 'n' roll stations won't play it because it's too country. Now if country stations won't play it because I used to play rock 'n' roll, I'm going to have to start my own chain of radio stations. But I won't stop rockin'. If I feel like rockin', I'm going to do it. I've got a band that can play both and feel good about it. There doesn't have to be a line. There are a lot of people walking around who like both kinds of music, but only *good* music. The only thing separating them is the radio station. You have to go one place to get one and another place to get the other. But it doesn't have to be like that.

MUSICIAN: *What was the radio reaction to "Payola Blues," did you get any flack from that?*

YOUNG: Yeah, I guess there was a little flack, it was kind of an embarrassment to some people. But it was all in good fun. That's the way it is anyway, everybody knows that. It's all about money, the whole thing. Anybody who thinks it isn't is kidding themselves and everybody else. Because what goes on in parking lots is nobody's business but those people who are there, and believe me they're out there. This is still America. I know what payola is and there are different kinds of payola; there is payola where the artist puts his money into it, and there is payola where the record company puts their money into it.

MUSICIAN: *Well they've got it pretty well laundered down. The record company can give an independent promo man a whole ton of money and look the other way.*

YOUNG: Right. "That's how much it costs." That's the way it works. Everybody knows that. It's no secret, and it's part of the mechanism of things. That's how Mr. Big stays Mr. Big. That's why the little guy with the little independent label has got to have something *great* to break through to where the people will say, "I want to hear that record! I don't care whether they paid you." They call up the radio station and say, "Play that thing or I'm going to listen to somebody else." That's the kind of music you need to make to break through that. Then after *they* do a couple of those and everybody loves *them*, they have one come out that's not quite as good as the first two. So then they grease their way in because *they've* got power. The radio stations will pay to get the tapes

"To get sued for being non-commercial after twenty years, I thought was better than a Grammy."

early. So it's just supply and demand, cause and effect and all that shit workin' at once. The American Way, by golly.

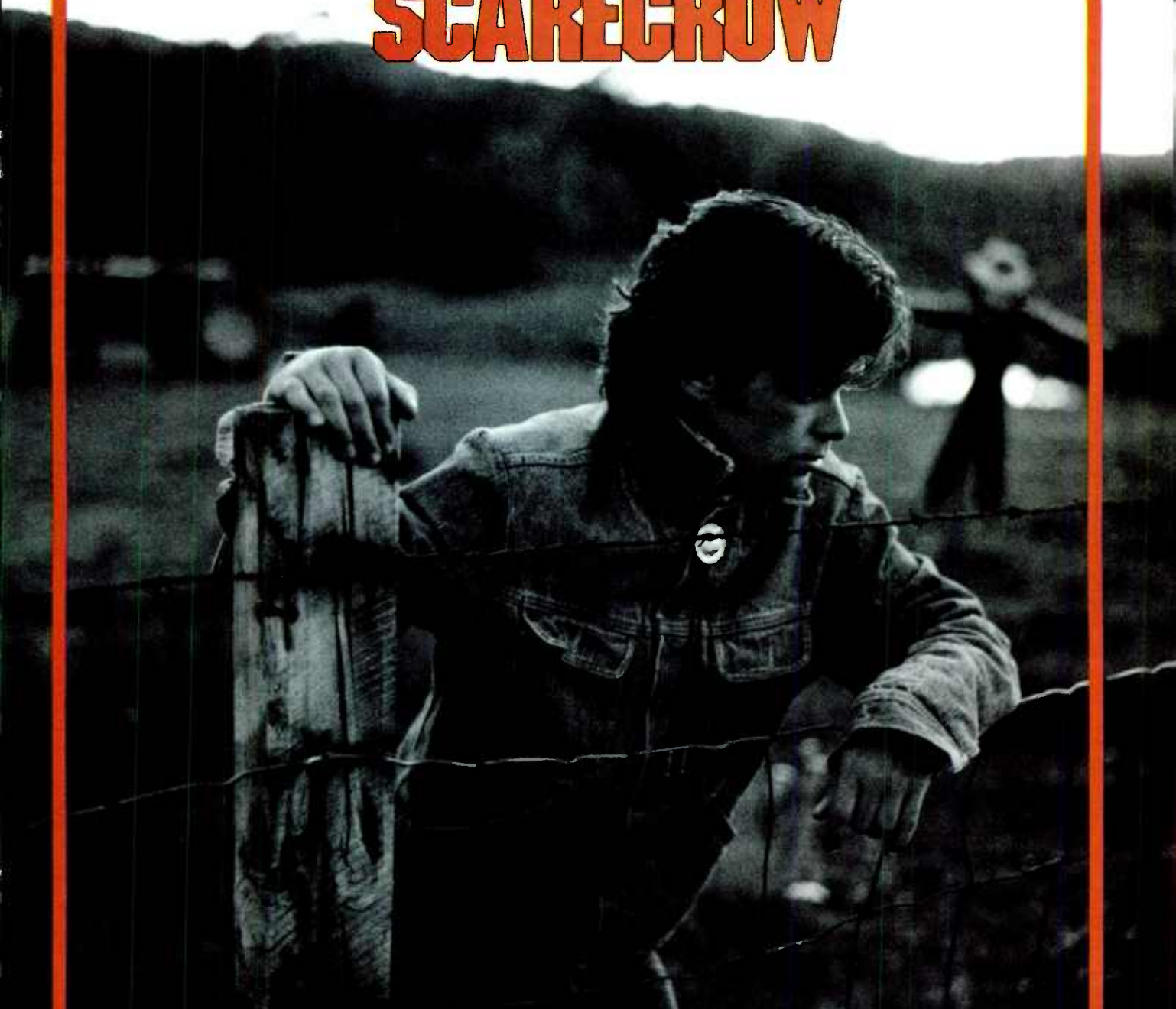
MUSICIAN: *Speaking of the American way, I think* Hawks And Doves *came out on the day Reagan was elected, and side two was a sort of suite sung from a working-class, probably Southern perspective. To what degree is that voice your own, and to what degree is it a character?*

YOUNG: I walk a fine line, because there is a character in there but he reflects a lot of the ways that I have felt. It's not really like me but it is. I can hide behind it. I can say things through somebody else that I couldn't say myself.

GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA

JOHN COUGAR MELLENCAMP

SCARECROW



**10 new songs that hit home and hit hard.
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MUSICIAN: *One verse goes, "In history we painted pictures grim/The devil knows we might feel that way again/The big wind blows and so the tall grass bends/But for you, don't push too hard my friend." I think that perfectly captures a certain American attitude. But at the same time, I'd be surprised if that were your attitude.*

YOUNG: Well, I felt that way when I was thinking about the hostages in Iran. "Just push us one more fuckin' step." I wish Carter had.... I'm glad that nobody got killed. That's number one. I just wish that we didn't have to sit there and take it in the ass for so long. I was on the edge there.

MUSICIAN: *Did you support Reagan?*

YOUNG: Against Mondale? Yeah. And definitely against Carter. I don't even have a vote. I'm a Canadian. I can come down here and say anything I want, I guess, as long as I pay my taxes.

But I do believe that Reagan's a good president and that he's a good man and I think he's a good leader. I don't agree with everything that he does. I don't agree with everything that anybody does. But I think he's trying to wake America up to the fact that we don't have unlimited money. We cannot just go on getting further and further in debt. And he thinks that the military's gone down.

We're spending all this money we don't really have on all these programs. The way I see what he's doing, I'm behind it. I'm not behind the way it's happening everywhere, but I know that something has to be done and he's taken responsibility for trying something. Which no one else did.

MUSICIAN: *In the days of "Ohio" and CSNY, people associated you with a leftist philosophy. Were people off the mark in assigning those beliefs to you fifteen years ago?*

YOUNG: No, I'd do the same thing today. Things that I was against then are the same things I'm against now. I don't see Reagan as Nixon. I think they're two different men. Really different! People compare those two just because they're Republican leaders and I don't think there is any comparison. I never would have voted for Nixon, who is our most popular

"Musically, Charles Manson had something great.... He wanted me to introduce him to Mo Ostin."

President worldwide. Everybody can't believe we did what we did to Nixon.

MUSICIAN: *The Russians were pretty shocked.*

YOUNG: Right! Well we have a conscience that they don't have. Time will tell whether we were right or wrong about it.

MUSICIAN: *You showed a great deal of sympathy for Nixon in "Campaigner," at a time when* everybody *was kicking him.*

YOUNG: Oh yeah that's the human side. No matter how bad his ideals were or how bad he fucked up the trust of the country, he still is a human being.

MUSICIAN: *Do you feel like a citizen of the United States?*

YOUNG: Yeah. I'm proud to be living in the United States. I'm proud of what this country is doing. Not every little nuance, everything isn't right, but I am behind it. I've been all over the world and I feel at home here. I like to move all around the whole continent. That's my place. I don't like to be political. I'm just one person, I don't want to put my political views on everybody. It carries more weight than it should. I don't know Ronald Reagan, but I have this feeling about him that is a personal thing. It'll be taken to be so much bigger than it should be if it's written, because people glom onto it and make it huge, and it's not a big thing. I already mentioned it to one reporter. He asked the wrong kind of questions and I was in a bad mood. He just attacked Reagan in this matter-of-fact way. And I went on a tirade at the guy for about five minutes. It pisses me off to have anybody *always* attacking, always putting down the leaders. My brother does the same thing. He doesn't have one good thing to say about one government leader anywhere. I'm tired of that shit. To me that's just trendy discussion. There must be some good in some of these people somewhere. They represent us in the world. We voted for them. We made them what they are. *We* did it. Just because a guy may be senator or governor doesn't necessarily mean that he's an insensitive asshole. I just can't say I hate Reagan. I'm proud of the way he's handled himself. I don't agree with everything he's done, but I'm proud of him

"I believe Reagan's a good president, a good man and a good leader. He's trying to wake America up...."

as a leader of our country. George Bush ain't gonna be my favorite. I hope the Democrats can come up with somebody good, because Kemp is not gonna be easy to beat either. Between Bush and Kemp, they've got the TV image and the whole fuckin' thing.

MUSICIAN: *"Revolution Blues" was a great portrait of the distance between being a rock star, a supposed counterculture leader, and being a revolutionary with dreams of "dune buggies coming down the mountains." What inspired that?*

YOUNG: Living in L.A. Knowing Manson.

MUSICIAN: *How did you know Manson?*

YOUNG: I met him through Dennis Wilson. He wanted to make records. He wanted me to introduce him to Mo Ostin at Reprise. He had this kind of music that nobody else was doing. He would sit down with a guitar and start playing and making up stuff, different every time, it just kept on comin' out, comin' out, comin' out. Then he would stop and you would never hear that one again.

Musically, I thought he was very unique. I thought he really had something crazy, something great. He was like a living poet. It was always coming out. He had a lot of girls around at the time and I thought, "Well this guy has got a lot of girlfriends." He was very intense. I met him two or three times.

MUSICIAN: *This is a weird kind of speculation but I've got to ask: Do you think if the guy had gotten an outlet he would have been a worthwhile artist?*

YOUNG: I think he was a worthwhile artist anyway. I don't know why he did what he did. But I think he was very frustrated in not being able to get it—and he blamed somebody. It had to do with Terry Melcher, who was a producer of records at that time. He wanted very much to make a record. And he really was unique.

MUSICIAN: *And thank goodness.*

YOUNG: But I don't know what happened. I don't know what they got into. I remember there was a lot of energy whenever he was around. And he was different. You can tell he's different. All you have to do is look at him. Once you've seen him you never forget him, I'll tell you that. Something about him that's...I can't forget it. I don't know what you would call it, but I wouldn't want to call it anything in an interview. I would just like to forget about it.

MUSICIAN: *"Thrasher" described the point where old friends become dead weight and have to be left behind. I figured*

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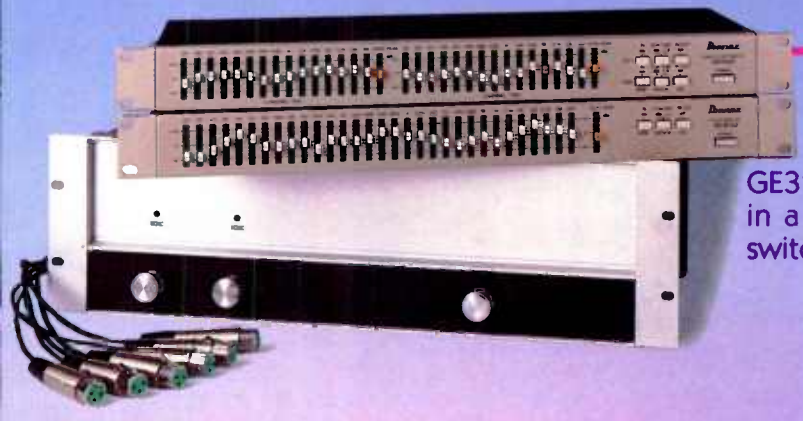

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it was about Crosby, Stills and Nash

YOUNG: Yeah. Parts of it were just dead weight. Well, at that point I felt like it was kind of dead weight for me. Not for them. For me. I could go somewhere and they couldn't go there. I wasn't going to pull them along, they were doing fine without me. It might have come off a little more harsh than I meant it, but once I write it I can't say, 'Oh I'm going to hurt somebody's feelings." Poetically and on feeling it made good sense to me and it came right out. I think I'd be doing it a disservice to change it based on what I think a reaction would be. I try not to do that.

MUSICIAN: *Is there anything you wanted to write about and haven't been able to?*

YOUNG: No. Writing is deceptive because you're always writing about things that you don't want anybody to know about. And you hide them in your words. So you get to say it but nobody gets to nail you for it. And that's the stream that goes through my music. Just little glimmers of something here and there that might give you some kind of a feeling. So I get those things out that way. That's one of the great things about music. It's got a lot of depth to it and maybe that's what video is taking a little bite out of. I'm not against video--I'm really video-oriented; but I just don't like the way it's being used in a lot of ways. I haven't really indulged myself in much video, I've only done a couple of them. When I have an idea to do something, I'll do it, but it might not be on a big hit. It might be on a song that's not going to get any airplay so what the hell does anybody want to give me money to do a video for? Maybe there could be a whole new way of making videos that's not necessarily designed to sell a record. Maybe it doesn't have to be like a commercial. Where do you draw the line? You've got guys making Pepsi commercials, then the same guy goes across and does the video with the same guy who is in the Pepsi commercial! What's the difference? What are you selling? Somebody comes up with a great song, you're listening away and then you're watching TV and you hear the same fuckin' song in a commercial! You say, "Oh those assholes, man, they sold me down the river. There I was believing this song and now they say it's *not* really what I was dreaming it was. It's some fuckin' product!" I say if you're going to give a song to a commercial, then don't give it to the people. That's abusive. Because if you're making the kind of music I like, you're getting right into people's soul, and the biggest insult you could ever give them is to get right inside their souls and move them and then have them discover when they're watching TV that what they were thinking about in the song is not really it, that it's really this *product*. It bothers me. I don't want to burst any bubbles. I'd rather leave it open for people's imaginations, to dream along.

MUSICIAN: *A lot of your songs hint at reincarnation. "Cortez" suddenly jumps into the past and into the first person when you sing, "I know she's living there, and she loves me to this day." The same sense of past lives comes up in "Like An Inca," in many of your songs. Do you believe in reincarnation?*

YOUNG: Sometimes when I'm writing a song I can feel there's other things in me that are not me. That's why I hesitate to edit my songs. If it's something I have to think about and contrive, work at, it's usually not that good. My best work just comes through me. A lot of times what comes through to me is coming from somewhere else. That's why I believe in reincarnation. Not in the conventional way. I think we're all vehicles for each other. You hide your subconscious but your subconscious is picking up things from around the other side of the planet, maybe something that happened to you in another lifetime, or maybe something happening to someone else right now, and you're tuned into it for some reason. Your conscious mind says "That's a bunch of bullshit, now we're in this restaurant, and you want a drink, or are you going to sit there and stare out the window?" So you have this one side of your mind keeping down the other communication, the thing that's really tuned in to what's going on. But if you open up that back part of your mind and find yourself in the right set of circumstances, you might be able to come out with something that didn't come from you.

MUSICIAN: *Do you have songs that are too personal to sing to an audience?*

YOUNG: Well, some songs are just too hard to do live. Like, "Will To Love," I don't know how I could ever do it. I just would feel too open, too wide open. You don't sing all that stuff on TV.

MUSICIAN: *"Will To Love" is an amazing song. You describe a fish struggling upstream. Randy Newman's praised your nature writing. You've written from the perspective of the furry creatures in "Thrasher," enough birds to fill an aviary. Can you really immerse yourself so completely in the creative process that you feel your fins swimming upstream?*

YOUNG: Yeah I can. "Will To Love" was written in one night, in one sitting, in front of the fireplace. I was all alone in my house and I was really high on a bunch of things. This was a long time ago. I really don't abuse myself like I used to. I don't think I'd still be here if I did. But I was really out there and I wrote the whole thing and put it together. None of the verses are exactly the same length. They're all a little different. I made it through it once on the tape. And then I went to record with Crosby, Stills & Nash in Florida after that. I took this cassette along and said, "Listen to this song I wrote." I played it for David and he loved it. He said, "Wow, that's great just the way it is." We tried to learn it but we could never get it as a band song. I couldn't sing it. I couldn't sing past the second verse without forgetting what I was doing, losing it totally and getting all pissed off because it didn't sound right. I couldn't get through it.

I never have sung it except for that one time. That's what I used for the record. A Sony cassette machine which I transferred to 24-track and then I played it back through my Magnatone stereo reverb amp. I brought two tracks of the cassette up on a couple of faders with the stereo vibrato in it, then I mixed them in with the original cassette for that sound of the fish. I overdubbed all the instruments on it and mixed it in the same night. Up in a place called Indigo Ranch. It was on a full moon. What a night that was, man, unbelievable. I ordered all the instruments from Studio Instrument Rentals, the drums, the bass, the amps, the vibes, all the percussion stuff. We had them set it up like a live date. I made the transfer of the cassette onto the 16-track and then I started overdubbing all the parts. They thought it was going to be a live session! They were all set up and ready to go. I just walked from one to another and did them all, mostly all in the first take. And then mixed it at the end of the night. It took us about eight hours to finish the whole thing and make it sound like it does now. I think it might be one of the best records I've ever made. I think as a piece of music, and sound and lyric and spirit it's probably one of the best. And that's why it's important for me as an artist to be able to record a song when I want to. I will never stand for anybody trying to take that right away from me.

MUSICIAN: *Another big subject of yours is extinction. Of dinosaurs, Atlantis, the Indians, and the post-nuclear world.*

YOUNG: To me it's just like when a forest gets burned, and it grows up again. That's extinction to me. Tearing down things to build new things. You build a beautiful thing; it can be the greatest thing and it's your dream to build it, but as soon as it's done, it's gotta go. You've got to tear it down because there's not enough room to build another new thing anymore. And if you stay with that first thing, you'll stop living. When you say, "This is it—this is what I want," that's when

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you start dying. You don't *want* anymore. Better to move away and do another thing somewhere else, leave that first one for somebody else to appreciate. That's why possessions are so confusing. I really reinforce myself with possessions, I have lots of possessions, yet some part of me would be just as happy with no possessions. Maybe that's what I'm saying: Tear the whole thing down, let me start over, let me be a baby again.

MUSICIAN: *Does "Old Ways" mean that it might in some cases be better to rust than to burn out? Better to go slow?*

YOUNG: I think in some cases it is, if you're not talkin' about rock 'n' roll. If you're talking about rock 'n' roll, it's better to burn out.

MUSICIAN: *Yeah?*

YOUNG: Yeah.

MUSICIAN: *Even if you're "gonna quit this grass, give up all this drinking"?*

YOUNG: Rock 'n' roll is like a drug. I don't take very much rock 'n' roll, but when I *do* rock 'n' roll, I fuckin' do it. But I don't want to do it all the time 'cause it'll kill me. The way I do it, I don't want to fuck around with it. It's just like a drug. When you're singing and playing rock 'n' roll, you're on the leading edge of yourself. You're tryin' to vibrate, tryin' to make something happen. It's like there's somethin' alive and exposed. And it's in there in country, but it's not the same way. It's *inside* in country; there's a soulful feeling that comes from knowing that you're with your friends and people work for a living and everybody has families and they love each other and when things go wrong you feel it. That's the difference. To really feel rock 'n' roll the way I feel it you have to burn as brightly as you can until you turn it off altogether. Then turn it on again some other time. If I tried to do every tour goin' full-out rock 'n' roll, and every album full-out rock 'n' roll, I would die. I would burn out. So it's just a little bit at a time. So I can still be doing it when I'm fifty-five or sixty. Like Willie Nelson.

MUSICIAN: *The one big thing that rock 'n' roll did* not *get from country and the blues was a sense of consequences. In country and blues if you raised hell on Saturday night, you were gonna feel real bad on Sunday morning when you dragged yourself to church. Or when you* didn't *drag yourself to church.*

YOUNG: That's right. Rock 'n' roll is reckless abandon. Rock 'n' roll is the cause of country and blues. Country and the blues came first, but somehow rock 'n' roll's place in the chain of events is dispersed.

MUSICIAN: *Because country and the blues is the whole arc and rock 'n' roll is just...*

YOUNG: Just the "UP."

MUSICIAN: *Just the "UP," without the consequences.*

YOUNG: So if you taper off rock 'n' roll, and not go full-out, then you're not goin' as far up as you should. Ⓜ

How Young Strung

"I have to go along with a Steinway piano," Neil says, "though I use a Bosendorfer when I can get it. We used one on the record. I like my old Wurlitzer upright piano; it's got a good honky-tonk sound.

"I'm playing a Fender Broadcaster, my Gretsch Horseshoe, and a 1952 Gibson Les Paul with a Firebird pickup on the treble end. For acoustic I've got a D-45 and a J-200. Lately I've been writing on Hank Williams' old D-28. I bought it but I don't have it on the road with me.

"I used a Tweedy Fender Deluxe amp for a long time. I recently changed to a new Mesa/Boogie top which I'm just learning how to use. It seems like I can get a lot of the same sounds I got out of the Deluxe, but without the extreme treble raspiness."

Neil plays Marine Band harmonicas, not Blues Harps.

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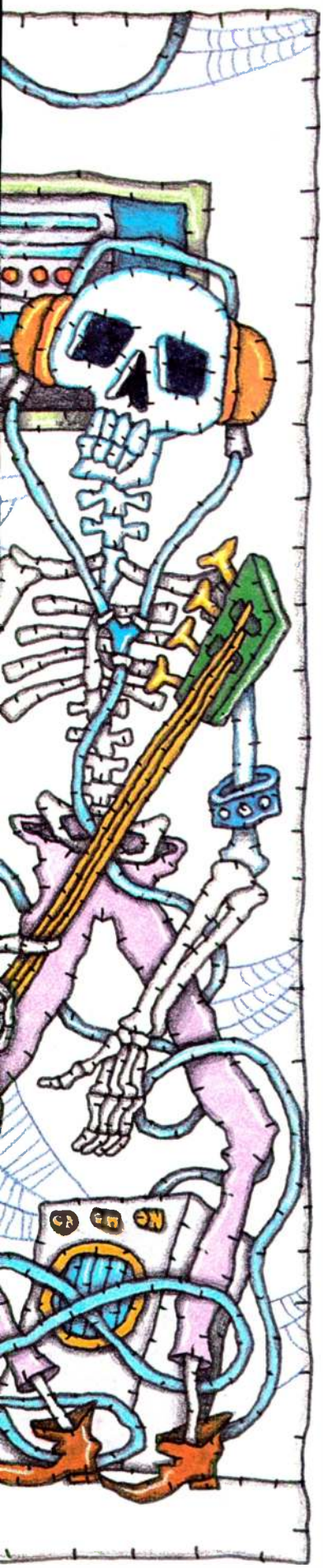

Career Killer?
Rock 'n' Roll Reaper?
Black Hole of Pop?

—

The Second Album Jinx
Can Be Musical Death.

—

By Gina Arnold

The Sophomore Slump

American lives have no second acts, says one hoary cliché. You may take offense at that, but clichés get to be hoary by being true. A popular pop music cliché is that an artist has a whole lifetime to prepare the material for his first album, and is then thrown into a promotional machine that leaves him no time at all to compose a follow-up. Look at Boston, Jesse Winchester, the Tom Robinson Band. Look at the Sex Pistols.

In the late 60s the Left Banke debuted with an album that featured great tunes like "Pretty Ballerina" and "Walk Away Renee." Their second album saw them heading down the river. In the liner notes to Rhino Records' new *History of the Left Banke,* guitarist George Cameron tells a common story: "We fell behind after the first album, we were on the road so much. When we had to finish the second album the whole thing was rushed. Mercury even gave us a schlock producer."

Hey, look at the Knack.

When a record company finds the rare artist who shows great improvement from album one to album two, they can sing hosanna because they've got a Dylan or a Springsteen or a John Fogerty or a Van Morrison—a real lifer.

Some artists try to avoid the curse by deliberately taking a left turn with their second LPs. Rickie Lee Jones followed her platinum debut with *Pirates,* a collection of wonderful songs with structures so unusual no one would expect radio to play them. Rickie Lee, in effect, refused to play the game. Other artists, like Dire Straits and the Pretenders, come roaring out of the second album slump with third albums that knock everyone's socks off.

But however one comes out of it, that slump hits with the sickening force of the first big dip on the Coney Island roller coaster. The worst thing is, it hits just when the band is starting to feel a little used to success. If a group's gone from being hot locally to getting signed to making a first record that did pretty well, they might just start to relax. And that's when the roof falls in.

Those in the depths of the Sophomore Dip display many attributes pop psychologists ascribe to the terminally ill. According to Elisabeth Kübler-Ross those attributes come in five stages:

Illustration by Steven Max Singer

I. Confusion and Denial. If you were really dying, you'd probably say to yourself, "No, I Am Not, I Refuse." If you were a band and you found out you had a serious problem going down on tape during the recording of your second album, you'd say pretty much the same thing and release the damn record anyway.

II. Anger: If you accepted the fact that you were dying, you'd be angry at the unfairness of it all. If you realized you'd released a rotten second album, you'd feel the same way.

III. Bargaining. If you were dying, you'd try and find a way out of it by making a deal with God. If you were busy making a confusing second album and came to your senses in the middle of the process, you might try sacrificing some ideals or ego to get back on the track.

IV. Guilt. If you were about to pass on up to the great beyond, you'd feel pretty guilty about some of the things you'd done in your lifetime. If you made a disappointing second record, you might feel pretty guilty toward your fans; you might, if you were contrite enough, even feel guilty toward the poor record company who financed the whole mess.

V. Enlightenment and Acceptance. You get used to the idea of death. You can also get used to recording.

Confusion and Denial

"I can't even imagine stepping out of the studio and not liking what I did that day." — Vicki Peterson, Bangles

Confusion is the stage where a band or artist is completely unenlightened as to how their record will be perceived by the public. Either because of lack of perspective or simply a wrong turn taken somewhere, the tendency is for a band to think that it's just as likely for confusion to lead to enlightenment as it is to lead to disaster. Guess again, suckers. Steve Wynn, on the Dream Syndicate's second album *Medicine Show*: "What bothered me about all the bad reviews was when people misread my intentions. They thought *Medicine Show* was either this big label sell-out or some bombastic statement. That hurt a lot. We were just trying to make a great record."

Medicine Show is a textbook case of Sophomore Slump. Dream Syndicate's first LP *Days Of Wine And Roses* was recorded for $4,000 in three days, and received rave reviews. Wynn became something of a trendsetter in L.A., where psychedelic introspection was just beginning to make an underground comeback. A lot of bands gave him credit for inspiration on the liner notes of their indie debuts, and Wynn himself was awarded with one of those rare "We Luv Ya, Babe" contracts from A&M Records with which to make a second album. *Medicine Show*, Wynn's A&M debut, cost $100,000, and it's hard to decide which was more disappointing, the album's sales or its reviews.

Wynn states the problem thusly: "If you do really well one way or the other on your first LP, then you have to move to another level. I almost wish someone had said, 'Okay, here's $10,000 for each record you make until the day you die.' That kind of challenge would have made great records. But instead they give you a different kind of challenge. They say, 'Okay, that was good—now here's this *new* amount of money. Use it well.'"

Wynn's been getting a bad rap around L.A. these days. The few people who don't hang out with him and further obscure his artistic vision call him cocky. Actually his persona is just a weird combination of shrewdness and sincerity. "You see, it's so much easier at the start," Wynn says warily. "You've shown some potential, and your fans love you for that potential. You can be rough and ragged and people will say, 'Imagine how great he'd be if he got it all together.' Then when you do get it together, it's not at all how they imagined it, and they're disappointed."

Wynn denies feeling any pressure in the studio from the record company to come up with a hit. In the six months that *Medicine Show* took to record, he says A&M only approached the band once, and that time very positively. Wynn denies more than that: "It's always weird when a band makes a record that gets great reviews and then goes and makes one that sounds nothing like the first one," he says stubbornly. "We did that and we paid for it. I'm still entirely happy with *Medicine Show*, but it could have been recorded a lot quicker. If you have all the time and all the money in the world, you don't always know what to do with it, so you spend a lot of time crawling up your own ass second-guessing yourself."

A&M is still behind Wynn and the Syndicate, even though the band has undergone yet another personnel change since *Medicine Show*, with guitarist Karl Precoda being replaced by Paul Cutler. Recently Wynn recorded an eight-song LP with Dan Stuart of Green on Red under the banner Danny & Dusty called *The Lost Weekend*. The LP was recorded in twenty-four hours in an 8-track studio behind a Vons supermarket, and Wynn says that the low-key recording situation has done a lot to help him relax: "Danny and Dusty was important to me because I played some of my favorite songs with some of my favorite people in a recording situation I felt totally comfortable with.

"It can happen that way. But nowadays bands spend months and months writing songs and months and months cutting demos for the label executives to hear, and months searching for a producer, and by that time you're so paranoid. You're going, 'I've got to write a song the label will like, the producer will like, and oh, the band's got to like it, and gee, I hope that the critics will like it, and radio is this whole other problem, and hey, what about that video?'

"You can give yourself a nervous breakdown, when most people just want you to come in with an acoustic guitar and go, 'This is a great song. I'm not asking you, I'm telling you.'

Steve Wynn figures his second LP got a bum rap.

HOWARD ROSENBERG

If you say, 'Well, this is our kind of music but we'll change it if there is something you might like to hear more,' then you're fucked. After the first concession, you're fucked."

Anger

"We always used to tell people we were happy about No Time Like Now, *but it was completely empty rhetoric. I see stuff we said in magazines about it, but we didn't believe it, and what's more, I don't think anyone believed* us." *— Steve Barton, Translator*

Anger is what happens when an artist realizes what confusion has wrought upon his album. Translator's second LP *No Time Like Now* was a sharp contrast to their debut *Heartbeats And Triggers*. Where *Heartbeats* was full of sharp, witty fresh-sounding rock, *No Time* was a gentler album with a wimpy, AOR feel to it that negated much of its strong songwriting. Unlike more discreet bands, Translator were willing, a few months back, to bleed about the experience of making it.

"On *No Time* there was an attempt to make us some form of commercial," said drummer Dave Scheff. "Our producer [David Kahne] had this idea of what that was, and we really weren't strong enough about saying what we wanted."

"We weren't roped into using Kahne," adds singer Steve Barton. "It just kind of came with the package, because we thought the first record [which he also produced] sounded pretty good. We thought we'd be able to work on the things that we thought were problematic on it."

"Like, I had some problems with the drum sounds," says Scheff. "We talked about it, and it seemed like it was going to happen the way I wanted. Then the rug was pulled out from under me and I was left going, 'I guess I'm just supposed to let them do this.' I definitely wimped out. I could have said no, I guess, but I didn't; they were talking about how this was going to be a radio smash, so I figured this was how it had to be."

"We had this problem on our last tour," says Barton. "People kept coming up to us and saying, 'Wow, you sound so different from your records.' In fact, *No Time* was a real misrepresentation of our sound. We convinced ourselves we wanted to sound like that, but by the end of the tour, we'd been playing very quietly and all these little parts, and finally we just went, 'Wait a minute! This is so uncomfortable!'"

Translator recently released a third LP, self-titled, which they are much happier about. The main difference is in the production, by Ed Stasium [Swimming Pool Qs, Ramones]. Stasium punched up the drums the way Scheff likes them, and made the guitars louder and more electric. The movement to make Translator's sound "rock of the 80s" has been halted in its tracks.

"It took us a full year and a half to get over the idea that we'd been touring around being something we weren't," says Barton. "It all solidified after we met Ed."

Bob Darlington, guitarist and songwriter for the band, sums up the whole experience. "There's this real tendency to let the record company take over," he says. "It just doesn't work that way. We had that experience, and it was a lesson to us. That's why we're making a record now that we're all real excited about, because we've been at the other end of the sphere. We made a record we now have trouble listening to, and we don't ever want to go through that again."

Grief is also what bands get when they put out their second album, regardless of how they feel about the record themselves. Rank & File's second LP *Long Gone Dead* had a potential hit single in "Sounds Of The Rain," but the album itself was a critical question mark and a commercial flop. Rank & File's problems were organizational, not psychological. The Kinman brothers [Chip and Tony], who make up the core of the group, had no set band during recording, and relied on several session musicians over a period of some months. They weren't touring, and now complain the album doesn't capture their live power.

The Kinmans defend *Long Gone Dead*, however. They blame its failure to hit on a series of bad breaks—being booked into "all the wrong clubs on all the wrong nights," for instance, according to Chip Kinman. In addition, they were sued by their manager, their van was repossessed, a European tour fell through, and a legal mishap delayed their video till long after the single had died on the radio. By the time the legalities were worked out, "Sound Of The Rain" had flopped and MTV wouldn't pick up the clip. Rank & File rallied, and are spending the summer in the studio with their new band and the rest of all God's creatures in Los Angeles.

Translator paid the price for the wrong producer.

But they consider last year the lowpoint in their careers.

"The second album was supposed to be so crucial," says Chip Kinman. "And nowadays people keep saying to me, 'Your third LP is so important.' You mean the others weren't? They're all important, and they're all scary; there's no difference between your second one and any other."

Bargaining

"At first it was hard to think about having someone else come in play on our records. I mean, you think to yourself, 'But we're a band.' But you have to be honest with yourself. You know your own limitations, and we had a sound in our heads that we wanted to put down. You have to do whatever it takes, and at this point, we're not good enough to do it by ourselves. Our egos can take the fact that we need *our producer on keyboards, we* need *a session guitarist." — Dan Zanes, Del Fuegos*

Bargaining is basically facing up to reality. After being confused, after being angry, a band must learn to make the concessions that will help them most. Bargaining is not necessarily a negation of integrity.

When the Del Fuegos first came to Los Angeles late last spring to make their first record for Slash, they arrived in a serious state of intimidation. For one thing, their van had crashed in Ohio, demolishing all of their equipment. For another, "We were such a garage band when we came to L.A., we didn't even know we were one," says lead singer/songwriter/rhythm guitarist Dan Zanes. "We found out fast when we tried to make a record and realized we had no idea how to go about it."

The Del Fuegos' first choice for producer was scared off by the band's utter rawness. Luckily, Slash found a replacement in Mitch Froom, who had just finished producing the *Cafe Flesh* soundtrack for the label. Froom's background producing Eddie Money and Rick Springfield "didn't sound

EBET ROBERTS

too happening to us," according to Zanes, but the band tried him out anyway and the combination clicked.

Froom's influence on the Fuegos went way beyond production. The first thing he had the band do when he first heard them in April was practice. For two and a half months he kept the Fuegos working on musicianship, before he'd even let them go near a studio. After releasing the extraordinarily promising *Longest Day* LP, the Fuegos fast became one of the most exalted bands to emerge from the underground since labelmates X and Violent Femmes. Reviews were universally good, shows were always packed and the gigs were often visited by celebrities like Tom Petty, David Lee Roth, Elvis Costello, and even Bruce Springsteen, who slipped backstage one night with Nils Lofgren and learned the chord changes to "Backseat Nothing" and "Mary Don't Change." Typical of the Del Fuegos' scatterbrained attitude, the same night he leapt on stage to jam with them was the night they didn't have a tape recorder running.

The Fuegos' response to this quick ascension?

"Our reviews have been far more complimentary than we deserve," shrugs Zanes. "The *Longest Day* was just way ahead of where we were when we came out to make it. That's the best thing you can say about a record: it came out much better than you were even prepared to make. Then you know you owe people serious thanks."

The second LP, tentatively titled *Don't Run Wild*, was far less difficult to make, according to Zanes. "It's taken us an

Rank & File's Kinmans: stranded, dispossessed & sued.

LP's worth of time just to get to the point of being good enough rock musicians to be able to play how we want," he ways. "I'm just a generally clumsy guitar player and Warren's got great ideas, but he's only just on his way to becoming a great player."

The Del Fuegos' humbling solution for their second album was unprecedented in L.A., where the denizens of Bob's Frolic Room on Hollywood Boulevard slip in and out of each other's recordings. Instead of asking one of their numerous friends and label-mates to play on their album, the Fuegos hired Jim Ralston, a session musician who plays with Tina Turner's band, to fill in the guitar parts they felt unable to handle on their own.

"Jim's been great, he's taught us so much," Zanes says cheerfully. "You know, we used to think we were going to prove to people that you could make great music on cheap guitars. Now I realize that maybe you will, but only if you're the world's greatest musician. Otherwise your guitar is going to go out of tune and cause people to have a painful musical experience. I have a whole box of tapes of us at home that just make me cringe."

"You know," he adds, "after we made the last album, we just thought it was so slick, the slickest thing ever put down on vinyl. Now we listen to it and we go, 'Oh, my god...that was *not* slick. This album, however, is *slick*."

Slick isn't the lifetime goal of all bands, but it is for the ones who mean to make it into the mainstream. The Bangles, who are recording their second LP in the same studio as the Fuegos with the same producer, David Kahne, that Translator now despises, are living in concession city right now. "Our last LP [*All Over The Place*] did okay," shrugs Vicki Peterson. "But I really want to hear us on KHJ (L.A.'s top forty station). That's been my dream for so long."

The Bangles have no illusions about where their chiming 60s pop sound fits in right now on the radio. "It would be impossible for us to try and sound like Madonna," says Peterson. "But with this LP we want to get a more punchy, fuller drum sound—the kind you hear on the radio, only without using a drum machine. On the last album, we had the vocals and the guitars right up front, because we wanted to emphasize our strengths. On this album, we're thinking more rhythmically, for a more 80s-type sound.

"We want to sound good alongside Madonna and Cyndi Lauper, without sounding *like* Madonna or Cyndi Lauper," she concludes. "You know, I really want my friends and the critics and people like that to like this album. But I want twelve-year-old girls to like it too."

Guilt

Nothing brings on guilt like feeling you've let down your fans. "It's like you've got a bunch of parents out there," says Steve Wynn. "It's like when you were six years old and did a finger painting, and your parents go, 'He'll be the next Picasso. If this is what he's doing at six, what'll he be doing at eleven? At twenty?' And when you're twenty, you're doing something a little better than the finger painting, but essentially the same thing, and everyone is all disappointed in you."

Robin Lane & the Chartbusters' 1980 debut was a critical smash and sold well around their Boston base. The LP crept into *Billboard*'s top hundred, though it was not the chartbuster Warner Bros. anticipated. Lane and her band spent an exhausting year crisscrossing the U.S. on a dilapidated tour bus, and then rushed into the studio in December to write and record a follow-up. The resulting album, *Imitation Life,* was dark and brooding—and Robin Lane was soon dropped from the label.

"I don't want to talk disparagingly about Warner Bros.," Lane says. "It's not the record company's fault at all. I really think it had to do with me. I gave out all the wrong messages. They figured we were new wave or punk because I'd say I liked the Sex Pistols and Television—but *we* weren't that way at all. We were half pop and half old Stones. On our first tour we were sent out with the Undertones and the crowds *hated* us. Imagine this: My first time in L.A., my first time playing for the record company, we were opening for the Undertones and the audience was pulling us off the stage, throwing water and lemons at me. I felt totally humiliated and there's Warner Bros. watching the whole thing. They were nice enough to give us a second chance anyway, and we blew it. If I had been more together about my own image and what *we* were, I think things would have worked out.

"When we went into the studio to make our second record nobody ever told me—my manager never told me—the record company was thinking of not picking up our option. Warner Bros. never talked to *me* about what they thought. If my manager had told me my career was in danger I might have picked some of my more commercial songs. I was interested in doing non-commercial songs then, doing things that were less pop. That was just my frame of mind at the time. If I'd known it was a do-or-die situation I would have

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picked different songs. There were no potential hits at all on that album.

"We were supposed to use Richard Gottherer as producer but Warner Bros. talked us out of it. Right after that he did the Go-Go's and became really hot.

"We had our chance, we had critical acclaim. If we'd just been more *smart* about our career. I can't give up; I have too many strong songs. It's just that everything needs to be right at the same time. You have to have management, good songs, a great band, a record contract. They want a whole package deal. You can't just have the music; you need the rest, the image as well as the beat."

Enlightenment and Acceptance

Think of making an album as giving birth to a child. Then think of how hard it would be for a parent to give that child to someone else to raise. It might be their creation, but someone else would impose their values and morals onto the kid's personality.

That's what hiring a producer can be like.

It's easier for bands to ease the pain of this realization by pretending that their producer is an engineer—someone who merely tapes the music. For one thing, the very idea of "production values" seems oxymoronic in L.A. where the Toto sound always lurks round the corner. "I can't figure out," says the Blasters' Dave Alvin, "why everyone hates so-called American Music to sound produced. British bands like U2 are wildly produced and no one ever acts like *they* sold out."

Unfortunately, in the studio, inexperience is bad business. "Once you get in a studio," says Alvin, "the music starts sounding a whole lot different from the clubs and halls you've been used to playing in. The songs don't change, but the representation of them does. You get into that antiseptic environment and you start making noises that sound like crap. You can get fooled. We certainly have."

Hiring a producer, then, is usually necessary—and heart-wrenching. "Who will love my baby?" thinks every band with any soul. It's awfully easy to make a regrettable error. David Kahne was a big mistake for Translator, but other bands found him perfectly acceptable.

"I liked David as a producer, and I liked him as a person," says Chip Kinman, for whom Kahne produced *Sundown*, Rank & File's first LP. "A producer has to be able to listen to the takes and say, 'Okay, enough is enough.' He gives a fresh outlook on songs you've been living with for a year. If a band doesn't have any ideas, or can't play their instruments, then a producer ought to bring in someone to make it a competitive record. Bands shouldn't fight that."

Rank & File held "producer tryouts" for their third album after sending out an 8-track demo tape to interested parties.

"We talked to some guys who had all these bogus theories about where Rank & File fit into the scheme of things," Kinman says scornfully. "Some guys did this wholesale slag off of British bands, and talked a lot about American Music. That's not what we wanted to hear at all. We just went, 'Sorry, no thanks, bad attitude.'

"The ones who said, 'This tape rocks, I think your idea and my idea of rocking out is the same,' were the ones we wanted to talk to."

The Del Fuegos decided they could deal with Mitch Froom when it turned out that he had a big thing for Booker T & the MGs, the Zanes' favorite band. Translator's Scheff claims that one of Ed Stasium's greatest strengths is that "Ed goes home and throws the same records on the turntable that we do."

But a producer isn't a roommate, and there are other important factors to consider. "On our first LP," says Chip Kinman, "We weren't really good enough musicians to do what we wanted. But Tony and I have always been kind of smart about music. We really like hearing other people's ideas. We can sort through them—tell if they're off base."

Dream Syndicate's Wynn likes to hear ideas, too, but his last producer Sandy Pearlman's profusion of ideas, in conjunction with A&M's generous grant of unlimited studio time, was an almost fatal combination.

"Sandy cannot make a fast record," Wynn confides. "For him, six months *was* a short record. He's a former critic, he's into spending weeks trying out some tiny idea that will either work or won't. He's a nice guy and all, but it's funny—I used to be the one telling people, 'Just go in there and do it. Don't think about it.' Now I'm going to take my own advice."

Producers are crucial to everyone's second recording experience, more so than during their first, when, as Translator points out, they are just getting the set down on tape, engineering-fashion. "Some bands should always just be plugged in and told, 'Play,'" Vicki Petersen says. "Some really need arranging. Our songs are kind of complicated in a stupid sort of way."

Peterson says the Bangles don't mind Kahne's suggestions, because "He's difficult and talented, but so are we." Rank & File stress the difficulties they plan on creating for a producer in the studio: "If we don't like an idea, we throw it out," says Tony Kinman. "Like Kahne always used to insist that we enunciate, we'd do a bunch of takes so you could understand what we were saying. Now we really aren't going to waste our time on that—there's not too many bands I like whose lyrics you can understand, anyway."

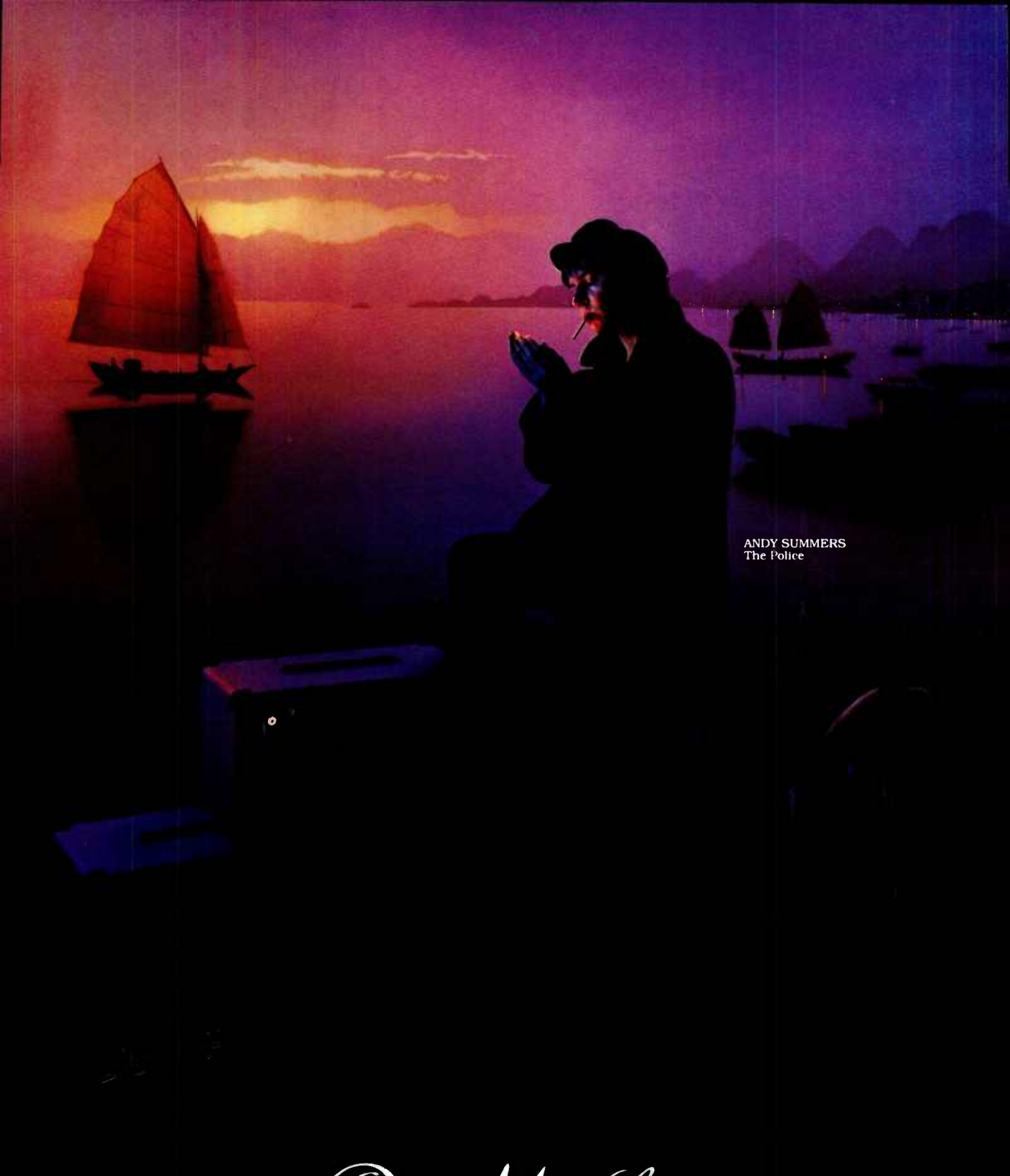
For a band like the Del Fuegos, who have yet to learn the intricacies of "being difficult," a producer's impositions had better be merited. "When we first came to L.A., recording intimidated the hell out of us," confides Zanes. "It still does,

Del Fuegos swallowed pride and brought in session men.

FRAN JAKIN

really, but we trust Mitch completely. I don't know why we've been so lucky [in our choice of producer]. We don't deserve it any more than any other hardworking band does."

According to Kübler-Ross, acceptance means "Throwing out what is trivial and turning to what is most important in your life." When the Cars finished recording their second album in 1979 Ric Ocasek was asked if he felt a lot of pressure about following his group's smash debut. "Nah," he shrugged. "It's just another album, and there'll be other ones after this." It would be a lie to suggest that everyone recovers from the Second Album Slump, but artists sure do come out wiser for the turbulence. At the least, the experience helps them find their natural level, figure out where they belong. Artists who've been through the Slump come to understand that a musical career isn't a glamorous lottery, with all results in the lap of the gods. A musical career is a whole life, in which every decision has repercussions and you live with the choices you make. M



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How can Talking Heads be three places at once...

Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth won't do interviews together—and they're *married*, fer crissakes. So imagine what it's like to corral all four Talking Heads when the band doesn't have to be in one place. Not that groups have to live, eat and sleep together in Monkees-like harmony. But the brittleness some people detect in Talking Heads' music has been known to show up in their inter-personal relationships.

The tensions and passions of the component members of Talking Heads could fuel a mini-series. In any creative partnership, a certain amount of friction is inevitable. Talking Heads' unique situation practically invites trouble: Weymouth had no prior bass experience before joining drummer Frantz and guitarist David Byrne to create the band. They played as a trio for a couple of years before adding Jerry Harrison on guitar and keyboards. As singer and main songwriter, Byrne naturally attracts the most attention. There have been semi-public spats about song credits. The group doubled in size in 1980 to play African-influenced grooves, and was still in expanded form on their last tour, which ended a year and a half ago.

Since then they've reunited only to record *Little Creatures*, Talking Heads' eighth album, earlier this year, and to make some accompanying videos. Mission accomplished, they've scattered to concentrate on the usual plethora of solo projects. Fasten your seat belt, extinguish all smoking materials and make sure your seat is in the upright position. We're taxiing down the runway In Search of Talking Heads.

By Scott Isler

Photographs by George Hurrell

Who Is David Byrne? What Is David Byrne? Does David Byrne Matter? YES.

by James Kaplan

In the summer of 1981, I was driving east on Route 24 near Short Hills, New Jersey, a stretch of new road that several years before had, at a stroke, transformed the leafy suburban terrain of my childhood into a futuristic landscape—that had, at a stroke, allowed for the rapid transit of many lanes of cars between the city, which lay strung across the horizon twenty miles distant, and the newly expanded, transfigured and futurized, mall. I was driving along that stretch of road, at a point where it rises to a maximum elevation and then falls, giving a sudden vista of the gigantic suburban/industrial plain spreading toward the city, when I turned on the radio and my life was changed.

Now, that has an unfortunate sound to it, an evangelistic sound—as if I had heard the word of God out there on Route 24, as if, like those people who put bumper stickers that say, I FOUND IT! on their cars, I had been looking for something that was missing from my life, and suddenly *here*

JAMES KAPLAN's *stories have appeared in Esquire and elsewhere. Knopf will publish his first novel this year.*

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID LEVINE

"WHAT MADE IT HAPPEN?" says a member of the Claiborne team. "Women went to work. Some of them used to marry early. The difference in women going to work is billions of dollars in clothes. Billions."

I asked Claiborne what she could tell about corporate society from its clothes.

"When the women first went to work, they had no sense of themselves," Claiborne said. "The clothes were all designed to make them look like mini-men. The designers took the man's pinstripe business suit and just changed it a bit so it would fit a woman. White blouse, floppy bow tie, sometimes even a four-in-hand tie. It was as if all the men were in the boardroom and all the women would be in the boardroom, too—as if everybody started at the top. But the women weren't *in* the boardroom.

"You can still see that style in very high powered New York law firms, or financial firms. Where money is real money and power is power, you'd better be in hose and high heels—but even there you don't have to be in a man's suit.

"I think the clothes women wear to work are getting more feminine, as women become more secure in business. Also, corporations themselves are getting looser, more oriented to people—they've heard so much about the Japanese. The Japanese have quality circles and they ask for all the workers' opinions—at least, that's what you hear.

"I walk to work. I get a kick out of seeing how women dress—women are busy, they don't want to bother as much with clothes, and they need reassurance, they have to be told it's okay. I've had a woman ask me, 'Can I wear your shirt with an Anne Klein pant?'

"Fashion can flow from the street up. Paris is a great laboratory, because European women get a sense of their own individuality more quickly than Americans do. California women have great confidence in casual wear. We started in sportswear, and we still produce a more casual look."

I asked Claiborne what was the most surprising thing about American women that could be learned from the clothes that they bought.

"Well, you hear a lot about fitness. You sell sports clothes and jogging clothes, and the general feeling is that women are much more fit than they used to be, but the clothing sales tell us that 30 percent of them are overweight."

Unlike some of the older American apparel firms, Liz Claiborne Inc. has few factories. Most of its production is contracted out to independent manufacturers who produce the finished clothes—and most of their factories are in the Orient.

"We don't do a design and then add the cost of producing and selling. We do a sample, and then we think—*I* think—If I was going to wear this to my job, how much would I pay for it? Then we try to keep the cost to that.

"I go to Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea," said Claiborne. "We have contracts in Sri Lanka and the Philippines."

Isn't this tough on American jobs?

"It is. When we started, we manufactured here. We were a union shop. But you can't match these developing countries. Let's face it, in the developing countries, working in an apparel factory is a good job. But no American mother wants to see her daughter sitting in front of a sewing machine in a factory."

What happens to American jobs, then?

"Well, we worry about that, just like we worry about the legislation that would put on tariffs or quotas to protect those jobs. Americans can produce clothes at the high end, the luxury end, but even Japan exports jobs to India and China. We just can't be labor-intensive."

Except, I suggested, on the design end.

"Well, that's right. When I started, design was a glamour trade for women. Come in, sketch, long lunch, worry about parties and whether you're going to them, leave at 5:00. Now the designers fill their heads with research, and they work twelve hours a day. You have to be involved all the way—the business is changing. We have megaretailers, buying megabatches of clothes. It's not just Lord & Taylor, it's *forty-five branches* of Lord & Taylor, and the product has to be there."

Stock-market lore tells us that when the hemlines rise, so does the market. In the Depression the hemlines dropped to the ankles—where to now?

"Hemlines are all over the place, both up and down," said Liz Claiborne. "All I can tell you about the trend is that things are moving faster and faster and faster." ●

it was! On the car radio!

That wasn't quite how it happened.

What I heard when I turned on the rock 'n' roll station that afternoon was like nothing I had heard before—totally unlike what I guess I wanted and expected to hear: the rock 'n' roll of the past, with its friendly or mock-menacing, infectious, always sexual, anthemlike, we're-all-in-it-together lull. What I heard instead was a man declaiming, like a radio preacher:

And you may find yourself
living in a shotgun shack
And you may find yourself
in another part of the world
And you may find yourself
behind the wheel of a large
automobile
And you may find yourself
in a beautiful house,
with a beautiful wife
And you may ask yourself
Well... how did I get here?

But this wasn't a radio preacher. His voice was set against a shimmering background of bells, punctuated by a rock backbeat. Before I knew what was happening, several voices had joined in, singing in ecstatic chorus:

Letting the days go by
water flowing underground
Into the blue again
after the money's gone
Once in a lifetime...

They had my attention—but what was I listening to? The context was rock 'n' roll, yet this wasn't rock 'n' roll. Not in any familiar sense. The voices were not white voices trying to sound black; the subject was not love or the singer himself or rock 'n' roll itself; the melodic structure was not yet another variant of the twelve-bar, three-chord blues. The song sounded as much like an American Indian rain dance or a Buddhist chant as it sounded like rock. And the subject—what *was* the subject?

Water? Time? Permanence and change? Dislocation? Whatever it was, it wasn't the usual stuff of rock lyrics. What I felt wasn't the usual, either. What I felt was a kind of awe, almost like the transcendent feeling that great art—say, Mozart's Forty-first—engenders. Rock, which is rooted in sex, rarely triggers the feeling. You might get a frisson from the second side of *Abbey Road,* and a smidgen of it from "Third Stone from the Sun." Here, however, the material seemed to be of a different order. Through the use of connotative rather than denotative language (the method of poetry), the song seemed to connect me with my context (the futuristic landscape) in an intensified way. What I was hearing seemed at once removed and intimate, visionary, funny, ecstatic, optimistic and pessimistic. It somehow linked the abiding earth to the sense that we live, nowadays, in a TV set whose channel is constantly being changed.

In 1975, when Route 24 was being cut through the green hills of suburban New Jersey, when, in a way, this country was poised at the top of the roller coaster between the last era and the current one, there were all kinds of ways to ignore what the new road really was—ways to see it as a handsome and successful engineering project, or, conversely, as an impolite intrusion on the woodsy-lane landscape. It may have been both those things, yet even more it was a case of time advancing, not smoothly, but with a ratcheting jolt. Likewise it would have been easy to dismiss the song I heard that afternoon in 1981 as an oddity, or, complimentarily, as a nice rock number with strange words and a catchy beat. It was both those things, and neither.

Who was responsible?

THE TIME IS TODAY. I AM IN THE BACK ROOM of a small house in Dallas. The house, on a hot and dusty back street in a marginal neighborhood, is a one-story beige-brick structure that was gutted a few years ago and turned into a hospice, a place for terminally ill patients to live out their last days in comfort. But even more recently it has undergone another transformation. It is now the production office for *True Stories,* David Byrne's new movie, his first as a director. (This is a more natural step for Byrne than might be imagined. He has produced and directed several Talking Heads videos, and recently appeared in and collaborated on the concert film *Stop Making Sense.*) The interior of the house is clean, white, and modern, thoroughly and quietly air-conditioned. The ceilings are high, the floors terra-cotta tile. Ceiling fans turn slowly. The place resembles a cutting-edge design studio—which is not far off the mark. Polaroids and panoramas of Texas locations, prefab metal buildings and wide empty plains and blank blue skies and long straight empty roads cover the walls. Multiline phones ring constantly. Tex-Mex accordion music plays in the background. There is a water cooler, a toaster oven, a big refrigerator full of sodas and juices. In the back room of the house, David Byrne is watching audition tapes, trying to make a difficult casting decision. In the room along with him are Karen Murphy, his producer; Vickie Thomas, his casting director; and myself. The choice is between two actors, both of whom have done good audition tapes, each of whom has read the character differently. Byrne sits at the desk, in the power position. Jokes are made, and suggestions, but he is the ultimate arbiter, and is watched anxiously, deferred to. I watch him. I have spent many hours with him at this point, but I have never gotten used to his face. In an age when more and more we look alike, he resembles no one else. This seems to be true no matter what light or what mood he's in, and no matter what he's wearing. In fact, David Byrne must be the only clean-cut white male in the world who can look weird—absolutely, defiantly, definitively weird—in a button-down shirt. He has a smallish, squarish, delicately boned head; very dark, almost black hair (surprisingly, liberally streaked with gray); and what would be standard Scotch-Irish-dark-handsome features, except—except that the gestalt is skewed just a few degrees to the other side of normal by his most arresting feature, his eyes. These are odd eyes, to say the least. Look on the back cover of the latest Talking Heads album, *Little Creatures,* and you'll see: they are extremely wide-set eyes, very round and very dark (the pupils almost indistinguishable from the irises), with the unsettling quality of looking directly at you and over your shoulder at once. They are the eyes of a mesmerist or a dictator. Byrne is aware of this fact, and uses it, to great effect, both in performance and in walking-around life. He never seems to smile in performance, but even if, in an informal situation, he breaks into an engagingly crooked-toothed grin, a moment later those eyes are staring again—at you or over your shoulder or into space, or all three at once, and it's as if a curtain has come down.

We have now viewed the audition tapes of both actors several times, and matters are at an impasse. Byrne is silent, his gaze focused somewhere through the far wall. Suddenly somebody notices a videocassette, in the rack below the TV, marked TALKING HEADS CBGB'S 1975. The tension is momentarily broken. We ask Byrne if we can put it on. Sure, he says. The tape rolls. It's black-and-white. There's a freeze-frame, for a half minute or so, of an empty, tiny stage. Then suddenly the band is there, in its 1975 incarnation—just three of them—Byrne, Tina Weymouth on bass, and Chris Frantz on drums. They are wearing button-down shirts and grave expressions. They resemble a particularly straight, particularly nervous high school band trying out, not very hopefully, in a talent contest on a public-access cable-TV station. Byrne seems younger (his hair's longer), but not markedly different. Anyway, it's hard to tell because I can't see his eyes: they're either closed or cast down so far as to seem closed. He seems paralyzed with stage fright. "The name of this band is Talking Heads, and the name of this song is 'Psycho Killer,'" he mumbles quickly into the microphone, and the band starts to play. This is the first song Byrne wrote for Talking Heads, a character monologue, a beautifully disturbing paranoiac's lament, with strange interjections in French. I have heard it performed recently—especially in *Stop Making Sense,* where Byrne sings it as a hypnotic solo, strumming an acoustic guitar to the accompaniment of a rhythm cassette while he croons the crazy words, his unsettling eyes flashing. But I'm unprepared for the ten-year-old version: *Byrne never opens his eyes.* He stands stiffly

STYLING: ARELLE LUTZ

and chants in a near monotone:

I can't seem to face up to the facts
I'm tense and nervous and I can't relax...
Psycho killer, qu'est-ce que c'est?
Fa fa fa fa...

The tape ends; the screen is blank. In the TV glass I see the reflected image of the 1985 Byrne, sitting impassively behind the desk. He is wearing a pinstripe button-down shirt with the top button fastened, and a straw Charlie Chan summer fedora. We clear our throats. "Somehow I get the impression, David," Murphy says, "that you have a much better time performing nowadays than you did then."

We laugh. Byrne is silent a moment. "You never know," he says quietly. "It's all inside."

Huh?

I'm an or-di-na-ry guy.
—David Byrne, "Burning Down the House"

He was always afraid of becoming an ordinary person.
—Tina Weymouth, on David Byrne

TINA WEYMOUTH HAS, MORE THAN ONCE, referred to David Byrne as a "loose ego." This has a clinical sound to it, but it is not unhelpful. One thinks of Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim, unstuck in time; and of Walker Percy's young, wandering heroes, detached in spirit. I have at times wondered, seriously and not necessarily uncomplimentarily, if Byrne is an alien, an interplanetary visitor in our midst: so odd are his aspect, his affect. "*Simple and general human conditions [prevail] among the most seemingly sophisticated.*" Thus Saul Bellow, in *Herzog*. I digested this wisdom early, wore it for a frontlet between my eyes. It seemed a universal key, a comfort in the most intimidating situation—until I met Byrne. *Something was up.*

Something was new. At our first meeting, at a Japanese restaurant in Manhattan in early spring, I was pleased that he arrived precisely on time, then I spent the rest of the session trying to get my bearings. He had said on the phone that he just wanted to have a drink; he was going to eat later. But then he kept *ordering* things, odd, unrelated things: different appetizers, noodles, beer, sake, Scotch. It was as if he were trying on clothes—or personalities. He took out a pack of Winstons, lit one, and held it and smoked it as if a human being were smoking a cigarette for the first time. There was something strange, too, about his carriage: he seemed simultaneously loose and stiff. When he leaned over to get a closer look at something I was writing, he bent from the waist, his neck rigid, like a curious bird. The conversation, also, felt jerky, fractionated. There were long silences. He laughed from time to time, crooked-toothed, but it was as if something were being wrenched from him. Yet I did manage to find out something interesting that night: he had been born in Scotland. It seemed along the way toward explaining something. In a way, he really *was* alien Old World: courteous, watchful, removed. He told me a story about his parents visiting him and listening to a tape of his new album. They sat before the speakers, rigid, in identical clothing and berets. He laughed. Odd story. Parents as furniture! We shared a cab afterward. I felt as though the evening had been fairly successful, but when I said goodnight, Byrne responded without looking at me, without even turning his head. Seated in the back of the cab, he appeared, suddenly, not so much seated as placed, as though someone had picked him up and put him there.

Our second meeting, at another Japanese restaurant, went a little better. For one thing, his girlfriend, Bonny Lutz, was present, so Byrne was looser; he joked a bit, smiled more. Yet still he seemed extraordinarily closed—complex to a Henry Jamesian degree. I had dutifully brought a list of questions, and he dutifully answered them, but it was hard work maintaining a flow, getting him to elaborate on anything. Then as tea came something happened. I had been asking him in a desultory way about other musicians and singers when all at once his eyes flashed. "One of the worst things about rock 'n' roll is this whole cult of personality," he said, and I was surprised—both by the passion and by the statement.

Was he merely dismissing rivals? One by one, out they went like light bulbs, swamis of the dread personality cult: Jagger, Joel, Prince, Sting, Michael, Huey....

Suddenly, however, something clicked. To watch Byrne perform is to see a distinct absence of charisma-mongering, to witness a new form of stage personality. He emits nearly unbearable emotional intensity without seeming to expend any actual emotion. He is a role, a mask; the actual character of the human behind it is a moot question. The Western tradition of theatrical performance has centered on the projection (or simulation) of warmth, and has sought as its object love, or desire, or both. *Byrne simply doesn't do this.* He gains strength and confidence from a responsive audience, but doesn't beg for its affection. He doesn't flirt. He doesn't chat. This has to do with his shyness, and it has much to do with the subject matter of his songs. What Byrne presents instead is without category. Byrne's lyrics, in combination with the band's music, are not poetry, yet they are to American popular music of the past what serious poetry is to light verse.

And you can dance to it.
How did he get here?
How did we all get here?

A YEAR OR SO AGO I WENT SHOPPING AT Tower Records in downtown Manhattan. It was a weekday night, but the neighborhood was jumping. You had the feeling that the weekend never really stopped around here, and that at least part of what was going on was a kind of celebration of Manhattan's Latest New Thing. But what was the thing? It wasn't clear, yet it seemed to have to do with this part of town, where there was a kind of vibrating border line between the squalid and the trendy, between the old, gray piece-goods storefronts on lower Broadway and the new restaurants with platformed dining areas, high-tech appointments, and pink neon lighting; it seemed to have to do with hair and clothes, which around here were severe and spiky and futuristic and which appeared to refer in an ironic way to the hair and clothes of the Fifties, the last time America was placid and self-satisfied. The New Thing seemed to have a lot to do with Tower Records itself, the perfect pleasure dome of the Eighties. Tower Records seemed to promise that you could go into a sort of shopping trance and emerge with enough music so that you would never quite have to pay attention again. None of this New Thing–ness was precisely new to me, but seeing so great a concentration of it was. I paid for my records and went to the bag-check counter, where I had left my attaché case—ironic object in this ironic part of town! The young woman behind the counter had spiky hair and a black shirt torn jaggedly at the neck and sleeves, but she was quite attractive nevertheless, her skin pale and lovely. I smiled at her as I handed her my check number. But her face, as she handed me my attaché, was hard and blank. There was no censure or hostility in her eyes—there was nothing in her eyes at all.

You might get the feeling, if you spend any time these days where devotees of the newest music, the newest looks, gather, that the Stare—the cut-you-dead stone-face designed to preempt, at all costs, the possibility of a pleasant chat—is a brand-new thing. I think not. I would guess that it has existed for exactly sixty-seven years, since the end of the War to End All Wars demonstrated to a horrified nineteenth century the advent of the murderous, mechanized twentieth. It was the huge and absurd slaughter of that war that brought the concept of the absurd into art. The avant-garde looked at what the war had done to Apollinaire and Gaudier-Brzeska and millions of others and gazed back blankly at the blank universe. See it in the eyes of Tristan Tzara, Marcel Duchamp, Samuel Beckett, William Burroughs; and, in a variation, in the eyes of Miles Davis, Charles Mingus, Thelonius Monk, Charlie Parker. In music, blackness and drugs complicated the picture. Andy Warhol complicated it even further when he introduced painting, music, and movies to fashion and squalor.

The Stare entered the Sixties gaining ground fast. Rock music and drugs allowed

middle-class white kids to Stare, too. Lou Reed, of the magisterially vacant gaze, made his song "Heroin" into a kind of anthem. Dylan learned to Stare, and taught Lennon. The West Coast was cheerier, but Altamont and Charles Manson ended that. Then the Sixties were over, and the Beatles broke up, and the times and the drugs went bad, and the ante was upped. With the density of events—Watergate and the oil embargo and Nixon's resignation and the end of the war and our loss of nuclear superiority—increasing geometrically, maniacally, any false sense of control over the karma of the world that might have existed in the previous decade now scattered to the winds. As did any sense of communality. Suddenly there was no longer any avant-garde—*everyone* was Staring. We were isolate individuals in an absurdly dangerous world. Technology, but not much else, was flourishing. Irony, always the avant-garde's most useful tool, had depended on an established order. Now there was no established order. Art reacted accordingly. Irony was institutionalized (and debased). Conceptualism, discord, and remove came to the fore. So did several appropriate characters, one in particular.

> ...in speaking of the pressure of reality, I am thinking of life in a state of violence... spiritually violent, it may be said, for everyone alive.
>
> A possible poet must be a poet capable of resisting or evading the pressure of the reality of this last degree, with the knowledge that the degree of today may become a deadlier degree tomorrow.
>
> —Wallace Stevens, *The Necessary Angel*

BYRNE ENTERED THE MID-SEVENTIES THE way he has always done things—in his own particular manner. He had grown up in a blue-collar neighborhood in Baltimore, had formed a rock band in junior high. Nothing unusual there. With the collapse of the band, though, he began to perform as a single, and his individualism—his eccentricity—flourished. He performed rock numbers on unaccompanied ukulele in folk clubs. When Byrne went to Rhode Island School of Design for his one and only year, he found that his fellow students were rich and long-haired and fashionably alienated; Byrne was poor and short-haired and *really* alienated—from his fellow students as well as everything else. He didn't want to be a painter; he was too shrewd for that. Painting was bourgeois and moribund. Art was teetering. How to make it new? In the manner of the times, he did performance pieces. In one of these he shaved his beard while a friend flashed Russian messages on cue cards. Why not? He also formed a band, called the Artistics (though their playing style got them retitled the Autistics). His odd looks and distinctive behavior made him a RISD campus legend. Rhode Island wouldn't hold him long.

IN 1975 YOU COULD WEAR A MOHAWK AND put a safety pin in your cheek, thus putting a safe distance between yourself and Paul McCartney. And safety pins might shock the Heartland, but lower Manhattan was more diverse, more demanding: The reaction south of Fourteenth and east of Park to the typically overproduced, ornate, and vapid mainstream pop of the mid-Seventies was a rash of raw bands that played three-chord songs and shouted strange lyrics. Here the avant-garde was staging a last-ditch holding action. There were the New York Dolls, the Ramones, the Planets, the Shirts, the Marbles, the Mumps, the Dictators. Each tried to outdo the others in strangeness and disturbingness. Damn the bourgeoisie! Full speed ahead! *L'art pour l'art!* Black was the color, none the number. Gauntness was all. Every *poète* was *maudit*.

Moments before the 1975 performance: "They resemble a particularly straight, particularly nervous high-school band trying out, not very hopefully, in a talent contest on a public-access cable-TV station."

In 1975, a Stare to top all Stares came to the stage of CBGB's, a hole-in-the-wall on the Bowery, and *the* club. Byrne was long-legged and painfully thin, with a shock of black hair; dark, piercing, wide-set eyes; and crooked teeth. (One front tooth was broken, the result of a childhood mishap.) Even among the strange humans who played on the club's tiny stage, Byrne's band, Talking Heads (himself on guitar; Chris Frantz, a friend from RISD and the son of an Army general, on drums; and Martina Weymouth, the daughter of a retired admiral, on bass), stood out. For one thing, you could understand their lyrics, strange as they were. For another, they dressed as no one else in the whole mean-streets, hollow-eyed scene dared to dress: like "normal" kids. Button-downs in the Bowery! Alligators at the Mudd Club! It was a brilliant move, whether ingenuous or dis-. (It seems to have been a little of both.) Byrne himself has said, "We were into dressing like kids, regular kids... kind of like if you looked at the census, what we figured the average person looks like.... It would kind of be a sneaky way of putting our music over. No one would suspect that someone who looked so normal could play music so strange. But they'd like it anyway, because we looked just like them. That was our big plan." Looking normal, being disciplined and intelligible, was an extraordinary way of having their cake and eating it too, of out-psyching rival bands, of out-psyching everyone. It was a way of making irony vibrate back and forth as if in a hall of mirrors until the observer didn't know *what* the hell was coming off. It was a way of showing all the hip art-schoolers that something totally new was here. It was a way of turning rock 'n' roll into actual art.

AS MANY OF THE EAST VILLAGE bands were getting record contracts, and as what came to be called New Wave music became subsumed into popular culture, less and less able to shock and more and more concerned with style at the expense of substance—as the Stare grew multifloriate, decadent branches (*vide* the B-52's, beehive-hair-bizarro-Fifties-style Stare; Blondie, fashion-model Stare; Devo, we-are-not-men Stare)—David Byrne continued to do what he had always done: think. Artistically it was impossible for him to do a thoughtless thing. Talking Heads now had a record contract, too; but although the albums came out yearly, beginning in 1977, at first the music was an acquired taste. The songs were prickly, dryly humorous, uningratiating. People who liked their music this way loved the band, but the people who were buying "Heart of Glass" by the gross didn't know from Talking Heads. Byrne, Weymouth, and Frantz (and now Jerry Harrison) wanted to be popular, but on their own terms. One interesting problem was, What should the band, and especially Byrne, *do* when they perform? At first they just stood there. It was... kind of interesting. But it wore thin. "I thought rock 'n' roll dancing was disgusting," Byrne said. "I wanted to be direct and real." Byrne decided that what he had to avoid at all costs was the foundations of rock dancing: sex sex sex and me me me. Stage dancing in rock had always been roughly the same strutting, leaping, wiggling, and posturing. In the beginning there was Elvis, then Mick—and nobody else (even the so-called New Wave) had gone very far afield. Rock dancing had al-

ways been about the white idea of blackness. But just as Byrne has never attempted to sound like a black man, he never tried to move like one. He has a long-limbed, loose, skinny body—a mime's body—and a blank but eloquent face—a mime's face. This kind of physical equipment is a God-given gift to a performer, and Byrne took the gift and used it. He reinvented the art.

By 1978, Byrne had met the British musical genius Brian Eno, and now Talking Heads had a new producer. The raw, stripped-down East Village sound began to go. By their third album together, *Remain in Light*, the band's music had been completely transformed. There were horns, electronic sounds, African polyrhythms: a complex texture that moved the band in one huge leap from Manhattan quirkiness to a kind of World Sound. Songs like "Houses in Motion," "The Great Curve," and "Seen and Not Seen" were at once highly listenable, technically lush, lyrically powerful, and urgently advanced. But one song stood even higher than the rest. It was beautiful, funny, and hauntingly infectious. It was more than compelling: it had the anthemlike quality, the humor, and the memorability of a major hit. The group chose to make it into their first video. It was the song I had heard on the radio, "Once in a Lifetime."

The first time most Americans saw Byrne was in this video, which came out in 1981. It was something of a shock as videos go: no thighs, no spike heels, no lingerie, no car chases—it was mostly just this ecstatic, sweaty, disquietingly skinny guy with slicked-back black hair and black horn-rimmed glasses and a dark business suit, flopping, jerking, twitching, and swimming against a background of fake flowing water. What was the video about? Well, water flowing, for one thing—but mainly it was about David Byrne. He looked odd... spastic, somehow. He kept smacking himself on the forehead with his palm, snapping his head back. Okay, what was wrong with the guy? Some people got the mistaken impression from this video that Byrne was, or was trying to pass as, some sort of Super Nerd, but these were only people who believed in this kind of category to begin with, people who confused the singer with the song. *These were people who were behind the times.* In fact, it took incredible grace and control and originality to move the way Byrne did. It also took incredible grace and control and originality to create a video this dreamlike, this powerful. What Byrne was up to in 1981 was establishing a standard that we are only now beginning to appreciate.

TWO IMPROMPTU PERFORMANCES:

• Byrne is halfway out the door of the Dallas production office when he realizes he's left something on the desk. He falls back into the room, tumbles back to the desk, arms waving, as if he's been blown back by a high wind. He manages to make the action look utterly natural.

• I'm walking him to the elevator in a hotel lobby. He is in a hurry to get upstairs, but he's in the middle of telling me something. So when the elevator door opens he gets halfway in, continuing his sentence. The door starts to close, hits him and opens again, starts to close, hits him and opens again—over and over until he has finished his entire thought. He staggers limply each time the door bounces off him.

BYRNE IN THE PRODUCTION OFFICE, making calls: He's on the phone to New York, trying to track down actors and technical people. He doesn't always get through to the people he wants, and several times he has to leave a message. He has to spell his name. But he does this with real authority, coolness, a very slight undercurrent of annoyance. In the office, he gives orders easily, neither apologetic nor domineering. He has surrounded himself with talented people, strong personalities, and when someone argues he listens, unthreatened. I think of what Hilly Kristal, the owner of CBGB's, told me about the Byrne of the early days: "He was a leader. He had self-discipline. He knew what he was doing."

That afternoon Byrne and I are returning from a fashion show at the Dallas Apparel Mart. There's a fashion show in his movie, and he wanted to take some pictures of the real show to get some ideas about how his ought to look. We're driving through back streets, silent. Cars are usually a good place to talk, yet Byrne and I say nothing. In a way I am resigned to this. I still feel as if I barely know him. He has gotten friendlier—in a reactive way. He has never initiated a conversation with me. So I observe him as much as I can, hoping to catch some idiosyncrasy unawares.

He's a good driver, easy and natural. He has at least this much of the Standard American Male in him. One thing that fascinates me: What would David Byrne listen to on the car radio? Jazz for a while, but then he gets restless. He tunes through country, Tex-Mex, a talk-show discussion about guns (he stays here for a few moments), Top Forty. He tunes into Huey Lewis's latest, which I rather like, and tunes right out again. Finally he hits on some New Wave. "Searchin', searchin', searchin'," the singer chants, again and again and again, in a monotone, over some dissonant guitar. Byrne clicks the radio off. We ride in silence.

And yet. The next morning we go to a Mexican flea market. It's close to midday, dusty, about 105 degrees out. Byrne is in his Dallas mufti: part disguise, part costume, part protection against the heat. It consists of the Charlie Chan hat, little round sunglasses, a blue button-down shirt, baggy gray pleated pants, and white bucks. Over his shoulder is slung a Nikon. He resembles a Thirties tourist in some hot colonial outpost. As a disguise, the outfit is minimally effective. He may not look exactly like *him*, but he certainly doesn't resemble anyone else, either. He keeps taking pictures of everything until, finally, the manager of one of the booths tells him, obscurely and a little menacingly, that this might not be such a good idea. He stops taking pictures. For a while I keep him in the corner of my eye, but I don't follow him around—I have finally hit on the most effective way of observing Byrne. The problem is, you occasionally lose him. A while later, I have done just that. I'm looking over some watches and cameras when suddenly he comes out of nowhere, right up to my shoulder, startling me. "I found a T-shirt that says, MERCENARIES DON'T DIE—THEY JUST GO TO HELL AND REGROUP," he says, delightedly. I, too, am delighted. He has initiated a conversation. He buys the shirt.

BYRNE SEEMS TO BE HAPPY THESE DAYS. He's having fun making his movie. He has grown comfortable with his music, even though this means, since his art was once the art of discomfort, that his music has changed considerably. He seems to be able to change at an amazing rate. His latest songs are about babies and levitation. This seems peculiarly, Byrne-ishly, appropriate: on one hand, he has grown along with his generation and has come to consider what we're all thinking about; on the other, his viewpoint has always been removed—a viewpoint from a space platform. He will never not surprise us. Happiness with Byrne is a relative matter. The world is getting no less dangerous, and he's something more than of the world—he's a kind of figurehead on its prow. His strangeness and that of the age are, in many ways, one. His art—an art of the nervous, of the offhand—is an ideal art for the age, of the age. But—*is it really art?*

We long ago passed the point where rock 'n' roll was merely an instrument of rebellion. The kids who used it for that are the grown-ups now. The shock of the new is commonplace. The established order and the ironic rebellion are one. The avant-garde is dead. Time is speeding up, accelerating at a blood-rushing, dizzying rate. This throws an enormous responsibility on today's artist. Whatever interesting thing he throws at the public will be digested and assimilated almost instantly.

When I first heard Talking Heads' new album, *Little Creatures*, I was pleased but unimpressed. The music was tuneful, different for the band—but how did it advance the game? It turned out I was the unadvanced one. It was only when I saw the video of "Road to Nowhere" that I finally began to understand where Byrne was heading. The video uses a stunning variety of techniques—hand-colored pho-

to animation, collage, multi-split screens, object symbolism—to create the audiovisual equivalent of a poem. It somehow manages to convey holiness and humor at the same time. Watch an hour of MTV sometime and see if anything does *that*. Byrne is at once dismissing the phonograph album, as a single-sense experience, and the common video, as a two-dimensional bore. Video technology, he's saying, is rich with possibilities beyond imagining. Why not exploit them to the maximum? What he's done this time is what he's always done: presented us with some singularly advanced information, information that we are eager to receive, but whose full import we may not yet realize.

Which is just about how great art has always worked.

Is this great art? Great I don't know about. It's *our* art.

AT A COMBINATION BAR-LAUNDRY IN Dallas called Suds, Byrne is being taped receiving an MTV Video Vanguard Award. At the same time, he is actually doing his laundry. The scenario calls for him to walk down an aisle, open up a washing machine, pull out the award (with a sock draped around it), look surprised, then make a brief acceptance speech. He's in High Geek mode for the spot: his eyes are wide and glassy; his head bobs chicken-style on his scrawny neck as he walks up the aisle holding the heavy, metal spaceman statuette. He's wearing a garish madras jacket, and garish madras pants of a completely different pattern. I'm looking on with two Texas guys, two good ol' boys with beards, oil-rig sunburns, and T-shirts. They're watching open-mouthed. "*What's* his name?" one of them asks me. I tell him. "That's it," he says. "That is one outrageous dude, man." Later, in the bar, they come up to Byrne, shy as schoolgirls, and ask for his autograph.

It's time for me to leave, and Byrne drives me to the airport. We are as silent as ever in the car, and yet—Byrne has chosen to drive me to the airport. We move across the huge, overdeveloped Texas landscape—mirror skyscrapers and flatlands as far as the eye can see. This is the landscape of the future. I think of a rock video, orange mercury-vapor clouds racing across a night sky, reflected in glass buildings. At the wheel Byrne is still wearing the madras jacket from the MTV spot; he has on his little round sunglasses. For some reason I suddenly think of car trips I made as a boy, and I remember two-lane blacktop and Burma-Shave signs. *Burma-Shave signs.* I ask Byrne if he remembers them. He does indeed, he says; he saw them in Virginia when he was small. And I think of all that has happened between that time and this, the accelerating press of events, and suddenly time seems to me something like a high wind, a gale sweeping us all along.

The Fighter with the Glass Heart

Mark Breland has all that it takes to make it in boxing. The only problem is, he doesn't like to hit people

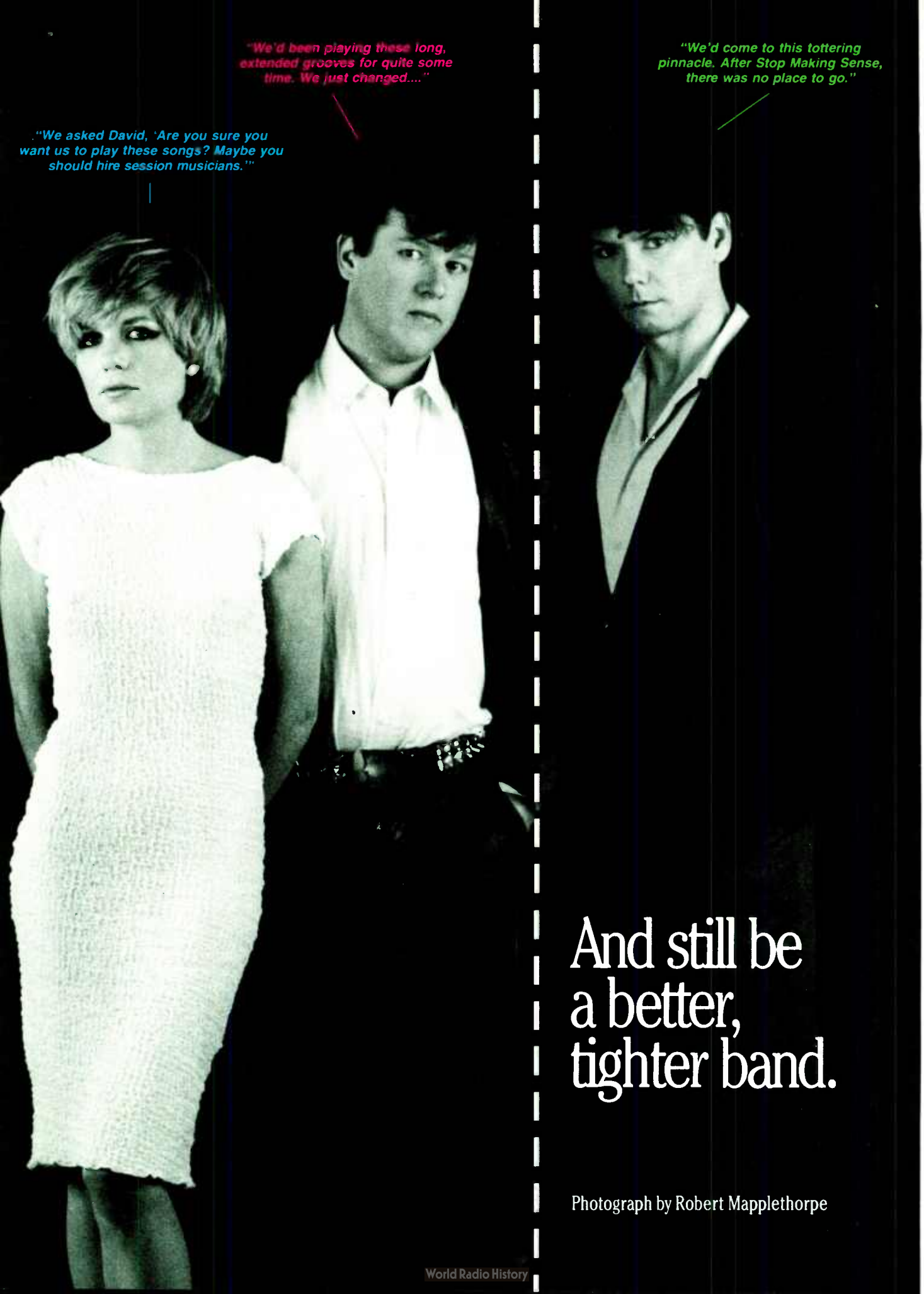
After winning the Olympic gold medal,

Mark Breland isn't going to the gym today. "I just feel... *aah*, you know...." He drawls this semiexplanation at heavyweight Henry Tillman, a big, earnest fellow, and at Tillman's trainer, a ragged little guy called Smitty, from a supine position on the floor of his smashing new bachelor pad high above Manhattan's Upper West Side. Breland, the longest, handsomest, most hyped welterweight (147 pounds) in the history of boxing, has just returned from a two-week Caribbean cruise, a "reward" for his second consecutive professional victory. Because of his amazing amateur record—110 wins and one loss, with seventy-three knockouts—he's the star attraction of a group of gold-medal winners from the 1984 U.S. Olympic Boxing Team. They all turned pro together a year ago in a masterfully coordinated Network Boxing Event, and if everything goes according to the blueprint of Breland's manager, Shelly Finkel, they'll all win titles at the same time.

Finkel, forty-one, who looks like two designer pillows cinched together by a Gucci belt, has proclaimed the collapse of the line that used to divide sports from entertainment: "Sports *is* show biz—has been since Ali, or maybe Gorgeous George." In so saying, Finkel, a flamboyantly bald man with a background in rock 'n' roll, betrays not the slightest tic of nostalgia for what boxing once was. For Finkel, aggressive rep of a new breed of boxing sales managers, there is no sentimentality about what A. J. Liebling called the Sweet Science, no nonsense about a frankly surly ideal of masculine pride that once raised the stoic boxer, along with the bullfighter and big-game hunter, above mere ballplayers and swimmers.

Finkel made his first pile by turning scruffy rock

by John Lombardi



And still be a better, tighter band.

Photograph by Robert Mapplethorpe

First Stop: Head South

One hundred and two degrees. That's the digital temperature reading outside the Capital Motor Bank, and the sign is in perfect working order. This is Dallas, Texas, where citizens can boast of hellish summers to match the worst you can find anywhere in the great forty-eight. On this blazingly clear August day, to be seen outdoors is to risk being brought in for questioning. Instead, the only apparent outside activity is a torpid stream of glinting cars, windows rolled up, plowing the soft highways. A visiting Venusian would be impressed, and probably comfortable.

But appearances can be deceiving. Consider an unassuming-looking house on a shady (but still broiling) Dallas side street lined with unassuming-looking houses. You have to be within a foot of the front door to read the recently applied letters: TRUE STORIES PRODUCTIONS. Inside—air-conditioned, of course—is the hustle and bustle of a film company in the throes of pre-production. Workers dodge purposefully in and out of rooms. A mother and young daughter wait by the reception desk; the latter, in a party dress, holds an 8x10 publicity glossy of herself on her lap.

Into this show-biz microcosm strides David Byrne, looking dapper in a tan snap-brim fedora, white long-sleeve button-down shirt, white bucks and tight-legged, red-and-blue plaid pants that could have been a window canopy in a former life. He's just taped an MTV award acceptance clip. Now it's back to the obsession at hand: *True Stories*, a feature film Byrne has co-written and will be directing in Dallas.

The thirty-three-year-old Byrne is a workaholic who respects no weekends and barely takes time off to sleep. In the last year alone, besides the *True Stories* project, he has presented a performance piece; contributed lyrics to songs by composer Philip Glass; taken lots of photos ("but haven't got them organized yet"); acted in a PBS television show; and released an album of his music for *The Knee Plays*, theatrical episodes he wrote with Robert Wilson for Wilson's epic play *The CIVIL WarS*. Not to mention *Stop Making Sense*, the Talking Heads concert film directed by Jonathan Demme that debuted last year, won a National Society of Film Critics award for best documentary, and is still holding forth in repertory houses; or *Little Creatures*.

Whether to mention Talking Heads in the same breath as David Byrne is becoming a pressing question. He gained prominence as the riveting frontman of the band, but his reputation is booming not just as a solo musician (Byrne's first non-Heads records came out four years ago) but as a multi-media prodigy. His face is on the cover of *Current Biography*. He was the subject of a full-blown *New York Times Magazine* article—part of a series called "The Creative Mind"—that quoted Glass praising Byrne's "concert music, and not just the Talking Heads." Rock 'n' roll music—amusing, you know, but, well, hardly serious.

Second Stop: Head East

Ninety degrees. It *is* better in the Bahamas—barely. At least on Grand Bahama Island there's an ocean breeze to stir the heat around. Another attraction is Tina Weymouth and Chris Frantz. They maintain an island retreat for summer escape between band tours and recording sessions.

Nassau's Compass Point Studios is a convenient base of operations for the Tom Tom Club, Frantz and Weymouth's part-time spin-off group. In 1982 Tom Tom Club's first album, quite unlike Talking Heads', sold half a million copies and dented street culture with the single "Genius Of Love." A year later a follow-up album did not repeat the success, but Frantz and Weymouth aren't hung up on sales figures. Currently they're planning a third album, going for long sails in the Atlantic, and raising their nearly three-year-old son Robin—not necessarily in that order of preference.

Third Stop: Head Northwest

Sixty-five degrees?? This ain't no disco! Milwaukee, Wisconsin is a mid-latitude paradise in comparison to the above hang-outs. Native son Jerry Harrison came back on family business. While in Milwaukee he's producing local

ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE

BYRNE ON BYRNE

Quite a few of *Little Creatures'* lyrics verged on being narrative, or came really close to having a thread from beginning to end. It seemed appropriate for these straightforward songs—although the other way could work just as well, I guess. Once you prove you can do something, you don't have to keep proving it. On *Speaking In Tongues* and some other stuff, I felt I proved people could like songs with words that made no literal sense whatsoever. Some of them did, but on the whole they were purely evocative phrases. The link between them was maybe they evoked a similar mood or sensibility. But in a literal sense there was no link. That was real difficult to do, a real challenge. It meant the words had to hold together on a purely aural level. You had to disconnect your tendency to try to make sense of them. They had to be able to bypass that.

Then it became hard to do narrative lyrics. I was forced into doing fragmented or non-literal lyrics; I found it more and more difficult to do narrative ones that didn't seem one-dimensional to me. I think if you tell a story it has to be both a story and a metaphor, and it has to sound nice rolling off your tongue. It was harder to get all the multi-levels of ambiguities into a narrative, so I did that less and started being more ambiguous. Then I felt confident enough to attempt more linear lyrics that still worked on other levels.

Sometimes the "I" in my songs is me and sometimes it's not. Or sometimes it could be me and not me in the same song. I'm always trying to revise my persona, break out of it. Once the songs are written and structured, they have a life of their own. Since I'm so close to them, I happen to have a really good idea

heroes the Violent Femmes, and keeping his own chops in shape by working on a solo album—his second, following *The Red And The Black* in 1981.

Prepare for Landing

Conclusion? Definitely a case of absence making the heart grow fonder. The four band members are rather disparate personalities who give the impression of appreciating each other better with a little distance. Frantz, the most easygoing Head, is apparently content to lay down a solid beat and leave theorizing to others. For this interview he was wearing shorts and a T-shirt warning "Don't mess with my toot-toot." Eternally boyish Harrison is even more earnest than Byrne. The outspoken Weymouth has no patience for pretense; she makes a lousy rock star.

Talking Heads' (and *Stop Making Sense*'s) popularity made Byrne a highly distinctive "rock star" himself. In the past he'd suffer through interviews, averting his eyes, chainsmoking nervously like an understudy for Don Knotts. Sitting in a hotel room in Dallas, however, he is relaxed, off the weed and quite forthcoming; perhaps, more than his longtime musical cronies, the teamwork necessary for film production has drawn him out. As he talks, he drinks a beer followed by a glass of iced tea—"up and down," Byrne says. After the tea is gone, he suddenly pops the lemon wedge into his mouth and eats it.

All the Heads' various solo projects no doubt provide a needed escape hatch for the abundant creative energies within the group. Byrne's vision dominates, but after eleven years together Talking Heads show no signs of breaking up. *Little Creatures* gave an excellent bill of health: Pared down to the essential quartet, they reverted to pop song structures with synchromesh arrangements bred of long experience playing together. Even without a hit single, *Little Creatures* went gold after a couple of months. In an industry where commercial and artistic success rarely have anything to do with each other, Talking Heads remain a happy miracle.

"I've got a lot to resolve with this band. I haven't outgrown it yet. If I were to leave now, I would take what ever problems I experienced into my next arena unresolved and have exactly the same problems."

of how to interpret them. It's not necessarily the best one; it just happens to be *my* interpretation. I get very attached to it, and jealous of it, but someone else may do a better one. Naturally it's perceived that the words are coming from me, but they could just as well be coming from someone else. I would hope so, anyway. I would hope they could apply to other people's lives and not just mine. I have to relate it to my own life, find something to base it on. Some are more made up than others.

It's important to me how this stuff is perceived. Honestly, at the beginning I had no idea I appeared like a psychotic lunatic. I *still* don't think I look like Tony Perkins [*smiles*]. I just wasn't at all aware that was the impression I was giving. I was aware that my performance was not like other people's, but I didn't think that automatically made me into a psychotic [*laughs*], or nut case. Years later, listening back to the first record, I could see how truly strange it must have sounded at the time.

I felt the "egghead" reputation was an unfortunate thing thrust upon us. It implied that we weren't sincere about the feelings we were putting across in our songs, or generating in our performances. It was like saying, "These people are smart. And because they're smart they can't possibly be sincere about what they're doing." Which is just total bullshit. Smart people can be just as sincere as stupid people! [*laughs*] Smart people can be just as stupid as stupid people. We've gotten away from that a little bit now. Also, at the time we seemed *really* different from a lot of pop and rock acts. We were like an anti-rock band. Not because I don't believe in rock mythology, but because there are other people who do it better—people like Bruce Springsteen and Prince and Mick Jagger. All of us in the band figured, well, let's come up with something else.

I'm hoping to discover, as much as a lot of the people I write about, some way of living that resolves alienation. Sometimes I write about it, and sometimes I write about the possibility of relief from that, of communion or release. I think I touch both things in the spectrum. I'm having a better time in general, all the time [*smiles*]. Suffering can serve as a ground or inspiration. But when you're creating something you have to feel pretty strong and confident. Otherwise you wouldn't be so bold as to try to make something. If you feel miserable, you just feel like going to sleep, or crawling into a hole, or watching television. At least that's been my experience. At its root might be some disturbance. But when you're creating, you're feeling pretty good. This is what I believe! [*tosses lemon wedge into mouth*]

I think more and more I'm allowing myself to appreciate things I would have ignored otherwise, or overlooked. For instance, coming into this hotel room—whoops! lemon in my teeth—I would have said, "What a sterile, horrible environment." But then you can look at it the other way: Look at how this curtain is fastened so that it doesn't *really* drape like a curtain, and how it's made to match all the other furnishings in the room. You can think, that's kind of nutty and wacky; somebody had a nutty idea, and put it to work. In a funny way, if you look at just a detail like that, then it's really beautiful and eccentric. But if you look at it another way, it's kind of depressing. I'm trying to find the way that's more fun these days. I'm trying to find the beauty and fun in all this stuff.

Big Talk about Little Creatures

DAVID BYRNE: I started writing songs again. I'd never disliked "songs" so I just thought I'd give rein to my instincts. I felt the more traditional song format is nothing to be ashamed of; I like listening to them, so I thought I'd try writing some. I hadn't done anything in a long time and I found it fairly easy. That kind of song you write with a piano or guitar, maybe a rhythm box to keep you in tempo. Sometimes I just record on the little tape player I use onstage. I listen back to it on that, and then refine the structure more, or whatever. If it worked in that basic form then it became evident that it didn't really need a whole lot of embellishing. Too much added to it could ruin those kind of songs.

The band all felt exactly the same way when they heard the stuff: The way to work out was to rehearse as a band. So we all holed up in a rehearsal studio for about a month and just learned the songs, until by the end we could play them all through one after the other—like bar bands, or like we used to do. Although the songs are different than the ones we used to do, 'cause they have a different feeling and they're about different things, their simplicity is similar.

JERRY HARRISON: I think the influence of the *True Stories* project made David get very interested in indigenous American music. I think that influence made him think in terms of an individual singing a song more than this process approach we had used in the past. So it wasn't a big surprise. But I was very happy with it. It was nice to do things in the old way, but take the lessons we had learned from making *Speaking In Tongues* and *Remain In Light*. It's a very American album. The influences, rather than being third-world, are more old rock or Tex-Mex or Cajun.

"We were tired of everybody copping our licks. We just changed for the sake of change, doing songs that had more personal feeling."

CHRIS FRANTZ: It wasn't really a big shocker, but it was a pleasant surprise. There had been evidence from all of us that we were kind of tired of the way everybody was copping our licks! [*laughs*] It seemed apparent we were having a big influence—at least it appeared that way to us. So we decided to go in another direction. We'd been playing these long, extended grooves for quite some time, and it was fun to have a three- or four-minute song that was arranged the old-fashioned way. They aren't exactly old-fashioned songs, but they do have those elements. It was fun, and kind of relaxing to play that kind of music again. It had been a while. It was the first time I had ever played ride cymbal with Talking Heads. It doesn't sound very important, but little things like

"Before* Tom Tom Club, *if David suddenly for a whim – and he was always threatening it in his tantrums – said, 'I'm gonna break up the band,' we couldn't continue musically."

that make a difference. It was the first time I'd ever played a march beat all the way through a song. It was a real pleasure for me. Since most of the songs were three or four minutes, I didn't have to listen to a rhythm machine all the time; over six or seven minutes it's hard not to speed up or slow down. This time I could just play. Also, the songs were well-rehearsed before we went into the studio to record them, so it wasn't like you were standing at attention wondering what the next move would be. The idea was just to play well and sound convincing, rather than come up with fabulous new ideas, one after the other, at 200 bucks an hour [studio time].

TINA WEYMOUTH: We got together at the end of last year and talked about being a band again; after a tour, we pretty much disband. David played us some demos of him playing guitar and singing with a rhythm machine. Most of what he played for us were songs for *True Stories*, 'cause that was what he was into. We asked him, "Are you sure you want us to play them? You've already written the songs. Maybe you'd just like to hire some session people." 'Cause a lot of the songs were in the style of somebody else, not anything like Talking Heads—a song in Tex-Mex style, things like that. He said, "No, I'd like the band to play, 'cause I think you would do something more interesting." We said sure; I said yeah, I will if I can sing some more! [*laughs*] He said, "Great, I'm really interested in hearing harmonies."

We started rehearsing in January, and took a short break when Chris and I went down to the Rock in Rio festival in Brazil to play on half the B-52's set. When we came back we finished learning the songs, and worked together on the arrangements and harmonies. It was very pleasant. We weren't racking our brains to come up with something new rhythm-wise. We were just trying to make these songs have a good feeling in an authentic manner, so it wouldn't be a parody or jive.

At this point David had songs that didn't have to do with *True Stories*, and those became *Little Creatures*. After we learned them all, we recorded them. Then, as usual after the four of us record basic tracks, we asked other people to do things they can do really well—like Eric Weissberg can play pedal-steel and we can't!

BYRNE: Some of the songs were bits and pieces of things I had done over the past few years that didn't seem appropriate for the other things we were doing. I'd have a little piece of melody like [*hums "Road To Nowhere"*]. I didn't know what to do with it, so I'd hum it into a cassette recorder on a piece of tape and file it away as something I like. Some of those

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got used. On the whole it was a burst of activity. But even though they're written in a burst, they're things that have been brewing over a period of time.

WEYMOUTH: I felt it was going back to the way we used to write songs, when David would say, "I've written a song in the style of Al Green," and then it would turn out to be "Happy Day" [on '77, Talking Heads' first album]: [*sings*] "Such a happy—*day*-ay-ay!" [*laughs*] There were some nice chord rubs. There were dissonances that, when we were learning to play, we avoided. So it was fun to go back to very simple rhythms, where the challenge was not so much to take the music to the next step, but to do it in an authentic style with real love for that style, and not mess it up. The magic is making it sound easy.

HARRISON: I love the feeling of rhythm, but I really like the sense of melody on the new album. Even though some people compare this to the first album—and it is similar to that in its concise song structures—it's very different in that this one is dominated by singing, melodies. It's really a new venture for us.

BYRNE: The new songs came easier. They're grounded in the culture I grew up with. Whereas the other things came about through a process of discovery, discovering other ways of making music. That way of making music, that has that ground or foundation, is pretty limitless. But I guess I just didn't feel like doing it again right away.

FRANTZ: We just changed for the sake of change, really. We wanted to do some songs that had a personal feeling to the band. The genre really didn't matter. We don't really think about being commercial. Once in a while we'll say, "Hey, this sounds like it can be a hit!" But when we think in those terms it almost never is. With the particular chemistry of our band, it seems that when things are commercial it happens in spite of us!

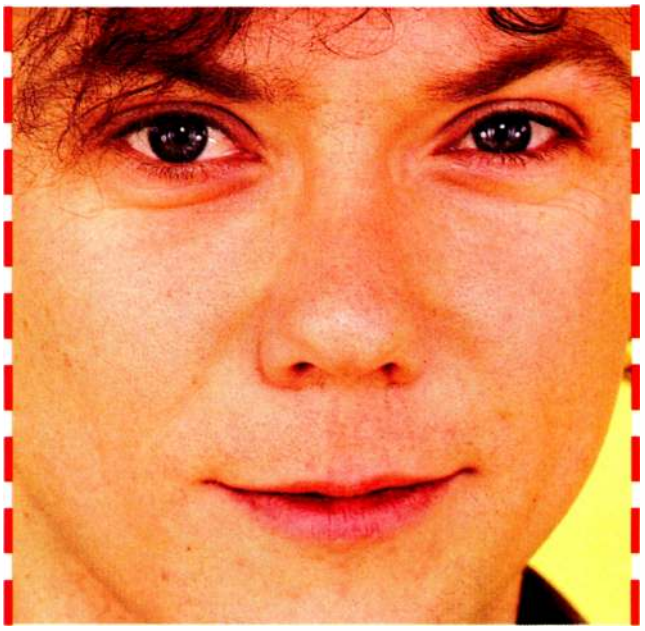
WEYMOUTH: We joked a lot about *Little Creatures*. We said, "This is our white album, ha ha ha." There was no black sound on it whatsoever. Funnily enough, when David started playing "Road To Nowhere," I said, "David, I'm just going to have to do the same bass rhythm as on 'Burning Down The House.'" When that song started, I was thinking of a Black Uhuru song; Robbie Shakespeare had played this *dum-diddit-dum*. Because Jerry and David never saw any reggae elements in it, they just played straight rock accents. The two merged without me and Chris ever mentioning it. When we saw Simple Minds in New Zealand last year, the bass

"Our 'egghead' reputation implied we weren't sincere. Which is just bullshit! Smart people can be just as sincere as stupid people. Smart people can be just as stupid as stupid people."

player said to me, "I really like that lick. I'm gonna steal it 'or a song." And he did! But you don't even hear the lick in "Don't You (Forget About Me)" until there's a slight breakdown because it's really buried. "Road To Nowhere" just happened to have the same rhythm.

BYRNE: Warner Bros. picked "Road To Nowhere" as a single. I have no feelings about the matter. I don't have an instinct for singles. I think it's just as likely that some oddball little ditty would be a single as something that sounds like a real rouser.

WEYMOUTH: I would have thought the first single would be "And She Was." And I thought "Stay Up Late" would have had a good chance because it's so very Talking Heads, kind of raw. I was surprised. But I like that song.



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"We're a band whose decision-making flows to the person who has the expertise. Since I play keyboards, I tend to be the one to straighten things out."

BYRNE: "Road To Nowhere"'s music is something to run counter to the lyrics.

WEYMOUTH: David loves everything Robin [Frantz and Weymouth's son] says. He's the only person who gets through David's armor, speaks exactly at his level: Say whatever you feel. Robin loves "Stay Up Late."

BYRNE: My consistent attitude about children and pets is they're something to touch or poke, to get a reaction.

FRANTZ: I wrote the lyrics to "Perfect World" a long time ago. David found them filed, and changed them around a little bit to make them fit the song. He said I wrote them in 1974. He couldn't think of anything to work with a melody, so he used those.

BYRNE: "Perfect World" was meant to be metaphorical, people's activities or lives as songs. I can imagine somebody asking themselves, "Am I always going through the same routines?" I played it for Chris and boy, was he surprised.

FRANTZ: "The Lady Don't Mind" was written for *Speaking In Tongues*, when all the songs were written in the studio by the band. Then David wrote the lyrics later. We didn't like the arrangement, so we reworked it, made it a cha-cha.

WEYMOUTH: It's like a ladder being built: The vocals don't go on until the very end. David still gets the lion's share [of songwriting credit]. We break it down in thirds. Rather than fifty percent for the top-line melody, fifty percent for the lyrics, and the musicians get nothing, it was a fair way of doing it: one-third for the musical arrangements, one-third for the top-line melody, one-third for the lyrics. We each get one-fourth of one-third. I'm very happy to have eight percent of a song, because for years musicians have helped a person who came in with just a skeleton of a song. They've told him how to sing it, they've made suggestions and they still get no credit. This is a step in the right direction.

HARRISON: Because we've worked with people like Brian Eno, people never knew what I did and what Brian did. I

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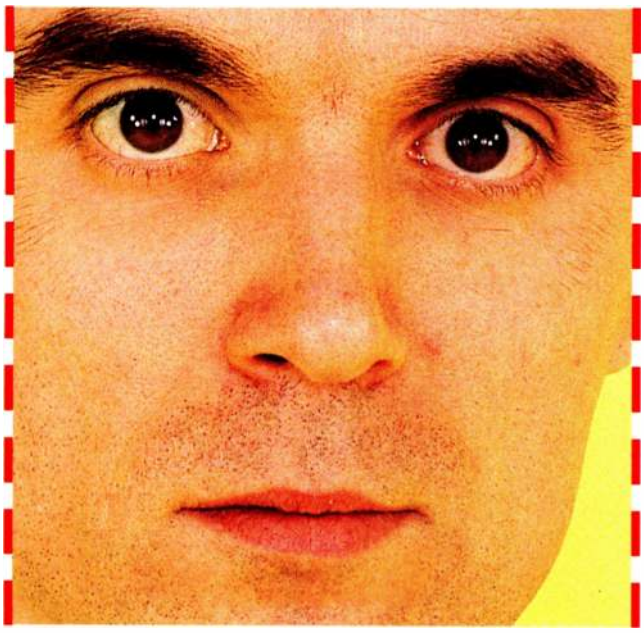

"Honestly, at the beginning I had no idea I appeared to be a psychotic lunatic. I still don't think I look like Tony Perkins."

would often get involved with harmonies when the basic idea was done through singing. I would write it down or put it on a keyboard so we could find if there was a conflicting note we just weren't hearing. As you build up more parts you have to be more rigid about it. Often when we would work out contrapuntal or harmonic relationships, because I play keyboards, I would be the person to say, "Wait a minute, something's going wrong," and I'd have to try to straighten it out. We're a band whose decision-making flows to the person who has the expertise.

Another reason people don't know what I do is that I play parts that often lie within a song, rather than stick out. I don't zero in on trying to be a virtuoso. With instruments like the DX7 and an Apple program, you have 500 sounds—and

"Talking Heads is, for all intents and purposes, David's anchor in reality. It's his family, whether he hates it or loves it. It's what he keeps coming back to. It's where he feels comfortable."

everyone in the world has those same great 500 sounds. You have to go to some other level to make the sounds interesting and new. I approach that usually by combining sounds so they have a different blend.

BYRNE: On a couple of songs the band came up with more music than on others. But on the whole it was done in a real traditional way, like, "Here's the tune, now everybody make up their parts and we'll play." I think whatever resentment might have been harbored was offset by the great relief at playing simple songs.

WEYMOUTH: It had been so long since we had played. The only way we communicate as a band is by playing. The compliment was that, having written these songs, David could have gone and done his own solo record. But he chose to have the *wisdom* to use Talking Heads—which I think made all the difference.

BYRNE: The Heads seem like the best vehicle for the songs. I could see doing a record of songs I wrote that other people sang; there are lots of people I think have real expressive voices that could interpret something I wrote in a way I never could. But we have a lot of fun doing songs.

My solo activity has never threatened the group *per se*—I don't think, anyway. It's always been assumed the group would continue. One doesn't exclude the other.

Solo Self-Analysis

WEYMOUTH: We're not gonna try too hard this time with Tom Tom Club. Last time my baby was four months old. I was getting up in the middle of the night, and I was writing songs the day before they were to be recorded. It was too insane. The space we'd created for ourselves in 1981/82 was now occupied by a lot of people. So we had a little disappointment coming to us. We had competition.

HARRISON: My first solo album was basically thrown out to see what would happen to it. If I'd put together a band and toured playing those songs, it would have drawn more attention. Nowadays you could make a video. At that time, if you didn't tour or get a hit single, an album was going to die. The Tom Tom Club album was obviously more accessible and exciting to people. That was certainly a more commercial album, and a great record. Record companies are like people; they place their bets.

Some of *The Red And The Black* had been written before we made *Remain In Light*. When we got involved with this fascination of time against itself, I wanted to see how that would work in other time signatures besides 4/4. So I deliberately wrote songs from rhythm patterns. There are rhythmic experiments, but they are not *a priori* experiments, starting out with "I wonder if it's possible to do this."

My new album is a little more direct than the first. It relies more on singing and songwriting. The problem with my first record was that it took you a while to understand. I'm in a position that I need to have something that's successful. David deliberately makes albums, like *Knee Plays*, that are non-commercial or have a very limited audience. When I, or Chris and Tina, make an album, there's this need for it to have commercial success. We're in different positions. I want to be able to continue to make albums.

WEYMOUTH: The success of *Tom Tom Club* was such a surprise. We never really thought it would take off. There was a bittersweet sadness: We were sitting with David in a taxi when our manager told us *Tom Tom Club* had gone gold. We wanted to be happy, but it was as if a second child had outstripped a first child who was supposed to accomplish something first. It felt like, okay, we've got our foot in the door; now, whatever happens to us, we can still make a living making music. Before, if David suddenly for a whim—and he was always threatening it, in his tantrums—if he said, "I'm gonna break up the band," we couldn't continue musically. We wouldn't have any business clout, and we'd have to go back to selling hamburgers or something.

Having a hit is like a miracle. You just write music because you love it. It's very hard to believe it's all due to luck. I don't think there's any musician I know who honestly believes in his own abilities.

Our best stuff comes when we don't try too hard, when we don't try to make a heavy personal statement. That just gets in the realm of self-preoccupation. *Little Creatures* did a lot of the same things we were going after.

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Heads, They Win

WEYMOUTH: *Little Creatures* is rebuilding the foundation. We had built a solid foundation stylistically, but we didn't understand it. We'd come up to this tottering pinnacle where there was no place to go after *Stop Making Sense*; the only thing we could do was a more expensive production, a bigger deal. It was all ludicrous. Here are all these other bands entering the funk-dance arena, and some of them are doing it better than us. So we'd better get the hell out and do something else, or we'll lose whatever it is that is unique to us. We gotta get back to our instincts. This was a good starting place. I expect we'll grow in another direction.

BYRNE: When we started playing the new songs, it was fun, real enjoyable. There was a real clarity to it that obliterated any irony [in reverting to a pop format].

WEYMOUTH: For us, all that was new. We didn't start as a band that knew how to play all that music and then reinvented it into a form. We just *were* the form, and we didn't know what it was. I remember David saying, "We want to sing like the Carpenters." We really thought we were writing trendy pop material on '77. This was the first time I'd ever played a country song. For us it *was* new, and it's new for the kids who've been raised on punk.

BYRNE: Our big effect on people, as I see it, is we're perceived as having success without compromise. That's a value people respect, and they don't see it very often. If you don't see it at all for a long time, you think it's not possible. All it takes is one instance for people to have faith in themselves, and to believe it's possible to live according to some set of values. That's *our* political statement.

WEYMOUTH: The band is, for all intents and purposes, David's anchor in reality. It's his family, whether he hates it or loves it; it's what he keeps coming back to. It's where he feels comfortable.

[*Pause*] I've got a lot to resolve with this band. I haven't outgrown it yet. If I were to leave this band now—forget all the other implications, like being a jerk to all our fans, etc.—it's very possible that whatever problems I experienced with the band I would take to my next arena unresolved and have exactly the same problems. I have to resolve these things with this band before I can grow to do something different. There's the potential for all of us to outgrow each other, but it hasn't happened yet. So far, the growth has occurred internally. As long as it keeps growing and doesn't hurt people—'cause growth is painful—it's a good thing and will continue. It has been, during this record and the last couple of records.

FRANTZ: We're all still too excited about being in a band to quit. If love of music is why you get into it, which is a good reason to be in a band, after ten years you're either still in love or you're not. We still are. Ⓜ

Creature Features

David Byrne played a Roland synthesizer guitar on the last Talking Heads tour. On *Little Creatures* he played mostly his 60s-vintage Fender Stratocaster. He plugs into a Roland Jazz Chorus amp; among his effects are an Ibanez Auto Filter ("it's neat, like an automatic wah-wah"), Boss digital delay and a compressor. "I haven't bought any new equipment in years," he admits, but "before we went on tour I bought an AMS digital reverb." Byrne writes on an Emulator, and has a Tascam four-track cassette recorder for his home-made demos.

Jerry Harrison uses an Emulator II, two Yamaha DX7s and "sometimes" a Prophet T8. He still has a Prophet 5 rev II; "unfortunately, no one's developed MIDI for that yet." The new album also includes a Hammond G3 organ, complete with a wood Leslie tone cabinet. In the string section, he has a Fender Telecaster, Stratocaster and "a couple of Roland synth guitars, but I haven't been using the synthesizer part of it very much lately." On the last tour Harrison patched his keyboards right into the monitor system. His guitar goes through a Roland JC-120. "I really like the sound of JBL speakers. I used those when I was in high school and I never saw any reason to change. We've used Gallien-Krueger amps too; for a solid-state amp, they are very well made. The JC-120 has problems in the studio 'cause it's so noisy, but it has that beautiful chorus effect. On *Little Creatures* we used a Music Man head and Marshall bottom for a lot of things."

Tina Weymouth still has her Veillette-Citron Standard bass, and a Hofner, strung with Dean Markleys. **Chris Frantz** still has his all-black, anodized Tama drum kit, with timbales, two rack toms (oversized and tuned low), and two Zildjian cymbals. His home kit, used with Tom Tom Club, consists of an eighteen-inch bass drum, rack tom, floor tom, snare, high-hat and cymbal. The Frantz/Weymouth domicile also includes a "top-of-the-line" Casio keyboard.

Little Creatures was recorded in New York at Sigma Sound Studios #5, on a Solid State Logic desk, with a Studio twenty-four-track recorder. Mixdown was on an Ampex ATR-100, at thirty i.p.s. Tape was Ampex 456. The album was also mixed on Sony digital equipment. Sigma has Fostex monitors, but engineer Eric Thorngren preferred the JBL 4311Bs and Yamaha NS-10s. The studio also has Lexicon 224-XL digital reverb, AMS RMX reverb and AMS DMX digital delay. Among the microphones used were Neumann U-87s and U-47s, Shure SM-57s, Crown PZMs and AKG 414s.

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Reel American

For several years now, most trend-setting producers have been British. Lately though, the pendulum of hipness has swung back to our shores, partly because it's an R&B-infected era and Americans know R&B better. This month, meet three formerly underappreciated Americans.

Reel American

RICHARD

Doctor of Applied Song Medicine, Studio Psychology, R&B Analysis and Chart Metallurgy

By Roy Trakin

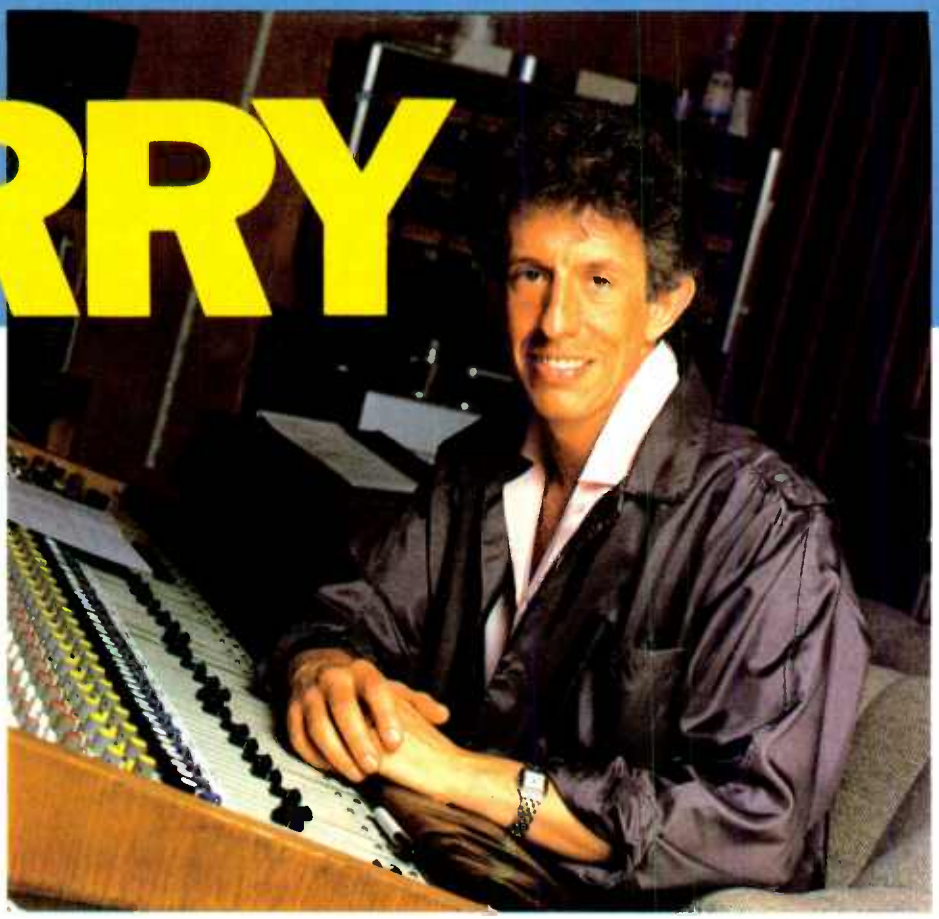
No, that's not right. You're playing that left-hand inversion a tad differently than last time," says Richard Perry, slightly annoyed at the synth overdub Jeff Lorber is recording on a track for Jeffrey Osborne's new album. But just as it seems Perry is all hard-ass drill sergeant, he hears a riff he likes and abruptly changes moods. "That's it, good. Now can you punch that in three measures back." In the course of the evening's session, Perry will range from stern taskmaster to fellow musician, from cunning psychologist to sage, twenty-year Industry Legend.

As Lorber and bassist Nathan East do a few more takes, the sweet smell of marijuana smoke fills the air inside Perry's Hollywood Studio 55 complex. He finally turns and asks the monitor-room crew, "What do you think," less it seems for their opinions than to confirm his own. After all, Richard Perry *knows* what he wants.

"I'm looking for the best ideas to make the best record and I'm prepared to provide as many of them as is necessary," he later explains during a break in recording. "Aside from that, I don't care where the solutions come from. As long as it feels good to the musician, that he feels he's putting his own thing into it. I'm not a dictator.

"If you asked me what single thing contributed most to my sound, I would say it's stimulating the artist to his greatest level. That's what makes a great record."

PERRY



CHRIS CUFFARO

...or how one of the most successful producers of the 70s keeps the party going in the 80s.

The forty-three-year-old Perry has had his share of great records in a career spent producing everyone from Captain Beefheart and Tiny Tim to Streisand and Diana Ross, from Ella and Fats Domino to Ringo and Nilsson. These days his hand is as hot as it's ever been, with his string of hits for the Pointer Sisters and regular recent top ten fare like DeBarge's "Rhythm Of The Night" (which Jeff Lorber arranged) and the Willie Nelson/Julio Iglesias chestnut, "To All The Girls I've Loved Before."

To many production purists, Richard Perry is "just" a commercial producer, less interesting than flashier, more experimental dial

twisters like Arthur Baker, Bill Laswell, Nile Rodgers or Keith Forsey. Perry, for his part, remains aloof from the next generation of of remix masters, dismissing them perhaps a little too casually as "the emperor's new clothes." In an era of technology overkill, he's more than happy to be best known as a "song doctor." As for the supposed stigma of big budgets and the high stakes of chart success, Perry sees sales as perhaps the most vital criteria of his *oeuvre*. If his records *don't* reach the masses, he doesn't think he's done his job. "I try to make the artist the biggest and best they can possibly be. I always conceived of producing as bringing the artist to life in someone's living room in the most glorious, complimentary performance one could imagine."

A perfect illustration of how far Perry will go to get that performance is his story of how the final version of the Pointers' "Jump" came about: "I had finished the mix on that record and everybody loved it except me," he recalls. "Something was still missing for me. Something fundamental, organic. So I brought in Howie Rich to put down a Minimoog synthesizer bass part, which immediately changed the whole groove of the record. Then I had Louis Johnson add a Fender bass to that. It was bizarre, because I usually don't like to stack basses like that. But, in this case, the addition of the two basses and a light alternation in the rhythm of the drum resulted in a totally different record. It put more of a black feeling into what was essentially a pop record.

"I was inspired. I called June Pointer on a Saturday afternoon to come to the studio and recut the fade to the vocal. She did some ad libs in a voice I had never heard her sing in before. Which was exciting—it opened up a whole new depth and maturity, so I had her sing the entire vocal again, which took about twenty minutes. But it changed the entire complexion of the song."

CHRIS CUFFARO

From Beefheart to the Beatles...

Richard Perry lives in a magnificent Hollywood Hills edifice once owned by Ronald Reagan (back in the Jane Wyman era). A vintage Seeburg jukebox dominates one corner of the living room, while a wall full of photographs pictures Richard through the ages, romping with Barbra Streisand, George and Ringo, the Pointers, Carly Simon and Clive Davis, Perry's trademark bushy afro and horsemouth teeth dominating every pose. His graying hair is now close-cropped and fashionably styled, and he speaks with the faint remnants of a stutter; he offers me a take-out macrobiotic lunch that looks like the prison food William Hurt is forced to eat in *Kiss Of The Spider Woman*.

Perry was born and raised in Brooklyn. His parents manufactured musical instruments for public school music education classes. He studied drums and oboe for over ten years, playing the latter in the Brooklyn College Symphony Orchestra when he was fourteen. At the University of Michigan, he "was in everything from eight-voice madrigal groups and two-hundred-voice Bach choirs to the world-renowned Michigan Men's Glee Club." But his first love was the doo-wop harmony groups he belonged to in high school.

"I was assured of being a success if I pursued a career in opera, since I had one of those bass voices you could hear in the last row of the balcony without amplification," he smiles. "I thought at that time I wanted to pursue a career in musical theatre."

But rock 'n' roll reared its raucous head. The Escorts, the vocal group he formed in high school, secured a recording deal with the Coral label and he cut a number of singles, one of which, "Somewhere," from *West Side Story*, actually reached #1 in Detroit. Since he was in Ann Arbor at the time attending college, Perry and the group played a series of record hops in the Midwest during Thanksgiving break in 1962, including one at the 20 Grand Bowling Lanes in Detroit.

"We were the only white group on the bill, playing to an all-black audience," remembers Perry. "We shared a dressing room with a pair of acts that were being showcased by Motown—the Temptations and the Supremes." It wouldn't be the first time Perry, who would go on to produce Diana Ross fifteen years later, would find himself a white man in a sea of black music.

Perry remembers the Escorts' first recording sessions clearly. "We cut the tracks straight to mono, without edits," he laughs. "We'd do four sides in three hours. I was doing all the arrangements. Even then I was bursting with production ideas. I remember having to practically beg the producers to make an edit between two takes. I'll never forget listening to that edit for the first time and thinking it was the most amazing thing I'd ever heard."

Richard became good friends with fellow Brooklynite Kenny Vance of Jay & the Americans, and the two began to collaborate. At the time, Perry had graduated from college and was trying to break into Broadway as a performer. A mutual acquaintance of the pair, an insurance salesman named Gary Katz who wanted to break into the music business, started a production company and hired Perry as his partner. The office stayed open less than six months, but both went on to bigger and better things, Katz of course ending up as Steely Dan's producer. Perry himself started getting independent production work from the Kama Sutra label, then seized the opportunity to relocate to Los Angeles when the company opened a

"There are no cut-and-dried rules, but there *are* certain things you can add to get a groove. I try to mix R&B motifs into a slightly different sound, something that's not altogether pop."

West Coast office headed by current Elektra chief Bob Krasnow. His first assignment was to produce the debut album by a wacky, white blues singer named Don Van Vliet, better known as Captain Beefheart.

"I heard him as being like John Fogerty on acid, but in control, with commercial purpose to it," says Perry of *Safe As Milk*, the resulting LP. "I was disheartened when the record didn't sell. The label was just getting started, though, and there wasn't FM radio at the time, so, if you didn't have a hit single, the avenues for exposure were little or none."

As proof of his uncanny ability to unearth saleable properties in unlikely places, however, witness the success of one Herbert Khaury, a.k.a. the trill-voiced ukelele freak himself, Tiny Tim. Perry's production of *God Bless You, Tiny Tim* marked his first commercial (if not aesthetic) triumph. Though Perry went on to produce two more Tiny Tim albums, the first remains his favorite: "That record was the real beginning of my producing career," he says. "It was the first album that I got to pick the songs for and conceive the arrangements. If Tiny Tim's career was handled differently, I believe he could have had staying power. Tim was not a one-dimensional performer. He should have been moved into TV and movies."

Perry went on to a pair of assignments with living legends Fats Domino and Ella Fitzgerald, the latter the first album Perry produced in London, where he eventually met and worked with Harry Nilsson, Fanny, and Carly Simon. Richard tried to introduce both Fats and Ella to contemporary material by the Beatles, Smokey Robinson and Randy Newman—with mixed results. "I thought it would be a kick for Fats Domino to do 'Lady Madonna,' because I knew Paul McCartney had written it being freely inspired by Domino in the first place.

"I encourage the people I work with not to close the door on any influences out of fear. I don't mean imitation, but, if you have confidence in your abilities, then why not open the door to other things that might turn you on? How you choose to interpret those influences will always be unique. Case in point being the Beatles. *Sgt. Pepper's* was more than a watershed for me. It was the temple and the shrine. And it was recorded on a four-track when most everybody else was using an eight-track. To this day, I'm baffled by that. And I've listened to some of the original tapes."

Perry had great admiration for the English boards and engineers, making a number of records at Trident Studios in London. "I first learned about sounds then," says Perry, who admits he had to ask buddy Kenny Vance what a four-track was on the way to one of his first recording sessions. "The top engineers over there were far better trained. Robin Cable was the twenty-one-year-old hot one over at Trident, with Ken Scott as the #2 guy. And, if you couldn't get either of those two, you had to settle for the #3 engineer, Roy Thomas Baker. There was a whole new approach to sound in England at the time due to the technology of their boards."

The producer's ability at forging contemporary identities and finding suitable new material for unlikely artists led to Columbia's Clive Davis arranging for him to produce one of his long-time idols, Barbra Streisand, in 1971.

"*Stoney End* was a turning point in Barbra's career," he says of the album that began what has turned into a fourteen-year friendship. "I was respectful, but not intimidated. I approached it knowing the both of us had a lot in common, including our backgrounds. Barbra appreciates someone who holds his ground with her. And who has something to offer her."

Richard Perry first met singer/songwriter Harry Nilsson at a party Phil Spector was giving for Tiny Tim in 1968. They formed a mutual admiration society until, three years later, Nilsson asked Perry to produce his *Nilsson Schmilsson* album. Richard recalls Harry suffering from a severe case of writer's block in the studio, right up until the time he had to record his vocals.

"All we had were incomplete songs. A chorus here, a verse there. We had the studio and all the musicians booked in advance. Finally, the day we went in, I said to Harry, 'You know those little ditties? They're becoming songs today.' I had cut all these tracks, leaving room for the subsequent lyrics. When the day came for him to sing, he laid down on the floor of the studio and finally wrote out the words."

Nilsson's drinking problem and marital break-up all but doomed the follow-up LP, *Son Of Schmilsson*, according to Perry, who says the song, "You're Breaking My Heart," with its "Fuck you" chorus, "had metaphoric significance for the whole album." Perry insists that the first Nilsson album and Carly Simon's *No Secrets* LP (which he did directly following the second Nilsson album) are two records he's produced whose sound still holds up today, despite over a decade of technological advancement.

By now Perry had cemented his rep as one of the best "song doctors" in the business (he admits he's had most of his success with artists who don't write their own material). But he was equally adept at getting more out of singer/songwriter clients, as he did on Carly Simon's "You're So Vain." "When Carly played me that song for the first time, she had a considerably different interpretation in mind," explains Perry. "It was originally called 'The Ballad Of A Vain Man.' At the last minute, we changed it to 'You're So Vain.' She heard it as a folk song."

"You're So Vain" was a record that reached out and grabbed the listener, a quality Perry tries to put into all his productions. "That's the number one thing I learned from the Beatles' records," he reveals. "They involved everybody. You could add your interpretation to it. Even if you didn't understand what a particular lyric meant, or you felt the synthesizers or George's Eastern instrumentation was weird. An artist can't hope to stand on the other side of the bridge and expect the audience to cross over to him. You have to build the bridge and frequently come over and even help them cross, if you care enough about the public understanding what you're doing."

With the Ringo Starr solo album, Richard Perry finally got a chance to experience making music with the Beatles, a result of Ringo's affection for the Tiny Tim debut. All four members contributed to the record, and Perry was hailed as the man who brought the band back together again after the break-up five years earlier. "Everybody wanted to pitch in and do what they could for Ringo," the producer reminisces fondly. "He was the catalyst. His record gave the others the opportunity to work together without any egos involved.

"There was a high level of diplomacy involved, though. George contributed 'Photograph,' then John came to town with 'I Am The Greatest,' which he'd written specifically for the album. We were recording in Sunset Sound in Los Angeles and I'll never forget it as long as I live. While we were in the beginning stages of doing John's track, someone called on George's behalf, wanting to know if he could come down and play on the cut. I had to go into the studio and actually ask John Lennon if it was okay for George Harrison to come down and work on the record. John simply shouted to me, 'Tell him to get down here and help me finish this bridge!' And next thing I know, George had come in, quietly plugged in his guitar and proceeded to play the perfect part. If that wasn't Beatles magic, I don't know what is!"

Returning to London, Perry asked McCartney if he would contribute a song to the album, too, and ended up spending a week in the studio together with Paul and Ringo. "It was the fulfillment of my dreams in the record business," says Richard. "Without question, it was the most exciting experience I've ever had in my life. Between working with the Beatles and Mick Jagger on 'You're So Vain,' I knew I couldn't go any higher after that. The Ringo record was a challenge and a responsibility,

too. I knew if it in any way came up short, it would have been unfavorably compared to the Beatles' efforts."

After hitting the heights with the Ringo record, Perry had his first high-priced commercial flop with Martha Reeves, then went on to produce what is still one of his favorite records, Art Garfunkel's *Breakaway*. "Out of all the records I've made, that's the one I listen to today the most, almost as if it's not one of my own albums. I like quiet music."

The latter part of the 70s saw more Perry hits, including Carly Simon's "Nobody Does It Better," the theme to the James Bond film, *The Spy Who Loved Me*, as well as two gold singles with Leo Sayer. His productions for the likes of Burton Cummings, Manhattan Transfer and Diana Ross were somewhat less successful, though the ex-Supremes' *Baby It's Me* LP did go gold in 1977, albeit without a hit single.

At the close of the decade, Perry had another long-standing wish come true when he launched his own Planet Records label in 1978, distributed first by Elektra, then by RCA. "It's really just the highest level of production deal," he admits. "It's now part of my job to make sure a record gets treated properly in the areas of promotion, distribution, marketing, advertising and publicity. I had always been involved in those departments, frequently out of frustration. I had to make it part of my work. The experience, quite frankly, has been mixed. I decided to start a record company just when the business was going through one of its worst recessions. I consider the fact that we're still in business today a major accomplishment."

Recently, though, Perry has pared the label down to just two artists—the Pointer Sisters and Greg Phillinganes—and has decided to sell his interest in the company to RCA while concentrating solely on independent production work. One thing he intends to keep doing is working with the Pointer Sisters, a group that he's guided through some tough times to their current multi-platinum standing.

"The fun doesn't begin for me until after the third album," he says of his collaborations. "I've been vindicated by my relationship with the Pointer Sisters. After the second album we did together, they were on the brink of bankruptcy. We slowly fought our way back, step by step. We went through that whole experience of prejudice with the various factions of radio. You know, they were too black to be pop and too pop to be black. We've only finally found our place over the last year."

Throughout his career, Perry has fought the element of racism in music. He is rightfully proud of his role in popularizing black music to a white audience, an element he feels is at the root of the 50s rock 'n' roll he grew up on. "The Golden Age of Rock 'n' Roll was rhythm & blues being played on white radio," he explains. "Gaining a wider audience. It wasn't the deep, dark blues of the late 40s and early 50s. It had a bit more of a universal appeal to it, more of a beat. I feel I know more about the roots of R&B than most people in the business, black or white. Back in those days, a thought wasn't given to whether you were black or white. People like Bert Berns and Jerry Ragovoy were some of the most soulful writers and musicians of all time, and they were white boys. One's soul has no color. It's the kind of music you make. And that's how it should be judged. What's made music so exciting for me over the last two years is the fact that the walls are starting to come down. Black and rock are mixing freely. That's why everything has started to fall into place for me with the *Break Out* album. I now have the opportunity to function with total creative freedom, without having to worry if a record is too black."

Perry's method of finding the R&B pulse in everything he does comes to light as I observe him recording overdubs on the Jeffrey Osborne record. He urges first keyboardist Lorber, then bassist East to incorporate those funky touches that give the songs their "black" edge.

"It would take me a half hour to explain precisely what that feel is," says

the articulate Perry, who credits his communication skills with making him a successful producer. "I'd have to run down what every instrument is doing and tell you the characteristics of each. And that would only be for the specific song. There are no cut-and-dried rules, but there are certain sounds or techniques you can add to get a certain kind of groove. I try to mix R&B motifs into a slightly different sound, something that's not altogether pop, but not altogether rhythm & blues, either. Hopefully, it's crossover. I think that's important because it helps black music to expand and grow in terms of its influences, while allowing artists such as Jeffrey Osborne and the Pointer Sisters to reach a wider audience."

What's left to accomplish for a man who's earned thirteen gold singles and six Grammy nominations, who's been named "Producer Of The Year" by *Billboard* magazine? As evidenced by his work on the last few Pointers videos, Richard Perry wants to segue into directing feature films, a skill he believes is exactly like producing albums. Is there any artist out there he'd like to produce? While admitting he's fulfilled all of his professional fantasies, Perry allows that he's harbored a few secret ambitions.

"When David Bowie went over to EMI, just before he recorded *Let's Dance*, I thought it would be interesting to work with him," reveals Richard after some prompting. "Now that he's made the changeover successfully, the challenge isn't as great for me. I've also always wanted to do a solo record with Mick Jagger. I feel the record he made didn't fulfill his potential; I think it fell way short of the mark. I would have gone for something completely different, rather than making a Stones album without Keith Richard. If I was going to do a record with Jagger, I'd make sure you wouldn't miss Keith, even if I had to have him play on it."

In this era of cocaine-driven technology freaks seeking weirder and baaader remixes, a pot-smoking ex-hippie producer like Richard Perry is a refreshing throwback. He remains a proud man, not so much vain as zealous of his reputation and his place in pop history. How did someone so firmly embedded in 70s lore cut it so well in the 80s? Maybe it's just the times have caught up with Richard Perry.

"It seems to be my natural calling in life," the crossover crusader says nonchalantly, and returns to the control room to direct yet another take.

Perryphernalia

Studio 55 has two main recording rooms, one for tracking, one for mixing. The former, Studio A, has a custom 40x28 board and Altec 604E monitors powered by a Urei 6500 amp. Auxiliary monitors are Yamaha NS10s, Auratones and RORs. The tape machines are a Studer A800 24-track, an Ampex 1100 16- or 24-track, two Ampex ATR 100 2-tracks and three Sony TCK-77 cassette decks (there's also a JVC turntable). Outboard gear includes dbx 160, LA2As and LA4As and Urei 1176 compressor/limiters, Pultec and API 550 equalizers, an Eventide DDL, an EMT 140 Plate reverb and Q-lock and Lynx synchronizers. Studio B uses exactly the same equipment, except the board is a Neve 8128 with Necam auto mixdown, monitors include a pair of K&Hs and the Ampex 16/24-track is a 1200. Studio B also has Lexicon Prime Time and Klark-Teknik DDLs, plus AMS RMX-16 and EMT 250 reverbs.

Also available at Studio 55 are forty-eight tracks of Dolby, a vocal stressor, Eventide flangers, a Urei 964 digital metronome, Invonics limiters, Kepex I & II and Gain Brain noise gates, Trident parametric eqs, Klark-Teknik graphic eqs, a Roland Stereo chorus, a Simmons Clap Trap, DMX, Fender Rhodes piano, a Hammond B-3 with Leslie, Hohner clavinet, "the usual complement of microphones," and Steinway, Kawai and Tack acoustic pianos.

Synching from page 90

Machine-to-Machine Sync

Before MIDI sequencers and drum machines became so important, SMPTE's main audio use was to synchronize two recorders together via an

expensive *chase-locking* synchronizer, so called because the synchronizer causes the slave to "chase" the master and "lock" to the master's time code. Both the master and the slave must have SMPTE time code recorded on one track; when the tape is rolling, this data feeds into the synchronizer. The synchronizer reads the time code from the two machines and compares them. If the slave is running a little slow or fast compared to the master, the synchronizer sends an appropriate correction signal to the slave so that the two machines maintain sync (see Fig. 5).

Machine-to-machine sync has several applications. One is to lock two multi-track machines together to obtain more tracks (i.e. two 24-tracks slaved together to give 48 tracks total, of which two are dedicated to time code). Another is to create "slave reels" in order to avoid playing a master tape too many times. Once the rhythm tracks are recorded on the master machine, these tracks can be premixed to one or two tracks on the slave machine. Overdubs are then added to the reel on the slave machine. Once overdubs are complete, the slave and master machines are synched together, and the overdubbed parts are transferred over to the master reel.

A final SMPTE application involves "pyramiding," as used by synthesist Larry Fast (Synergy and Peter Gabriel band). He prefers to work at home on his 8-track, but in many cases needs more than eight tracks to complete a project. So, he records SMPTE on one track of the 8-track, then fills up the other tracks with parts. After recording the tracks he books some time at House of Music (a 24-track studio) and transfers the tracks, including SMPTE, over to the 24-track. He then syncs the 24-track and 8-track together, makes a premix from the 24 on to one track of the 8-track, goes home, and loads up the remaining six tracks on his eight track. He then books some more time, syncs the 24-track and 8-track machines together, transfers his new overdubs, and so on until all 24 tracks are filled up. Not only does he get to work at home, but this saves a lot of money; the time required to transfer the parts is minimal, so the only significant studio cost is for mixdown time.

Wrapping Up...

In today's audio/video studio, SMPTE provides the system master clock, while MIDI acts as an intelligent interface between various pieces of equipment. Synchro-sonic triggers and pulses can further be derived from MIDI to trigger individual events, or provide compatibility with older gate- and trigger-oriented systems. All in all, there are a lot of ways to synchronize devices.

Everything is not perfectly rosy, however. Many SMPTE/MIDI devices are expensive, and each one seems to have some particular feature not shared by the others...So shop very carefully before laying down your bucks. Also, different devices take different amounts of time to process the SMPTE or MIDI signal. As a result, some instruments may lag behind other instruments by a few milliseconds; these errors are often tuned out using delay lines, or delay facilities built into the synchronizers themselves.

But most problems are surmountable, and besides, synchronization is a relatively new subject, so some growing pains are inevitable. As the music industry becomes more sync-conscious, it won't be long before we start to see signal processors, mixers and other devices that can read SMPTE time code directly. Truly low-cost automated mixdown is not far away either, and some advanced SMPTE-ready devices are available now (such as TASCAM's Model 58 recorder, and the new Fostex two-track that includes a center-channel third track for recording time code). Learning to apply synchronizers has improved my efficiency in the studio, allowed for more sophisticated musical compositions, and opened up the world of video/audio production...spend a little time delving into the subject, and your horizons will be broadened as well.

KEITH FORSEY'S DISCO SNARL

From Donna Summer to Billy Idol, from Psy-Furs to Simple Minds, the union of style and raunch.

By Rob Tannenbaum

Most brilliant career moves are spurred by divine intervention. Consider Noah, who was happily employed as a farmer until some cumulonimbus clouds convinced him to bone up on home carpentry. Or Richard Nixon, who opted for the life of an author when he felt the hot breath of the Justice Department through his White House door. And then there's Keith Forsey, who toiled as a simple disco drummer until an amateurish cassette from a snarling, leather-clad singer brought him to his true calling. Well what'dya expect, a burning bush?

"I was living with Giorgio Moroder in Los Angeles around 1980 and he would get tapes of bands, to see who he wanted to produce. One day, a package came with this flamboyant, big-time writing, in black, red and green. It was rough demos from Generation X; very sketchy, but 'Dancing With Myself' was on there.

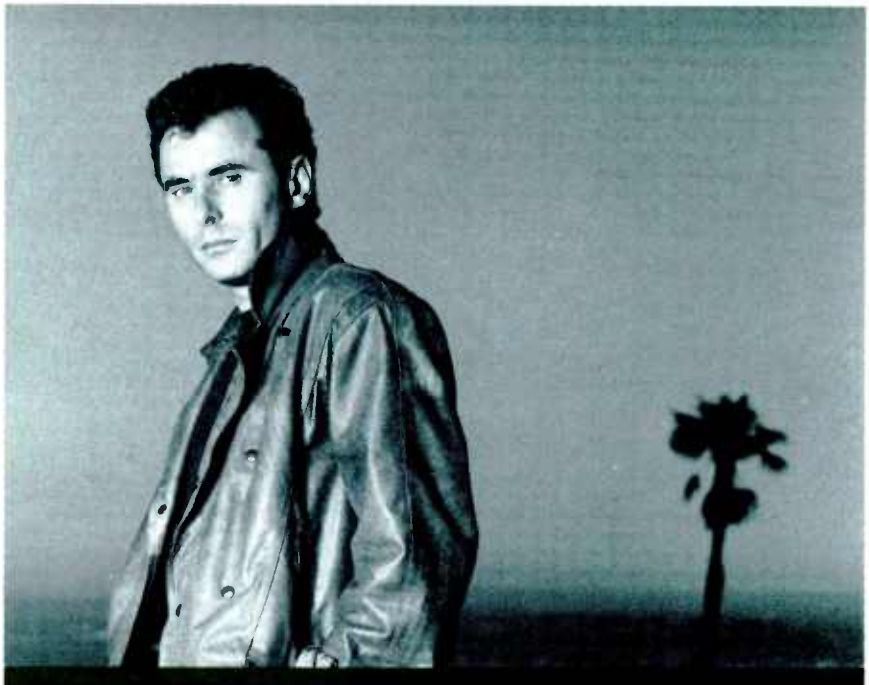
"The moment I heard Billy Idol's voice, it struck me that this guy was *happening*. I got a lot of flak from other people around me, who thought I was wasting my time. Giorgio didn't want to do it, so I said, 'Boss, give me a break. I *have* to do this record.' It was my first production and they took a chance on me. When we finished the album, that's when I thought, 'God, I have to be a producer.'"

It's September, 1985. Having already made his home in England, Germany and Los Angeles, the thirty-seven-year-old Forsey presently inhabits a New York hotel room while producing Billy Idol's new album. Monogrammed towels are draped around a portable studio the band uses to work up songs for the album. "Billy's coming over tonight and we're gonna write some hits," Forsey casually tells a caller. Such self-confidence is merited by lifetime chart impact above and beyond his Idol speculation. As a musician and songwriter, Forsey helped his boss conquer America with Donna Summer and Irene Cara—Forsey shared an Oscar for co-writing "Flashdance (What A Feeling)." As a budding producer he's done LPs for the Psychedelic Furs, Icehouse and Nina Hagen. Most recently he's put big singles by Glenn Frey and Simple Minds into the Hot 100. At times, Keith Forsey *does* seem able to manufacture a hit record at will.

That is, until you hear him say, "The most clichéd thing to steer clear of is the hit single. It doesn't represent the band, it's just a song to bank on. A Trevor Horn cut has an obvious stamp on it, which is sad—it makes you more aware of the producer than the band. Frankie Goes To Hollywood is really Trevor Horn. The producer will go on working, but you don't know if the band will."

Isn't it possible that Forsey is being unfair? After all, some people have called him the American Trevor Horn and suggested—erroneously, he insists—that he manufactures Billy Idol's hits. "True," he considers. "You never really quite know who does what. We might be being unfair to Frankie." Then Forsey's contrite frown spreads into a grin. "But I don't think so."

The producer's prime job, Forsey maintains, is "pulling the band's personality out and nailing it to plastic. I've had people produce records that I've played on; I had to play a song that I couldn't *stand*. How can you give an audience any feeling about something if the song is bullshit to you? The most important thing is that when the band leaves the studio, they're happy. That's one of the things I learned by coming from the other side of the fence."



"The most important thing is that the band is happy."

CHRIS CUFFARO

When Forsey began his life "on the other side of the fence," drums were his passion. As a boy in London, Keith was seduced by a kit his older brother brought into the house. "The *smell* of the drum kit attracted me," he laughs. "In those days, they used real calfskin on the heads. With the trap case and the cymbals, the smell was so strong that even when I went to bed I'd think about it. One day my brother said, "Ere, just go boom-chh-boomboom-chh,' and I slowly drifted into it."

The most successful British band he played with was Spectrum, who had a

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hit in Spain with a Beatles cover. Around 1970, he drifted to Munich to play drums for Amon Duul II, pioneers along with Kraftwerk in the German electronic tradition. After a few years he joined Passport, a mediocre German outfit who emulated Weather Report. Neither was what he wanted. "I'm a straight-ahead drummer, and they were a little bit out of my range. I was delving into something I probably shouldn't have been.

"I wanted to feel more in control of myself. In certain bands, if somebody happened to be onstage stoned out of their mind, it didn't make me look good. So I figured I didn't want to rely on anybody." That decision led him to a session career. "As long as I had my chops together, I could be a complete unit."

In Munich in the early 70s, that meant working with Giorgio Moroder, who ruled the German charts with Eurodisco. Moroder gave Forsey *lots* of work. "You'd do a disco song in the morning and in the afternoon there would be a cover of a T. Rex song," he recalls fondly. Moroder's session coterie was developing into a production team for Donna Summer. Forsey played on almost all of Summer's records, from *I Feel Love* to *The Wanderer.* Her backing team included co-producers Moroder and Pete Bellotte, with Forsey on drums and Harold Faltermeyer at the keyboards. It was Forsey, Faltermeyer and Bellotte who co-wrote "Hot Stuff" and made "a definite decision to get more into rock 'n' roll." (Someday do a comparison listen to "Hot Stuff" and "Rebel Yell.")

To Forsey, disco is still not a dirty word. "I *love* disco," he confesses. "To me, disco is 'Put It Where You Want It,' by the Jazz Crusaders. Stix Hooper playing four-on-the-floor, with two and four snare drums, eighth-note high-hat, no drum fill and grooved to the max. It was only when the whole world started jamming out albums by people who couldn't sing that disco became disgusting. Listen to the music out there now—Madonna is just cheap disco."

Moroder began to work with more American bands, and when he moved to Los Angeles in 1979, Forsey followed. The drummer quickly became established in West Coast session circles and his experience expanded to soundtracks, as Moroder worked on *Foxes, Cat People* and *Flashdance.* At around the same time, Forsey signed a deal for a solo album.

"Oh, do you have to mention that?" he sighs. The LP, which featured such L.A. session stars as Larry Carlton, Steve Lukather and Leland Sklar, was never released in the U.S. "From playing sessions I had done rock 'n' roll, jazz, country and I liked it all. When I made the record, all this stuff came out and there was no face behind it. It was a mess. I can emulate Bryan Ferry or David Bowie, but as an artist, I don't have a soul of my own."

This self-analysis (and his love of calfskin) may explain Forsey's instant passion for the Generation X demo tape he came across soon after his solo debacle. After all, Idol has never been accused of lacking personality. But Idol and Gen X were also a way to balance the languid musical values of the El-Lay

continued on page 85

Forsey's Forceps

Forsey writes at home on a TEAC 4-track, with an Ovation acoustic and a Roland Juno 60 synth. His other guitars are a Fender Tele and a Kramer; he has no preference on amps or strings. He also has a Fender bass, Lexicon PCM-60 reverb, an AMS delay, LinnDrum and Roland TR-808 drum machines, a Roland MSQ-700 sequencer and a Yamaha grand piano. His drum kits are Tama, a black Slingerland and an old Ludwig. He sticks a Black Beauty snare in, favors Paiste cymbals and Emperor heads. "The smaller the kit, the better; I don't go in for eight toms or two bass drums." He has an older Simmons electronic kit, which he says nasty things about. And he uses a Dr. Click when necessary.

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OTARI

NARADA MICHAEL WALDEN ♥ ARETHA

A funky refugee from the fusion wars remakes Lady Soul and puts down some recording roots.

By Josef Woodard

A producer's studio is his castle. On a muggy July day, in San Rafael's Tarpan studio, Narada Michael Walden is tending his with a benevolent, excitable hand. He personally acknowledges an assortment of workers buzzing about the building, shaking hands and kissing the cheeks of the better sex: "God's greatest invention," he grins copiously to the visiting journalist.

In the outer offices, the phones are busy with negotiations. Upstairs, in-house songwriter Preston Glass is cultivating a hook or two on a DX7. Clarence Clemons, whom Narada is presently working with, mills about the lounge. Tarpan (which means "satisfaction unparalleled" according to the name given it by Narada's spiritual leader, Sri Chinmoy) is a thriving musical domain.

And much of the reason has to do with a pink Cadillac, a toy model of which sits like a symbolic trophy on top of the recording console. The Caddy in question is the hero of the crossover smash "Freeway Of Love," which has sent Aretha Franklin revving up the charts and has brought overdue attention to Narada the producer. After toiling over the past decade in the varying roles as monster drummer/songwriter/keyboardist/singer R&B solo artist, Narada is suddenly enjoying limelight as the man who brought the world *Who's Zoomin' Who*, by general consensus the best Aretha record in years.

Narada's natural geyser of exuberance is enhanced this day, having just received word of Aretha having gone gold. "I'm so happy and relieved the album's doing well," he sighs. "Wouldn't it have been horrible, to produce Aretha Franklin and have it be a flop?"

How did he succeed where other, more seasoned producers have missed the mark? "I did a lot of homework," he explains. "I listened to a lot of her older work, because I wanted to get a handle on it. People, for the most part, when they think of Aretha Franklin, think of good times, good vibes, fried chicken, lady soul on the box, can do no harm. Ain't nobody gonna drop a bomb on your head. That's what I wanted to get again, in this modern-day society where everybody's OD'ing on sample this, Fairlight that. I'm not putting that down, 'cause I'm the biggest freak of that kind of stuff that ever lived. But she's so natural, you have to address it as such."

At a time when technoid hip-hop surfaces dominate the urban contemporary scene, *Who's Zoomin' Who* does sound refreshingly non-electronic. It has a real-time integrity, with nearly all the excitement coming from Aretha's queenly means. There are token celebrity walk-ons by the Eurythmics and Peter Wolf (what soul-colored pop singer wouldn't like an audience with the queen?), but the prize moments come during a tune like "Sweet Bitter Love," on which she belts out her gospel-hued fury.

"She's a walking church," Narada suggests. "I didn't do anything. She truly is a great lady of our times. It's the biggest high when you're sitting there in the booth looking through that window; you've got a mild groove going and that sound just pouring out of her mouth. She'd be talking about 'Baby, we're going to better-than-ever street.' That's the way she is. I didn't tell her (in a stiff anglo voice) 'Why don't you do something clever here?'"

Was it intimidating working with soul royalty? "At first, but the truth of the matter is, Aretha has a great sense of humor. She's very young in spirit. You think of her as this old legend—I know I did, because I didn't know her. But you meet her and she's got this babyface, she's laughing and giggling, cracking jokes. You lose your tension immediately. But you really just have to let her do her thing.

"She does what she does. If it felt right to her, that's your record, buddy. She teased me, 'Narada the perfectionist. You want me to do it again? Narada the perfectionist.'"

Some of Narada's perfectionist tendency may come from his keen awareness of several facets of the record-making process. For the *Zoomin'* project, he played drums and keyboards as well as penning a fair portion of the material. With his pent-up talent, it's hard for Narada to play the producer

"She's a walking church. You just let her do her thing."

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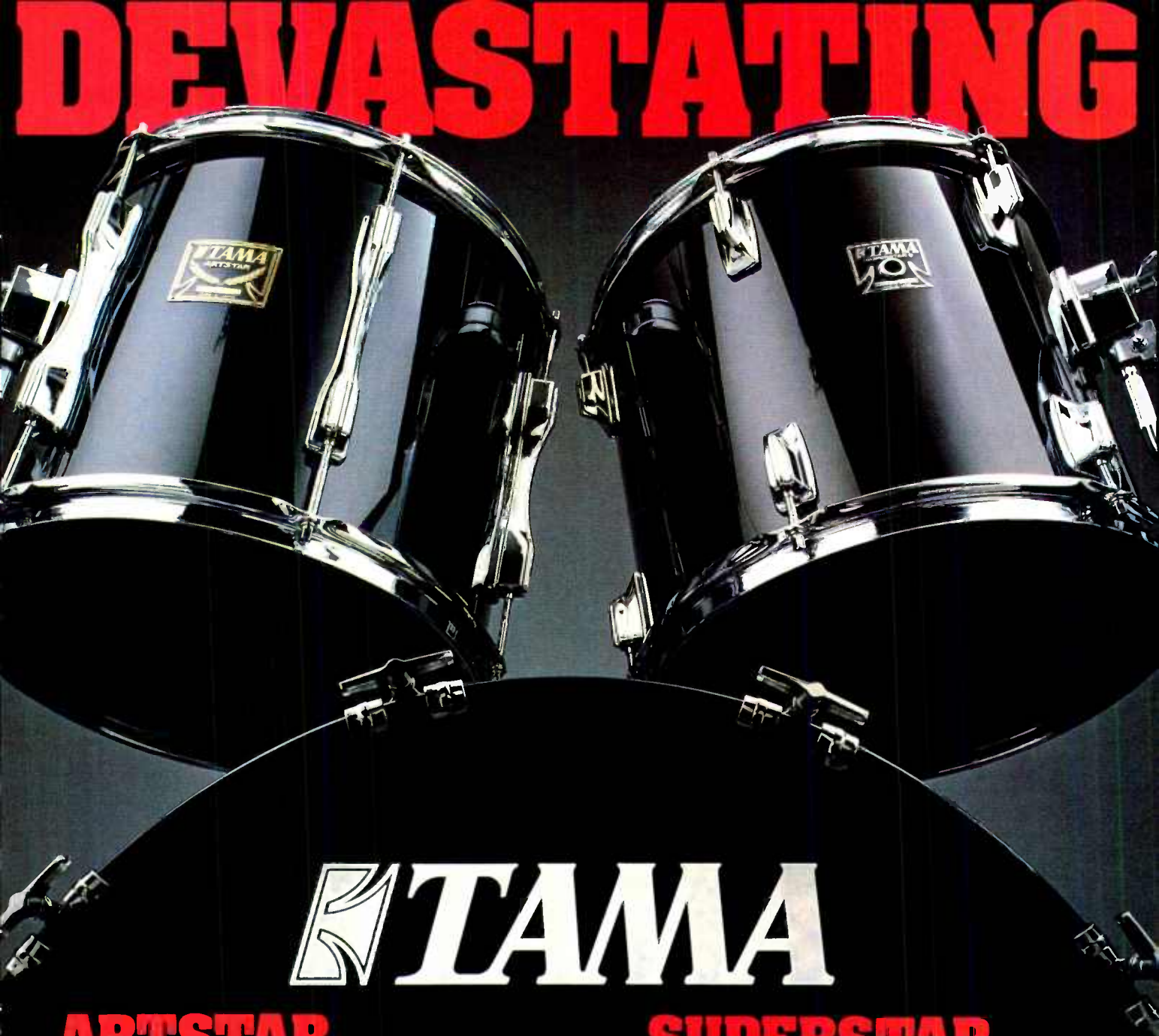

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role as the omniscient overseer from the control room armchair. He's got itchy fingers, and limbs.

In fact, the term *producer* itself doesn't carry much weight for him. "I'm no producer," he states flatly. After a pregnant pause, he continues, "I don't know what the word means. It's just being a sensible person. Some people are better at making practical decisions than others. If you're walking down the street and you see a beautiful dress for your girlfriend, if you're real impulsive, you might buy it. If you have the money and you're impulsive, you're in trouble. Being a producer's just being able to have a sense of balance.

"The balancing act really comes into play when you're trying to reach the most people, and that seems to be the call of the day. It's always been the call of the day, really, but even more so now because there's this strong push to sell huge units, make the biggest noise, the biggest bang. [with muster] *Look out, you're on my territory. Back! Get off my turf. Yeah!*" He lets out a brawling laugh.

Narada tends to address the production gambit in metaphors, rather than nuts-and-bolts terms. "Quincy says, man, that being a producer is like being the director of a film. You pick the right script, pick the right actor or singer, the right cameraman or engineer. The way I produce is more along an athletic line. I'm more of a coach than a producer, if I have to have a title. I have to inspire somebody to keep pushing, keep going, or to dig deeper or go higher, to transcend yourself. To me, good drummers are like that. In a band, they're the heartbeat, they're the pushers."

Of course, the drummer reference is no idle analogy; Narada first gained notoriety as an explosive and dexterous force behind a kit. "A lot of people don't understand drummers," he ventures. "They think they're unmusical people. That's just ignorance, because there are so many great musicians who came from rhythm first." Narada immersed himself in music in numerous bands in Michigan, his home state, before heading to Los Angeles. It was there that he linked up with Mahavishnu John McLaughlin, which then led to a noted stint with Jeff Beck; Narada became a drummerly foil, with the goods to go *tête à tête* with the reigning guitar heroes.

Much as he cherished the opportunities, Narada regrets that his position created "a stigma of 'Okay, you're a fusion cat.' If John likes you, you must be a bad cat *[laughs]*. It hurt me, because I couldn't get any work doing anything else. For a long time, when I wanted to go and make commercial records, they would automatically think 'Oh, you're going to overplay.' Of course, I probably would. But let *me* be the judge of that."

Narada's creative urges found a ripe outlet on Beck's celebrated *Wired* album. Not only did the drumming on tunes such as "Led Boots" approximate gale force eloquence, but Narada's compositional input accounted for most of the album's material. "It was a good time," he recalls of the *Wired* days. "We could experiment and get over with it. You didn't have to do stock things. You could mix things up—play rock blues with odd meters or off-the-wall chords."

Inevitably, Narada pursued a solo career. Interesting though his projects have been, sales have been elusive. His jazz-rock tinted debut album of 1976 came at a bad time, just as the fusion craze was starting to ebb. "It didn't sell, for whatever reason, so Atlantic records came to me and said, 'Okay, this fusion stuff is starting to get thin now. Why don't you do more singing and let's go that route.' I started to do more singing, more verse/chorus/bridge—*songs*. But had the first album done better, believe me, I would have pursued more of that kind of path. Here's Jeff's album, which has my writing and playing all over it, and it goes gold. I release an album and you can't give it away."

This year's model, *The Nature Of Things*, is the latest of several eclectic, but decidedly funk-minded solo al-

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bums. Thus far, it has failed to generate any big noise, commercially. But while Narada has been tenaciously casting out his own artistic net, his producer chair has kept him increasingly busy. Aretha's nugget validates an impressive list of artists Narada has worked with over the past few years, including Angela Bofill, Sister Sledge, Herbie Hancock, Patti Austin and just recently, Larry Graham. Narada's expertise generally covers a crossover terrain between black and white radio, which can sometimes be a frustrating netherworld.

"Look at Clarence (Clemons), man; he had a record out last year and the guy's in limboland. Sure, he plays with the biggest group in the land—Springsteen. But he's *not* Springsteen; he's a black man in a white man's country. Let's break it down. Pop radio would love to play hit records by him, and they *will* as long as they see him doing something on black radio. They love him, but they won't do anybody favors. There is no loyalty in pop radio, to anybody—white, black or green.

"You're talking about hitting the pulse, especially when there are so many white English artists playing black music. It's bigger than ever. It's sad on one front; there's no more need for major labels, necessarily, to sign ghetto bands from Chicago or Detroit. They come over here from London and they've got their image built in. People eat it up.

"I don't mean to sound jaded, bitter, prejudiced or anything, because I'm not," says Narada, suddenly monitoring his rap. "We are the greatest country in the world. But sometimes you're a bigger hero in someone else's country, it's just the truth. It's not just the black man crying, because they're jamming to all kinds of obscure black acts in England you'd never know about in America.

"So I'm not really complaining. I'm just saying that it's a game, and to be a producer—as you say—or a coach, you have to understand the nature of the game. You have to understand the rules. Like in tennis; you can have a great shot, but if it goes outside the court, it don't make no difference." Ⓜ

The Coach's Megaphones

Narada uses Pearl drums, Paiste cymbals and Remo heads. He also owns a LinnDrum, a Yamaha DX7, a Prophet 5, a Fender Rhodes given to him by John McLaughlin, and a Roland MSQ-700 sequencer. Tarpan Studio sports a Trident TSM board out of the Automatt Studio A. Its decks are a Studer A80 and an MCI JH 224, plus a Q Lock 310, which enables 48-track synching. His outboard gear includes DeltaLab, Lexicon Prime Time and ADA digital delays,an AMS reverb and Urei 1176 compressor/limiters. Monitor speakers are Urei time aligns and Yamaha NS10s.

Forsey from page 78

environment. "This was a conscious decision on my part. I was becoming very music-oriented, very clever *clever*; using technique instead of the energy that was in the music I grew up playing. I was getting very slick and losing the youthful essence that had excited me about the Stones and the Who. The Sex Pistols were just what I used to get off on when I was sixteen; out-of-tune, in-tune/too-fast, too-slow, who cares?"

Forsey admits today that he "wasn't really prepared to produce the Gen X record." *Kiss Me Deadly* was taken by many as proof that punk had hit a dead end. Idol was signed to cut a solo EP. "A lot of people didn't want him to use me again and I can't blame them," Forsey says. "A guy who'd just made a flop album? But Billy was adamant about it, the way he always is."

The remade "Dancing" became a dance club epic, fired by ex-Clash drummer Terry Chimes' relentless beat. Chrysalis released "Hot In The City," "White Wedding" and even "Dancing With Myself" (for a third time) as singles. But, Forsey explains, "Radio said, 'No way. A spikey-haired guy? Get it out of my face.'"

Forsey's next production assignment was Icehouse, the Australian band fronted by Iva Davies, whose David Bowie fixation is deeper than Madonna's belly button. Forsey calls this "an unhappy marriage." "I'm not a kick-ass producer. I put up a little fight with an artist if I feel strongly, but they usually get what they want. Iva was so conscious of what other people had done that *he* wanted to do as well. You can't hope for people to accept you if you're gonna copy something."

This observation influenced his choice in subsequent projects. He and Moroder co-produced *Fearless* by Nina Hagen, the German singer who combines the vocal characteristics of Ethel Merman, Beverly Sills and Sheena, Queen of the Jungle. Although only the schlock-rap "New York, New York" got any exposure, Forsey was happy with the album. "That's the kind of artist I like—she's so unique, such an entity within herself. No one else is like Nina!"

While producing Hagen's album he was also working on Idol's *Rebel Yell*, which was designed to be "more accessible, not quite so underground as the first album." Idol became a multi-format coverboy with the channeled aggression of "Flesh For Fantasy" and the captivating sway of "Eyes Without A Face." But don't try to give Forsey or guitarist Steve Stevens too much of the credit:

"I get pissed off when people write about Billy as the glamorous part of the team and don't give him enough credit for the musical side. They assume that

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HOW TO GET IT ALL IN SYNC

Syncronicity made simple: a guide to clock pulses, MIDI synching and SMPTE time code

By Craig Anderton

Musical synchronization has not changed much since people started beating on logs. In fact, it's a lot easier to understand all these mysterious little SMPTE/MIDI/synchronizing boxes if you realize that deep down, all they're really trying to do is emulate human behavior.

With human players, one person (typically a drummer) keeps time and the other players follow that person for their timing cues. The players constantly monitor the drummer to make sure they are properly synchronized, and if the tempo speeds up or slows down a little bit, adjust their speed to compensate.

That's what synchronization is all about: getting every element of a system in sync with the master timekeeper. This article will cover the many possible ways to synchronize, from the earliest clock-pulse based systems on up to SMPTE...and we'll describe some useful applications as well.

Craig Anderton is presently working on a book on MIDI, due out around December.

Early Synchronization Methods

The most basic electronic timekeeper, which is still very much in use today, is the *clock*. When turned on (usually at the beginning of a song), the clock emits a steady stream of pulses. Devices such as drums and sequencers count the number of pulses since the clock was first started. Providing that the instruments in the system start counting at the same time and count at the same rate, if the drum machine plays a certain sound at, say, the 345th pulse and the sequencer plays another sound at the 345th pulse, you will hear the two sounds at precisely the same moment.

Each clock pulse is a pulse of energy, like the "tick" or "tock" of a clock. Clock pulses are the electrical equivalent of a pendulum; however, instead of swinging back and forth between two points, a clock pulse swings back and forth between a maximum and minimum voltage (see Fig. 1). This is a very unambiguous type of signal—it's either full on or full off.

The simplest, and least successful, way to synchronize two devices is to set their respective internal clocks for the same tempo and try to start them at the same time. Problem 1: How do you set *exactly* the same tempo for both machines? Even if both devices have tempo readouts, these are not likely to be 100% accurate. The tempo of either device can also drift due to instabilities in electronic components.

Problem 2: The two units must start at *exactly* the same time. If one starts as little as fifteen milliseconds or so behind the other, you will hear an annoying "slapback echo" effect.

The solution to the first problem is to use a *master* clock to provide a common timing reference to all the *slave* devices in the system. Should the master clock drift a little bit, all the slaves following the clock will drift by the same amount, thus maintaining sync. Each slave must have an *external clock input* so that it can accept timing pulses from the master, as well as a means to defeat the slave's internal clock (if present) and select the external clock. The master must have a *clock output* jack to send the timing reference to the slaves.

Now refer to Fig. 2 to see how this all comes together. The master drum machine selects its internal clock; the clock output signal feeds the sequencer and a second drum machine, which are slaved to the master. These latter two devices are switched to accept the external clock signal plugged into their external clock input jacks. However, we still need a way to start all the devices at the same time. For this, each device needs a *start/stop* (also called *run/stop*) input. In most cases we can connect the start/stop inputs together and run them from a single footswitch, thus giving us the option to turn all the devices on simultaneously. As soon as the switch closes, the master starts sending out pulses and the slave devices start counting those pulses.

Great! Now all machines start and stop at the same time and follow the same master timing reference, which means they are in sync with each other. So our problems are solved, right?

Well...not always, which brings us to the "different clock rate" problem.

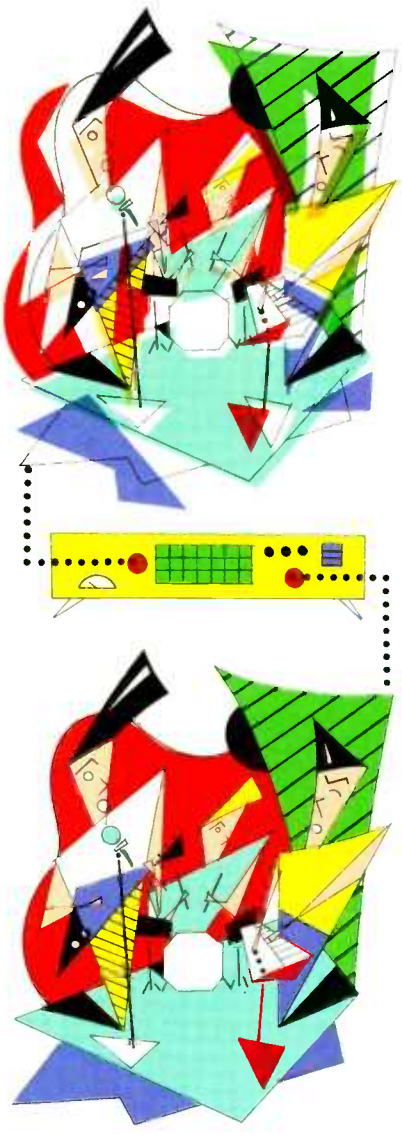
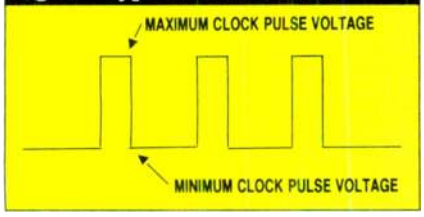


ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY ALLEN

Different Clock Rates

Since our tempo reference should be as musically useful as possible, we need to relate the number of pulses to beats and measures. Clock rates are specified in *pulses per quarter note* (ppqn). For example, suppose a sequencer that follows a 24 ppqn standard is set to receive an external clock; the sequencer counts the number of pulses it receives, and each pulse advances the sequence 1/24th of a beat. Therefore, 24 pulses elapse for every beat, and consequently 96 pulses (4 times 24) would elapse during one

Fig. 1 Typical Clock Pulse



measure (4 beats) of 4/4 music. Unfortunately, though, different units have different clock rates. Common rates are 24 ppqn (used by Roland, E-mu, Sequential Circuits, and Korg), 48 ppqn (favored by Linn), and 96 ppqn (the Oberheim standard). The Fairlight CMI requires a 384 ppqn clock, and older PPGs 64 ppqn.

If an Oberheim device provides the master clock that feeds a Roland drum machine and Oberheim sequencer, there's a problem; the sequencer will advance 1/96th of a beat every time it counts a clock pulse, but the drum machine (which works on a 24 ppqn standard) will advance 1/24th of a beat for each clock pulse received. Therefore, during the time it takes for the sequencer to play one beat (96 pulses), the drum machine will have played an entire measure. Fortunately, there are a number of adapter boxes from J.L. Cooper Electronics, Garfield Electronics, Korg, Roland, etc. to synchronize machines with different ppqn requirements.

Before going any further, let's explain why these particular numbers were chosen. The reason we want these pulses is to *trigger events*—perhaps a drum beat on a drum machine, or to advance a sequencer to a particular note. Therefore, we have to make sure that wherever we might want to trigger an event, a pulse will be there to provide the trigger. For example, if we only need to trigger an event on every beat, a 1 ppqn system works just fine. But suppose we want to trigger an event on every eighth note. We would then need a 2 ppqn system in order to provide a suitable trigger pulse in between the quarter notes. Every time we increase the number of clock pulses per quarter note, we increase the *resolution*—the ability of the drum machine or sequencer to program "detailed" rhythms. With a 4 ppqn system events can occur every 16th note, and to trigger 32nd notes, an 8 ppqn system would do since there are eight 32nd notes to every quarter note.

But what about triplets? Unfortunately, 8 ppqn is not divisible by three. After a little bit of research, some companies figured 24 ppqn was the best way to go, as this accommodates up to 32nd notes and 32nd note triplets (Fig. 3). As the figure shows, no matter where you want to trigger a sound—up to 64th note triplets—there will be a corresponding trigger at that point.

By the way, a clock can do more than just feed drum machines and sequencers; for example, my "Master Synchronizer" derives trigger pulses at regular rates (quarter note, eighth note, sixteenth note, triplets, etc.) from a 24 ppqn clock. These triggers can drive synthesizer arpeggiators, play individual electronic drum sounds, switch effects on and off, etc. The concept that a master timing track can provide information for all kinds of other uses is an important one, as we'll see later when we get into SMPTE time code.

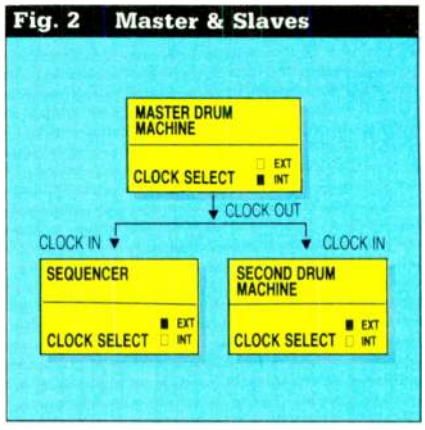
For live music, we have all we need: Upon starting the master, the slaves will count along with the master and stay in sync. But some problems remain. What about synchronizing overdubs to tape? And starting these devices in the *middle* of a song? And what about synchronizing audio to video? Read on...

Sync to Tape

Suppose you record a rhythm machine track on tape, then several overdubs later decide to overdub another rhythm machine part. If the overdub machine's tempo is *identical* to the tempo of the original part, and if you start the overdubbed part at *exactly* the same time as the previously recorded part, there is a slim possibility that the two will stay in sync long enough to record the overdub. However, if the tape speed varies even a little bit, or you nudge the tempo knob on the drum machine...end of overdub session. The solution is to *record the master clock signal on tape*, and then while overdubbing, slave all devices to this pre-recorded clock signal. (Note: The signal coming from the tape is not sufficiently clean for most purposes, so this approach requires some signal conditioning in order to turn the taped signal into a waveform suitable for use as a clock signal. Devices with sync-to-tape include such a conditioner.) As with our previous examples, all devices must start at the beginning of the tune. One master clock pulse looks like any other to the slaves, so the slaves have no way of knowing whether the pulse currently being received is the 10th or 10000th...unless, of course, they started counting these pulses from the very first pulse. What this means is that if you want to overdub the last two measures of a song, you still have to start at the beginning and amuse yourself until the last two measures roll by.

Unfortunately, recording a clock pulse on tape is not particularly reliable. After shuttling tape around for a while, occasionally some tape oxide will shed off and create a dropout, thus eliminating a pulse or two from the click track.

Fig. 2 Master & Slaves



If you try to overdub an instrument to this messed up click track, sync will not be maintained with tracks which had been synched to the click track before the dropout occurred.

Many manufacturers chose *FSK synchronization* as a more reliable sync-to-tape method. Instead of simply recording on-off clock pulses on tape, this sync system shifts between two different frequencies (hence the term Frequency Shift Keying). Tape is much happier recording alternating audio tones than clock pulses, and this system is also somewhat less sensitive to dropouts. Unfortunately, each manufacturer has their own standard. So, if you put a Linn sync track down on tape, you cannot sync a Roland or Oberheim drum unit to that same track. However, since many units have external clock outputs and inputs, you can do some roundabout tricks. For example, a drum unit could sync to the FSK track, then its clock output could drive another unit's clock input (see Fig. 4). Still, you

could run into the problem where one unit requires a different clock rate from another.

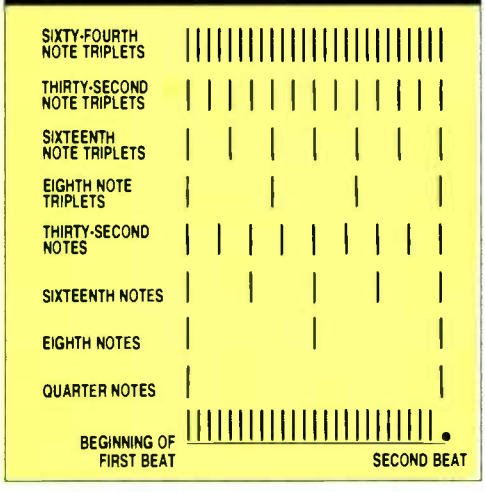
When enough musicians get frustrated, someone else sees a product: about the same time I designed the Master Synchronizer for budget sync applications, Garfield Electronics introduced the Doctor Click for high-end sync applications. Intended as a universal clock transmitter/receiver/translator, Doctor Click lets you take a sync track (recorded on tape or "live") and translate it to just about any other format. You could even take a "click track" (metronome signal recorded on tape) and synthesize a sync track at the proper rate—24, 48, or 96 ppqn.

Although problem solver boxes such as the Doctor Click were very useful, they were still band-aid solutions: The underlying problem, lack of standards and design incompatibility, remained...thus giving impetus to MIDI's creation.

MIDI Synchronization

MIDI, a computer "language" designed to allow computer-controlled instruments to communicate with each other, was designed to handle system synchronization as well as functions such as note messages, instrument dynamics, etc. MIDI specifies a 24 ppqn clock system, so that means no more incompatible clock rates between manufacturers. MIDI also provides several other timing related "messages" that can be exchanged between machines (typically from the master to the slave). These include:

Fig. 3 Note Resolutions in 24 ppqn



Start. When the master transmits a start message over MIDI (usually initiated by pressing the Play switch), all slaves instantly reset themselves to the beginning of the song and start counting along with the MIDI clock signal.

Stop. When the master transmits a stop message, everything stops counting.

Continue. Continue tells the slaves to pick up from wherever they were when the stop message was sent.

Song Position Pointer. A MIDI sequencer or drum machine can keep track of how many measures (up to a maximum of 16384 measures) have elapsed since the sequence was started. This is a very powerful feature: For example, suppose that a sequencer capable of sending measure information feeds a drum machine capable of receiving measure information. If you select a certain measure number on the master as the start point, both units will automatically position themselves at the beginning of that measure. Tell them to start by pushing the Play button, and they will start together from the same measure and count at the same rate. Once started, they remain in sync by virtue of being driven by the same timing reference.

A word of caution: Remember that not all MIDI instruments include the same complement of features, so some slaves may not be able to accept song position pointer data. Make sure you check units for compatibility (refer to each device's MIDI Implementation Sheet) before expecting to use them in a system context.

Synchronizing MIDI Devices to Tape

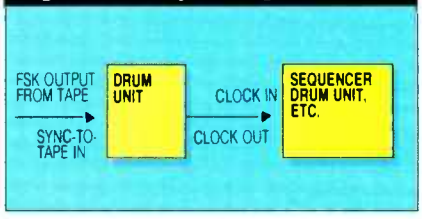
Synchronizing MIDI devices, especially sequencers, to tape gives amazing flexibility: You can record electronic MIDI instruments on the MIDI sequencer and acoustic instruments on the multi-track recorder, then during mixdown synchronize the two together to obtain more tracks than you could have from the tape recorder alone. The tracks recorded in the sequencer are often called "virtual tracks," since they fulfill the exact same function as tracks recorded on tape—yet are not recorded on tape.

Many sequencers have sync-to-tape facilities built-in, which certainly makes life convenient. In fact, for most synchronization applications, the sequencer's sync-to-tape is all you'll ever need. These days, though, life does not involve only audio; there's also video, and we might want to sync a sequencer, audio recorder, and video recorder together...which brings us to SMPTE (Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers) time code.

All about SMPTE

Although we've already covered several timing standards, for most professional videotape editing and multitrack synchronization applications SMPTE time code is the sync standard of choice. Originally developed by NASA as a means of accurately logging data, SMPTE time code labels each frame of a videotape or film by recording a unique piece of digital data on that frame. For American (NTSC standard) television and video, each second of SMPTE time code is divided into 30 frames (the standard number of frames that pass by in one second of video; the standard frame rate for film is 24 frames per second, and for European television and video, 25 frames per second). Each frame is further divided into 80 subframes, with each subframe being a little less than half a millisecond long. A typical time code location might be 00:10:08:29:(76), which you would read as 00 hours, 10 minutes, 8 seconds, 29 frames, and 76 subframes into the videotape. SMPTE also provides for "user bits" so that users can include custom pieces of data in the time code.

Fig. 4 FSK Synching to Tape



The SMPTE time code emanating from a SMPTE generator can be recorded onto one track of tape, thus serving the function of a super-accurate index counter. Instead of having to rely on some external mechanical thing that slips and has no real relationship to the tape, timing information is preserved *on the tape itself*. This data can then be played back into a SMPTE time code reader which precisely identifies where you are on the tape. SMPTE time code not only helps synchronize audio to video, but can also synchronize two or more audio recorders together—as well as some other tricks that we'll mention later on.

The best news for musicians is that there are now several SMPTE-to-MIDI synchronizers that correlate MIDI song position data to SMPTE time code readings. For example, suppose that measure 16 of a song (which marks, say, the beginning of the chorus) starts at SMPTE 00:00:45:(10), and measure 24 (which marks the beginning of the second verse) starts at SMPTE 00:01:10:(15). If you roll tape starting at 00:00:45:(10), the synchronizer box will send out MIDI data that tells the slave units to start at measure 24. Of course,

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starting the tape in different places will send out different song position information. Therefore, you can roll tape at any point and within a fraction of a second, any sequencer or drum machine that responds to song position pointer information will "know" where it should be in the sequence relative to the time code, and start playing at that measure.

Usually the beginning of the SMPTE time code is not at the same point as the beginning of the composition, since it's good practice to include an "electronic leader" of time code (when synchronizing tape machines, this gives plenty of time for them to overcome any mechanical inertia and sync up). To compensate for this leader, as well as to overcome other problems, most synchronizers (such as Roland's SBX-80) include *offset registers* which will cause MIDI timing information to start only when the SMPTE reader reaches a specified number.

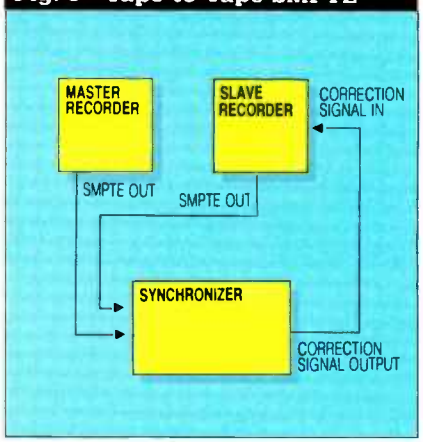
Of course, you don't always need fancy tools to perform SMPTE-to-MIDI sync. As mentioned in the August issue of *Musician*, Frank Serafine synchronizes SMPTE and MIDI by simply recording two sync tracks, one with MIDI timing information and one with SMPTE timing information, on adjacent tracks of a multi-track recorder. Thus, the two timing tracks are always in sync with each other, and he can relate the MIDI timing information to SMPTE timing information recorded on the next track over. This approach does use up two tracks, but is very reliable and saves the cost of a synchronizer box.

So now our MIDI system is synched up to SMPTE...but there's more.

SMPTE-Reading Instruments

Some instruments can optionally bypass MIDI and sync directly to SMPTE. E-mu's Emulator II, for example, can both read and write SMPTE time code as well as follow MIDI timing messages. You can specify a sequence start point in SMPTE time code, which is of tremendous use in video work: Suppose you're adding one minute worth of sound effects in the middle of a video—say, starting at SMPTE time code 01:05:10:(77)—and you have the Emulator synched up to the SMPTE time code recorded on the video's control track. You can sample the needed sound effects into the Emulator II, start the sequencer at SMPTE 01:05:10:(77), then play each sound effect into the sequencer while watching the video action. Rewind the video to just before the start point, enter the SMPTE time code value where you want the sequencer to start playback—in this case, SMPTE 01:05:10:(77)—and what the sequence plays will be in sync with the visuals.

Fig. 5 Tape to Tape SMPTE



The Emulator II also provides a sort of "chase" function. If you roll tape and the SMPTE time code is prior to the sequencer start point, the Emulator II will wait for the tape to catch up. If the SMPTE time code is later than the sequencer start point the Emulator II will "fast-forward" through its sequence in order to catch up to the time code.

SMPTE Tape Control

SMPTE can also help automate tape control functions. For example, the SMPL system from Synchronous Technologies lets you specify punch-in and punch-out points in relation to SMPTE time code. Thus, once you've entered the punch-in and punch-out time code values, SMPL takes over from there. SMPL also allows for auto-location. If you want to go to the tape position indicated by time code 00:05:12:13 (the basic SMPL system doesn't use subframes), SMPL will first put the recorder into play and read the time code to determine the present position of the tape. Next, SMPL will use its knowledge of the transport mechanics to rewind or fast forward to within a few seconds of the auto-locate point, and then "park" within 15 to 29 frames prior to the specified auto-locate point. For use with master clock based systems, SMPL will also provide a 24, 48, or 96 ppqn signal synchronized to SMPTE. This signal always begins on the next metronome beat following a cue point (specified with SMPTE time code) to maintain rhythmic consistency. (Note: A chase lock accessory adds SMPTE-to-MIDI translation and machine-to-machine synchronization, our next section.

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FIGHTING MIKE FRIGHT! PART ONE

—

How to get your mikes to do things even the big-time engineers haven't thought of—by intensive listening.

By Freff

You can try and try, but there's no escape. Short of totally consecrating your heart to the purity of synths and samplers, sooner or later in home recording you'll have to wrestle acoustic tracks onto tape. Which means microphones. Which means getting funky, sometimes *very* funky. But for me and a lot of other recording fanatics, it's well worth it. In the next two installments of this series, we'll be talking about making microphones work for you and your music, trying to take a bit of fear out of [*cue scream*] Mike Fright.

Rarely is an individual engineer's choice of mikes based on a solid, intimate understanding of a wide number of mikes and their working characters. Instead, these crucial choices come from a mix of Common Gospel, Word of Mouth, Inertia, and The Latest Greatest Thing. Like so:

Common Gospel: "Hey man, like *everybody* knows that AKG 414's are really good but they make everything sound kind of the same, you know?"

Word Of Mouth: "Really. PZMs for the bass drum. Check it out."

Inertia: "The AKG C-451 is what I use for close-miking acoustic guitar. Period. It works. Why mess with success?"

The Latest Greatest Thing: "They got that killer crash cymbal on Johnny Do It's hit single by dropping a U-87 on the cymbal from a biplane. That's for me, man. Book me a biplane."

But if you want to do more than just get by, if you want to be truly creative, then you are going to have to really know the mikes at your disposal—inside and out. Set them up and listen, listen, listen. Nothing more, nothing less. Ironically, this kind of devoted study is easier for amateur and semi-pro engineers than it is for full-time professionals; partially because amateurs have less to unlearn, fewer accumulated "facts" to discard, but mostly because the pros *rarely have the time*. The goods must be delivered in a steady and predictable fashion, so the budget for experimentation is usually low. A home recordist may have only one decent mike (if that), but he or she has the time to try any and everything.

What should you be listening for, and how? You're listening for differences. That's all. What each mike sounds like in contrast with the original sound, other mikes, or even the same mike in a different position or with a different setting. First, get a sound source that is relatively stationary in space and consistent in volume, timbre, and frequency. If you don't have friends you can call in and exhaust on your behalf, go with artificial aids: synthesizer sequencer patterns, drum machines, cassette tapes. Keep your choices simple at first: One lone snare cracking away in a low 4/4 is better than a whole drumkit. A solo guitar tape beats a recording of a symphony.

Second, listen with your own ears until you feel really familiar with your chosen sound source. Try and find specific words to describe the quality and character of its sound. WRITE THEM DOWN. That's critical.

Now plug in your mike(s). In a normal setup, where the control room and studio per se are separate, there are three basic places to tap the microphone signal (the input track on your mixing board, the record head on your tape deck, the tape itself) and two ways to listen (studio monitors, headphones). Mix and match as you will. Listen to the microphone signal carefully at each tap. Get to know each the same way you got to know the direct, un-miked sound source. Go from one tap to another, comparing. Write your conclusions down and then change something in the equation—sound source, mike, mike position, mike setting—and go through it again. And again.

In a one-room studio, like mine, you won't be able to use the studio monitors without disastrous feedback, so you'll have to listen strictly through headphones, and inevitably you'll be hearing the direct sound source and the mike signal at the same time. There are no great solutions. The best you can do is minimize the sound pollution by wearing the most form-fitting, airtight set of earphones you can buy, and trade off some comfort for greater accuracy.

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Of course, the test as described doesn't have to stop at this simple level. You can rig as many mikes, or sets of mikes, as you see fit, and directly compare the sound of their outputs. You can try esoteric combinations of microphones; weird mixes of close and far miking; moving sound sources; oddball mike placement (the ceiling, the floor, under a hat, at the end of a cardboard tube). You can run long cables and put your mikes in normal everyday rooms and hallways, all of which have their own characteristics, and none of which have anything to do with the artificial perfection of a studio. You can exhaustively study a mike's output with a spectrum analyzer, or prowl through it band by band with parametric and graphic equalizers. If you're courageous and careful you can even deliberately push things to the bare edge of feedback. Anything goes, *as long as you listen and remember* (the last part of which is why you should always keep pen and paper handy).

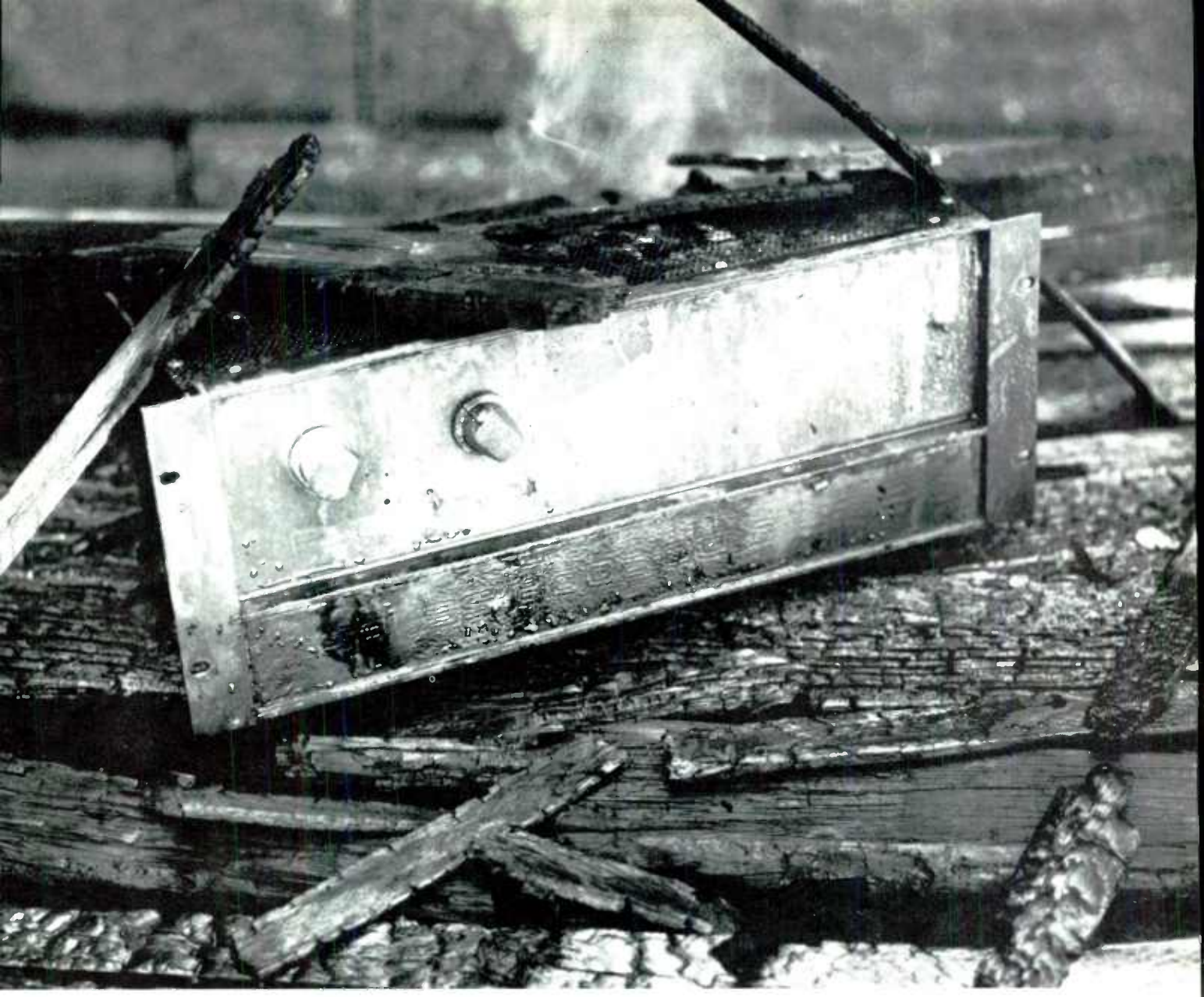
My personal favorite is to put the mike on the end of a boom and move it around myself, while listening over headphones. In a sense you become the microphone for a time, and there is no better way to learn how subtle changes of position can radically change a sound. You can do that with stereo pairs, too, if you've got the right clamps and poles. For mobile experimenting, microphone shock mounts are definitely recommended.

There's nothing you can't fake in a small studio. Take the challenge of the Big Ambient Room sound—well, these days it rarely comes from a big, ambient room. Instead, it comes in a box: run some close-miked signals through a good digital reverb, and bingo. Still, you can pull off a good approximation without digital reverb. The game is to fool the ear of the eventual listener by fooling the microphone. For us, the perceived size of a room is a psychoacoustic impression based on hearing thousands of closely-packed echoes; subtle differences in their duration, phase and frequency content give us the sonic clues that build a sense of space. A microphone's more limited sensibility, spacially, makes it possible to create a passable illusion in the listener's mind.

Here are just a few possibilities, to get your own imagination going.

- Place highly reflective surfaces at different distances from the original sound source, and close mike each one with a good cardioid microphone. By varying things—panel size, panel angle and distance from the source, mike angle and distance from the panel, surface texture of the panels, relative mix levels of the mike signals—you can create different reverberation effects.
- As above, but use bidirectional microphones placed between two panels, thus focusing continuing reflections toward the mike. Curved shapes would work well here.
- Muck about with the overall room reflectivity. Deaden some walls by hanging absorptive fabrics like burlap or curtain material. Brighten others with glass, plastic, polished wood, aluminum foil, or what have you. The brighter walls will seem closer than the deadened ones, and the effects of mike choice, placement and angle will be intensified.
- Cheat. Use a real room, if you have to. Run a mike to some other room, pipe in the sound source over a speaker, then record the source up close and the room ambience separately. It doesn't have to be a big room to give a big effect; just knock down the speaker's volume, or go a step further and put the ambience mike in a different room than the speaker. The key here is just get something happening that can be blended in.
- An approach from further out. Shove your mike into something that will really resonate with the sound source, the way sea shells do. Hell—shove a good directional mike up against the mouth of

continued on page 122



In the early morning hours of November 15, 1984 tragedy struck the Bethany Lutheran Church of Cherry Hills, Colorado. A faulty electric organ was blamed for a multiple alarm fire that claimed much of the structure. Thankfully no one was injured in the blaze that caused over one million dollars in damage.

In the ensuing clean-up operation a Crown amplifier was discovered under charred timbers. Owing to the intense heat of the fire the chassis had warped and the AC cord was a puddle of wire and rubber.

The amplifier found its way to John Sego at Listen Up, Inc. of Denver. Armed with insatiable curiosity and a knowledge of Crown dependability John installed a new AC cord and proceeded to verify operation on the test bench. The amplifier met factory specifications in all functions.

In the photo above we offer you another glowing report of Crown durability.

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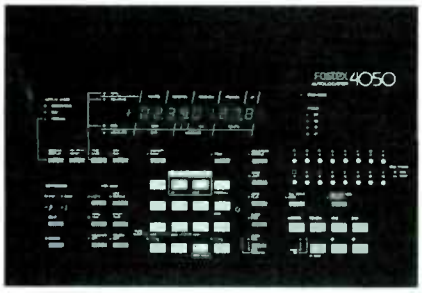
DEVELOPMENTS

Synching Up, Software Revisions & other A.E.S. Surprises

By Jock Baird

What's the magic word for October's A.E.S. show in New York? SMPTE, if you call that a word. The big recording equipment manufacturers are taking the plunge into synchronizer/autolocator units that can do audio-to-video editing, lock two multi-tracks together, or give pinpoint tape handling capability. **Studer/Revox's** entry is called the TLS 4000; it is modular and rack-mounted, comprised of a basic "black box" unit and one of two Local Control Units, one fairly basic, the other with more display capability and Wait Lock, Slew Mode, Loop, and Cue & Go-To functions. **Otari** is promising a syncro-surprise of its own.



$1,250 Fostex 4050

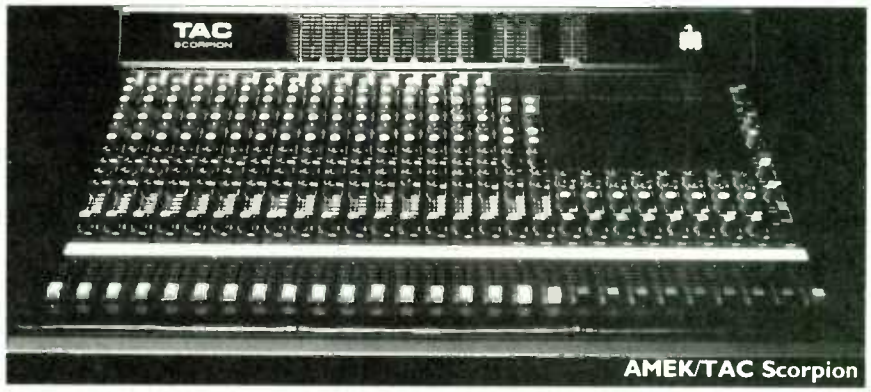
But for those with reduced budgets, there's still good news: **Fostex** has brought out two incredibly affordable units. The first is comprised of the Model 4030, a rack-mount brain which offers hundredths of a frame resolution and has a serial interface for external computer, and a remote controller called the Model 4035 which can run one master and three slaves, has ten auto-locate positions, programmable punch in/out, zone limits to keep you from unwinding your tape, and ninety-nine seconds of pre-roll time. The two modules sell for $2000 together, and the software can be quickly modified to run **Otari**, **MCI**, **Studer** and **Tascam** decks. But if even that seems too steep, check out the Fostex Model 4050: for a laughable $1250, the 4050 generates and reads SMPTE code and synchronizes it to MIDI, enabling you to control synths and drum boxes through any sequencer, changing tempos and rhythms as you go. It stores MIDI info, or lets you dump any MIDI and locate positions to tape. As an auto-locator the 4050 does everything the 4035 does, and its software can be similarly modified to other companies' decks.

Soundcraft Series 200B console

SMPTE is also bringing new 2-track mastering decks into the fray, since a third, center track for time code means you don't have to use one of your main tracks. **Otari** will be unveiling one such deck, a top-of-the-liner up near fifteen Gs. **Studer** recently brought out the $9900 A820. Microprocessor-based sub-systems allow software control of all transport (preferably by a Studer TLS 4000) and it's packed with natty little extras like dual thumbwheels for microscopic edits, dual stepping motors on the pinch roller, four, count 'em, four speeds, and ultra-techy phase-compensated amplifier circuitry. There's also a digital memory for storing audio parameters. Or how about the new **Sony** APR-5000, with its sporty, LeMans-like off axis tape tension system for jam-tight tape handling.

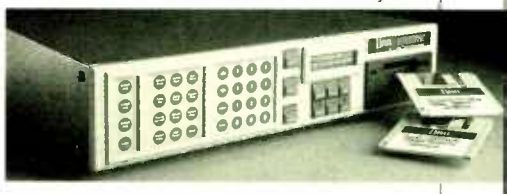
One of the most exciting 2-track mastering options for the financially handicapped also comes from **Sony**: It's a scaled-down version of the F1 called the PCM-501. Using pulse code modulation, it digitally encodes an analog audio signal into a format that can be recorded by a video cassette recorder. That means a digital master, with CD-quality noise specs. How much does it sell for? Are you sitting down? $795. Bet you're sitting down now. We're having Freff run a PCM-501 through a battery of different VCRs, and shortly we'll bring you the test results.

Some blue-chip mixing console makers are heating up the home/semi-pro sweepstakes. One is a British firm, **AMEK**, who makes a gorgeous high-end board called the Angela. They've recently debuted the TAC Scorpion, an expandable line of desks that starts at six grand for a 16x8x2 with 8-track monitoring, and then offers more input and different subgroup modules for more flexibility. The basic TAC Scorpion has 4-band eq with swept mids and selectable turnover points, four aux sends and two assignable aux returns, and fader reverse function metering with switchable peak/VU ballistics. TAC/AMEK also offers a 28x12 Scorpion it claims is the lowest cost full 24-track unit available.



AMEK/TAC Scorpion

Soundcraft really brought out the Series 200 a while back, but they've done such a complete remake of the update, the Series 200B, that it's almost a new board. Cosmetically it has a raven gray facias and a low-profile slanted body. Electronically it has a lot more headroom, internal switching for +10 to -4 db sensitivity, a built-in electret mike for talkback, and improved patching capability. An 8/4 standard Series 200B is $2500; a 16/4 is $3750; a 24/4 is $5250. Soundcraft, incidentally, just delivered a TS 24 32-channel board to Prince. Then there's **Soundtracs**, an upwardly mobile British firm that not



32-track LinnSequencer

It can sound like anything from a jazz combo to a rock band. And record like a multi-track studio.

Introducing the Technics SX-K350 PCM keyboard.

The peal of a trumpet. The whisper of a flute. The rhythm of percussion.

These PCM sounds, and more, are all at your fingertips. Because they're all stored in the memory of the new Technics SX-K350 portable keyboard with MIDI capability.

And to mix everything together, the SX-K350 features a 4-channel play sequencer that's like a multi-track recorder. With it you can play and record solo presets, bass lines and separate left and right voices on four tracks. Then play back one track or any combination of tracks simultaneously with your live performance.

And with the MIDI terminals you can interface with up to 16 other MIDI keyboards, an external sequencer or even a computer. Which means the SX-K350 can handle the demands of today's music. And tomorrow's.

The Technics SX-K350 keyboard. It can take your music as far as your imagination will go. Maybe even further.

Technics

The science of sound

Developments from page 96

only got Pete Townshend to purchase one of their 16-8-16s for his home studio, but got him to pay list price for it.

Another A.E.S. buzzword will be "software updates." Makers of professional digital reverbs are announcing new programs that can be loaded into existing units, making them right up to date again. The **Lexicon** Model 200 is a typical example, with two of its existing four programs improved and two all-new ones, "Rich Split" and "Inverse Room" added (naming reverb patches may become a growth industry). The **Klark-Tekniks** DN780 reverb/processor got a similar shot in the arm, and also added memory-protect and remote control features. In the less rarefied price ranges, a company called **Applied Research & Technology** is updating the software for the 01A, one of the very first digital reverbs below $1500. ART (formerly MXR) is also releasing a new software-based 16-bit reverb, the DR1.

Speaking of software, **Linn Electronics** took the 32-track sequencer/keyboard recorder section of the Linn 9000 and made it available as a separate rack-mounted, disk-drive-equipped unit for under $2000 (without the drive, it's $1300). With 100,000 notes of RAM storage and sixteen MIDI channels, the new LinnSequencer also has a remote control operation option that most MIDI musicians will find long overdue. (The operating system from the 9000, by the way, is one of the most idiot-friendly in computerdom.)

Beyond the land of the burgeoning digital reverbs, other outboard action includes three new affordable graphic equalizers from **Rane** that utilize their constant bandwidth technology. One is the 30-band, ⅓-octave GE 30, which takes two rack spaces and lists for $700. Then there are two micrographic eq's at around $350: the ME 30 is a single-channel ⅓-octave unit in one rack space, while the ME 15 is a ⅔-octave, dual-channel unit. To fine tune on that short slider throw, there's a range function switch that goes from ± 6 dB to ± 12 dB sensitivity.

Valley People added a Dynamic Sibilance Processor (selectively getting rid of escesssssssive s's) to their new compressor/limiter, the Model 440. There are some impressive design innovations aboard, including Linear Integration Detection to emulate the human ear's response, Peak Reversion Correction to compensate for discrimination against low frequencies, and Anticipatory Release Computation that eliminates "pumping" and distortion when using short release times. This is a lot of outboard gear for $600—nice panel, too. **Furman** also got into the act with its LC-X expander/compressor/limiter. Listing for $450, the LC-X has "soft knee" action in its compression/expansion section, and is based on a single high-performance VCA that uses Furman's own Thermal Null System to correct for voltage offset and minimize crossover distortion. (The LC-X also deesses, but at the expense of the expander section.)

So you want to know what that futuristic-looking acoustical foam material that is suddenly turning up everywhere is (for instance, in the ads for the Emulator II)? It's called **SONEX**, does not cost a bundle, and it really works. How do we know? We've been using it in our proofreaders' offices for three years now, and it silences their screams wonderfully. Ask **Alpha Audio** at 2049 West Broad St., Richmond, VA 23220 to tell you more, (804) 358-3852.

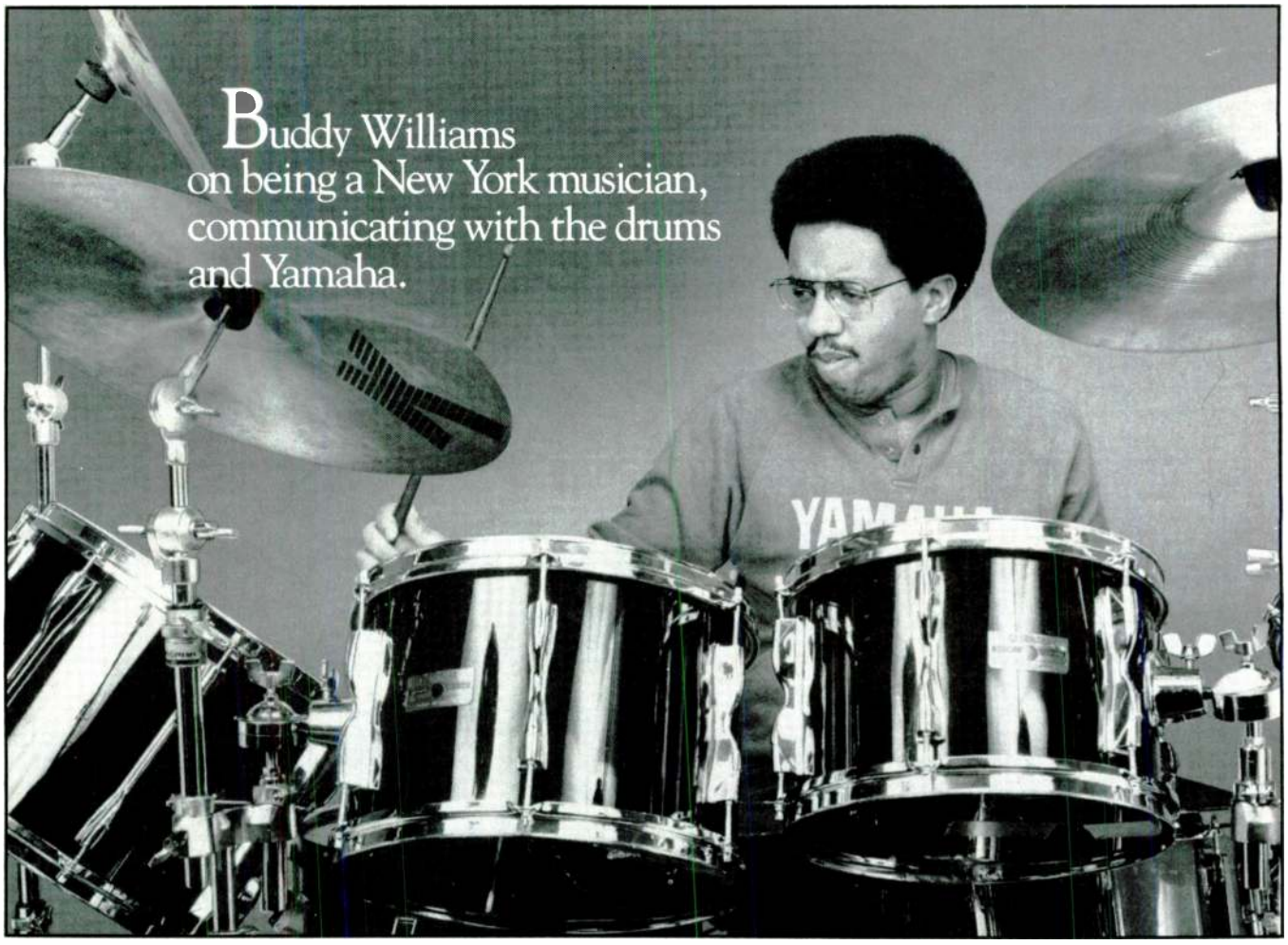
It's about time dept.: **Craig Anderton**'s *Digital Delay Handbook*, an eminently usable introduction to an indispensable item of equipment. Personally I would've liked to see one of Craig's classic "great-explainer" overviews before he plunged right into his fave patches, but otherwise the book is terrific. It's available from Music Sales Corporation, 24 East 22nd St., New York, NY 10010.Ⓜ

Forsey from page 85

Steve and I do a lot more than we actually do. It starts to get my tits up. Seventy percent of the music is Billy Idol. We call him 'the Punk Police'; he goes, 'That sucks...we can't do that...that's too ordinary...that's too shitty.' He directs what should be happening and I feed off that. I try to stay out of their face—I don't want anything of me getting through there at all. My job is to be the mirror."

Aptly enough, *Mirror Moves*, Psych Furs' '84 LP, was his next production. Given how easily Forsey hardened Idol's sound, it was surprising to hear him smoothing the Furs in comparison with their early tracks with Steve Lillywhite. "Those were hard and raw," Forsey says. "Richard Butler would get drunk and sing the track once and that was it. But they were great records, the best records they made, because they were a full band. I don't think we got full Psychedelic Furs because they were dispersed—(drummer) Vince Ely had left and Richard moved to New York while (guitarist) John Ashton was living in London. We had a good relationship and it would have been a good first step. We learned a lot about each other. Unfortunately, I couldn't make their new record with them."

Forsey was already busy working on soundtracks. His film experience with



"I'm proud to say that I'm a New York musician. My day will consist of a 10, 11 or one o'clock jingle, an afternoon rehearsal for somebody's concert and then I'll either play a club that night or 'Saturday Night Live.' That's four different styles in four different worlds."

"I'm a team person when I play. I don't feel that the band revolves around *me*. If my part doesn't fit in with the rest of the rhythm section, then I'm not making it. I'm not happy.

"I hear these sounds in my head that should go inside the music, the overall sound that we're trying to get across. As musicians, we're trying to *communicate*. If I'm not communicating with the other guys or I'm not feeling right within the music, then we're not getting it over."

"The sound of Yamaha drums are the closest to the sounds I hear inside my head. They let me get across what I hear and what I feel needs to be inside the music. Sometimes I have to hit 'em real hard for loud situations and I know they'll be there. They're dependable. When I played with Roberta Flack, I had to be sensitive enough to do "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" and still get the part across. These Yamahas let me do that.

"Yamaha drums are very personal to me. I've always felt they were the last of the hand made drums. I went to Japan and visited their factory and they wanted to hear my ideas because I was a drummer who played their instrument.

"I don't know what Yamaha's formula is and I don't want to know. I just play 'em, I'm not in the business of making them. I just know they're more *applicable* for what I do than anything else on the market, and I get to play a lot of different drums.

"Sometimes I'll walk into a studio and have to play other drums, but I'll always ask for Yamaha. I was on the road with Dave Sanborn last year and I had to use a straight-out-of-the-box Tour Series set in an emergency and it worked out fine."

"I think of my drums as my 'kids.' Very rarely do I let other people play them unless it's unavoidable, a bottom line situation. Me and my kids have to lock up and have an understanding. It's a *feel*."

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

YAMAHA

Moroder led to his first scoring assignment, *The Breakfast Club*. As executive producer, Forsey had broad control over the artist selections; he miraculously turned Wang Chung and Karla DeVito into rockers and saved Joyce Kennedy from the death grip of Jeffrey Osborne. Forsey also wrote the single "Don't You (Forget About Me)," which shot to #1 and became the first American hit for Simple Minds, one of his favorite bands. A fulfilling experience?

"I hated it," he grimaces. "Movie people suck. When I make a record, it's just me and the band. In a movie, you've got producers saying, 'I think Corey Hart should sing this song.'" Forsey snickers and shoots a middle finger at the invisible studio execs. "We were in London ready to record Simple Minds and they were still bitching. Why Simple Minds? Because of the feel of the music and the feel of the movie. But they were looking for a vehicle to sell the movie.

"They didn't show me too much of the film, but one of the shots I saw was the one guy [Anthony Michael Hall, the class geek] saying, 'When we meet in the schoolyard tomorrow, are you going to remember me?' That's what gave me the idea. The title came first, then the mood. The song was actually written for Bryan Ferry, who is one of my favorites. The feel lent itself to his style."

Forsey was also involved in another soundtrack smash, *Beverly Hills Cop*. Forsey co-produced Patti Labelle's "Stir It Up" with ex-bandmate Harold Faltermeyer, who he calls "the only guy I'd ever consider co-producing a record with." He and Faltermeyer (who had his own hit with the instrumental "Axel F") also co-authored "The Heat Is On," which did much to revive Glenn Frey.

The constancy between Forsey's productions is more of a style than a sound. "What I go for, on all the records I make, is strict groove underneath with raunchy guitars on top and the personality of the vocalist. I like to make a real rough, tacky demo at home, to get the form and the mood of the song, and then go in the studio and cut it for real right away, to get as much excitement as possible. Whatever happens, you're free to jump on it. You make a mistake and it turns out great."

The clarity of his records, he insists, has little to do with technology. "There are no tricks involved. It's just choice of parts and choice of frequency between the instruments. As you're overdubbing, you have to be aware of the space it's taking up. Each instrument should have personality. When I first went into the studio, I thought a producer had to know the desk, the eqs.

Finally—A miniature mic that won't miniaturize sound.

It's not hard to make a very small condenser microphone. But it *is* hard to build one that duplicates the low noise, frequency response and SPL capability of larger condenser mics. This is just what the Shure SM98 does. It's the first truly professional miniature condenser instrument mic.

The SM98 incorporates not one, but several design innovations. By integrating the cartridge capsule with the outer case, the SM98 provides a nearly ideal polar pattern for better isolation and smoother frequency response for more natural sound.

The SM98 also features a specially designed five-stage pre-amp that gives you all the signal you need for pure, uncolored sound reproduction. You'll be delighted with the extra "headroom."

Then there are some nice extras, like a detachable cable at the mic end to simplify teardown.

We knew it wouldn't be easy to make a great miniature condenser mic. But barriers are made to be broken, aren't they?

For more information on the SM98, write or call Shure Brothers Inc., 222 Hartrey Avenue, Evanston, IL 60202-3696. (312) 866-2553.

SHURE

Breaking Sound Barriers

Forsey from page 100

Later on I realized I don't have to know anything except how good the band is. All the other stuff is irrelevant."

A punk at heart, Forsey values emotion over execution. "There's a lot of stuff I hear that isn't sincere. I don't hear people crying behind a sad line or laughing behind a funny one." He jumps up to play a rough mix of a new Billy Idol song, "All Summer Single." "Very August, isn't it?" Forsey shouts over the booming bass. "That's so Idol—all steamy and heavy."

Forsey's conviction that long-term producer/artist relationships are the most fruitful is borne out by his work with Idol. "I need the band to say, 'Come on in,' to trust me and not to look at me as the record company man. After one album, the band knows they can trust me and I'm not just there for the money. I need the band to love me, to let me join the band."

Forsey's notion of the perfect artist-producer relationship indicates some lingering nostalgia for the fraternity of band life. Might he be lured back by an Amon Duul II reunion or the chance to form his own band? "No way." He recoils as though a flock of film executives had appeared on the couch. "I don't want to be a star. I just want to be a producer." Ⓜ

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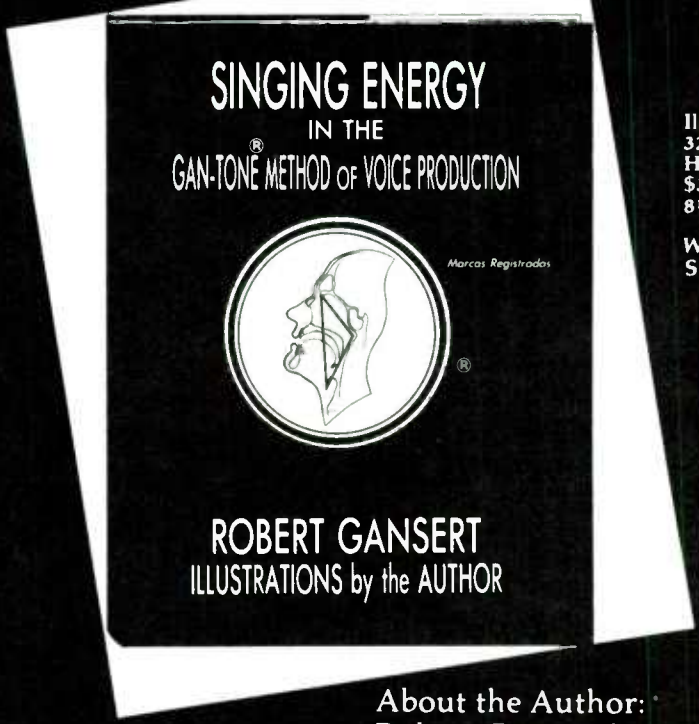

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Robert Gansert has been a performing vocalist for over twenty years, and has been featured in numerous concerts and recordings. His work has been internationally acclaimed. He is currently a noted instructor at the Carnegie Hall studios.

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NONESUCH RECORDS

FALL • 1985

*Chicago Tribune. January 16, 1983

Joni looks at dogs from both sides now coyotes to curs to sheepskin wolves

JONI MITCHELL

Dog Eat Dog
(Geffen)

Joni Mitchell has always been an anomaly. During the politically-charged 60s she made her mark as an incisive confessional poet; a few years later, when confessional songwriters began breeding like rabbits, Joni turned toward jazz, that most macho of musical genres. Now that romantic pop is in, it's only fitting that she should emerge with a record that's as politically and spiritually righteous as any by a major artist since the death of Bob Marley. The sound is still Joni Mitchell's, but the sentiments are pure Joan of Arc.

Framed by songs about friendship and love ("Good Friends" and "Lucky Girl"), *Dog Eat Dog* is really a record about social darwinism, and how that philosophy poisons hearts, our nation, and planet. The hypocrisy of religious evangelists who preach militarism in God's name is bluntly exposed on "Tax Free" (which features a guest sermon by Rod Steiger) while the more somber—and effective—ballad "Ethiopia" draws lucid connections between a drought-stricken country "abandoned by the rains," the "shortsighted greed" that produces "the whine of chainsaws hacking rainforests down" and a media that turns calamity into a circus ("A TV star with a PR smile/ Calls your baby 'it'/ While strolling through your tragic trials"). At moments like these Mitchell's outrage is nearly palpable; so is her resignation, which makes her plaint that much more moving. And it seems fitting that the woman who set "Woodstock" in context fifteen years ago should, in the wake of Live Aid, do the same for "Ethiopia" today.

Equally effective is the style she's chosen for these sonic sermons; *Dog Eat Dog* is an LP awash in programmed synths and drum samples. And it works. Like Thomas Dolby, who not so co-incidentally co-produced the record and plays on several tracks, Joni has learned how to make electronics complement rather than replace emotional vulnerability; the music seems contemporary but never cold. A metallic, chugging rhythm does come in handy on "Fiction," a song about the possibilities of paralysis in an over-stimulated culture; more impressive, though, are the swatches of synth textures on "3 Great Stimulants," which convey the rich, dark brooding of orchestral brass. Mitchell's melodies remain far more complex than standard top forty (even on the superficially mainstream "Good Friends," a duet with Michael McDonald, of all people) but seamlessly interlocking riffs and a steady percussive pulse make this her most accessible music in years. Joni's passion and eloquence, however, is what makes it memorable.

Of course it's rather unfashionable these days to espouse social views more substantial than those beamed from beer commercials. But one thing about Joni Mitchell, she's always sung from the heart, and over the years she's acquired a moral authority that can't be so easily dismissed as, say, Steve Van Zandt's. *Dog Eat Dog* has it's flaws; there are a few weak songs, and moments, like on "Tax Free" where subtlety may have been more effective. But at a time when our government practices jingoism in Nicaragua, a song about the dangers of "artifice, brutality and innocence" ("3 Great Stimulants") seems more than just a cautionary fable.

Dog Eat Dog is thoroughly modern music, and it's also a throwback to a time when pop stars sang about the world as if they—and it—mattered. On "Dog Eat Dog" Joni Mitchell prophesizes that all which is genuine "will be scorned and conned and cast away." Here's hoping this record proves her wrong. – **Mark Rowland**

MELODY MAKERS

Play The Game Right
(EMI/America)

CEDELLA BOOKER

Redemption Songs
(56 Hope Road)

Besides spreading the politics of hope and struggle, Bob Marley espoused a creed of self-realization through selflessness, and his best songs were steeped in images of community and of family ties. In 1975, he wrote a moving song about the plight of West Kingston urchins who subsist by foraging in the gigantic garbage dumps on which their shacks stand. It was entitled "Children Playing In The Streets," and Marley vowed that when they were old enough, he would teach the song to his own children. It now appears on *Play The Game Right*, the delightful first U.S. album by the Melody Makers, a reggae-pop group composed of four of Bob and Rita Marley's offspring.

In 1977, while working on the Wailers' *Exodus* LP, Marley began encouraging his mother Cedella, a powerful church singer in her youth, to cut some gospel-reggae demos. After her son's death, she wrote a series of songs, among them a stately, elegiac ballad called, "Mother, Don't Cry," whose refrain ("Mother don't cry, I'll be alright") consists of Bob's last words to her. The requiem is among the highlights of *Redemption Songs*, an arresting record available in this country as an import.

The Melody Maker's effort features the reedy singing of teenage David "Ziggy" Marley, reggae's answer to Julian Lennon, whose near-eerie vocal legacy is offset by echoes of the spunky verve of Frankie Lymon. The other Melody Makers sound like a more playful version of the I-Threes in rich vocal arrangements by producers Grub Cooper and Ricky Walters. The spare instrumental tack taken by the backing musicians—including members of the Wailers—is particularly effective on "Naah Leggo" and the title track, in which peppy, pealing ska/Stax horns parry with Aston Barrett's rope-a-dope bass, while Ziggy skats and cajoles with the dusky rasping technique he learned from his father. Despite some serious themes, the Melody Makers display neither cute conceits nor the overweening huff and puff of kids trying to sound like adults.

Cedella Booker's throaty gospel crooning on *Redemption Songs* manages to sound intimate, reverent and informal in traditional material like "You Gotta Move." And when she recasts Wailers gems—particularly "Put It On (Lord I Thank You)"—in a gospel mold, she wisely reserves her worship for the songs and their messages, rather than for the man who made them famous.

Happily, the Marley clan has neither resorted to crass reissues and compilations of basement tapes since Bob's passing, nor tried to deport themselves as surrogate reggae royalty. With a light touch and fresh agendas, they are carrying on with grace, providing soulful testament to the continuity of life.

– **Timothy White**

MARSHALL CRENSHAW

Downtown
(Warner Bros.)

Marshall Crenshaw's best efforts encompass the delicacy of Smokey Robinson, the swagger of Presley, and the heartache of Hank Williams so imaginatively that you don't even care where he got his ideas from. He got into trouble on *Field Day*, though, when producer Steve Lillywhite overamplified everything to Spectoresque proportions. Since Marsh' works best on a small scale, the record collapsed like a house of cards. He's clearly learned that hard lesson well, 'cause *Downtown* is a sleek delight. Produced, save one track, by Crenshaw with Larry Hirsch and good ol' T-Bone Burnett, the LP rightly zeroes in on the details of the music, rather than making a slam-bang display. Every track yields pleasures that underline the joy of traditional rock 'n' roll performed well: The vibrant strumming of an electric guitar in "Little Wild One (No. 5)"; Burnett's almost-comical sitar fills on "Terrifying Love"; the goose-bump harmonies of "Blues Is King"; and the footloose rockabilly licks throughout. Crenshaw's vocals, a tasty mixture of "aw shucks" openness and sardonic bemusement, suit the role of the cool cat ("(We're Gonna) Shake Up Their Minds") and soothing romantic ("The Distance Between") equally well.

Exhibiting a true A-side/B-side mentality, our boy loads all of *Downtown*'s best tracks onto side one. "Yvonne" uses NRBQ's rhythm section of drummer Tom Ardolino and bassist Joey Spampinato to set up a rubbery, hip-shakin' tempo for Crenshaw's playful tale of desire fulfilled. "Blues Is King," produced by Crenshaw and Mitch Easter, has the transfixing effect of a beautiful hallucination, carried on waves of rippling guitars and airborne vocals. Here and elsewhere, warm, spacious melodies recall nothing less than early Brian Wilson gems like "Don't Worry, Baby." Crenshaw isn't that great a composer yet—he still overwrites somewhat—but for the first time there are hints he might approach that plateau someday, a pretty tantalizing prospect.

Midway through side two, Crenshaw uncorks a pair of covers that flirt openly with nostalgia while keeping the fun flowing. Ben Vaughn's loping lament "I'm Sorry (But So Is Brenda Lee)" must make Little Miss Dynamite proud; the spunky "Right Now" captures the spirit of vintage Ricky Nelson raveups. And, heck, why not? *Downtown* is a little bit old, a good bit new, and thoroughly winning. Only the terminally jaded should pass it by. – **Jon Young**

NEW ORLEANS REISSUES, VOLUME ONE

This month's lesson: Reissues. Example one, Professor Longhair's *Rock 'N' Roll Gumbo* (Dancing Cat), exemplifies the correct way to reissue Classic American Music. Notice that Dancing Cat, owned by reigning king of toucheefeelee music, George Winston, has *added* two tracks to the original French

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Blue Star album. And they've had Phillippe Rault re-do his geek liner notes, something as badly needed as the remixing job, which brings up the piano and expands the overall sound. Then, further shaming the Big Labels and appeasing neurotic record reveiwers, this tiny label pressed the record on really good vinyl, so it sounds great. *Gumbo* grabs the pared-down sound of a working band and celebrates it in all its unretouched road-house glory; no frills, lots of groove. If that isn't enough, Gatemouth Brown, who as someone quite accurately noted, "can do more tricks with a guitar than a monkey can do with a peanut," spins off some of the best blues guitar solos I've ever heard.

Example two, Lee Dorsey's *Holy Cow!*, raises a moral conundrum: Should we be happy that a Big Label has released Classic American Music, albeit diet-plate style, (12 tracks) or should we hold out for the English imports, which remember those days of 16 Greatest Hits? Either way, this release seems part of a welcome trend which, if done right, suits me fine. Lee Dorsey isn't the greatest technician, relative to the gospel greats, but his voice *is* unique –sandpaper rough, cracks where cracks fit, instantly recognizable. *Cow!* includes as good 60s soul as ever percolated in the Crescent City, with original versions of Allen Toussaint classics like "Sneakin' Sally Through The Alley," "Yes We Can," "Ride Your Pony," and much more. Toussaint's production, spare and precise, makes the tunes special, turning the most brilliantly retarded novelty song into a surreal trek through overdubbed chunks of choruses and reverbed guitars. It's a pop version of musique concrete. – **Peter Watrous**

SHEILA E.

Romance 1600
(I.R.S.)

Artists usually sound more distinctive and less derivative over time. Sheila E. seems to be moving in the opposite direction. *The Glamorous Life*, her solo debut, was produced by Prince but

sounded utterly unlike him. Its grab-bag take on jazz, salsa and funk moved to an entirely different drummer, and that helped make Sheila stand out against the rest of the Minneapolis Mafia.

Romance 1600, sad to say, sounds like just another Prince production, even though, with the exception of "A Love Bizarre," it was produced by Ms. Escovedo herself. But Prince's hallmarks are all there, from the self-pitying romantic despair of "Bedtime Story" to the double-timed balladry of "Dear Michaelangelo." "Toy Box" suggests "My Sugar Walls, Mk. II," as Sheila E. rummages through her "box" in search of a juicier metaphor. "One touch is too much," indeed.

In fairness, there are bits that remain entirely Sheila's, such as the fast-and-furious instrumental salvos that preface "Sister Fate," or the warped jazz of "Merci For The Speed Of A Mad Clown In Summer," but that only reflects the difference in instrumental competence between Sheila E.'s band and the Revolution. More to the point is the way the jazzy cadences of "Yellow," a song Sheila E. ought to be able to take in a different direction, are reduced to a sadder-but-no-wiser "Little Red Corvette."

None of which is reason to avoid *Romance 1600*. "A Love Bizarre" is, in many ways, a better Prince song than anything on *Around The World In A Day*, and both "Sister Fate" and "Toy Box" have their charms. But this album seems a step backwards for Sheila E., and that's too bad. – **J.D. Considine**

THE FLESHTONES

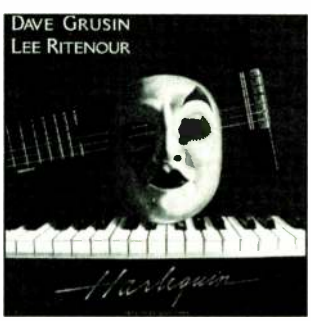
Speed Connection II
(I.R.S.)

The Fleshtones know how to throw a party. About the only ingredient missing from *Speed Connection II* is a garbage can full of Blue Whales, a tasty yet lethal curacao/vodka/lemonade concoction that the 'Tones toss together for their own soirées. Otherwise, this vinyl bash is complete.

The Kings of Super Rock are in rare form here: Their loose-limbed purée of the Rolling Stones, the Kingsmen, and

the Chocolate Watchband jolts across in a manner never quite delivered on the group's fine but comparatively restrained studio records. This is high-energy stuff—a guitar-whacking, sax-blaring, tambourine-thrashing mix of R&B dementia and garage-band chaos. Vocalist Peter Zaremba wails with a jagged larynx worthy of the Sonics' Gerry Roslie, while the band—particularly fretbuster Keith Streng and tubthumper Bill Milhizer—generate the kind of abandoned noise that makes a Fleshtones show one extended rave-up. Set standouts include a killer medley of 'Tones Super Rock standards, a practically unrecognizable rearrangement of T-Bone Burnett's "When The Night Falls" (with guest Pete Buck of R.E.M.), and a roaring version of the R.E.M. throwaway "Wind Out."

Don't confuse this LP with the earlier import version *Speed Connection*, by the way; though both were recorded before frenzied fans at the Gibon Club in Paris, this set clearly eclipses its predecessor for musical power and sheer mania. At one memorable juncture on *SCII*, an audience member who managed to elude the security bellows at Zaremba, "We want *intoxication*!" The singer coolly replies, "We'll work on it, baby." Work on it yourself, baby—mix up a Blue Whale, assume the Fleshtones Power Stance, and rock yourself into a panic. – **Chris Morris**



DAVE GRUSIN
LEE RITENOUR

Harlequin
(G.R.P.)

IVAN LINS

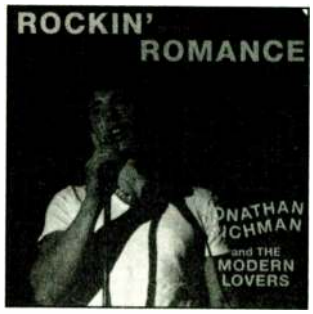
Juntos
(Philips/PolyGram Discos)

The addition of Brazilian singer/songwriter Ivan Lins to Dave Grusin's and Lee Ritenour's latest release adds just the right crunch to a dish in need of a strong bite. Keyboard wiz Grusin, who honed his craft via film and TV (most recently, *The Goonies*) has mastered the art of atmosphere, but his music lacks intimacy; oversweetened tunes like "Early A.M. Attitude" and "Cats Of Rio" (with real cats) wash well, but don't wear long. In contrast, Lins' two songs, which open and close Side A, seem to pull sentiment straight out of the earth; his voice, a rumpled, sexier version of David Clayton-Thomas, is worth the price of this album. Playing with a generous harmonic hand, he knows how to engorge a melody from the inside, but his music is animated by a rhythmic sixth-sense that digs, under, around and over a beat—a gift American Brazilophiles only approximate.

A fuller draught of Lins can be had on *Juntos* (available on import), which brings together top Brazilian and American artists who have recorded his hits over the last ten years, including Djavan, Beth Carvalho, George Benson and Patti Austin. With a sensuality funkier than Jobim's but less convoluted than Milton Nascimento's, Lins writes classic tunes for real singers: His musical world, colored by *saudade* (longing) is filled with big furry emotions just waiting to reach out and grab you. While his most popular songs shout with Brazilian joy, his most powerful ones, in collaboration with lyricist Victor Martins, delineate personal pain with poignant clarity. And Lins' voice is often his best interpreter; on "Believe What I Say," he rides a double scat with Patti Austin that skids them both right off the map into outer space.

Lins is presently preparing a solo album for GRP, and whether he can safely navigate that mainstream crossover will depend upon translations and production values that won't synth him out of existence. But he's never sounded so sophisticated as he does on *Harlequin*; given his prodigious technology and obvious *simpatico*, Dave Grusin might prove to be the American cockswain Lins needs.

– **Pamela Bloom**



JONATHAN RICHMAN AND THE MODERN LOVERS

Rockin' And Romance
(Twin/Tone)

Jonathan Richman is a musical Rorschach blot. Does he embarrass you? Make you feel six years old again? Transport you to a higher plane of existence?

Few would deny that Richman packs a punch, no matter what his particular effect. With minimal backing for a flat, nasal voice talk-singing about virtually anything, Richman and the Modern Lovers seem artlessly naive. But anyone who can't appreciate Richman's wide-eyed persona—and his humor—is taking life too seriously.

As usual for Richman *Rockin' And Romance* is beyond criticism, but we can draw some objective conclusions. The current Modern Lovers comprise a drummer and a whole bunch of backing singers; only Richman plays guitar. (And you thought the group was quiet *before*.) Jonathan sings (or whatever) completely unaccompanied on "Walter Johnson," which thus sounds like a field recording from some parallel universe. Another baseball-related song, "The Fenway," traffics in the nostalgia which tinges much of *Rockin' And Romance*'s material. "The U.F.O. Man" pays tribute to the Beach Boys' "Little Honda" and has an acoustic surf-guitar break. Sample lyric from "My Jeans": "I've turned the whole store upside down/And they don't got Wranglers, so let's go." There's a love song to a "cruddy little chewing gum wrapper" and an ode to "The Beach." Throughout are wang-a-dang-dangs and bom-diddy-boms showing Richman's fondness for 50s vocal groups.

It's an idiosyncratic blend, alright: unamplified rock 'n' roll pantheism. But it's at least as appealing as heavy-metal devil worship. As long as he doesn't start a cult religion, Richman remains delightfully out of tune, not just vocally, but with a material world. – **Scott Isler**

JOHN WAITE

Mask Of Smiles
(EMI/America)

To tell the truth, it's hard to take John Waite seriously. A perennial pretty boy, he started off as a member of the

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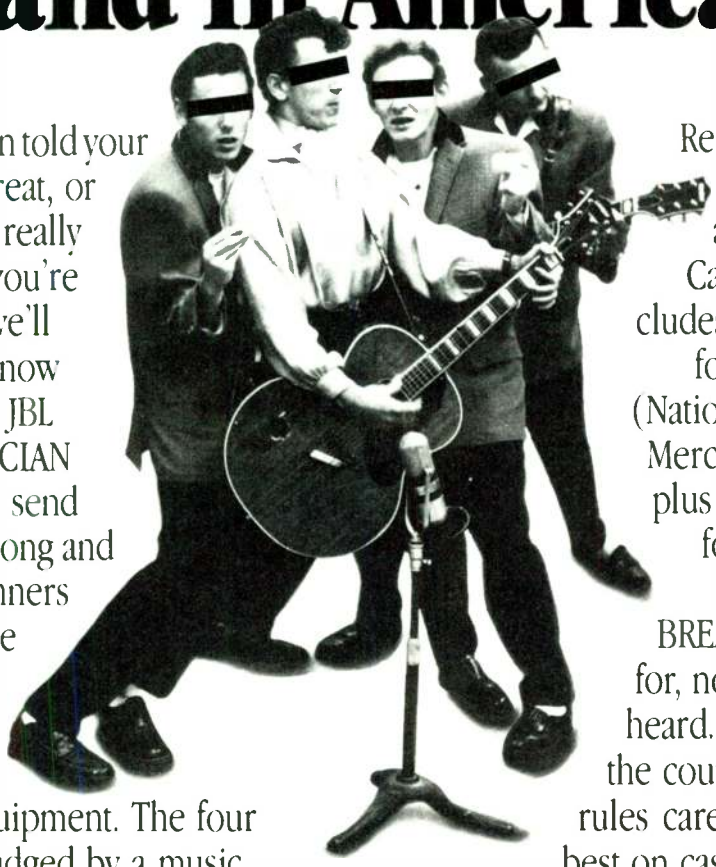

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Babys (a sort of hard rock precursor to Duran Duran), and has since gone on to become a soap-opera heartthrob. Not exactly like hopping trains with Woodie Guthrie, is it?

But one of the great things about rock 'n' roll is that almost anyone is capable of making a good record, even teeny-bop fodder like John Waite, and *Mask Of Smiles* is so solid, it's embarrassing. Unlike Rick Springfield, Waite is no ersatz rocker; the edge to his performance is genuine, and his voice pushes the songs along with authority. "No Brakes," the album's aptly-titled climax, finds the singer practically roaring as the rhythm section hurtles along on its way to a searing Johnny Thunders (?!) guitar solo. Kiddie music this isn't.

Mask Of Smiles does make allowances for the singer's youth-market appeal, but rarely compromises itself by playing down to its audience. "Every Step Of The Way," for instance, builds its chorus around a melodic hook, but rather than beat you over the head with it the way Nik Kershaw might, Waite grinds on around it, emphasizing the way his band rocks, not how the song twinkles. A similar, though more impressive, version of that trick turns up in the cover of "Ain't That Peculiar," a marvelous piece of work in which Waite avoids all the expected Marvinisms to turn the original's slow burn into an outright rant.

Mask Of Smiles isn't without problems—Waite remains an unfortunately histrionic ballad singer, and "Laydown" is one of this season's least subtle sex songs—but on the whole, it does everything a mainstream rock record is supposed to do. Including getting us to take the singer seriously. – **J.D. Considine**

Murray from page 26

they kill it, and then they pick another one and they do it again. Instead of seeing who the brightest guys are and dealing with them all, they choose one. I'm not talking about anyone per se, I'm just talking about the fact that *I* wasn't chosen," Murray says, laughing.

"So I'm not one of the chosen ones," he continues more philosophically. "So I have to fight to be one of them. I believe it *will* happen, though. I came to New York to become a millionaire. I know that sounds weird, that I picked the wrong profession for it, but I actually did come to New York to become a millionaire by playing music. I still see that, somewhere, and if I don't reach that goal, maybe my son will.

"You got to be able to live with yourself though," David Murray concludes. "You got to be able to wake up in the morning and say to yourself, 'Oh man, yeah, I feel good what I'm doing.'" M

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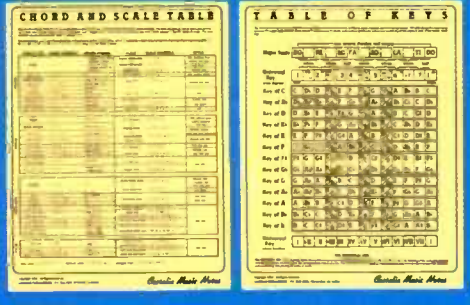

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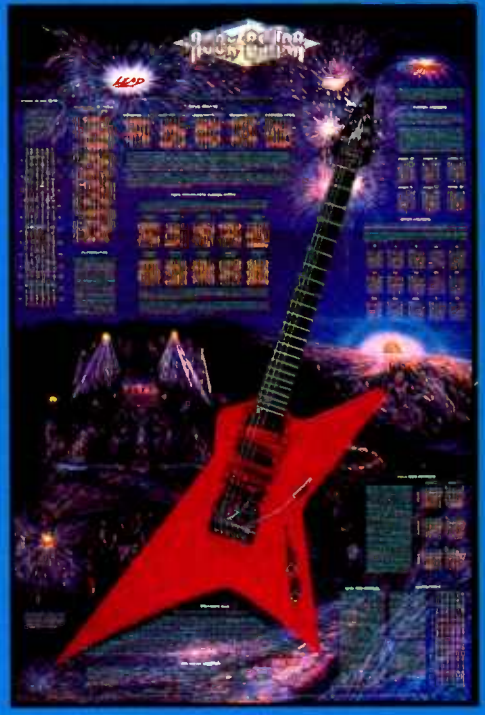

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SHORT ROCK TAKES

J.D. Considine

Lisa Lisa & Cult Jam with Full Force

Lisa Lisa & Cult Jam With Full Force

Full Force

Full Force (Columbia)

Lisa Lisa's "I Wonder If I Take You Home" was to this summer what UTFO's "Roxanne, Roxanne" was to last winter: the most addictive dance record of the season. Part of it had to do with the way each song opened a window to reality—Lisa Lisa's combination of desire and cold feet is as common in real life, though as rare on record, as UTFO's fast-talking strike-out—but Full Force's lean, purposeful grooves help too. That Lisa Lisa would round out her hit with a few more done-me-wrong songs was no surprise, but Full Force tops off its own eclectic funk with a gospel earnestness stretching from the Martin Luther King tribute, "The Dream Believer," to the spirited harmonies of "The Man Upstairs." Who said hip-hop's got no roots?

The Motels

Shock (Capitol)

Martha Davis has always overplayed her parts, inflating Ronnie Spector quivers into Barbra Streisand shudders; no wonder the Motels often sounded too campy for their own good. But here she expands her role with enough sense of purpose to lend a certain opulence, from the hi-tech funk of the title cut to the cool melodrama of "Icy Red," making *Shock* an affordable indulgence.

Marti Jones

Unsophisticated Time (A&M)

When fronting Color Me Gone, Jones showed all the buoyant promise of a talented unknown. Amazingly, her solo debut lives up to that and more. With producer Don Dixon as (most of) her backing band, Jones reveals all the inner magic and melodic detail beneath these songs, which range from the wistful warmth of the dBs' "Lonely Is As Lonely Does" to the bittersweet pop of Elvis Costello's "The Element Within Her."

Dexy's Midnight Runners

Don't Stand Me Down (Mercury)

Singing like Van Morrison doesn't mean much when you've got a voice like Kevin Rowland's, for no amount of embellishment can cover Rowland's nasal inflection and outright ugly tone. So it makes some sense to find the arrogant one talking through such offerings as "This Is What She's Like." Unfortunately, this "Come On, Eileen" rip-off is as close to catchy as the album gets.

Jennifer Holliday

Say You Love Me (Geffen)

"You're The One," a gentle Michael Jackson ballad, sets the tone, as Holliday cozies up to the melody without overwhelming it. Her performance is supremely controlled, emphasizing strength and dynamics, which makes it all the more exciting when she finally cuts loose. And her powerfully spiritual reading of Ellington's "Come Sunday" is a gem.

Loverboy

Lovin' Every Minute Of It (Columbia)

The only thing worse than a band this calculating is when it produces an album this good.

del Amitri

del Amitri (Chrysalis)

With their twangy guitars and verbose idealism, del Amitri invite comparison to those other Scots innocents, Aztec Camera. But del Amitri are more than the latest band to climb aboard that particular wagon, for the grit in Justin Currie's voice lends these songs a toughness reminiscent of early Graham Parker. Absolutely winning.

? & the Mysterians

The Dallas Reunion Tapes: 96 Tears Forever (ROIR cassette)

There was a stunning simplicity to the Mysterians' sound, a droning mindlessness that somehow made a virtue of repetition and ellipsis. Perhaps the ultimate proof of its power is the unstoppable vitality shown in this 1984 reunion show. With the band sharper but no slicker than the old days and ? himself sounding like the bad-ass Mick Jagger would like to be, this is a performance that can't be passed up. (611 Broadway, Suite 725, New York, NY 10012)

Sly & Robbie

Language Barrier (Island)

In which the dynamic duo finally call in some debts to assemble an all-star cast. True, some names are bigger than their contributions (are you *sure* Bob Dylan is on this record?), but that's no problem if it keeps Sly & Robbie in the groove. And groove they do, from the starkly circular "Black Satin" to the rambunctious "Bass And Trouble." Recommended to those who don't need uplift in their dance music.

The Armoury Show

Waiting For The Floods (EMI/America)

Though their dour demeanor and stark textures bespeak brave new music, all this really amounts to is Big Country for eggheads.

Michael Nyman

The Kiss And Other Movements (Editions EG)

Because Nyman is enamored of pulsing, repetitious ensemble writing and simple, triad harmonies, it's tempting to lump him in with the likes of Philip Glass. But Nyman is no mere minimalist, for he cultivates a sort of salon-orchestra warmth in his players, and eschews slowly unfolding thematic development, working instead for a wry melodicism reminiscent of Carla Bley. (Jem Records, 3619 Kennedy Rd., So. Plainfield, NJ 07080)

Zeitgeist

Translate Slowly (DB)

This Austin quartet sounds suspiciously British; not that they're slavishly anglophilic, but much of their sound seems based on received ideas. Every so often, though, the band busts through its mannerisms. On the likes of "Blue Eyes" or the title track, *Translate Slowly* is transformed from the merely likeable to the absolutely wonderful. (Landslide. 450 14th St., Atlanta, GA 30318).

Stewart Copeland

The Rhythmatist (A&M)

If it seems odd that rock's most polyrhythmic percussionist should sound so straight here, listen closer. B'wana Copeland really did learn something from his sojourn in Africa, specifically how to use the whole band to develop his rhythmic ideas. Granted, that leaves him with an album that's more instructive than catchy, but it's still better than sitting through his slides.

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SHORT JAZZ TAKES

Francis Davis

Max Roach
Survivors; Easy Winners; Scott Free (all Soul Note/PolyGram Special Imports)

These three new releases all bear witness to the great drummer's willingness to take risks. If side one of *Survivors*, which plops Roach down in the middle of an overagitated Peter Phillips string quartet, demonstrates why these jazz and classical liaisons seldom work, the flamboyant *Easy Winners* by Roach's double quartet (his hard-working band plus a string section) shows why that effort is worth it. "A Little Booker," Roach's uptempo dirge for the late Booker Little, is electrifying, while scores by trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, tenor saxophonist Odean Pope, and violist Maxine Roach (a string transcription of a Joplin piano rag) have their moments. *Survivors* is at least worth hearing for the drum solos on side two, but *Scott Free*, an album-length Bridgewater composition, fails to justify such extended treatment.

Muhal Richard Abrams
View From Within (Black Saint/PSI)

The centerpiece is "Down At Peppers," a revisionist sixteen-bar blues comparable in impact to such earlier Abrams masterworks as "Mama And Daddy," "Blues Forever" and "Bloodlines" (sorry, only one to an album). The rest is more experimental, but scarcely less exemplary, with colorful performances by trumpeter Stanton Davis and percussionist Ray Mantilla.

Dave Holland Quintet
Seeds Of Time (ECM)

Unlike last year's *Jumpin' In*, which reached out and grabbed you, the follow-up, with its subtle emphasis on composition and five-way polyphony, takes a few spins to sink in. The extra effort is worth it though, because the front line of trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, trombonist Julian Priester, and saxophonist Steve Coleman remains one of the most stylish and distinctive in jazz, while sizzling drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith proves a vast improvement over his predecessor. Bassist/leader Holland has no betters on his instrument, and few peers.

Hugh Ragin
Metaphysical Question (Cecma)

On his first album as a leader, the young trumpeter with the malleable tone and pithy approach to rhythm interprets Paganini, Ornette Coleman, and two of his own compositions—one a witty turn on the solemn ostinatos favored by the likes of Pharoah Sanders, the other an exploration of inner space with bassist John Lindberg and drummer Thurman Barker pointing the way. All of it is dazzling, the sort of LP major labels ought to be releasing every once in a while. (Available from North Country Distributors, Redwood, NY 13679-9612)

McCoy Tyner
Just Feelin' (Palo Alto)

Tyner's first since disbanding his quintet is a change of pace—a trio date showcasing his flair for melodic embellishment. But let's face it, the format is hardly spacious enough for Tyner. Let's hope someone records the rude big band he debuted on the East Coast last winter.

Ahmad Jamal
Digital Works (Atlantic)

Back in the 50s, at the height of Jamal's popularity, musicians raved about him while critics dismissed him as Erroll Garner without humor. As usual, the critics were right. This new double's remakes of "Poinciana" and "But Not For Me" confirm that the late bassist Israel Crosby gave the originals their irresistible cheek.

Chet Baker & Warne Marsh
Blues For A Reason (Criss Cross/North Country)

An inspired pairing of veterans: trumpeter Baker, whose taut solos are becoming as deep and indelible as the lines on his face, and tenor saxophonist Marsh, whose spirals, coils and whorls make his style unique and identifiable as a fingerprint. The rhythm section is on the money, with pianist Hod O'Brien almost stealing the show—no small feat when Marsh is on the bill, playing his favorite game of name-that-chord-change as cunningly as he does here.

Frank Foster & Frank Wess
Frankly Speaking (Concord Jazz)

Clifford Jordan & Junior Cook
Two Tenor Winner (Criss Cross/North Country)

You want tenors in pairs, we got tenors in pairs. The two Franks swing with all the aplomb one expects from ex-Basieites, and their seasoning as big band arrangers serves them well. (Having Kenny Barron as their pianist serves them even better.) The Jordan-Cook confrontation is less balanced, partly because Jordan plays with such fire and imagination these days that he makes Cook sound stolid by comparison. But only by comparison.

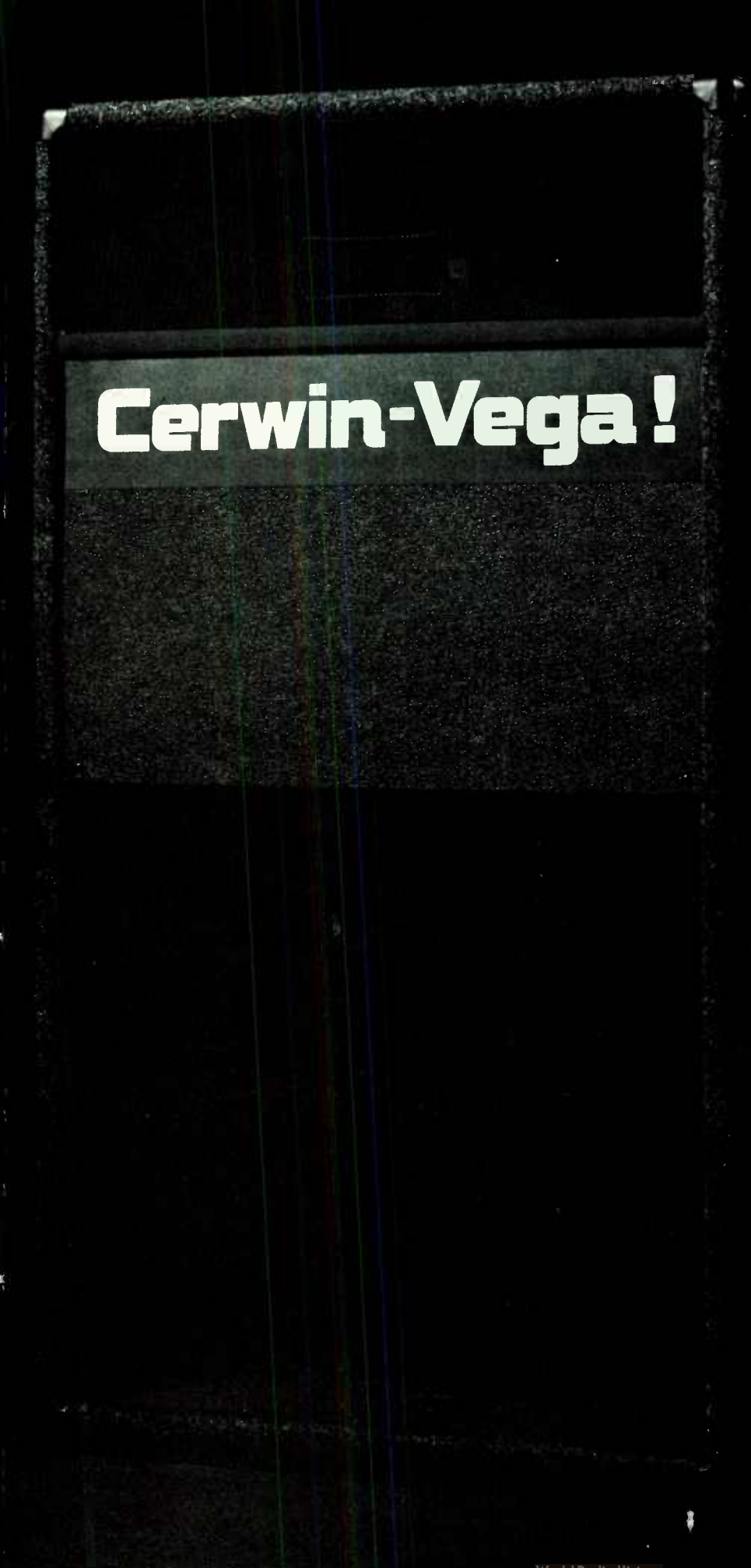
Phil Woods Quintet
Integrity (Red/PSI)

This good double from Italy is the first Woods LP to feature trumpeter Tom Harrell, who brings some badly needed edge to the alto saxophonist's group, and who also seems to be having a rejuvenating effect on the book, which now consists mostly of hard bop classics by Weston, Rivers and Shorter.

Borah Bergman
Upside Down Visions (Soul Note/PSI)

The joke about this mad genius-type has always been that his right hand doesn't know what the left is doing and doesn't want to know, either. His piano music still takes hand independence as its goal, but there's more space between the notes now, and more sense that someone might be out there listening. All of which makes this LP a good place to come to terms with one of the more unusual, subterranean figures in contemporary music.

Original Jazz Classics: Blue Note or no Blue Note, when it comes to facsimile reissues, Fantasy still sets the standard. The latest batch of thirty includes long-forgotten curiosities like *Introducing Paul Bley* (with Mingus and Blakey, no less), *Max Roach Quartet Featuring Hank Mobley*, Abbey Lincoln's *It's Magic*, and Pat Martino's *El Hombre*, and is especially kind to pre-bop tenors. Highly recommended: *Bud Johnson And The Four Brass Giants*, *The Bud Freeman All Stars Featuring Shorty Baker*, Paul Gonsalves' *Gettin' Together*, and Buddy Tate's *Tate A Tete*.



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SHORT Vides TAKES

Michael Shore

Prince & The Revolution Live
(Warner Music Video)

The whole two-hour *Purple Rain* tour extravaganza for just $29.98 list? When Prince, still one of music's hottest figures despite the Michael Jackson burnout factor, had announced it would be his last tour for an indefinite time? We're talking total commitment to value, right? Well, yes and no. This particular show—March 30, 1985 at the Syracuse, N.Y. Carrier Dome—was simulcast live to Europe via satellite. *Prince & The Revolution Live* comes right off the satellite transmission, with no extra lighting for the home video. So a *lot* of the time—like whenever the Carrier Dome lights aren't up full—the onstage proceedings descend into an impenetrable blue-black murk, and we're left wondering what we're missing. Also on the minus side, what we're seeing (and not seeing) is mostly no more than a neurotically rote run-through of the performance sequences in *Purple Rain* the movie; one does wish The Kid would give it a rest after a bit. Especially grating is the special-effects treatment of "When Doves Cry," which turns the entire live version into that mirror-image riff from the end of the song's promo clip. Still, this *is* Prince, and his expenditure of talent and energy is as remarkable as it is generous. Some bizarrely arresting theatrical interludes reveal, even revel in, the twisted narcissism and provocative paradoxes at the heart of this classically American character.

Sade: Diamond Life Video
(CBS/Fox)

With her high-fashion Afro-Eurasian looks, Sade sure ain't hard to look at. And her band's swah-vay, jazz-inflected sophisto-pop (let's call her Steely Danielle) is very easy on the ears. But of the four clips here (including the never-seen-before "When Am I Going To Make A Living?"), only the elaborately Hitchcockian "Smooth Operator" offers more than lovely looks and soothing sounds. Between-clip interview snippets tell us zilch. Sade's music is so atmospheric and seductive that visuals really do it a disservice.

Chuck Berry Featuring Tina Turner
(Passport)

The brown-eyed handsome man in front of a hasn't-a-clue whitebread crowd, this time at Los Angeles' Roxy in 1982. Bland-out direction reinforces the immediate impression of defiantly offhanded readings of Berry classics, but look and listen again and you'll discover some fine, metallic-bluesy chordal solos (in "Nadine" and "Around And Around," among others). Then again, Berry also gives way too much solo time to schlockmeister guitarist Richie Zito. Still, by the time a pre-comeback Tina Turner sashays out, in *straight* platinum-blonde hair and dancing better than she does now, and Chuck's gorgeous daughter Ingrid joins Dad for a "Reelin' And Rockin'" that gets the whole audience onstage dancing with glee, you can't help but be won over. Keith Richards probably owns this tape; why not you?

The Cars: Live 1984-1985
(Vestron)

Larry Jordan's direction is as ultra-slick and accomplished as the band itself. But while the moving, cantilevered multi-monitor video backdrop, lightshow shadow-play, and post-production computer graphics—not to mention Ric Ocasek's fringed black-leather-and-confetti-tweed jacket, and Elliot Easton's groovy paisley Telecaster—are all very diverting, nothing can disguise the band's frigid lifelessness onstage.

Willie & The Poor Boys
(Passport)

The opening credit—"from an original idea by Bill Wyman"—does not bode well, since Wyman's last original idea on home video was the execrable *Digital Dreams*. But this make-believe-sock-hop isn't all that bad: Like its companion album of roots-rocks covers, *Willie & The Poor Boys* is a pleasantly harmless indulgence. Charlie Watts mugs it up as usual; Wyman gets to sing (and sounds remarkably like Ringo Starr, who does a cameo at the end as a janitor); Ron Wood toots a sax; everybody wears fab 50s tweed jackets. Only Chris Rea's "Baby Please Don't Go" has any shred of urgency.

Jazz At The Smithsonian: Art Farmer
(Sony Video LP)

The expatriate flugelhornist, who now resides in Vienna, comes across as genuinely warm, sweet and humble, both onstage and in brief interview comments. Farmer's abundantly evident mastery of the mellow horn (leading a rhythm section propelled by superb drummer Billy Hart) ought to be more than enough to banish the memory of Chuck Macaroni from the mind of anyone with ears to hear.

Frankie Goes To Hollywood
From A Wasteland To An Artificial Paradise (RCA/Columbia)

Much as I despise this "band" and all it stands for, there are some things to recommend in this half-hour clip compilation. Mainly, there's Godley & Creme's brilliant "Two Tribes" clip, a diabolical conflation of media agit-prop and politics-as-professional-wrestling; this is the long version, full of "scratch" treatments of Nixon tapes and the like. You also get the first of many controversial clips for "Relax" (complete with implied golden showers in a gay bar); the unendurable boondoggle of "Welcome To The Pleasuredome"; and the last "Relax" clip, with one of the great comic moments in rock history: the group onstage besieged by an audience of teenage *girls*. What a hoot.

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Mike Fright from page 94

a big conch shell, or through a hole in it, and see what you get.

None of these tricks will give you a perfect Big Ambient Room sound. It's that they're a good start; that everything on tape is part of an illusion, and you are in control. For example, you can vastly improve an ambient reverb effect by mixing it so that the reverb is in wide stereo against a tightly positioned original signal, and then rolling off the reverb's eq in the same band as the original's upper frequencies. The radio shows of the 30s and 40s are rich textbooks in how limited technologies and space can be manipulated to create amazingly rich, diverse effects. Remember that the threatening sound of the Martian cylinder starting to open (in Orson Welles' famous *War of the Worlds* broadcast) was as easy as close-miking the opening of a stuck jar of peanut butter in a toilet bowl down the hall from the studio.

Ninety percent of the time, mike position is more important than choice of mike. In a one-room studio, be prepared to do some really absurd things, like aiming your mike to catch the interesting sound being reflected upward by your synth rack. And don't forget that in small rooms, you and whatever musicians you are working with become part of the sound of the room. Joe Engineer, the Living Gobo. It can get like that: the audio equivalent of holding on to your TV antenna to improve reception.

In small rooms you also run into other interesting problems...like the one I had with mike stands. They took up too much space and were easily knocked over. What was worse, the very soundproofing that made my floating room secure from the world's noise (and the world secure from me) made it so that every time somebody tapped their foot, or rolled in a chair, the vibration traveled sideways through the floor, up the mike stand, into the mike, and thence onto the tape in low, thudding booms.

What to do? Hang the booms from the ceiling. A temporary test rig proved the idea would work, and right now we're in the middle of installing a permanent fixture—a big T-shaped rail on the ceiling, with screwholes for booms, and flanges to clamp mikes directly onto. Though it looks a little silly at first glance I'd recommend it to any studio that has an easily reachable ceiling. The setup is simply more stable and more flexible (in terms of mike placement, especially over drums) than anything conventional I've ever worked with.

Now my players can fidget all they want. The mikes just hear the music. Ⓜ

More Mike Fright next time.

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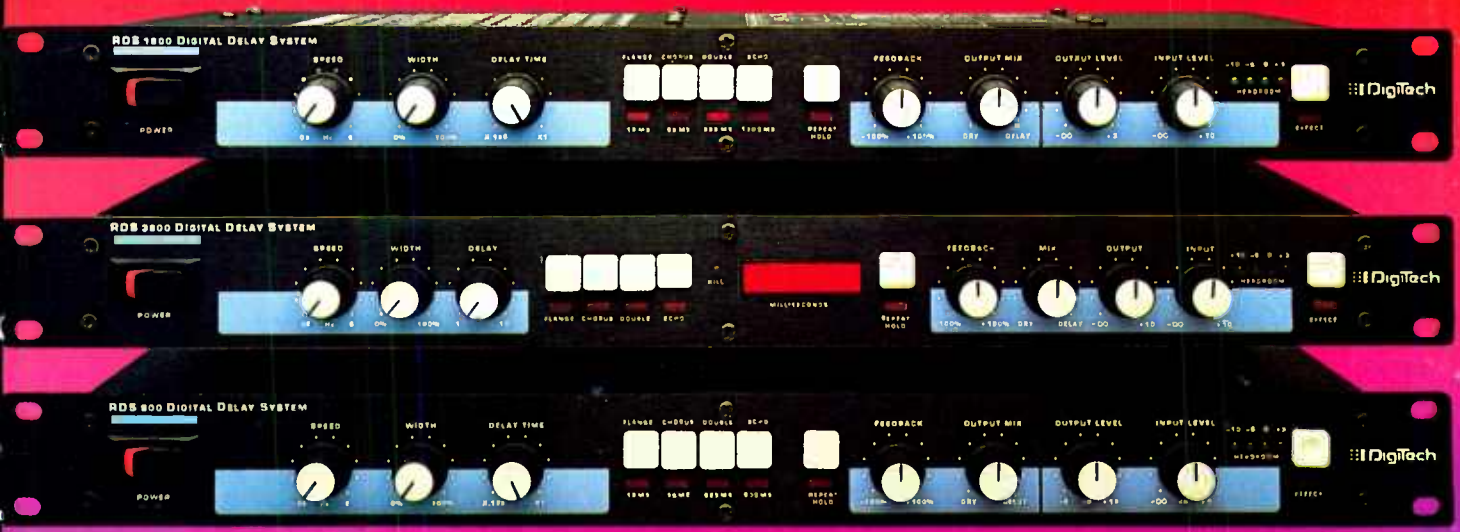

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