Adrian Belew Grins & Bears It

Windham Hill: For Elevation Or Elevators?

MUSICIAN

$2.25 NO. 90 APRIL 1986
ICD 08582

Good God! It's JAMES BROWN!

Behind His Long, Strange Trip Back

By Timothy White

Tom Petty

Bares His Southern Soul

Brian Setzer

The Ex-Cat Shifts Gears

THE STEP BEYOND

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Roland Makes It Happen!

APRIL 1986
NO. 90

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COVER: JAMES BROWN
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
STEVE MARSEL,
WALDORF-ASTORIA NYC.

BRIAN SETZER
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
HOWARD ROSENBERG

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: STEVE MARSEL; KEVIN MAZUR/RETNA; ROCKY WIDNER/RETNA; MARK LEIALOHA

Tom Petty Not just another Great American Rocker, the son of the South discusses his songs, his music and himself. And Bob Dylan.
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LETTERS

ZZzzzzzz

I think you did a great job on the article about ZZ Top. Tim White did a good job pointing out what a massive band they are even though everybody already knew it. ZZ Top really does kick massive ass and I hope that they will keep on kicking ass for a while longer.

Eric Bender
Villa Grove, IL

I should be interested in the fact that Frank Beard "whupped" some drunken woman for falling on his new drum kit? Or that he got into music as a new way to "look for pussy," while his pregnant wife stayed home (probably barefoot)?

And I'll bet Mark Knopfler was just hanging out by his phone hoping "Billy Boy" would call and explain how to make his guitar sound "nasty." Come on. Shee-it!

I don't expect this kind of inane crap from your magazine. I just let my *Rolling Stone* subscription run out. You may be next.

David B. Harvey
Amesbury, MA

P.S. Was Dusty Hill really drunk enough to get shot by his own gun when it fell out of his boot, or is he really as stupid as he tries to act?

The study in contrasts couldn't be greater: the obnoxious neanderthalisms of ZZ Top compared with the altruistic intelligence of Rubén Blades. Yet Top sells millions, while Blades struggles in relative obscurity. I'm embarrassed by what that says about us, the record buying public.

Jay Dunner
Sicklerville, NJ

ZZ Top's hitherto unrevealed musical secret? The reason that Billy Gibbons doesn't need a phase shifter? The answer was inadvertently revealed in the photo on page fifty-five—Billy and Dusty are one minute and twenty seconds out of sync.

If you try this at home, kids, remember that precise time differential; more than that, you sound like ? and the Mysterians; less, and you're Toto.

Al Valusek
Ann Arbor, MI

What's this?! ZZ Top on the cover, when you could have given it to Kate Bush, one of the most talented and attractive ladies in popular music? Or to 10,000 Maniacs, just the most original new band this year? Or even to Marshall Crenshaw, surely one gifted musician who has never gotten his due?

Yeah I bought the magazine, but not because those redneck cartoon clowns were on the cover. Are you guys trying to become another *Circus* or what? Such a shame.

Roy L. Henry
Pigeon Forge, TN

Hounds In Love

The interview with Kate Bush was terrific. Since most other rock magazines do not include such artists as her (i.e. those of the art rock genre), your inclusion of this piece was most rewarding. I applaud you for your incisive and informative articles, and an overall excellent magazine.

André Papillon
Lowell, MA

I was really shocked by the interview with Kate Bush, first because you gave her album *Hounds Of Love* such an insulting review in Short Takes in December, and secondly because of the tone of the interview. Peter Swales' attitude seemed condescending and negative, particularly when he tried to change Kate's mind about her style of live performance. An interviewer should have some respect for the artist and her judgment. I was particularly disappointed after the fantastic interview with Joni Mitchell in December. With so few women really being in charge of their music, it's a shame to see a chance for an interview handled so badly.

Geoffrey Welchman
New York, NY

The Springstein Family?

Rubén Blades wants to be "the *first* Latin-American artist to exert a vital influence on mainstream pop music." Rubén, did you ever hear a song called "La Bamba"? Did you ever hear of Carlos Santana? Neither Carlos nor Ritchie Valens came from a nice Jewish family in Asbury Park, New Jersey, you know. And, by the way, who is Julio Iglesias?

Sam Leandro
Laytonville, CA

[*Never mind that. Who's this nice Jewish family? – Ed.*]

Here's Yngwie

Some people think Yngwie shoots his mouth off too much, but the best can say whatever they want to say. – *Michele Boivin*; Mr. Malmsteen is an artist with little to say of any merit and is remarkably opinionated on subjects that he knows little about. – *Jon Epstein*; Although Malmsteen's guitar playing is pretty good, his talent is not nearly as great as his ego. – *Lisa Sligh-Raven*; Will Yngwie wait until he grows up a little before he comes down on jazz musicians? – *Kenneth Lee Wells*; Things I hate and so should you: 1. Yngwie Malmsteen; 2. Yngwie's knowledge of everything there is to know about music. – *Ned P. Niemi*; I could spend weeks naming off simple, three-chord songs that are better than any of the pompous, self-admittedly masturbatory drool Yngwie writes. – *Dale Scott.*

Madonna Butterfly

The Thompson Twins' covering the Beatles' "Revolution" is like Madonna singing Puccini.

Brian Weathers
Hollywood, CA

Anna one, anna two

I am writing to you in the hope that you will be able to print my letter in your *Musician* magazine. I am very interested in Lawrence Welk and his orchestra and would like to know if any of your readers can send me either information or cassette tapes they no longer need of Lawrence Welk and his champagne music. I would be most grateful and appreciate it. Thanking you so much,

Geoff Dickinson
Barrow-in-Furness
Cumbria, England

[*Can anyone help this man?*]

Marshall's Man

Thanks for the article on Marshall Crenshaw. *Downtown* is the finest album I've heard in a long time—excellent musicianship, sincere singing and great harmonies. All this and no synthesizers to screw it up. The whole record has an honest soul to it, which is totally lacking from most of the tunes on radio station playlists.

I work in a record store and I always recommend Marshall's album. Once people hear it they buy it.

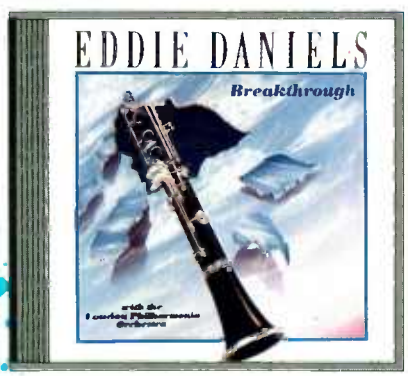
Rick Ellingson
Kalispell, MT

Errati

Due to a stripping error, the bylines for Rock and Jazz Shorts were switched in March. Apologies to J.D. Considine (Rock) and Peter Watrous (Jazz).

NEW MAGIC FROM THE DIGITAL MASTER COMPANY

The Chick Corea Elektric Band Quintessential keyboard master Chick Corea presents a GRP debut bearing all the earmarks of a new Corea classic. Featuring heavyweights Dave Weckl on drums, John Patitucci on bass, and guitarists Carlos Rios and Scott Henderson; The Elektric Band takes its place as one of the hottest releases of the year.



Eddie Daniels/*Breakthrough* "Eddie Daniels is the monster clarinetist...His debut album for GRP will become the benchmark to judge all future recordings blending the world of classical music and jazz."
—Quincy Jones

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WILLIE DEVILLE

BY JIMMY GUTERMAN

BORN AGAIN: THE PUNK HIPSTER RISES FROM THE ASHES

Something got lost between my first record and now. I don't know if I lost it in my drug haze or if I lost it in my management fights, but it's gone. Something sidetracked me. I've got to figure out what I forgot along the way."

Such statements are not the most effective way to promote one's new album. Willy DeVille, arch Spanish Harlem traditionalist and perennial critic's darling, is sipping coffee in the living room of his chilly uptown New York walk-up. He'd started talking about how proud he was of *The Sporting Life* (Atlantic), but now he looks simultaneously concerned and confused.

"I'm trying to remember what originally made me want to sing and get in a band. Drug hazes, attorneys, divorces, court dates—they all mess you up. They took up a big slice of my career."

He started as a contender. Willie's band Mink DeVille exploded out of New York's punk bastion CBGB in 1976 with a more traditional sound than their clubmates and a major label deal. As the frontman/singer/primary songwriter for Mink DeVille, Willy has spent a decade trying to translate the feeling of the Drifters' records he grew up on into a contemporary context. His goals made him a critics' fave and attracted such collaborators as Doc Pomus and Jack Nitzsche, but after a half dozen albums (and almost as many record companies), DeVille has yet to break America and he can count his minor European hits on one hand. His best album, 1980's afterhours *Le Chat Bleu*, was deemed so commercially wrongheaded by then-label Capitol that it nearly didn't come out. It finally reached the racks in America nearly a year after it was released in Europe.

"Mink DeVille was my dream," Willy remembers wistfully. "The dream is over. It's time to put Mink DeVille to sleep. There's a framework around Mink DeVille that I've got to break away from. "This was a weird record to put together," DeVille says, lighting another cigarette. "I started it in Holland, made demos and then got the band together to record the tunes. But everything we started to record sounded like something I'd already done. The band was so stylized, it was making me crazy. I went to my manager and told him. It was really frustrating. We put something together we'd all heard before. I wasn't doing anything different. If I had put that out, I would have been cheating my fans and, worst of all, I would have been cheating myself. My manager suggested a change in the rhythm section, so we wound up in Muscle Shoals. It was different and it gave me a challenge, which I really needed. It worked out real nice. I was creating something—I wasn't recreating something that I had heard before. Then I went back to Holland to mix."

The result, the transitional *The Sporting Life*, has received so little label support it's surprising Atlantic didn't just release it as a cutout and eliminate the middleman, but what's in the grooves justifies all DeVille's frustration and some of his enthusiasm. (Three times during the interview, DeVille said "*The Sporting Life* is a very, very good album.") Half the tracks, including the gorgeous single "I Must Be Dreaming," are a triumphant farewell to the deeply-felt Leiber & Stoller-style love songs that have been DeVille's best work, while the other half employs synthesizers and Emulators in tentative moves toward whatever comes next.

Not that it was easy bringing in the new technology. "The first time I used synthesizer, everybody started to freak out. They went crazy in two different ways. Either they said it came out too much like Ben E. King and the Drifters or they said it was too different. I'm tired of hearing people saying either, 'That doesn't sound anything like Mink DeVille' or 'That sounds just like another Mink DeVille record.' I just want to be able to go in and create something that's good, something that jazzes me."

DeVille's obsessive need to shed his Mink straitjacket doomed the band. "It was difficult trying to keep a band together and make it a band effort, because it was really all me. I was writing the songs, I was singing the songs, I was arranging the songs, I was producing the record, I was naming the record, I was designing the album cover. I was doing everything, but I kept lying to myself that it was a band effort. When they didn't want to work together, it hurt. Their dream wasn't the same as my dream.

"Maybe it's part of growing up and realizing that nobody has the same dreams you have, especially for yourself. Now I'm going to have a backup band, which is real funny and real foreign. I hate to think of guys backing me up. I'll never get used to that, but it's the way it is. As a trade for that, I'll get more freedom to do what I want to do."

Lou Cortelezzi's smokey sax, a Mink DeVille trademark, is gone. "I'm going to use less saxophone on the next few records," Willy warns. "I'm a big lover of saxophone, but I'm sick of seeing it on Air-Gel commercials. If I see someone else on TV driving in a '59 pink Cadillac with a sax, I'll throw up."

Which brings us to why he wants to drop the "Mink" title; he's only recently

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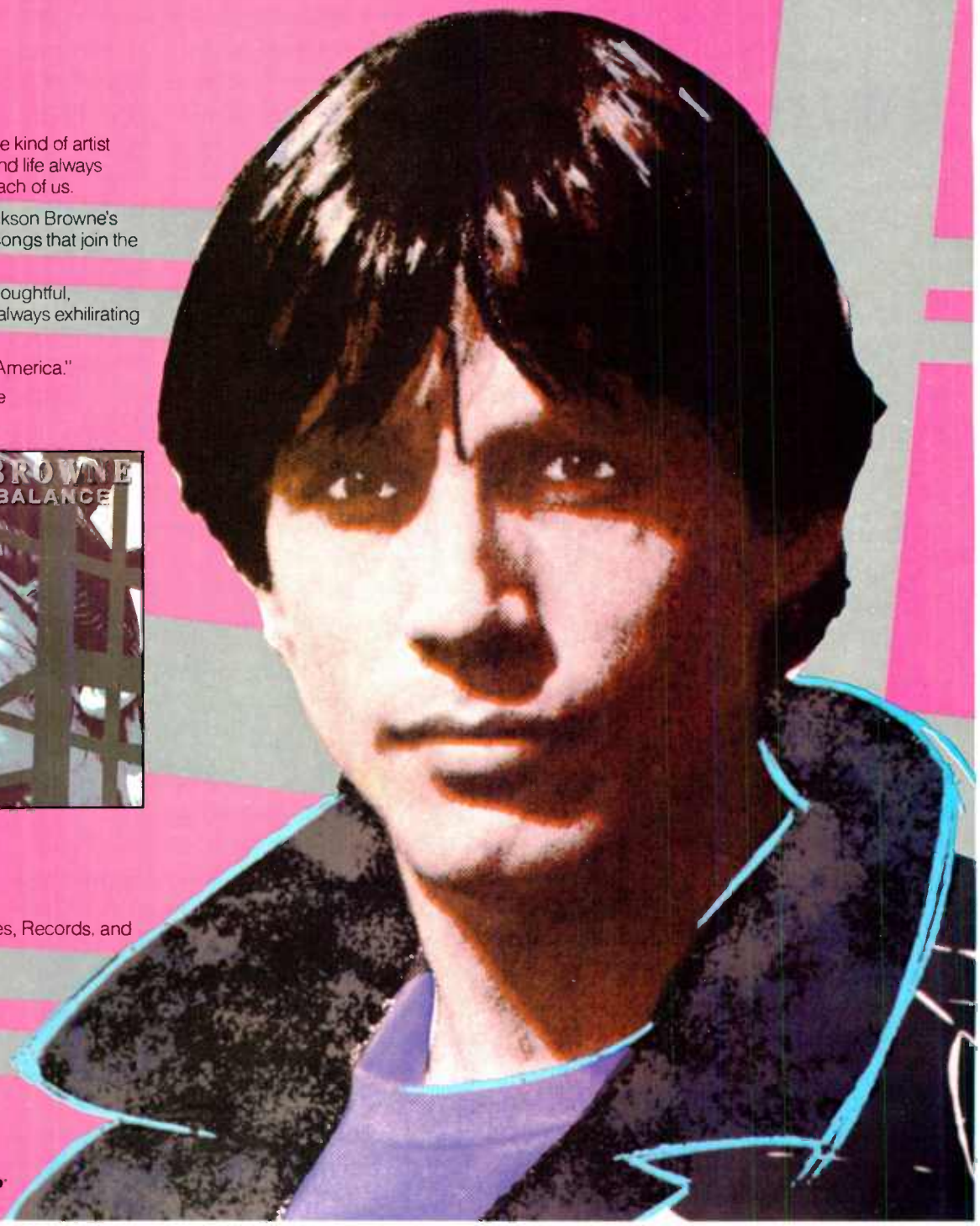

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begun to care or even acknowledge who Willy DeVille is.

"My second manager had a real taste for the high life. He liked tall blonde models, long limousines, and he did a lot of cocaine. He was also blowing all my money doing it. After a while, I realized he was bleeding me dry, so I got a shark to get rid of him. Then I had to get rid of the shark, which got real dirty. He was garbage. He was harder to get rid of than any disease. He was harder to kick than drugs. But now I've got a great manager. He helped get me out of the drug thing. With his help, I'm going to start building Willy DeVille's career. I'm a snake shedding my skin."

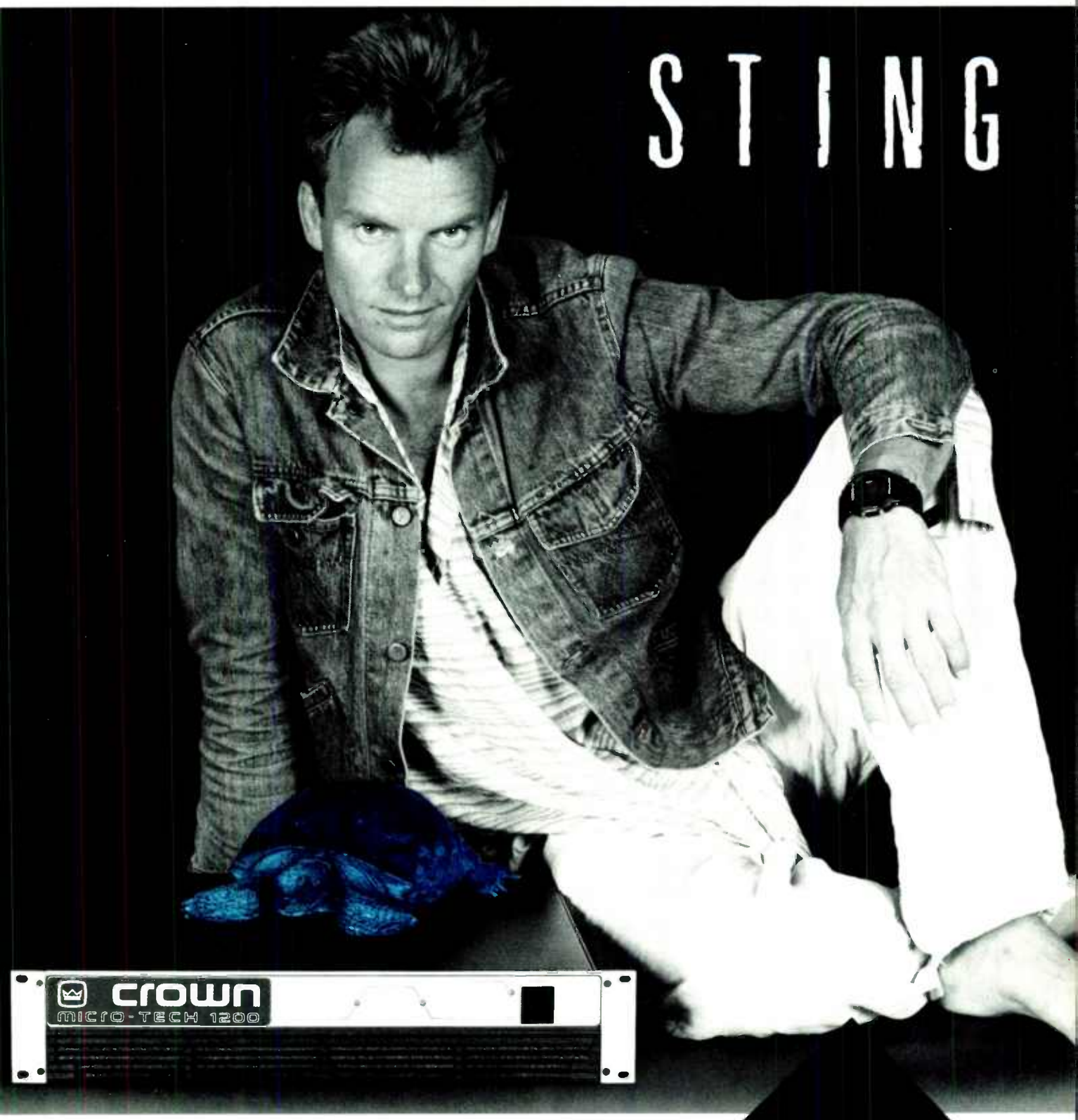
From the start, DeVille's music was passionately romantic. Drifters' records became real life, and real life an attempt to realize the dreams those records held. Unfortunately hard drugs hold a perverse charm for romantics, if only as an escape from the real world.

DeVille insists his drug days are behind him, but there are still some bills left to pay. "I'm still dodging lawsuits from my first wife. I still can't be seen in too many clubs. I'd really like to take my new wife out dancing—I feel like a kid with her—but I can't. When I was really drugged out, with my first wife, I never wanted to go anywhere. With my new wife, I want to go out and do all the things I didn't do for years. At the party at Limelight celebrating the release of the new record, I had to have four guards at the doors to make sure my first wife didn't show up. She could come in with a pistol, she's that nuts. I'm not being melodramatic. She's fucking crazy."

DeVille's apparently put drugs and bad management behind him, but what lies ahead? He's got some projects in mind: He's midway through writing a book of Jim Carroll-esque short stories, and he's been talking with Mark Knopfler about producing the next LP, but the need to change pervades DeVille's every professional move. "I don't want to be the Lenny Bruce of rock 'n' roll. One of the things that fucked me up was the whole New York thing. They encourage you to be a junkie here. Look at Johnny Thunders. He falls off the stage, too fucked-up to play, and people cheer him. That's camp. In New York, you have to be funny, you have to be campy. They want you to fail, to fuck up. Then they can enjoy you and laugh at you. I'm not about camp. I'm real." Ⓜ

Coup de Ville

Willy DeVille sings through Shure ball microphones. Live, he uses a Gibson Les Paul, a James Trussard, and a Washburn, all played through Fender Twin amplifiers. He writes primarily with a Gibson J-200 acoustic. The new traditionalist also likes to tinker with a Yamaha DX7 and an Emulator.



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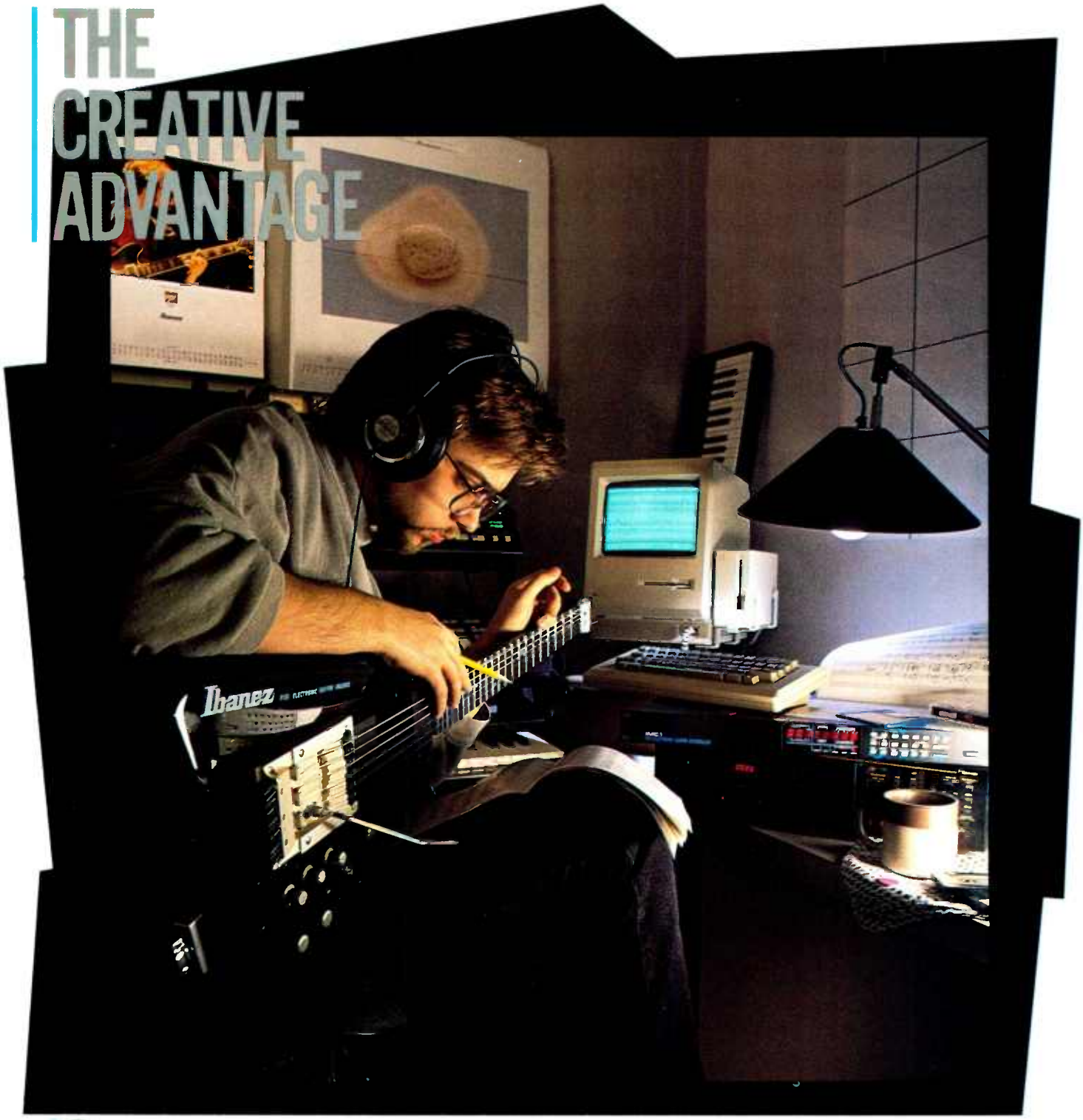

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WINDHAM HILL

BY JOSEF WOODARD

MUSIC THAT ELEVATES OR MERELY MUSIC FOR ELEVATORS?

There's a new dance craze sweeping the country. Coast to coast, they're doing the Glaze. A sedentary dance, no floor is necessary—only a disposition towards the musical equivalent of a Vermont spring afternoon. An aptitude for stillness helps, too.

In increasingly impressive numbers, old folks, young folks, and mostly folks somewhere in between, are snatching up the goods from Windham Hill records. There is no longer any escaping the music, or philosophy, institutionalized by the company built by Will Ackerman and his ex-wife Anne Robinson. George Winston's aw-shucks piano doodlings now permeate hipper restaurants and boutiques. Socially correct get-togethers flaunt designer water and the solo guitar musings of Michael Hedges, Alex de Grassi and Ackerman himself. Record stores pump Windham Hill's soothing atmospherics through their house systems, confidently ensnaring new converts and guiding them to the special Windham Hill record sections conveniently located cheek to jowl with the jazz bins. Multi-artist concert programs ("An Evening with Windham Hill") pack large venues with enthusiastic crowds, who nestle into their seats and wait for Windham Hill's musical serum to take effect. And as pianist Scott Cossu takes the stage and begins to sprinkle his myriad of variants on a C major arpeggio for the willing throng, anxiety magically melts into the ether. Social malaise becomes history. The dance begins. They're doin' The Glaze.

Such seemingly innocuous music has managed to spawn what is arguably the most influential music industry trend of this decade. Following Windham Hill's lead (not to mention sales figures) major and independent labels alike are helping to spread the gospel of Glaze. Meanwhile Windham Hill, eager to protect its hegemony and obviously willing to go with the economic flow, has finagled its own major label distribution (with RCA via A&M), launched several subsidiary labels, and is currently testing the waters for, among other things, a film division, a publishing company and a laser disc project.

For all its wispy New Age vibe, it's fitting that the company's headquarters are located in Palo Alto, well within the high-tech shadow of Silicon Valley. These days the business of the counterculture is business, and Windham Hill is here to stay.

Will Ackerman is inclined to agree. "One of the ironies of this entire situation is that Windham Hill is regarded by many as this mellow bastion," he grins. "There's probably this image of Will Ackerman sitting around in a fern-bedecked office in a very contemplative manner." Well? "In point of fact, my

MICHAEL THORESEN

blood pressure went to 210 over 140 a couple of years ago and they were saying, 'You're going to have a heart attack and we don't mean next year.' But I feel that I've gone through that, and things are saner now."

Sitting in his high-ceilinged living room—a view of verdant woodscape through the picture windows of his Mill Valley home—Ackerman certainly appears to have matters well in hand. His athletic, blond on blond countenance suggests a water polo player who has since become intoxicated by the spiral of his own success. Though his duties as Windham Hill CEO propel him into fairly constant motion, he hasn't relinquished his artistic ambitions; our first interview was postponed a day so that Ackerman could record a song for a sampler LP that he'd written the night before. He claims to be wary of capitalist excess, and speaks with respect of his grandfather, a cautious banker back in Ohio. He denies that Windham Hill's success was due to entrepreneurial shrewdness: "This company wasn't based on any brilliant demographic analysis...it was just a matter of going into a sector of the musical community and finding a wealth of talent and material to draw on." You know, like Berry Gordy.

Demographics *do* play a big part in the saga of Windham Hill, however. The tradition of homegrown stylists dreaming up etudes in the privacy of their living rooms and performing them at local folk hangouts is at least as old as the early-60s folk revival. The Vanguard and Takoma labels enjoyed modest success with just such a format in the intervening decades. So why should there be such hoopla generated now over music that, ten or twelve years ago, would barely have filled a coffeehouse? The answer is simple—demographic synchronicity. That ubiquitous baby boom generation, weaned on music as a cultural life force during the 60s, alienated from modern pop trends yet similarly unsympathetic to the heady concerns of modern jazz, has discovered in Windham Hill a tastefully happy medium—music to unwind from a computer terminal by. And it's an aesthetic that Windham Hill is happy to reinforce. Their catalog is a steadfastly c*lean* line. Recordings are top-notch, pressings crisp, graphic cover designs spare and uniform. (Cover photographs, like the music, are often vaguely impressionistic.) Nor do ungainly dissonances, harsh timbres, blue notes, funny meters or swing feels intrude once diamond strikes vinyl. Nothing, in other words, to shake Windham Hill's image as a safe emotional harbor from the world's abrasions. It's angst-free instrumental folk music, or your credit card back.

True, Will Ackerman hadn't set out to find gold in them California hills, and its discovery probably surprised him more than it had John Sutter. Having dropped out of Stanford, he'd first founded Windham Hill Builders (the name came from a Vermont inn where he'd once lived), while honing a guitar style in the vein of John Fahey and Robbie Basho. Then in 1975, mostly as a lark, he recorded an LP called *In Search Of The Turtle's Navel* (Sting take note) with a little fiscal help from his friends.

"I had to have a minimum order of 300, so I literally called the record presser to say, 'Forget it,'" he recalls. "Then Annie came through with the bucks. I fully expected to have two or three hundred records sitting in a closet. We did discover that if you left them on a radiator, they curved into the rough shape of an ashtray. I thought there might be a market for *that*. But that was as far as my vision went."

The ashtray concept proved premature; other guitarists, such as Ackerman's cousin Alex de Grassi, helped sell enough records to keep all the players in custom-made instruments and the fledgling label solvent. By 1978 Will and Anne were ready to quit their day jobs.

"We made a promise to ourselves," Ackerman explains. "If the bastard

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didn't live and breathe by itself, the hell with it. But it didn't falter; it got up off the table and started dancing around." Many a noble small record company has felt the agony of defeat, but Windham Hill was beginning to feel its oats. Then came The Miracle.

In 1980, though advised against it, Ackerman decided to cut an album by a barefoot piano player named George Winston. At a production budget of $1720, Winston's solo piano debut, *Autumn*, has since earned gold record status (500K units sold) in three countries, and it's still selling. His music clearly struck a fat major seventh chord with the public, who perhaps discerned in his simple ramblings a Keith Jarrett sensibility, albeit with Jarrett's knotty introspection, dynamic tension and personal belligerence thoughtfully deboned. The music press initially took a liking to Winston's musical grasslands; a four star review in *Rolling Stone* and a glowing notice in this publication helped spread the news about a music that took the DIY punk axiom to nice wholesome ends.

The rest of the industry also rallied to support Windham Hill—after all, here was music that executives might genuinely like. Windham Hill had already learned how to survive quite comfortably outside the traditional distribution network; its own specialized audience had been efficiently tapped through New Age health and book stores, Mom and Pop record stores, even via direct mail. So by the time their independent operation began to "show its belly in the water," as Ackerman put it, and he went to woo Hollywood, major distributors were understandably receptive. As a result, Ackerman's deal with A&M provided Windham Hill with an unusual degree of autonomy.

"Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss used to pack up records in a garage, and I think there was a lot of empathy there," Ackerman observes. "They gave me complete quality control—picking the vinyl, pressing, tape base. I could release as many or as few records as I wanted."

Through A&M, Windham Hill has infiltrated new territory; Japan has turned out to be a particularly strong market, an affinity that may have as much to do with the Oriental-style packaging and Windham Hill's understated, co-operative business structure as the music. The company, for all its success, is certainly a model of promotional restraint; they don't rush product, advertising is scant, and the label roster has currently congealed into a tight, nearly impenetrable family. Winston hasn't even released a record in years.

"We didn't set out to break rules," says co-founder Anne Robinson, "we just set out to do what we felt was right—not jamming something down people's throats, treating people honestly and hoping they would do the same back."

Though Windham Hill's business actually increased by a rather astounding 1000 percent in one year, Robinson is quick to debunk any talk of an overnight sensation: "We've been working hard for ten years, thank you. The average compounded growth is about 180 percent a year. I would prefer that it weren't this year, because if you have a snowball of growth growth growth, it gets unmanageable. We limit releases for a very good reason; if there are too many, we can't get involved in them. I don't want to see our energy dissipated."

One unique aspect of the A&M deal allows Windham Hill continued independent distribution to their non-traditional market. They service a mailing list of 90,000 names—talk about a subculture!—and Robinson is proud of it. "Everything in our catalog sells just fine, thank you. We're not out advertising and pimping."

Windham Hill's industry profile was also boosted measurably by its appearance on, and almost immediate dominance of, the jazz charts, a development Ackerman credits to some passionate lobbying by *Billboard's* Sam

MARC JOHNSON

With John Scofield, Bill Frisell and Peter Erskine

Bass Desires

The formation of the group Bass Desires finds bassist/composer Marc Johnson, guitarists John Scofield and Bill Frisell and drummer Peter Erskine collaborating on an album of eclectic allusion. Witness the reggae-inspired "Mojo Highway," the country/oriental rocker "Samurai Hee-Haw" and the slow blues "Thanks Again."

Bass Desires

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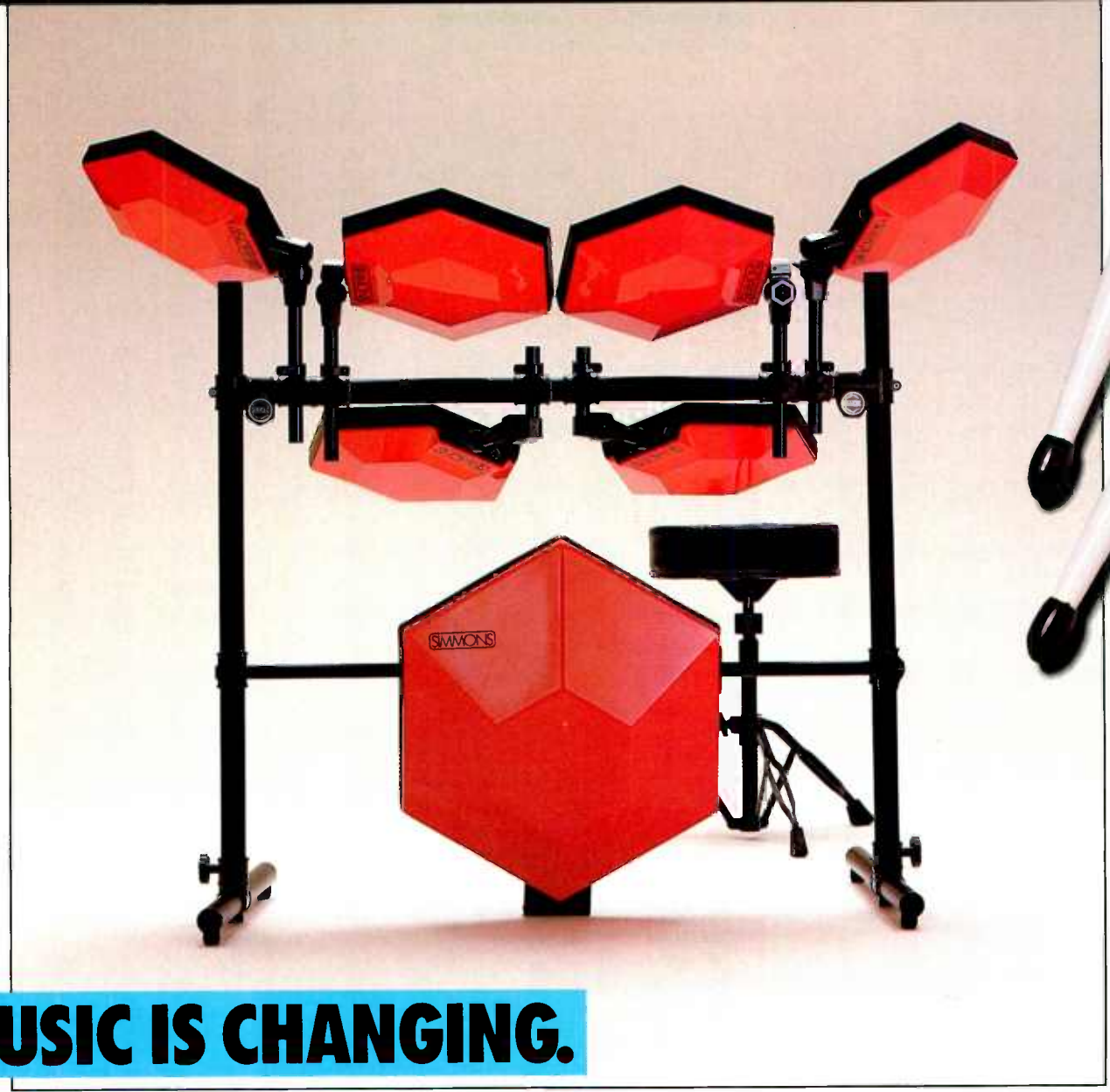
Sutherland. But the regular appearance of records like *Autumn* atop the jazz listings sticks in the craws of many jazz cognescenti, for whom Windham Hill and their ilk are imposters, usurping jazz's natural audience while bilking its prestige. Now epithets abound—hot tub music, yuppie Muzak....

The critical stigma clearly bugs Ackerman. "I'm pissed as hell when I hear charges that Windham Hill is a nice mellow little label. I defy anyone to listen to Hedges on "Aerial Boundaries" or "Rickover's Dream" or the whole new Shadowfax record and say that. Darol Anger was recording with [David] Grisman on Warner Brothers; why suddenly, because we signed him, should he be relegated to insignificance? Obviously I'm defensive when I hear it."

One response has been Windham Hill's Magenta label, coordinated by veteran producer Steve Backer, who previously put together the adventurous Novus jazz series for Arista. Magenta's first three releases bode well: Mitchell Forman's stout fusion exercises are balanced by Anthony Braxton's slightly skewed readings of standards, and a fine set of solo piano by Richard Beirach, whose intense, feral style is the perfect antidote for George Winston's underkill-overkill. Another Windham subsidiary called Open Air features efforts by an a cappella group (the Nylons) and Canadian pop/folk artist Jane Siberry. And Winston's own Dancing Cat label kicked off with a re-release of Professor Longhair's decidedly unmellow classic *Rock 'n' Roll Gumbo*.

Windham Hill will still do The Glaze, of course. But with so many imitation models dogging their footsteps, it certainly can't hurt to diversify. And perhaps that's where Windham Hill's true significance lies, as the manifestation of a dream, or let us say concept, for a generation keyed into prosperity without Machiavellian means, culture without pretension or intellectual hurdles, and vacations in Vermont. A blend of puritan work ethic, Woodstock Nation self-reliance rhetoric and simple musical cheer, Windham Hill has prospered without succumbing to industry blight.

"This is not a boy scout camp or a religious cult or anything else. We're a disparate group of people," Ackerman observes. "But we're working together in a very cooperative and ethical way. We're a privately held corporation. We've never owed a penny to anyone. We haven't issued stock." He pauses, then brightens with a thought. "It's a very conservative philosophy really. As if you were living in a small town in Ohio."



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DIVINYLS

BY J. D. CONSIDINE

WILD, LOUD, MEAN AND CRUDE: YOU'VE GOT TO LOVE 'EM

There's something wonderfully out-of-control about a Divinyls' stage show. It isn't simply the music, though the brash combination of semi-metal guitars, swaggering drums and high-impact melodies is as close to irresistible as mainstream rock gets. No, what makes the live performances especially memorable is their almost palpable intensity. Most bands simply play music; the Divinyls seem to *inhabit* their songs.

Especially singer Christina Amphlett. With her ability to shift from a girlishly-sweet warble to a shriek that seems swiped from somewhere in *The Exorcist*, Amphlett is utterly riveting on record. Onstage tonight at the Ritz, though, she sings as if possessed.

Stomping about the stage in dark stockings, garters and an undersized schoolgirl's dress, she manages to turn the refrain of the Easybeats' "Make U Happy" into something just short of a threat, as if "I'll make you happy, just like your mommy said" were a promise to be at once desired and feared. When she leaps up on the drum riser to perform an offhand hula during the guitar break, it's clear that there's more going on here than the music alone.

Thus, it isn't entirely surprising to hear what Amphlett figures she'd have done were it not for rock 'n' roll.

"If I wasn't doing what I was doing," she says nonchalantly over dinner, "I think I'd be an axe murderer, or something like that."

Bassist Rick Grossman, seemingly taken aback, laughs. "An axe murderer? I wouldn't have thought you'd have been an axe murderer. I'd have thought you would have been...." His voice drifts off as he tries to think what she would have been, and Amphlett laughs. "I dunno," he finally decides. "Like someone who tried, maybe, to do something, and sort of...." He pauses, searching for words. "...died in the process."

This puts the table into hysterics.

"Like trying to do long flights in a little airplane," Grossman elaborates.

"The first woman to win a Grand Prix—in a billy cart!" suggests new drummer J.J. Harris (who replaced Richard Harvey last August).

Amphlett, clearly delighted, laughs. "Well, that's very nice of you," she tells Grossman. "Thank you."

"Well, I'm not being that nice," Grossman demurs. "I'm not saying you would have actually *achieved* it...."

And Amphlett laughs all the more.

There are five Divinyls in all, but the band is very clearly centered on Amphlett and guitarist Mark McEntee. Part of that is because the two write most of the material—although guitarist/keyboardist Bjarne Ohlin also turns in tunes—but an even greater part has to do with the way their personalities define the band.

The two hooked up in Sydney, Australia, back in 1980. McEntee had been working as a sort of freelance guitarist, "living from fretboard to mouth" as he puts it, while Amphlett's musical outlet at the time was singing in a choir. "I had been doing this thing, singing for nuns and priests in this bloody choir, and it was like a religious thing, almost. I was," she says, looking for the words to sum up her situation, "kind of, ummm...."

"You were the odd one out," prompts McEntee.

"Well, I was," she agrees, "and I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I found myself in this situation. And then Mark came along, and said, 'Why don't we write together?' Which was very nice of him, and got me out of that."

"And into something far worse," smirks McEntee.

After recruiting Ohlin, bassist Jeremy Paul (who left the group in 1982) and original drummer Richard Harvey, the Divinyls began working at a pub in the Kings Cross district of Sydney. Not exactly a tourist attraction, Kings Cross is known not only for its rock 'n' roll, but also for its sleazy street life, prostitutes and junkies. Hardly the same as singing for the nuns. Before long, the Divinyls were drawing capacity crowds, building an audience and a curious set of performance practices, like Amphlett's tendency to pour whole pitchers of water over her head in midsong.

"Well it cools you down!" she says. "I've done shows where I've fainted, right? I've had to be picked up and stood there. I'll just keel over because of the heat, 'cos the place is packed and sweaty, and you're dizzy....I mean, I used to douse the *audience*—everybody would be soaking wet."

"We used to have an oxygen bottle," adds Grossman. "When we hadn't really gone into the bigger pubs, we were getting big crowds in a smaller pub. You just couldn't breathe."

The pub circuit is a sort of national training ground for Australian musicians. "It works in a totally different way

MOSHE BRAKHA

Mark McEntee and Christina Amphlett: not just another bar act.

over there, where a band will form and will spend years playing without thinking about making a record," explains Grossman. "They'll spend two years in those places playing, and then they make a record. While in England, and here in a way, you can have an artist signed by a record company, make a record, and then they'll get a band together to go out and promote the record. Australian groups *have* to play bars first."

"You're just not taken seriously unless you go through that process," Amphlett agrees. "In Australia you must go through and pay your dues." But, she adds, just because they play the pubs doesn't mean that all Australian bands are basically bar acts. "I get annoyed, because there is this stigma that a lot of Australian bands are just *pub* bands. We just work a lot live. There's no rules, everybody goes through separate things. But Midnight Oil, INXS, Mental As Anything, Hoodoo Gurus, Church—you name them, they've all come through the pubs."

"It's very exciting playing in the pubs," says Grossman. "And you get a genuine reaction at a lot of those places. You don't get people standing there who won't dance because the guy next to them won't dance. If they like you, they'll show it. And if they don't like you, they'll show that, too."

The rowdiest, most demonstrative crowds particularly favored the Divinyls. The band was never especially fashionable—"We're the band everybody loves to hate," jokes Amphlett—but they managed large-scale success early on, thanks to the single "All The Boys In Town" and the soundtrack from *Monkey Grip*, a dark Australian film about heroin addiction that Amphlett disliked intensely.

Monkey Grip, or as Amphlett puts it, "that bloody movie about heroin," is not something the band particularly likes talking about. "I was so depressed, complains Amphlett. "I've never even seen the whole film. You know, you do things...." She looks away and adds, "I feel embarrassed about that film, so let's not talk about it. It always comes up. Everybody knows about it, and it upsets me."

In all honesty, though, one of the reasons the American press is so curious is that almost nobody in this country has ever seen *Monkey Grip*. "Yeah, thank God," she spits, "just so nobody bloody does."

"You're getting to really hate the movie, aren't you?" says McEntee. "Yeah, well, I do," Amphlett moans, "'cos it's depressing. And over here, you wouldn't understand it and wouldn't be able to relate to it. You couldn't, it's a very parochial Australian film."

Perhaps one reason Amphlett so dislikes the film is that it subverts the Divinyls' music, imposing meanings based on the action of the film. For a singer who needs to identify as strongly with her material as Amphlett does, no doubt that's quite painful. This isn't to suggest that Amphlett cherishes her work because it's essentially confessional; as McEntee puts it, "When you write a song, it's really just a story. It doesn't necessarily have to relate to you, you don't have to tell your life story."

But, Amphlett insists, "it's gotta be real. That's still important to us. I can't get onstage and sing it unless I really believe it. So a lot of songs that come into the Divinyls from people, have almost to be tailor-made, which is a shame. It's frustrating for others, sometimes, but I've really got to believe in the lyrics."

"I've got a lot of different things inside me. What's great," she adds, brightening, "is that, gradually, more stuff has come out. It's just something that keeps on developing, and I'm always trying to find different ways to do things that will suit the song. I always try and interpret the song. I love it, because then I'm getting out a lot of things, emotional things. A lot of our songs are emotional releases. I'm not one of those frustrated people who only gets to do one thing. I think I've got a lot of scope, and I'm al-

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lowed a lot of range. It's very satisfying in that way."

Satisfying in a completely different way has been the success of "Pleasure And Pain," the first single off the band's second LP *What A Life!* The song, written by Holly Knight and Mike Chapman, was bestowed upon the band almost out of the blue. Chapman, himself Australian, had been a long-time Divinyls fan, and, Amphlett says, "told Chrysalis about the band. They signed us because of Mike's recommendation."

No surprise, then, that when McEntee and Amphlett found themselves dis-

DIVINYLS SOLUTIONS

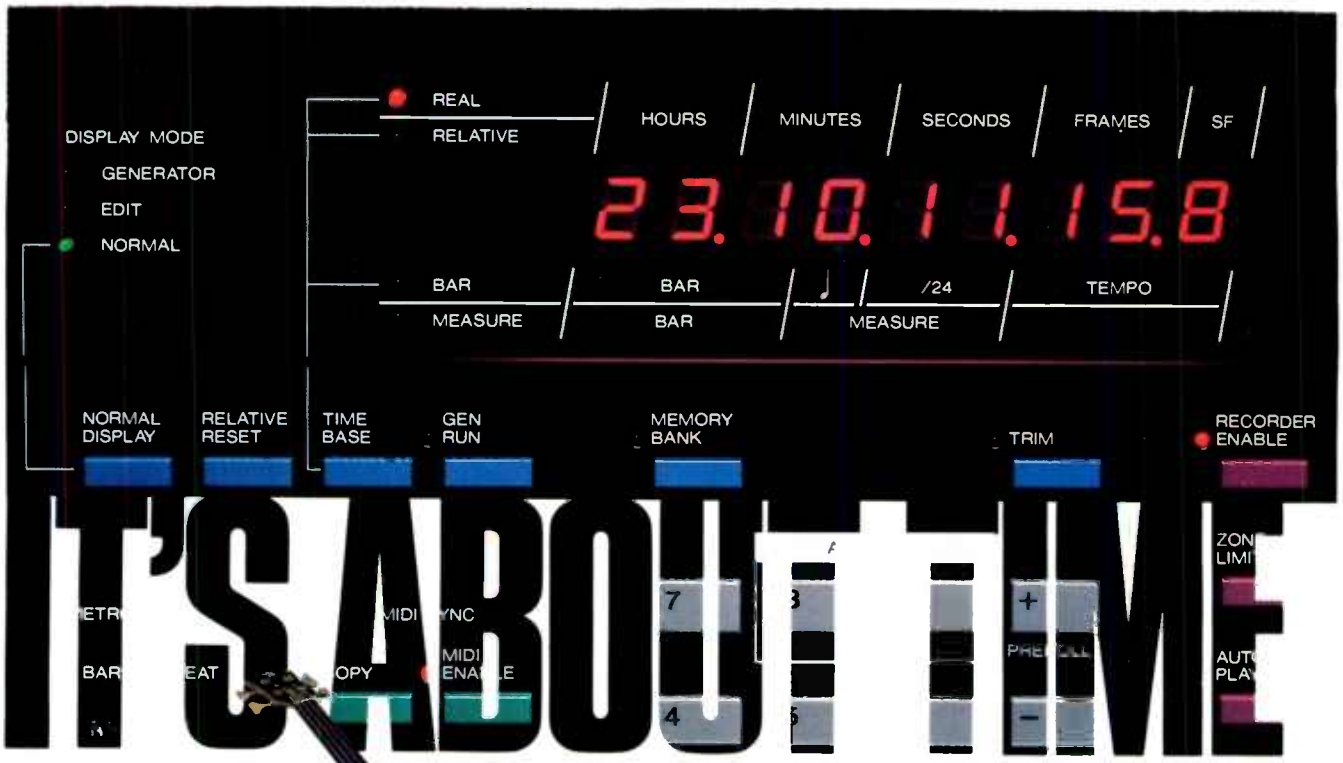
Mark McEntee does most of his writing and playing on a single-coil, Les Paul-styled Guild he bought a few years ago for all of $300. "I don't know how old it is," he says, "but it's the best I've got." In fact, the guitar's hollow body gives it such a resonance, he used it instead of an acoustic guitar for *What A Life!* "But people will never see it live; it's too good." Onstage, the Guild is replaced by a Gibson, a 1980 single-coil Les Paul. His other guitars are a Rickenbacker 12-string (boasting a customized 12-piece bridge) and a mid-70s Strat with a maple neck and extra-wide frets. His amps are Marshalls, his strings D'Addarios (.010 to .052), and his Korg pedal rack includes a compressor, chorus, echo and a graphic equalizer.

Bjarne Ohlin plays a '62 Stratocaster through a Marshall 800 JCM, using Boss digital delay, chorus and equalizers. His strings are also D'Addario (.011 to .052), and he uses a 73mm pick. His main synths are a Yamaha DX7, augmented by a TX7 FM Tone Generator and a Prophet 5. He also has an Emulator, although that's largely reserved for special effects, including the backing vocals on "In My Life." "We use that instead of tape or extra players," he explains. The synths are sent through a Roland mixer, with a Yamaha R1000 reverb and D1500 delay reserved for keyboard effects.

Rick Grossman's main bass is a Steinberger he bought just before recording *Desperate*, with standard Rotosound Swing Bass strings instead of the double-ball kind. This is fed through a Gallien-Krueger 400 head and into an SVT 810 cabinet reloaded with two Gauss; 15-inch speakers. His only effect is a Boss chorus, and his backup bass is a '65 Precision bass with a Badass bridge and a brass nut.

J.J. Harris plays a Tama Superstar kit, consisting of three rack toms, one floor tom, an 8-inch snare and 22-inch kick, with Remo pinstripe and black-dot heads. His cymbals are Zildjian and Paiste— a 14-inch high-hat, a pair of Chinese cymbals and a pair of 19-inch crashes—and he uses Tama hardware and pedals. All this is pounded with Promark 5A sticks.

Christina Amphlett uses a blue neon tube of her own devising, and brandishes a custom-made axe in "Guillotine Day."



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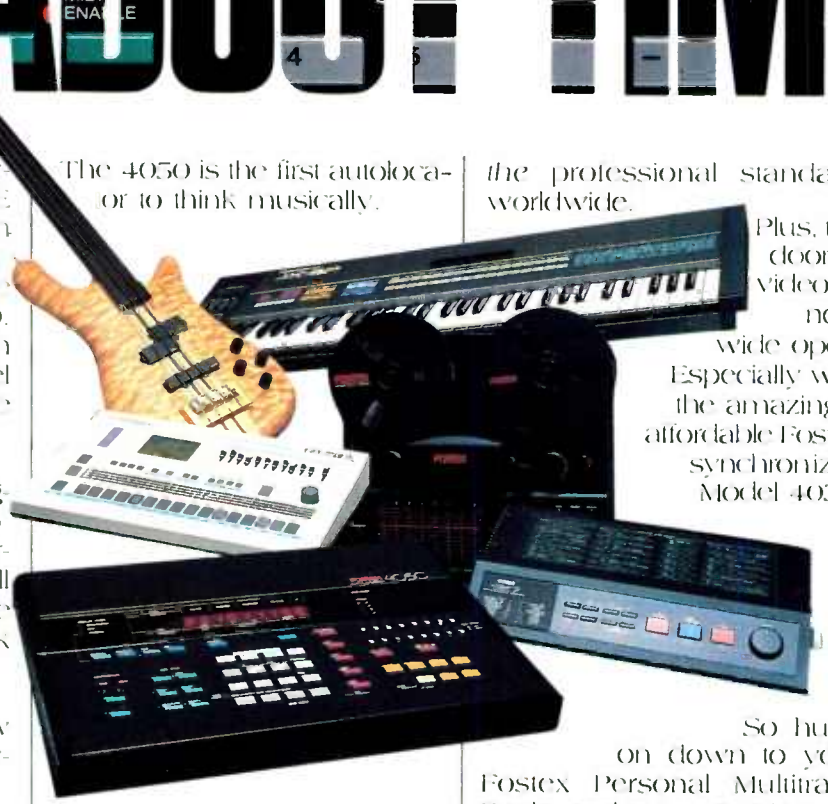

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satisfied with the mixes Gary Langan gave the five tracks he had produced for *What A Life!*, they arranged to go to L.A. and have Chapman fix things up. Says Amphlett, "Mark and I went over to ask him to mix the album, right? And while we were there, Holly rang him up and sang the chorus of 'Pleasure And Pain.' And then Mark played him 'Sleeping Beauty,' and he really liked that, and wanted to record those two songs."

Despite Chapman's reputation for pop perfectionism, he took a hands-off approach to working with the Divinyls. "Mike just said, 'Well, here's the song,'" Amphlett reports. "He showed us the chords, and then we Divinyl-ized it. We got into the studio and did it. And he was delighted. He was funny, because he's a bit sensitive about whether or not we'd like it, y'know? Then he didn't even say anything, he just let everybody do what they do. So it very much became a Divinyls song."

"Mike's a rock 'n' roll person," McEntee says. "When you work with some people in the studio, they're tempted to put their own thing on it. You know that attitude—'You guys stick to playing the guitars; we'll fiddle with knobs in here.' Mike's not like that at all. He really knew what the band was about, and could pull the best out of us."

Curiously, although the Divinyls seem eager for their crack at America, after merely skimming the surface with their debut album, *Desperate*, they're not particularly set for stardom. They seem a bit taken aback by their enthusiastic acceptance so far; as Amphlett said, "We're not *used* to people liking us."

Perhaps that's why they still identify with what Amphlett describes as "more of the down and out kind of person. Street kids, people like that. We've done shows with street kids—Rick helped put together a whole show these kids wrote. And a lot of these people relate to us; we have an empathy with them, we care about them. Maybe that's why we get down and do things more about that side of life, because maybe those kind of people have to relate to us."

"Also," says Grossman, "Sydney is a very big place, very spread out. A lot of groups, when they start to get popular, give in to that temptation to just do big concerts, to cut back and not play for those kids. Y'know, it's amazing how much they appreciate that you're actually going out there and playing."

"We've always tried to make ourselves accessible to an audience that maybe can't afford to pay enormous amounts of money," adds Amphlett. "But I don't want you to get the wrong idea, here. I mean, we're not do-gooders." She laughs. "We're not nice people. We're assholes."

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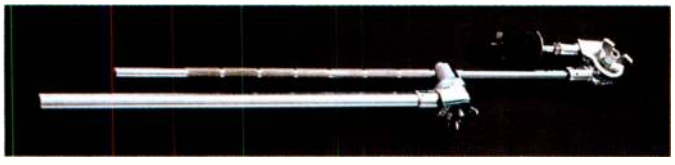

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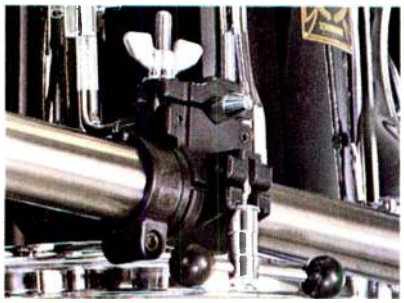

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FACES

LL COOL J

He Has Seen Rap 'n' Roll Future

LL Cool J may have the same casual b-boy look, the same Rush management company, and may come from the same Queens, New York neighborhood as rap rulers Run-DMC. He may be a bit player in the same movie, *Krush Groove*. However, at seventeen, the former James Todd Smith is quick to point out that he has his own style. "I'm more hardcore," he asserts, referring

BERNARD BELAIR

to the sturdy, electro-fattened beats on his debut Def Jam LP, *Radio*. "I don't [attempt to] crossover. Also, I'm more literate—literate and tough."

A rapper for seven years, Cool J's first 12-inch release, "I Need A Beat," sold over 100,000 copies with little airplay and virtually no promotion. His album is approaching gold status, selling 100,000 copies in two weeks—a Springsteenian velocity. Devoid of singsongy smoothness, the rapper's forceful warbles come off braggadocious and funny. But he can also get mushy, courting girls with lines like "when you ring my bell/ Perfume I smell/ The aroma passes through my brain cells." "He's a poet," says Rush publicist Bill Adler. Citing his creative inspiration for "I Want You" and "I Can Give You More," the performer himself adds: "I saw New Edition making money catering to the females, but I don't sing—so I did it *my* way."

Rhythm tracks chilled out to the bone further separate LL from the hip-hop pack. They're neither wimpy nor vampy, guaranteed to be a nuisance or haunt your brain fuzz. It's mostly been the latter. Rick Rubin, who had a concept to "reduce (not produce) the streetest records around," foresaw that. An integral part of the Cool J explosion, Rubin "heard Run-DMC and thought: '*This* is how these type of records should sound.' Run-DMC seemed a bit too polished, too musical. And 'Sucker MCs' didn't have any hook."

To make LL's sound bigger, badder, fiercer and more devastating, Rubin mixes two drum tracks (one treated with gated echo) way above the vocals in his minimalist mix. He also takes months off between songs "to think about beats that feel right and make the most sense."

Radio is basically selling itself. But Columbia, Def Jam's distributor, is using LL's ingratiating personality and its own pop market clout to expand the performer's base. That means prime TV appearances, special posters, and a video of the latest single, "Rock The Bells." "Based on the response we've gotten," a Columbia executive says, "LL Cool J has the potential to be a long-term artist."

— *Havelock Nelson*

FINE YOUNG CANNIBALS

They Want to Make You Cry

The English Beat? Bassist **David Steele** recalls his former band not fondly, but well. "We didn't like each other very much and we wrote crappy songs," he snorts. Although his curt dismissal of a group once beloved by many might seem a bit harsh, he's got no time for nostalgia now. Along with fellow Beat alumnus Andy Cox (guitar) and new kid Roland Gift (vocals), Steele is one of the Fine Young Cannibals, a soul-flavored pop combo that's already created a stir in England and Europe.

They had a devil of a time getting started. Following the demise of the Beat in 1983, Steele and Cox began looking for a someone to front their next project. They advertised in the British music papers. MTV announced the job opening, and hundreds of tapes poured in. No luck. "We found lots of average performers," Steele recalls, "but nobody that was incredible."

Discouraged after a year of searching, they finally remembered Gift, a sorrowful-voiced singer they'd met when his band Akrylykz opened for the Beat way back when. The trinity was complete. Taking their name (for no particular reason) from the 1960 Robert Wagner-Natalie Wood film *All the Fine Young Cannibals*, Steele, Cox and Gift commenced to make tasty sounds together.

Though delighted with the album, Steele doesn't hesitate to describe the Cannibals' tunes as "miserable." That is, "miserable in a sad way, not in a bad way. We intend to be depressing. Woody Allen once said that if he's made one person unhappy, he's achieved his goal. That's our aim with music. We feel that if we've made one person cry, we've accomplished something."

— *Jon Young*

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CIRCLE JERKS

A Chip Off the Old Punk

"We're not a punk band," says **Keith Morris**, the short, hoarse singer of Los Angeles' Circle Jerks. "That would be one of the last descriptions that I would want to use. My dad was a punk. My dad was in a motorcycle gang. When he was in high school, him and a couple of his friends would tie the principal to a chair and make him at knife point say certain things on the PA system. A lot of the lyrics I write are direct influences from my dad and his friends. The kids nowadays are not like that. The kids nowadays have a bit more intelligence."

Morris isn't entirely confident on this last point, but he seems ready to test it. The Circle Jerks have just released *Wonderful*, their first album in almost three years, with a heavy-metal parody as its centerpiece. "The sarcasm is there," Morris says, "but a lot of the kids don't like it. They have certain expectations of what we're supposed to be." The kids also expect the Jerks to be faithful to the L.A. punk scene, which the band's new lineup isn't. "What we've done," says Morris, who along with guitarist Greg Hetson remains from the 1979 lineup, "is incorporate a couple of guys that have never played this type of music before. They've never seen what goes on at our shows." Drummer Keith Clark joins the Circle after playing lightweight pop in 20/20. Bassist Zander Schloss rose to minor stardom crooning an inspired rendition of the 7-Up jingle in the film *Repo Man*. "It's embarrassing," the least likely Jerk says, "that people recognize me for being a nerd in a movie rather than—"

"Being a nerd in the Circle Jerks," Morris interjects.

"No-o-o-o. Being a hardcore punk, man."

Despite the line-up changes, the band hasn't changed its approach. *Wonderful* is less a departure than a rehashing of old formulas, like chunky guitar lines and mock-hedonist lyrics. If it's boring...well, they never promised you anything more. "We're just a bunch of jerks," Morris says. "Do you find us interesting? Stimulating? We're just like the guys on your street washing their cars Sunday afternoons." You couldn't ask for a better description of rock's foremost beach punks.

— John Leland

Jazz Rules, OK?

When Lee Abrams talks, radio stations listen; the creator of FM's album-oriented rock (AOR) format is one of the most respected programming consultants in the business. So the thirty-four-year-old Abrams made quite a stir in January when he declared that jazz "will be the next big thing."

Before you start scanning the dial for Sun Ra, take heed: the jazz Abrams is talking about is more the "new age" style of George Winston, Jean-Michel Jarré and Vangelis. This stuff reminds Abrams "of progressive rock in 1966."

Despite Abrams' credentials, not all AOR stations are eager to follow him into yuppie Sominex land. But perhaps his clout, plus the success of an act like Sade, will stretch some program directors' minds, if not ears. After all, how many times can even they listen to "Stairway To Heaven"?

TUXEDOMOON

Crazier than the Average Band

Tuxedomoon is not a band with a plan. Since forming in 1977, the group has navigated itself with all the foresight of a blindfolded gypsy. They've relocated from San Francisco to Brussels, and participated in diverse musical outings—from scoring ballets and avant-garde performances to embarking on the more traditional rock tour.

The scattershot approach keeps the sextet from establishing a sonic niche, so it's ironic that their recent *Holy Wars* album met with cries of sell-out; the record's neo-classical leanings stray from the dissonant sounds that brought Tuxedomoon a cult following. "If this is commercial," co-founder and multi-instrumentalist **Steve Brown** says, "then that's great because somebody's changed and it hasn't been us."

The stubbornly unconventional band members keep out of musical ruts by maintaining the group as a back-burner project. "Tuxedomoon isn't a nine-to-five job," Brown explains. "It's a bunch of artists, musicians and film makers who get together when they feel like it." Live shows have long included film and video imagery.

Musically, Tuxedomoon traces a quirky post-punk pattern, taking in the melodic monotony of a funeral dirge and the sporadic cacophony of a Salvation Army band jam. Instruments range from guitar to flugelhorn—Brown himself plays piano, keyboards, saxophone and clarinet. The result is often jolting and jarring and not exactly laden with hooks.

"We keep experimenting," Brown says, "taking risks and screwing around onstage. A lot of other [bands] seem to get scared or jump onto a safe island and stay there. I don't know, I guess that we're just crazier than the other guys."

– *Michael Kaplan*

FREDERIC DEVILLIERS

Smugglers' Blues

Tape piracy is more than a thorn in the side of the music industry. It's more like a seppuku gash, judging by the hair-raising revenue loss estimates issued by the International Federation of Phonogram and Videogram Producers, or IFPI (*Faces*, November 1985). The problem is that the mostly third-world countries where piracy is rampant do not have any intellectual-copyright laws.

Exporting illicit recordings to copyright-respecting countries, on the other hand, is a criminal offense. Last December 13, U.S. customs agents in New York arrested the co-owner of an Indonesian record and cassette manufacturer and distributor. Anthony Dharmawan Setiano was charged on January 6 with copyright infringement and U.S. customs laws violations.

Setiano's company, P.T. Inexco, handles some notorious pirate tape labels. He had reportedly offered to sell 360,000 allegedly illicit recordings, at $1.45 each, to a New York-based dummy import/export corporation set up by the Recording Industry Association of America. Last fall Inexco shipped that corporation approximately 5,000 tapes, fraudulently invoiced as blank; these were seized by U.S. customs agents at New York's JFK Airport. An earlier shipment of allegedly illicit samples came via diplomatic pouch through the Indonesian consulate in New York. Setiano pled not guilty to the charges at an arraignment hearing January 17. His arrest was possible only after the RIAA "enterprise" convinced him to come to New York to finalize a deal.

Setiano allegedly described his company as having a production capacity of 2.6 million tapes a month; Inexco's promotional literature indicates distribution in Asia, Africa, the Mideast and South America. The Indonesian consulate's involvement—the RIAA claimed the commercial attaché negotiated for Setiano and was promised a commission—underscores the tricky problems in dealing with international piracy.

"This is going to put more pressure on the Indonesian government to clean up its act and give copyright protection," says an IFPI spokesperson. Adding to that pressure is Inexco's bootleg records of the Live Aid concerts, seized by police in Italy. The government of Singapore, another hotspot of pirate taping activity, has at least acknowledged the issue and claims to be working on legislation. Whether Indonesia follows suit, in light of Inexco's aggressive international marketing, will be a function of quiet diplomacy.

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TOM REUSCHE RETNA

Tom Petty Pulls Together

—

The Southern Soul of a Hollywood Rocker

By Bill Flanagan

Tom Petty's a rich, famous rock star cruising down Sunset Strip in his red sports car, pulling into a private parking space and loping upstairs to the office of his manager, one of the top dogs in the music business. Is he happy? You bet he's happy. Why is he happy?

"Did you know we've got the number one country song this week?" Petty asks. He tries to act like it's no big deal but he can't keep from breaking into a smile. It is a big deal. He's really proud. "It's Rosanne Cash's version of 'Never Be You,' a song me and Benmont wrote. It's the number one country song this week." He lights a cigarette and says quietly, "I'm particularly pleased about that."

Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers (Benmont Tench, Stan Lynch, Howie Epstein, Mike Campbell) have been based in Los Angeles for more than ten years now. Some of their fans probably don't even realize the band was transplanted from Gainesville, Florida. But Petty's delight in topping the C&W charts is one more reflection—after last year's theme album *Southern Accents*—of the Southern soul still stirring in this Hollywood rock star.

Not that Petty hasn't always displayed the rock 'n' roll equivalent of traditional Southern values: appreciation for hard work, a mistrust of silliness, an inclination toward understatement. These qualities have helped the musician produce solid work for a decade, but may have also kept him from crossing over into the sort of mega-stardom reserved for performers more willing to risk making fools of themselves.

Petty has never pursued fame outside rock 'n' roll's boundaries; he refuses interviews with *People* magazine, doesn't make movies or go on TV talk shows, has yet to sing on an all-star charity anthem. Like good athletes, Petty and his band never show the effort behind their work. They don't grimace, they don't scream, they don't pound their fists on the floor. In 1985 they finally made one concession to the far rafters at their arena shows: They allowed a bit of flashy lighting and a few special effects. Even this small nod to the Age of Prince met some resistance.

"My attitude toward the shows is old-fashioned," says guitarist Mike Campbell. "I would go out with just a couple of spotlights and set the amps up on the floor. In arenas maybe that's not fair to the guys in the back. When I go to a rock show, if they're playing great and I can just see their faces, I'm happy. But in the bigger places there is a responsibility to give the people a little bit more than music. More power to it if it works. I just hope it doesn't cross the line into being pretentious."

Being pretentious is probably the last thing Tom Petty's band ever has to worry about. They're way too solid and no-nonsense for that. In fact, they're so unassuming that it's easy to forget just how good they are. Listening to Tom Petty's six studio albums back to back proves that he has created work of consistent substance. It also demonstrates a conceptual intelligence too often ignored by those dazzled by blatant displays of English Major imagery or impressed by chords trembling under the weight of ninths and thirteenths added clear up the keyboard. The band's 1976 debut, labeled "punk rock" in those naive days of the last hippies, is full of great songs that grab listeners in the first bars and yank them into the band's mood. Everyone knows the liberating "American Girl" and the hungry "Breakdown"—but lesser bands have built careers on songs less joyous than "Rockin' Around," and less moving than the haunting "The Wild One, Forever."

The Heartbreakers' next LP, *You're Gonna Get It!* (1978), was recorded under pressure and perhaps had too much of the garage in it. But "Listen To Her Heart" managed to be at once uplifting and defiant, and there are plenty of bitter partisans who'll bend your ear about how that record was Petty's high point—"Before he went commercial."

If *Damn The Torpedoes* was going commercial, everyone should go. Hung up by legal wars and faced with the possibility of never recording again, Petty, his band, and producer Jimmy Iovine fashioned a

RON DELANEY

Declaration of Independence that finally sent the Heartbreakers' fortunes through the roof. "Refugee," "Don't Do Me Like That," and "Here Comes My Girl" were the hits that defined Petty's sound for radio fans and still form the backbone of his public image. The album had lots of other great rockers, and a couple of numbers—"Louisiana Rain" and "Even The Losers"—that demonstrated Petty's skill as a senstitive, though never sentimental, lyricist. So charged were the Heartbreakers at that time that in 1985 Lone Justice scored their lone hit with a version of "Ways To Be Wicked," a leftover from the 1979 *Torpedoes* sessions.

Having made his commercial breakthrough, Petty resisted the temptation to make *Torpedoes 2, 3* and *4*. *Hard Promises* (1981) was a slower, more moody album than any of its predecessors. "The Waiting"—with its unpunky message of patience and fidelity—was a hit. Like the LP's other stand-out tracks ("You Can Still Change Your Mind," "Insider"), that song flipped over rock clichés to examine grown-up perspectives and responsibilities. Among the tunes tossed out for not fitting the mood of *Hard Promises* was "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around," which was scooped up, dubbed over, and put out with the Heartbreakers' backing intact by Stevie Nicks.

Petty's next record, 1982's *Long After Dark*, was more upbeat (he was heading out and touring and needed songs that could rock arenas) and even more powerful than its predecessors: "Straight Into Darkness" was subtle and true in its evocation of the way exultation can disintegrate in spite of the best intentions of everyone involved. In that song Petty set his scene with a novelist's eye for symmetry and detail, describing the death of a romance from an airplane seat, where the narrator is watching the lights beneath him disappear as his flight ascends.

"I don't believe the good times are over," the singers vows in the final verse. "I don't believe the thrill is all gone. Real love is a man's salvation. The weak ones fall; the strong carry on." Then he adds the stoic punch line: "Straight into darkness." Because such sentiments were attached to tunes concise and danceable, a lot of people overlooked just how good the album was. *Long After Dark* was sometimes dismissed as *just a good rock 'n' roll record*. As if that were an easy achievement, as if that were a backhanded compliment.

Following the *Long After Dark* tour Petty built a studio at his California home and toyed with the idea of recording an album without the Heartbreakers. He wrote a sheaf of songs about the American South and eventually re-enlisted the band to record it. With more than an LP's worth of Southern songs, Petty struck up a friendship with Dave Stewart of the British duo Eurythmics, and together they wrote some offbeat tunes ("Don't Come Around Here No More," "It Ain't Nothin' To Me," "Make It Better") which, despite roots in R&B, were later decorated with arrangements that can only be called psychedelic. There were delays while Petty and the band tried to figure out what to do with all the material (their record label balked at Petty's choice: a double album), and a crisis when Petty broke his hand and doctors thought he wouldn't play guitar again.

But by '85 the hand was okay and an LP called *Southern Accents*, which combined the best material from all the recording sessions, was a hit. The LP proved how far Petty is willing to stretch his songwriting, not only musically (the songs written with Stewart raised the most eyebrows among America-firsters) but lyrically; "Spike" was written in the voice of a Southern bully picking on a punk rocker, the title song from the perspective of a hobo.

Christmas of '85 saw the release of *Pack Up The Plantation*, a live double album, and early '86 a concert video that displayed a more relaxed, outgoing Petty than fans had been treated to before. The Heartbreakers sounded great at Live Aid, and were enlisted as Bob Dylan's backing band at Farm Aid. That musical marriage worked so well that all involved

Petty, Lynch, Dylan, Epstein, Campbell & Tench

decided to extend the alliance. In early '86 Dylan, Petty, and the Heartbreakers played in Hollywood, tearing through rehearsals for a joint tour of Australia and Japan that would (at least) turn up in the USA as a TV special.

If Dylan was out to assert his famous will on the band, he found in the Heartbreakers a unified personality: men who aren't easily shaken and always keep their eyes open. After one early rehearsal—before everything was running smoothly—Dylan listened to a tape of the playing and wondered aloud if they weren't making "hospital music." With the deadpan that has shriveled a thousand weak souls Dylan said, "It sounds like a Neil Diamond record." "Oh yeah?" replied the unflapped Petty. "Which one?"

For his part, Petty seemed most excited about buying a new pick-up truck for his father back in Gainesville. "It was the most fun I ever had," the singer laughs. "You can buy yourself everything, but doing something like that really tickles you!"

Petty used to have a reputation as a reluctant interview. His family background has rarely been discussed. Now he's more comfortable talking about personal matters. Maybe that reflects his rapprochement with his Southern roots. Maybe it's just part of growing up.

"My father did a lot of things," Petty explains. "His last job was selling insurance. When I was growing up he had a grocery store in the black part of town. They used to put me out to play with the black kids until the store closed. I don't know if that had any effect on me." Petty has a funny way of cracking the corner of a smile. It leaves you unsure if he's kidding, or just deflating his own tendency to romanticize. "He also drove a truck selling wholesale dry goods—anything from cigarettes to handerchiefs on cardboard sheets. He came from a farming family. Mostly he sold insurance. He's retired now. He's always been in Gainesville."

Is his mother equally proud of her son's success? "My mom died in '81," Petty says quietly. "That was unfortunate. But at least she lived long enough to know I was all right."

MUSICIAN: *"One Story Town" and "Hometown Blues" had a real sense of "Let me get out of this small town before it kills my spirit!"* Southern Accents *saw you reapproaching that old home town, finally seeing something worthwhile there. Have you come around that way in your thinking?*

PETTY: Maybe I have. I don't think I would've written *Southern Accents* if I'd been living there all this time. I wouldn't have seen it the same. I've been gone for so long that going back I saw it quite differently. I think if you grew up in a big town you'd have the same frustrations to get out of there. It's part of figuring out what you want to do with your life. I think you've got to go somewhere else once.

John Cougar seems content with his small town. Which is

NEAL PRESTON

fine. I think there's something to be said for both sides of the fence. It's more just going out beyond the boundaries you were given and having a look around.

MUSICIAN: *Sometimes your perspective changes drastically over the course of a song. "Rebels" starts out as a song about a contemporary man and woman having a fight and as it progresses you get in the whole Civil War.*

PETTY: I don't really know why I did that. I sat down and just wrote the lyrics out, then picked up my guitar and put something to it. I just read in your magazine that I got the "Most Muddled Use of History award" for that song. Which is probably fair enough. If you go to some places in the South the Civil War is still very present. You can go into a 7-11 and buy stickers that say, "Hell no, we ain't forgettin'!" and "Lee surrendered—I didn't!" There's a million phrases: "Rebel by birth, American by choice." Since that album people send me things all the time. I could really be taken wrong if somebody walked into some rooms in my house—'cause there's some real horrific things.

What spurred that verse on was that when I was in Atlanta I was noticing all that stuff about the Civil War around—rebel flags. It's still handed down father to son—just a little bit. I don't know if that makes them prejudiced or what. Downtown Atlanta looks like *The Jetsons,* but if you go two hours in any direction, you can hit a whole other kind of animal. You hit the woods and these guys who have no idea what's going on two hours away. I was writing about the frustration of these guys. They don't even know why they're frustrated! They say "Daddy says it's like this, but when I go out the door it ain't like that. Where do I fit in?" That's what I was writing about. I wasn't really trying to nail down history.

MUSICIAN: Southern Accents *was divided between the obviously Southern songs like "Rebels," and the more off-beat songs you wrote with Dave Stewart, like "Don't Come Around Here No More."*

PETTY: When we wrote "Don't Come Around Here No More" we thought the phrase itself was a Southern phrase. And I found it interesting to put it in a "psychedelic" context. When we wrote that it was more of an R&B song. Listen to it: [*sings*] "Give it up!" We were trying for almost a Marvin Gaye feel. Then I just got carried away with that single. Dave and I worked on that single for months. That song could have come out as ten different records depending on what faders were up. There was one version where it was double time all the way through. There were a couple of drum tracks, a couple of different bass tracks. On the radio at the time you never heard anyone doing anything unexpected. You kind of knew where the whole thing was going. You didn't hear things go *out.*

It was just for the fun of it; psychedelic music isn't even meant to last. It's just meant to get you from here to there. Before when it was all going on it ended up at James Taylor. It was really just to stir things up. I'm surprised it's gone on to become as popular as it has. I didn't know anybody else was even thinking about it. Shortly after we did it, Prince came out with a record that was sort of psychedelic. Now I see people all over town with little glasses on.

Some people criticized me for that, because they thought I'd left the *Southern Accents* theme. But I never intended to tell the story of the South on a record album. I couldn't possibly do it. People say, "What about the black experience?" Well, what about it? I wasn't trying to make an album you could put on to understand the history of the South. It's a phonograph record!

MUSICIAN: *Were you thinking at all of Randy Newman's* Good Old Boys *when you made the album?*

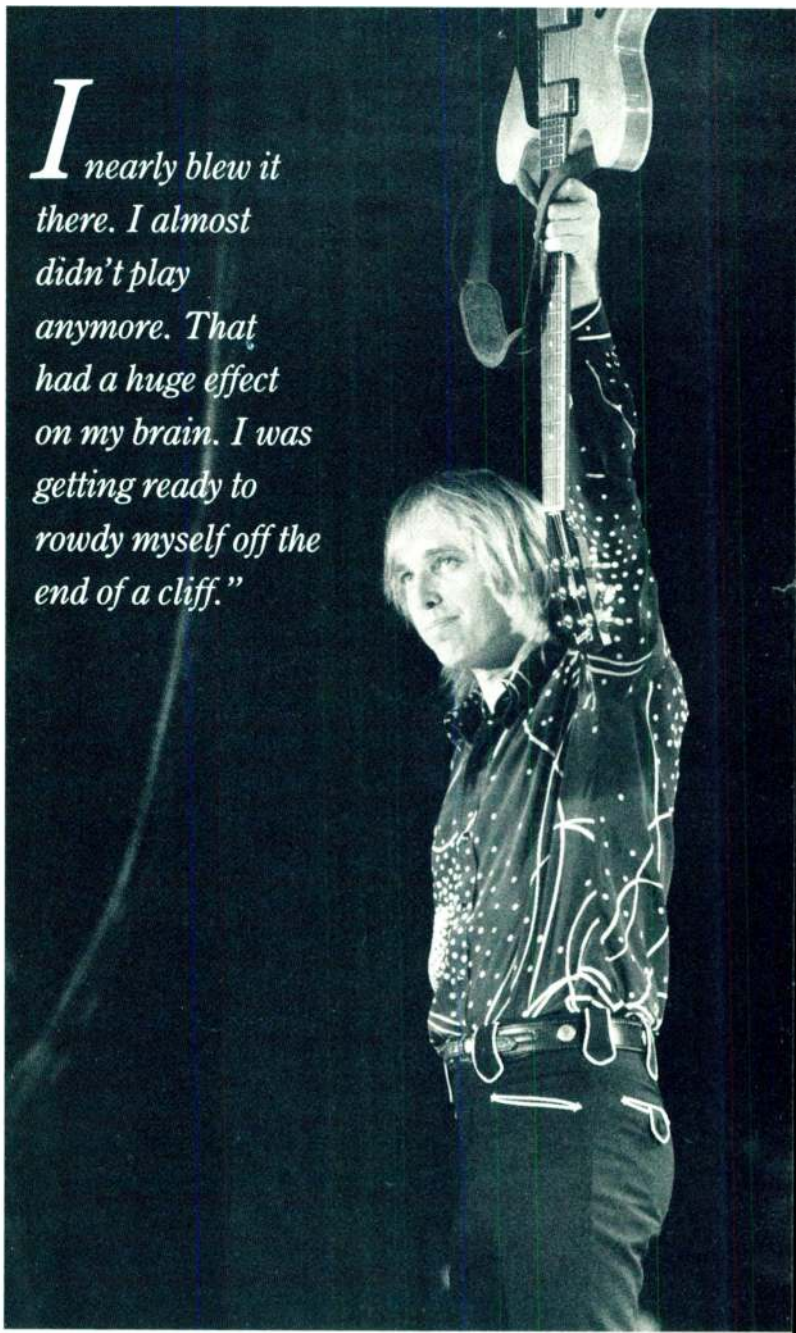
PETTY: You know, I completely forgot about that album until *Southern Accents* was about to come out. Somebody mentioned it to me and I went into a state of shock. "Oh God! I forgot all about that!"

MUSICIAN: *"Spike" reminds me of Newman's "Pretty Boy": "Have we got a tough guy here? A tough guy from the streets?"*

PETTY: Right, yeah. Most of *Southern Accents* is written in character. Randy Newman's one of the best character writers. A lot of people who write songs these days think it's always got to be about *them.* That's very limiting. It's always "Me, You, Me, Me"; it's always got to be how *I* feel about this and it's all very serious. But you can reveal yourself through characters. You can get out, you can say things you wouldn't say. I used to worry about it, but now I don't think everything you sing should be your *creed,* should be how you live your life. Or you're going to limit what you can say; you're going to intimidate yourself.

MUSICIAN: *Walter Becker said that he and Donald Fagan used characters to say things they believed—but wouldn't want to admit to in ther own voices.*

PETTY: Exactly! You draw a line in your subconscious. You say, "I don't want to say that." But *really,* if we were sitting having a drink, I might lean across the table and say that. I might



ROCKY WIDNER/RETNA

not want to *live* by it, but I might say it. Or I might *think* it. So yeah, it does free you up to do that.

MUSICIAN: *Now the down side of that is that some kid can take you literally. You sing "Spike" and somewhere out in the crowd maybe there's one drunk kid with a stars and bars t-shirt and a bad attitude saying, "Yeah! That's right! Let's find some little punk rocker and kick his ass!"*

PETTY: Yeah, but you can't allow for stupidity. You've got to be smart enough to figure that out or else I can't worry about you. Also, it presents the argument to these kids. But yeah, that is something you have to think about. I guess ol' Ozzy's in a lot of trouble [*Ozzy Osbourne is being sued by the parents of a fan who they say was inspired to kill himself by Osbourne's record "Suicide Solution"*]. You have to think about it. You have to draw your own lines there. You have to think [*smiles*], "If this is dangerous to society perhaps I shouldn't do it." You can't let the lowest common denominator dictate what you're doing. You have to shoot for the highest.

"The groove is the important thing. We work on that."

MUSICIAN: *You sing "Spike" in a funny voice. Was that so people would realize right off that this nasty character talking wasn't Tom Petty?*

PETTY: It just came out of me that way. We recorded it first in a sort of heavy metal version, all electric. I even had a couple of different verses. Then one night I was home playing it on my acoustic guitar in a different key—'cause there was a capo on the guitar—and I came up with this whole other feel. I said, "Wo—this might be the way to go!" I actually brought the band by at four or five in the morning and we did it. Everything's live on that take. They didn't even hear that arrangement until we started to play. The take was twenty minutes long. I just cut out the best bits and put it together. That's one of my favorite tracks on the album.

MUSICIAN: *Do you ever picture other singers when you're using different voices? Ever say, "I'm going to sing this one like Otis Redding, this one like Dylan"?*

PETTY: Not any more. I did that on the first couple of albums, just for communication's sake. We'd say, "Why don't you try to make this sound like Wilson Pickett?" Or Mick Jagger. But by around the time of *Damn The Torpedoes* I didn't even think about it. As a matter of fact, I try to avoid singing like Dylan, just because I don't want to seem like I'm imitating him. I have been conscious of that.

MUSICIAN: *Is it strange to be in band behind Dylan?*

PETTY: I like it. Quite a bit. It's a real good experience because after this many years you can forget exactly what it's like to have somebody else out front. It's easy for me because I can understand exactly the little insecurities that creep in, and why a singer gets frustrated. It's also kind of *fun*—in that the heat isn't always on me. I'm getting a lot better on guitar. I get to play a lot more guitar than I ever get to play with the Heartbreakers where I have to sing all the time.

Usually when someone gets up with the band they're not very good, or you think, "Shit, I'd rather sing this myself 'cause they aren't doing it right." But when you've got *Bob Dylan* there, it's perfect. There's very few people we'd do this for. Musically it's the most satisfying thing I've done in a long time.

MUSICIAN: *It's been a long time since Dylan played with a self-contained band.*

PETTY: I think he's enjoying that, too. But you can't do it unless the two styles complement each other. It was just a lucky thing and I think we all realized it. When we were doing the Farm Aid rehearsals we all said, "This is really more than twenty minutes worth of stuff here."

MUSICIAN: *Is it tough for you and Mike Campbell to avoid bumping into each other with a third guitarist?*

PETTY: Probably, but it's an interesting thing to be playing and not know who's going to take a solo. Someone'll start and you just look for your hole. If Bob or I are starting to disintegrate, Mike'll jump in. Sometimes we all play a solo at once which sounds *really* interesting. There's kind of an unspoken thing, "If you're blowing it get out of the way." It's a very guitar oriented thing.

Musically, Bob's certainly thrown everything at us he can. Which is very good for us because there's not many people around who can really stretch us like that. Not to sound egotistical, but there's so few people you can really learn anything from. Maybe he'll throw out something from the Gershwins—or something with a lot of chords that rock 'n' roll players normally wouldn't play. But our attitude has been that anytime he pushes us, we're gonna push back. You've got these two elements there; it's not really like six guys—it's like two. He throws this and we say, "Okay, we'll throw this back." But it's not a competition. I've learned some chords doing this.

MUSICIAN: *Everyone has awe for Dylan as a songwriter and performer, but I'm surprised he's teaching you chords.*

PETTY: He's a very good musician. He's not to be taken lightly. You don't survive that long if you're not good. We'll play a song one way one day and maybe that song'll have a completely different set of chords the next day. Instead of questioning that we just do it both ways. But we might say, "Bob, I think it's better the other way." And if it is, he's willing to go your way. We're not tiptoeing around him.

MUSICIAN: *Musically, one of the nicest qualities about the Heartbreakers is that the band doesn't rush things. You notice it most in Michael's guitar solos because so few real good players have that virtue—but it's true of the whole band: They don't rush, they don't steamroll the song.*

PETTY: We work on that. The groove is the important thing. With players like this you don't really worry about what they're going to play. You just worry about hitting the pocket. If we can hit a pocket that feels right, they're just naturally going to play the right thing. Once it all locks, our training is to just hold that pocket. Just hold that, don't think about it—because once you think about it you can hear that on the tape.

MUSICIAN: *Did you play in a lot of cover bands when you were young?*

PETTY: Yeah, that was all we played. I started playing for money when I was about fourteen. Back then no one was real interested in hearing original songs. I guess it's still the same way. In England people want to hear what a group has to say. One of the problems over here is that until you make a record nobody's very interested. We used to play in this bar where they were really down on originals so we'd say, "Here's one by Santana" and just play one of our own. A lot of the songs that I hear groups covering now are the songs we used to play all night back then. The Animals and Creedence and all that.

MUSICIAN: *For all the bad things about playing covers, it does teach a band an awful lot about songwriting.*

PETTY: I think you've got to do it if you're going to learn anything. It's the only way to really figure it out. I can't imagine not starting that way. It certainly did us a lot of good. Today I worry

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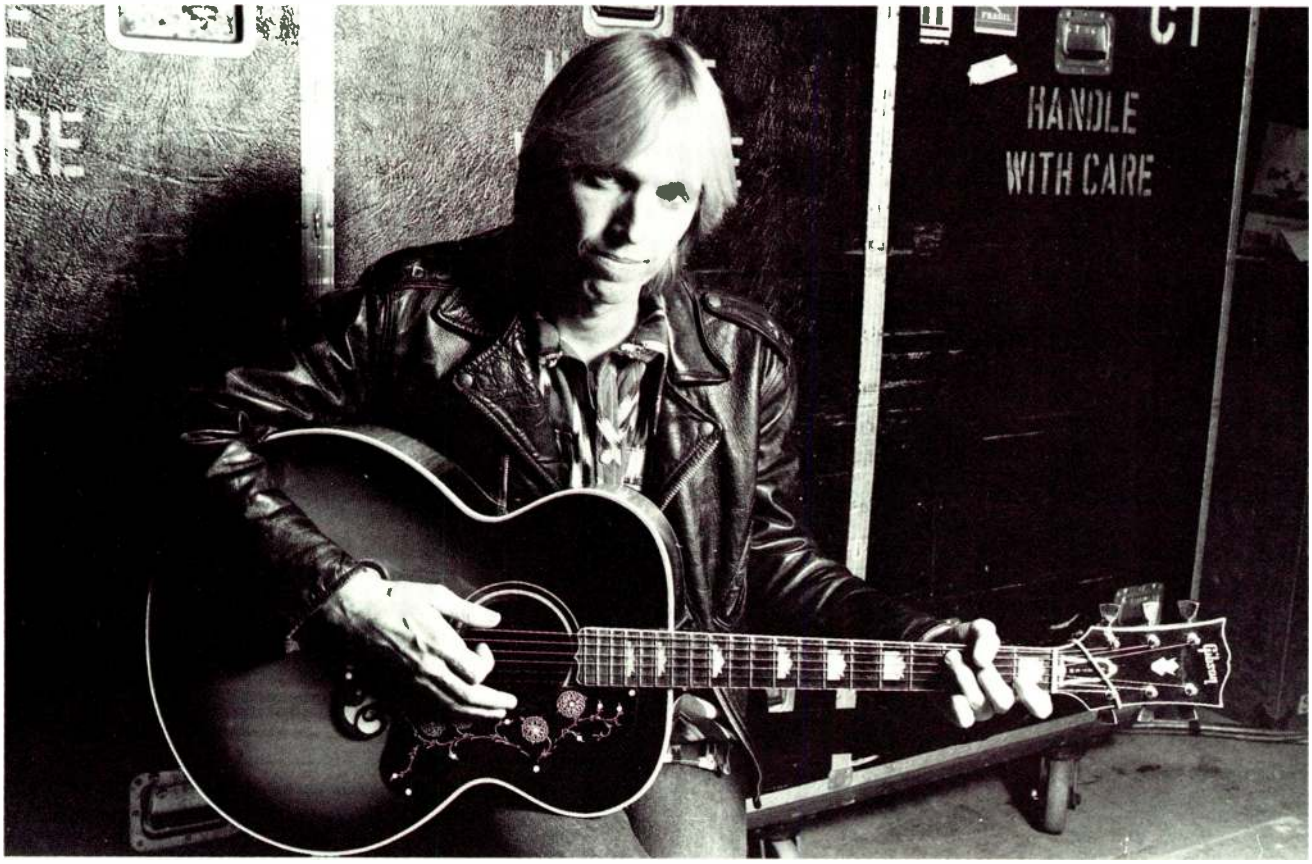

"I don't think everything you sing should be your *creed*, how you live your life. You'll intimidate yourself."

because when I was doing it the top ten, the stuff on AM radio, was really good music. I don't know, maybe I'm getting older but it seems like if you had to do that now it could be a frightening experience! In the 70s we used to go down to hotel bars and hear guys playing disco and think, "God, what are you going to learn from that?"

MUSICIAN: *You always have a strong sense of melody. Now and then—in songs like "Anything That's Rock 'n' Roll," "You Can Still Change Your Mind"—I hear a real Beatles influence.*

PETTY: Yeah! People don't notice that the Beatles were a huge influence on us. They always go to the Byrds or the Stones, who were big influences on us, but the Beatles were enormous. We were particularly into the Beatles. They were just so good. God, they were good. A lot of people miss it. We don't sing like the Beatles but I think we've inherited that sort of melodic sense. I hope.

The Everly Brothers have been a huge influence on us, too. It's almost silly to say that because they've been an influence on everybody. Not even speaking of harmonies; melodically Don Everly had a huge influence on me. Still does. Listen to the middle eight on my song "Finding Out"—that's completely influenced by Don Everly.

We grew up at a time when music was really rich and good. All those influences slowly meld into something. We were always trying to do it our own way—we weren't trying to copy people. It all just mixes up and something of your own comes out of that.

MUSICIAN: *Did you ever think Jimmy Iovine pulled kind of a fast one when he suggested giving "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around" to Stevie Nicks?*

PETTY: No. He didn't because I wasn't going to use it. We had about five songs that weren't going to make it onto the album (*Torpedoes*) and that was one of them. I don't know if it would've been a big hit with just me singing it alone; it sounded more like a blues. Jimmy's probably pulled other fast ones, but I don't think that was one. Lone Justice was probably a fast one [*laughs*]. "Ways To Be Wicked" was left over from *Damn The Torpedoes*. Mike and I just never thought it was finished. It's only got one verse! We tried to cut it and weren't really happy with it. We completely forgot that song. Jimmy dug through his old tapes and found it.

MUSICIAN: *Well, it's now kind of in to do songs with only one verse that's repeated over and over like a second chorus. Your friend Dave Stewart does that a lot. Speaking of "Ways To Be Wicked," I thought it was pretty funny that this year's born-again Christian was singing she wanted someone who "ain't afraid to stick it in"—and it was getting radio play.*

PETTY: I've had a few chuckles about that myself. When a girl sang the song it completely changed the innuendo factor.

MUSICIAN: *Mike Campbell wrote the music for "Boys Of Sum-*

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On the Dylan/Heartbreakers tour Petty mostly plays the Gibson, as Dylan and Mike Campbell are playing Fenders. "Sometimes I use a Telecaster. For acoustics we play Gibson J-200s and my favorite, an old Dove." On some of Dylan's acoustic numbers Petty, an old bassist, plays Howie Epstein's Fender.

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mer," offered it to you, and you passed on it. Then Don Henley wrote words for it and it was a big hit. Was there any moment when you said, "I should have kept that one?"

PETTY: No, because I'm not sure it would've been the same thing. I think in the long run it was very good for Michael to do something without me. Because I've done things without him and I think that he needed that self-confidence. The song didn't fit *Southern Accents*. Don Henley really did it justice.

MUSICIAN: *I get a big kick out of "Shadow Of A Doubt." It's one of your songs that says one thing but means another. The singer tells you how great his relationship is, and between the lines you can almost see the girl he's singing about looking for the exit.*

PETTY: They're very subtle things. For a long time people didn't even hear it, they thought we were just singing these real simple love songs. But there's a lot of subtlety in there. I always try to find those little quirks which I think make the songs a little more interesting. It's not always intentional. Sometimes it's just luck they come out that way, but it's interesting you noticed that.

MUSICIAN: *In "Letting Go" you sang, "There's no one as honest as a soul in pain." That could be the credo of a lot of your work. When you assume the "Go ahead, walk" attitude in songs like "You Got Lucky," it never sounds sincere. It's always pretty obvious that the singer's not doing half as well as he says he's doing.*

PETTY: "You Got Lucky" is the most misunderstood song I ever wrote. That's a very insecure person saying that! But it's a real emotion. I found it amusing to sing that. But some people said, "God! The audacity!" That's a real insecure character. Insecure people say things like that to protect themselves.

MUSICIAN: *You do that nice bit in the live version of "Breakdown" where you say, "Okay, go ahead, I couldn't care less"—then you start strangling the microphone! It's pretty funny, but there's a dark side to it, too. Did you ever value pain too much? Elvis Costello said he's afraid he sometimes subconsciously instigated trouble in his life for the sake of having things to write about.*

PETTY: Yeah, I've been through that. I think everybody gets to that point. When I was in the hospital with my hand bigger than my head I said, "What am I doing?" You don't know you're doing it, but you do it. I'd find myself stirring things up, stirring up the people around me. If things started to get too placid or idyllic I'd just do something to get everything stirred up. It took a lot to admit that to myself. But I think I would just get everything in turmoil so the music would come. It's a hard thing to talk about because it's not something you're conscious of or you wouldn't do it. But these days I'm kind of aware of that. I want to be happy. I don't want to suffer. I don't want to be fucked up all the time. I nearly blew it there. I almost didn't play anymore. That had a huge effect on my brain.

MUSICIAN: *Did you get to the point of trying to figure out what you'd do if you couldn't play guitar again?*

PETTY: You sure do. Yeah. And the list was real short.

MUSICIAN: *But you could have gone on writing and singing and fronting the band—I mean, at least you had a band.*

PETTY: Yeah, and they were a lot of help! They came in and said, "Well, Brian Setzer's looking for a band." [*laughter*] No sympathy ever from them! That's the way they are. They never said, "Oh God, it's terrible!" They just made jokes about it all the time. They never thought I wouldn't play again, so that helped me think about it. But it was nine months before I could even strum a chord. You don't think how many times you just reach for the guitar and pick it up without thinking. It's just part of what you do, like smoking a cigarette. That was the hardest thing for me. I think that had an effect on me. The way I was living at the time was rowdy. I was getting ready to rowdy myself off the end of a cliff.

MUSICIAN: *In "Don't Do Me Like That" and "The Waiting" you wrote about the pressure being in the public eye puts on your personal life. My favorite take on it was "What Are You Doing In My Life," which was a real funny description of being plagued by a fan who tells everyone she's your girlfriend. That obviously happened to you.*

PETTY: Yeah. That's when people first start to know who you are when you're walking down the street, and everything that goes with that. It's a hard subject to sing about or talk about because there's nothing worse than having somebody moan about being too famous or too rich. It's real far down on my list! It's just that you have to get used to everyone watching you all the time. You get so sensitive that just someone coming up to tell you they like your album bugs you! But then again, we had a hard dose of it. We went through lawsuits and so much persecution for a while that I think that confused me, too. This is bordering on self-analysis here.

But these days I feel more comfortable. I know people who get so afraid. They should just do it, just get out of the car and do it. See, I've always been in a group that just won't put up with any of that, and it's been good for me. Stan Lynch will say, "Let's go to Las Vegas, right now! And don't take any bodyguards!" And you don't need that shit. Nobody needs that. You don't have to surround yourself. It just adds to the problem. Prince doesn't need bodyguards. Really. He can go and have a drink, he'll be okay. He doesn't know that yet. Bruce Springsteen and I went to Tower Records and went shopping. Nobody even noticed us. But some people would get so nervous at the idea that they just wouldn't do it. You have to remember, "I can do that if I want."

MUSICIAN: *John Cougar Mellencamp told* Rolling Stone, *"Jon Landau was right when he called Springsteen the future of rock 'n' roll." He said, "Look at all these guys who do the exact same thing. Me, Petty, Seger, a whole bunch of us...."*

PETTY: I think I know what he means. I think that I'm a little more—dare I say—*eccentric* than those guys. I know all those people quite well. And I think that they're terrific. We all get along very well. We're all about the same age. We do have the same musical favorites.

I think I spent a lot of time before John Cougar—this may have no consequence—I was into that straight rock thing for a long time. He's turned a lot of people on to that, as Bruce did. However *I don't think that's the whole ball of wax*. I think there's more to it than that. I wouldn't be content to just do that forever. Right now I feel like I could do a whole album like that and feel real content with it, but next year I'm sure I'd want to do something a little different. As I did this last time.

But I like what Cougar's doing. I'm glad he's gotten that success he wanted for so long. I'd never really been a Cougar fan. Then when I heard him do "Pink Houses" I really thought he hit something on the head. I love John Fogerty, but I also like Brian Wilson. All sorts of stuff. The only danger I see in all this "American music" thing is that four chords, guitars and drums is fine—but if that's *all* it's going to be it's weird. Are we going to inherit nostalgia or are we going to give this music something? I'm not knocking it, but that music's mostly the same stuff from the 50s.

But I don't want to come off like I don't like those guys. I think the world of them. But there is a difference. In that club, maybe I'm the one who's a little more off the wall. I think to those guys in that little club, I'm the one who's always been a little off his rocker [*laughs*].

MUSICIAN: *In "Best Of Everything" you wrote about a romance that was nice but wasn't the real thing. In a lot of your songs things that come easy aren't worth as much as things that cost a lot of anguish and a lot of work.*

PETTY: I think there's an element of truth in that. I used to believe that more than I do now. I think you've got to be careful not to discount the things that come easy—but there is a certain satisfaction in struggling for something and getting it. That's the American way. M

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BRIAN SETZER

THE EX-STRAY CAT BREAKS OUT OF HIS ROCKABILLY TRAP

BY JON YOUNG

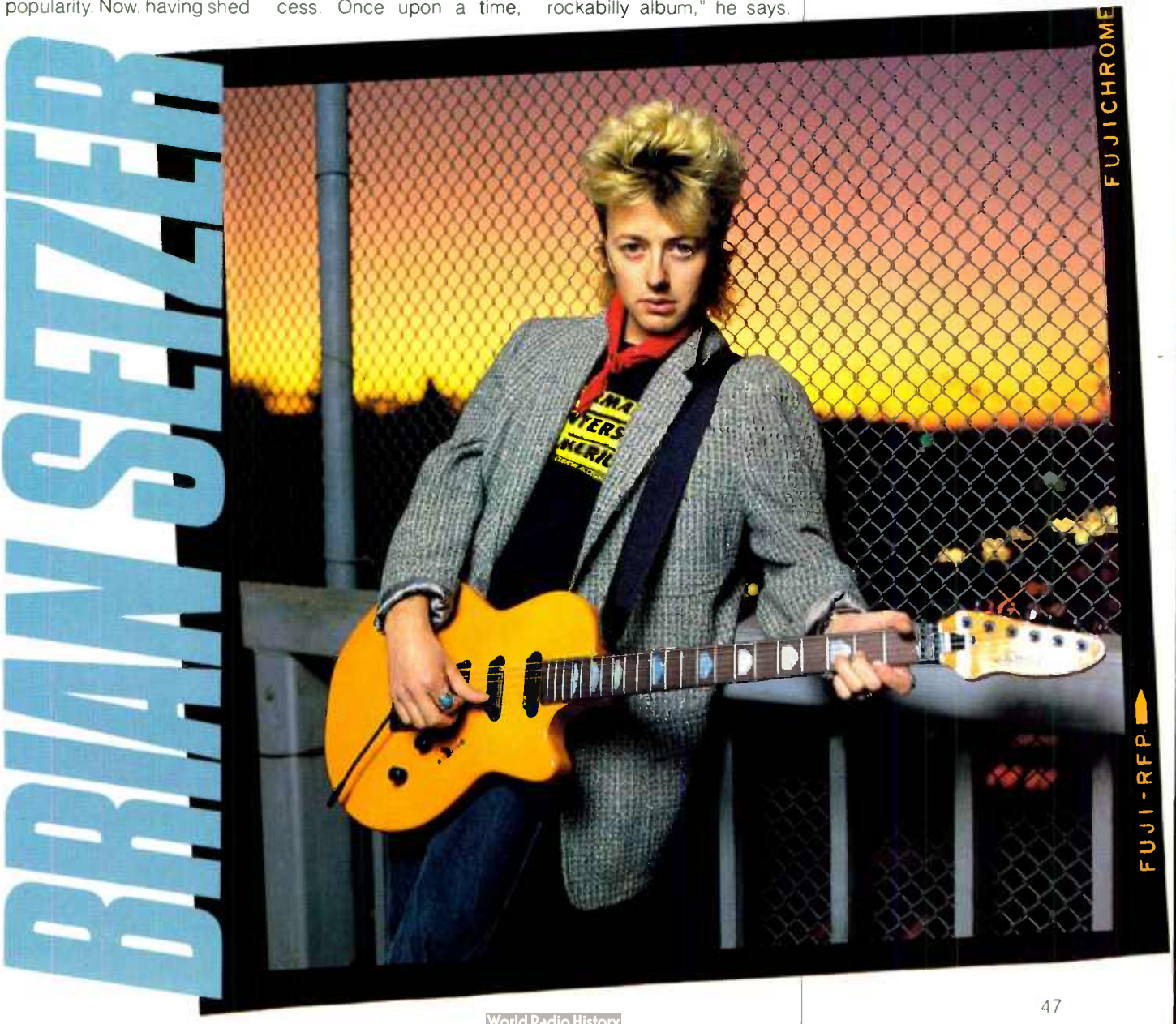
He still looks like Brian Setzer. Same elaborate tattoos winding around the arms. Same tousled blond hair, though the rockabilly quiff is long gone. Still dresses cool, without straining for effect. But there's something strangely different about the '86 model Setzer...hmmm...What could it be? The glasses! Brian Setzer is wearing wire-rim glasses!

On the eve of the 1982 release of the Stray Cats' U.S. debut, *Built For Speed*, he was a gum-chewing nobody in a white T-shirt, pleasant but uncommunicative, as if revealing his thoughts was unmanly. By the time of *Rant 'N' Rave With The Stray Cats* in 1983, Setzer had acquired a cheerfully cocky edge, obviously emboldened by popularity. Now, having shed the Stray Cats like so much excess fur, and finished *The Knife Feels Like Justice*, his first solo LP, Setzer's toned down the bravado and is eager to talk about music. He wants to be taken seriously.

The Knife Feels Like Justice showcases a mature approach that parallels Springsteen, Mellencamp and Petty, instead of previous heroes Carl Perkins, Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran. "The Stray Cats were a great rockabilly band, but sometimes were treading on pretty thin ice artistically," he admits. "I'd write a song and think, 'Haven't I heard that before?' I feel now that I've got my own sound, that I've got a pretty distinctive style."

The luxury of pursuing art was made possible by the Stray Cats' fairy-tale success. Once upon a time, three Long Island boys named Brian Setzer (guitar, vocals), Slim Jim Phantom (drums), and Lee Rocker (bass) formed a rockabilly trio. Brian played sharp guitar and wrote catchy songs; the others kept up. They went to England and became big stars. Then came back here, and, lo and behold, it happened again. Thanks to the hit singles "Rock This Town" and "Stray Cat Strut," rockabilly rocked AM radio for the first time in two decades.

Bubble-bursting time came quickly. *Rant 'N' Rave* had a distinctly recycled feel and didn't sell as well as *Built For Speed*. "I remember thinking I didn't want to lose my fans, the rockers who'd made me a success. I was determined to put out a real rockabilly album," he says.



HOWARD ROSENBERG

"I'D JUST CASHED IN A WORLD-FAMOUS, MONEY-MAKING GROUP. THE OTHER GUYS HATED ME."

"But it was a mistake to feel I had to pledge allegiance to a certain genre. In retrospect, I should've branched out more.

"When the Cats began, we were so different. I got such a thrill. When we started seeing the bowling shirts in Macy's and the string basses in fashion layouts, the fun had gone for me."

In the summer of '84 Setzer began hanging out with Jimmy Iovine, producer of the Cats' rendition of "16 Candles" for the movie of the same name. "Jimmy said 'Why don't you come over to my house, get away from your friends and people hounding you.' And I got a real lift when I did. I met Dave Stewart. Tom Petty and his band were there, working on *Southern Accents*. I sat down and played guitar with Mike Campbell and I got inspired again. I started to write songs in a different direction, away from 'Hot-rod Saturday Night.' My lyrics began to have some depth."

At the same time, Setzer's listening diet had expanded to include everything from Roy Acuff and Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown to Poco and Buffalo Springfield, music he'd never noticed before. "I'd had such blinders on," he says, with the fervor of a convert.

Setzer finally "got up the courage" to fold the Stray Cats in October '84. He recalls, "I was scared. I'd just cashed in a world-famous, money-making group. The other guys hated me. And I had a mortgage. So I had to get my ass in gear." He continued to write and began recording demos with Tommy Byrnes, a fellow flash guitarist who'd joined the Cats' lineup on their final European tour. Little Steven Van Zant helped with some of the demos and collaborated on "Maria," a Springsteenish ballad about the plight of an illegal alien. Serious stuff, indeed.

"Once I had five songs it became easy," he smiles. "I felt like I had a sound to work from." What kind of sound? "I hate to use the phrase 'American rock,' but that's what I felt it was."

Next step: find a producer. Don Gehman, John Cougar Mellencamp's collaborator, liked Brian's demo and agreed to talk. Notes Setzer, "I'd always dug John's records from the time I heard 'Jack And Diane' with that acoustic guitar and great-sounding mix. There wasn't the effect of a snare drum in the Lincoln Tunnel or a corporate guitar. Then I met Don and discovered we liked a lot of the same things: what I call 'bristling guitar,' the use of a Hammond B3, a slight synth in the background, and so on."

Agreeing to produce, Gehman assumed the role of benign taskmaster. Setzer can laugh about it now. "I was writing and writing. When I had eleven songs, I played 'em for Don, and he said, 'Now you've got six.' and I'd thought I was done! I finally ended up with seventeen songs for the album." That was only the beginning of Setzer's lessons. "I told Don I wanted the record to be rough and underproduced, like the demos. I thought R.E.M. had the right idea. But he said the songs would change a lot."

Sessions began in August, with a band that included Setzer, Byrnes, Mellencamp drummer Ken Aronoff, bassist Kenny Aaronson, and Chuck Leavell on keyboards. During recording, Setzer's songs continued to change shape, thanks to ongoing input from all the players. Observes Leavell, "I've worked a lot of sessions, but I've never seen anyone else who was as open to suggestions as Brian was. Everybody spoke freely, and if someone had a good idea, we tried it. If it worked, great; if it didn't, nobody got his feelings hurt. That makes for a great working atmosphere."

Setzer agrees. "This wasn't really a solo album in the usual sense. It was a band effort. For example, I never knew much about arranging. Some of my songs originally ran eight minutes. Chuck would say, 'Brian, do you think we could lose that verse? It's getting a little monotonous.' I'd realize he was right."

Producer Gehman had a couple of priorities. First, make sure *The Knife* didn't sound like Mellencamp's last album, *Scarecrow*. That meant such measures as changing the snare drum in Aronoff's kit. Second, keep it clean. "That's real hard when you've got a twangy guitar player like Brian," Gehman observes, "because eighth and sixteenth notes are flying all over the place. But you can't take that away or you'll lose what makes him special."

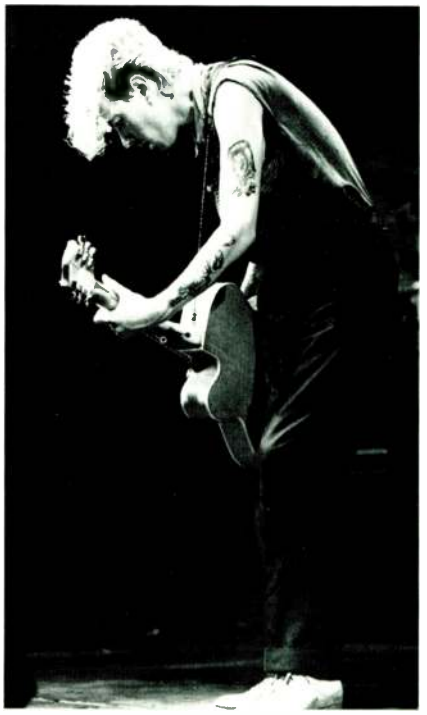
For Setzer, making *The Knife* meant being more than a rockabilly shouter; songs like "Breath Of Life" and "Boulevard Of Broken Dreams" required genuine melodic vocalizing. "I never wanted to be a singer when the Cats started," he acknowledges. "I was always a little inhibited by the idea. This time I wanted to sing with the lights down so I wouldn't be embarrassed, until I realized how silly that was and decided to open up."

All the better to deliver autobiographical lyrics for the first time, a subject that provokes evasive squirming in the otherwise confident Setzer. "I knew I had to do something personal, but I couldn't force it. That's why the writing took me so long." The title track, with references to starting a new life and seeking an identity, must be one of those songs that comes from the heart, right? Setzer pauses, looks at the floor, and murmurs, "Umm, yeah, it is."

The band's endless tinkering continued throughout the sessions, with tunes changing up to the final day of overdubbing, when the Motown-flavored "Bobby's Back" finally fell into place. "That's the one song I didn't want on the album, because I thought it didn't fit," says Setzer, "but Don was adamant. I'd tried all sorts of things, including B.B. King-style blues guitar, but still he wanted me to work on it. So I wrote some new lyrics, borrowed one of Petty's Telecasters and played a new guitar part, and Benmont Tench added new organ. Suddenly it didn't sound like a Wham! song anymore."

Four months after it began, *The Knife Feels Like Justice* received a final mix. The result is an impressive, coherent whole that purges Setzer's music of nostalgia. Epic rockers ("Haunted River"), grunge boogie ("Radiation Ranch"), ringing folk-rock ("Aztec," co-authored with Campbell), and lilting ballads ("Breath Of Life") link together nicely, thanks to artful production that keeps the voice front and center. So diligent was Gehman about showcasing

"I should've branched out more."



DAVID WAINWRIGHT/RETNA

Setzer the singer that it takes a few listens to notice much of the flashy axe work.

The Knife is a big change. Isn't it? Setzer responds, "It is and it isn't. There's still some rockabilly in there. I'd love to hear 'Radiation Ranch' coming out of the radio of a '57 Chevy this summer."

If the marketplace rejects *The Knife*, Setzer's daring career move could look pretty foolish. "I hope my fans will like it," he says softly. "I don't think they want to hear about hot rods their entire life." He doesn't say so, but the LP is really his bid for respect from grownups, too.

Finally, Brian Setzer has a question of his own: "Do you think people will like the record?"

Of course. Don't you?

"Yeah," he grins. "I just wanted to hear you say it." M

MAX WEINBERG

TAKIN' IT TO THE PUEBLO

BY ROBERT SANTELLI

You think the PMRC is tough on rock lyrics? The Navaho pueblo in New Mexico refused permission to Brian Setzer to shoot a video there because "The Knife Feels Like Justice" includes the word "insane"; the chief felt it might harm young Indian minds. Other tribes, like the Hopi, said no to Setzer out of principle. They just didn't want lights, cameras, and rock 'n' roll invading their culture, even if Setzer and video director Domenic Senna promised to adhere to strict guidelines (like no trespassing on sacred ground).

"I had no intentions of letting anything get filmed which would have even a *feel* of exploitation," Setzer says. "I didn't want it to be like these white guys from New York were there to enlighten the natives with rock music." Why have a rock band play in the center of an Indian pueblo anyway? "It's such an amazing place, I just had to ask. I figured there was no harm in that."

The Taos Indians agreed—appropriately enough, since it was this pueblo which Setzer, producer Don Gehman and their wives visited last August on a break from recording. "We always wanted to see Santa Fe," explains Setzer, "so we went there. Then we heard about the Taos Pueblo, and drove up to have a look. It leaves an impression on anyone who sees it for the first time."

Indeed it does. For more than one thousand years, the Taos Indians have lived close to the pueblo. No pueblo structure in the United States is as large or as elaborate as theirs. There is no electricity, no indoor plumbing and no running water. Food is prepared in domed adobe ovens as the Indians did it before the first white man stepped foot in the Americas.

According to some Indians at Taos, Setzer would have been denied permission if he'd approached them a few months earlier. Just before he made his request there was a change in the tribal council. "The old council was more strict about things like this," explains Adam, an extra in the video. "But this was a way to bring some money into the tribe. People get paid to be in the video. And the money the whole tribe gets will go to improving our roads."

According to Setzer, he and the band felt like outsiders in the beginning. "It wasn't your typical rock 'n' roll environment," he laughs. "Eight o'clock in the morning and we blast into 'The Knife Feels Like Justice' with the sound of guitars, keyboards and drums filling the whole square. And we shot an awful lot of takes, so they heard the song over and over again.

"But things really warmed up the afternoon of the first day when we sat down to this delicious meal the Indian women cooked for us. After that we met the chief, and he told us we were welcome in the pueblo. That opened things up considerably."

For the remainder of that day and all of the next, those not employed as extras watched the filming. When it was all over, there was a coming together of Indians and rockers, which as Setzer said, "made the two days end on the most positive of notes. It was a real educational and cultural experience on both ends."

But there could be no permanent exchange of culture. As darkness fell and the equipment was being stacked back into the trucks, one Indian extra was asked if he planned to watch the video on MTV.

He looked puzzled and asked, "What's a MTV?"

SETZER SONICS

For the recording of *The Knife Feels Like Justice*, **Brian Setzer** says he used "an old Gretsch 6120, a new Telecaster-style Schecter with pull-pot knobs, a Guild Aviator guitar, and an old Fender Telecaster with Seymour Duncan pickups and a stringbender that Gene Parsons put in. I also played a new guitar that I've developed with Guild. It looks a little like their old Blues Bird—it's got a solid body with three pickups, a tremolo bar, a body of flame maple, and see-through colors.

"As for amps, I relied primarily on Fender Bassmans and new Marshall 50-watts. Don and I mixed a lot of old and new equipment. I never would have considered playing my old Gretsch through a new Marshall in the old days, because it wasn't authentic. We ended up with a guitar sound similar to what Eric Clapton gets, what I call bristling. It's got a lot of tone and some breakup, but it's a nice warm breakup with a lot of presence. I wanted people to hear the record on the radio and say, 'That's Brian.'"

The strings were D'Addario standard .010 guage; picks were Fender mediums.

Tommy Byrnes used a Schecter, Guild, and Fender '53 Telecaster. "Once we got a good rhythm tone on a track, I'd try to stick with it on other songs," he says, "especially with Brian changing guitars on just about every track. That helped make us sound more like a band." Byrnes also used Marshalls, D'Addario strings, and Fender picks.

Ken Aronoff whacked the same drum kit he played on John Cougar Mellencamp's *Scarecrow*, Tama drums and Zildjian cymbals, with one exception: "Instead of a five-inch metal snare, I played a seven-inch wood Slingerland Radio King. That gave a deeper sound." He used Vic Firth rock sticks. "They're like billy clubs," Aronoff laughs.

Kenny Aaronson played ESP basses with Precision-Jazz pickups through an Ampeg bass amp.

Keyboardist extraordinaire **Chuck Leavell** comments, "The way the sessions evolved, I ended up playing a Hammond B3 eighty per cent of the time, which surprised me. I hadn't played that much organ since I worked with Dr. John." Otherwise he tinkled a Yamaha seven-foot piano or interfaced with three synths, a Korg DW-8000, a Poly 800 and a Poly 61. "All my synth parts were MIDI'd together on those three instruments," he adds.

The rhythm tracks for *The Knife Feels Like Justice* were cut at One on One Studio in North Hollywood because "Don likes Trident boards," says Setzer. "He also used things that made a lot of difference in the sound, like Fairchild limiters. I didn't even know what a limiter did at first." The vocals were cut at Tiki Recording Studio on Long Island, where Gehman again used a Trident board and Setzer sang into old Sennheiser mikes.

JAMES! The Power of Positive Badness

"Sometime, you like to let the hair do the talking!" booms the massive burnt-umber visage in the gilded mirror; stubby hands briskly smooth out the sparkling surface of his highly teased bouffant with a savage styling comb the size of a shark fin. Up close, one recognizes the matte finish of his complexion as well-rendered pancake, the keen edge to his gaze as a thick application of eyeliner. This is his street face.

The puggish, broad-chested man steps back from the looking glass in the Barron Room South of New York's Waldorf Astoria. He savors the sight of his Luster Silk-soaked mane and buffed countenance, as his hairdresser of some three decades scrutinizes each meticulously layered lock of conked tonsorial confection.

"Ummmmm," Henry Stallings purrs, ringed fingers weaving pinpoints of light into a cut-rate halo above his cousin's chunky head. Stallings is careful not to touch his latest James Brown 'do: No less than six hours in the making, it seemed at midpoint to be an uneasy cross between Lulu's sculpted look circa *To Sir with Love* and an expansive Jiffy Pop foil bubble. But now that the Augusta, Georgia-bred Stallings has completed his barbering, his boyhood

By Timothy White

friend's bulbous new coiffure is the spitting image of the smart helmet of wavelets Beatrice Arthur sported during the last two seasons of *Maude*.

"I look good, huh?" Brown offers to no one in particular as he contentedly strokes the lapels of his plaid twill suit. "Henry Stallings is my kin, you know. This is a man that never have said, 'I don't think that looks good on you.' He would say, 'What you want? Do you want to roll it? Do you want a bush? Or a 'fro? Right now he's only freelancing and doing a few things 'cause he's with me on the road. But we're getting ready to build a shop around the country and we're gonna call it Groom Me. Groom Me, sir! Groom ME! GROOM ME!"

Brown repeats the name of the proposed beauty parlor chain another half-dozen times, finally adding, "We went to Silas X. Floyd Elementary School together; we was in the fifth grade." Then he drifts into a kind of stiff-limbed, glassy-eyed reverie, striking curious bent-necked poses in which he regards the four-inch cuffs of his bell-bottomed trousers as if they were roses abloom in the desert. The mammoth grin is fixed, his jug ear cocked for the comments of his sidekick.

"Met James on Spruce Street in Augusta," says Stallings, a shy fellow with close-cropped hair and an impeccable pencil moustache, as he flicks invisible lint from his three-piece caramel livery. "We used to hang in front of grocery stores in an area on the south side called the Terry, and we'd grab a shoeshine box to see if we could make a few bucks. Later on we were into boxing, trying to box. James was a loner, no brothers or sisters, and we split up for a while when I went into the service and he went to prison."

For Stallings, the service meant the army. For Brown, the slammer was Richmond County Jail on Fourth Street in Augusta, where he landed at sixteen after breaking into four cars in a single night. Following several months in the local lockup, James was sentenced to eight to sixteen years at hard labor in a state prison; he served only four in a reformatory before having his time commuted for good behavior.

"After James got out, we saw each other again and he had a big, big record with 'Please, Please, Please,'" Stallings says. "We met up on 125th Street after he came to New York for an appearance. I was working at Sugar Ray Robinson's parlor, the Golden Glove, at 123rd and Seventh Avenue, and I couldn't believe James' success, 'cause to me he had just been a shoeshine boy and an attendant at the pool hall. James Brown singing!"

It was a hobby he'd acquired in stir, where he played drums in a combo with inmate Johnny Terry. Upon Terry's release in 1952 Brown formed the Swanees, a gospel group that also included Bobbie Byrd, Sylvester Keels and Nafloyd Scott. The act became the Famous Flames as black doo-wop took hold, and they landed a steady gig as the house band at Clint Brantley's Two Spot Club in Macon, Georgia.

"I first dug Little Richard at the Two Spot, down on the corner of Fifth and Walnut," Brown suddenly interjects. "He discovered me and I discovered him. Before I considered music, I tried sports. With Beau Jack, the *baaad* 1940s Georgia prizefighter, as my guidance, I had three fights as a professional boxer and won 'em all. But I knew a black man with a bum leg couldn't make it in sports so I had to quit that. Seeing Little Richard singing 'Tutti Frutti' and getting over, I went on to the WIBB studios in 1954 to do a demo of 'Please, Please, Please.'

"Don Robey from Duke/Peacock Records in Houston want it, Leonard Chess of Chicago's Chess and Checker labels want it too, but Ralph Bass of Federal put his job on the front lines for that tune. We went up to Cincinnati, me and my boys, to record it right, but Mr. Syd Nathan of Federal and King Records, he didn't want no part of that record. Mr. Bass loved that record to death anyway, *lost* his job over that record and pushed the thing hard all during 1956 in Atlanta, in Birmingham, down in Florida with the help of promo man Mr. Henry Stone. Till it was pandemonium from Federal for '56, hear me?

I heard the percussion in everything; even rhythm guitar sound like a drum to me."

"Pretty soon Mr. Nathan, he saw the light, gave Ralph back his job and we git down to serious business. Because of the Lord—who I thank in a minute—everybody's been seeing that same light shine since!"

Mr. Brown, the Godhead of Get-Down, has been haunting the corridors of Gotham's grande dame of a hotel for a solid week. He joined Ray Charles, Fats Domino, the Everly Brothers and other surviving architects of the pop pantheon in the main ballroom downstairs at the glittering January 23 inaugural induction dinner for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. At the ceremony he worked the summit conference of rock stars and record industry bigwigs like the dancing street pug he'd once been as he touted his scrappy hit single from the *Rocky IV* soundtrack, "Living In America." It was Brown's first ascension into the upper reaches of the pop charts since "Get On The Good Foot" lingered briefly at number eighteen in *Billboard* in the autumn of 1972, and it was an unsentimental journey of epic proportions for a man marking the thirtieth anniversary of his recording career.

This afternoon, as he hums the martial melody to "Living In America," Brown is immersed in his more mundane moment-to-moment insistence on reflex homage from the obliging retinue he's collected over the years. These include burly alto/

LAURA LEVINE

tenor saxman Maceo Parker, who's resigned or been dismissed from the James Brown orchestra more times than anyone can count; rawboned baritone saxman/arranger St. Clair Pickney; and one Reverend Al Sharpton, Jr., portly field marshal and impromptu pitch man for the soul potentate, who announces he's secured a waiting limousine for a pressing round of errands and appointments.

"I've known Mr. Brown since I was fifteen or sixteen, hanging around the back fence of the mansion he useta have in Queens," Sharpton says brightly. "He had a castle with a moat around it on Linden Boulevard in the St. Albans section of Queens and the kids from my neighborhood in the Hollis section of the borough would go over to look at the giant concrete gold 'Please, Please, Please' record he had imbedded in his front yard. There was a lot of bigshots living on that street, but he was the only one who'd come out and tell us to stay in school. It was inspirational."

So much so, according to Sharpton, Jr.—who says his father was a preacher at Brooklyn's Washington Temple Baptist Church—that he left Rev. Jesse Jackson's Operation Breadbasket in 1971 to take up with Brown. (A spokesperson for the Washington Temple Church of God in Christ on Bedford Avenue, the only such church now in Brooklyn, says she never heard of either Al Sharpton.) When not acting as "road supervisor" or providing the halftime homily at the singer's shows, Sharpton runs a vague-sounding organization he calls the National Youth Movement. But mostly he simply keeps company with the Padishah of the Licking Stick.

Brown turns on the crisp edge of his Cuban heel and heads down the plush hallway. A phalanx of tuxedoed gentlemen pass noiselessly in the opposite direction. "Well now, look at those fellas," Brown says in a strident stage whisper. "Ain't they clean!"

"Aw, *excuse* me fellas," Sharpton brays, barely catching his cue. "But this is Mr. James Brown who you looking at, yes, indeed. Hold on now, don't hurry off. Excuse me, could somebody hold the elevator for a moment when these very fortunate business executives meet Mr. James Brown...?"

In short, everything remains double fine and freakishly dandy in the uncommon world of James Brown as he nears the 1990s. Secure in his own singular element and firmly in control of his destiny, he remains the Baron of the Beat, the Feudal Lord of Funk, the Mash Potatoes Mikado, the Disco Dynast, the Marquis of the Sex Machine, the Shogun of the Cold Sweat. And that's enough, thank you—or so it has long

appeared on the baroque surface of things.

As an artist, James Brown has tempered his peculiar genius in the crucible of the fickle international marketplace. In the process he's laid the musical groundwork for the best efforts by other gifted voices ranging from Sly Stone and Bob Marley to Fela Kuti and Kurtis Blow, not to mention Led Zeppelin ("Kashmir," "The Crunge") and ZZ Top.

As a socially conscious personality, Brown has assumed political stances of head-scratching polarity. He appeared live on television from Boston Garden in April, 1968 to quell race riots that erupted after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. When Hubert Humphrey (noted author of James Brown liner notes) lost the Democratic nomination to George McGovern in 1972, Brown turned around and gave President Nixon a vigorous soul shake. Gerald Ford was heralded in 1974 with "Funky President (People It's Bad)."

The singer's grasp of more recent events and their underpinnings is no less shaky. In the winter of 1982 he gave former Island Records producer Paul Wexler a signed photo of himself with Ronald Reagan, along with the following piece of advice: "Paul, if you were a strong producer and had yourself a plan you'd worked hard on drawing up for your artist, would you let that artist change it all at the last minute? Of course not! Well, it's the same with Reagan and his economic and social plan for the country. So we gotta support him."

What a piece of work is James! How ignoble in reason! How finite in faculty! Yet in form and moving how express and admirable! Surely there is more to this man's man's man's overwrought frippery and fabled self-absorption than meets the overloaded eye. Or as he phrased it before the footlights of Radio City: "Can I go back? Do you *want* me to go back?! Okay, we going back to church right now, and then we gonna finish up in outer space. And bring me that lickin' stick!"

James Brown was four when his parents' marriage crumbled; six when he could buck dance to the accompaniment of a mouth organ; seven when he was living with Aunt Handsome "Honey" Stevenson and becoming proficient at rolling dice and picking out tunes on the household's rickety pump organ when he should have been in school.

"He would stay out of school two and three days a week, but when he came to class, he would still do more than the other children," Laura Garvin, his seventh grade teacher, recalls. "We used to have little performances in class. We would charge ten cents to see James Brown and the children would just pile in, so we had to rule out the classroom shows. Sometimes we would move the show into the library. There was a piano there, and James Brown would play it or dance or sing. That was the real beginning."

He dropped out of the seventh grade before the end of the school year and went to live with his paternal grandmother. He earned board by pumping gas alongside his dad, dancing for tips beside the troop trains snaking out of Fort Gordon, and shoplifting. After his release from reform school he took a job as a janitor at Toccoa, Georgia High School and married Velma Warren Brown in June 1953; the license carried the cooked data that he was born June 17, 1928 in Pulaski, Tennessee. (Joe Brown registered the birth of his son as May 3, 1933 in Augusta, Georgia.) After two years of evening rehearsals with the Famous Flames, Brown quit his day job and made for Macon, crediting his self-confidence to "white people in Toccoa who believed" in him.

He was near the peak of his popularity in 1967 when he purchased his first radio station, WJBE in Knoxville, Tennessee. He would purchase two more, WEBB in Baltimore and WRDW in Augusta. The summer of 1969 found Brown back in Augusta and Macon to break ground on a number of James Brown Gold Platter Pantry restaurants, whose menu was to feature "fried chicken, fried catfish, corn bread, collard greens, black-eyed peas, sweet yams, buttermilk biscuits, fried pies and 'tater puddin'." Plans called for 150 franchises in all fifty states and the Caribbean by the end of 1970.

"But no matter how big Gold Platter soul food becomes," *Newsweek* ruled, "Brown probably will resist pressures to move the headquarters of his firm outside Macon. 'Macon understood me first,' he says. 'And a man is home where he's understood.'"

It is also usually where he's sued or slapped with tax liens by the federal government. The first legal actions were divorce and paternity suits filed in 1969 by Velma Brown. Their union of sixteen years had produced four offspring and a litany of "insurmountable marital difficulties," according to court papers.

Brown temporarily retired from public appearances but reemerged in autumn 1970 after wedding the former Deirdre Yvonne Jenkins in South Carolina. He signed a longtime contract in 1971 with Polydor Records and restructured his organization, selling off his old catalog and dismissing most of the JBs, his post-Flames tour band.

Teddy Brown, nineteen, his father's eldest son by ex-wife Velma, was killed in a car crash in June 1973 along with two other companions from Toccoa.

The Treasury Department claimed in 1975 that Brown owed $4.5 million in back taxes for 1969 and 1970. The financial cloud deepened in 1976 when onetime manager Charles Bobbit took the stand in U.S. District Court in Newark, New

"Eddie Murphy eat your heart out!"

JIM CUMMINS/CAMERA 5

Jersey to testify that he'd given New York City disc jockey Frankie Crocker approximately $7,000 in payola payments to get Brown's records on the airwaves. Bobbit's testimony was later thrown out on a technicality.

In September 1979 a Richmond County Superior Court jury returned a $161,000 verdict against Brown and his Third World, Ltd. No. II Corporation for unpaid rent, breach of contract and punitive damages in an Augusta property dispute. WJBE was sold in January 1978 to raise needed funds. WEBB in Baltimore was put into receivership by a judge who ordered Brown to jail for failure to appear for questioning in a suit by the station's former owner. WRDW in Augusta, second in its market until a June 1979 fire crippled its capacity to transmit, was sold at public auction by the National Bank of Georgia in April 1980.

The IRS filed tax liens of nearly $2.2 million in 1980 on twenty acres of land Brown and wife Deirdre owned in Aiken County. Cash flow improved when Brown sold his beloved D-125 Sidley Hawker jet. Deirdre drove off their sixty-two-acre Jaydee Ranch in South Carolina in 1983 with their two daughters and didn't bother to look back.

On the professional front, reluctant record companies had intimated that Brown take his own advice: Give it up or turnit a loose. "When John [Belushi] and Danny Aykroyd invited me to be a part of the Blues Brothers film, they helped me get myself going again," Brown recalled in April 1982, several days after Belushi's death. "I was going through a bad period at the time, having trouble getting my records released. Truth is truth, and I was not in demand, not wanted. Through the film and their own records, they opened the door again for me and so many other performers like me—Brother Ray [Charles], Aretha—getting us rediscovered and appreciated again. "John flew in to watch me cut my stuff on the soundtrack album 'cause he knew I was nervous, and he said, 'How can I help?' He was *there* for me, unnerstand?"

Brown was again ambulatory in the public's mind, but not yet on the good foot. The success of the Tom Tom Club's James Brown-influenced "Genius Of Love" moved Paul Wexler, then producing several projects for Island Records, to explore the possibility of securing some studio time with the renascent soul pioneer. Wexler flew down to Augusta in February 1982, and a preliminary chat led quickly to contract negotiations. By April, Brown and his troops (trombonist Fred Wesley among them) were in Nassau, laying down rough tracks with resident composer Wally Badarou and the premier reggae rhythm section of bassist Robbie Shakespeare and drummer Sly Dunbar.

"Since James Brown has been the source of most modern dance music in North America, as well as a huge influence on contemporary Caribbean and African pop forms," Wexler says, "he was tense about anything that tasted of a collaboration, saying 'Nobody knows how to be James Brown but James Brown.' I tried to cool him out by explaining, 'Your musical profile is perfect as it is. I'm just suggesting an exciting new frame for it.' I couldn't see how an Afro-Carib hybrid built around James could fail."

The slim, gentle-natured Wexler, thirty-two, pushes his fingers through his thick salt-and-pepper hair and sighs heavily as he cues up a cassette of the never-released LP's rough mixes during an exclusive Manhattan listening session. "Unfortunately, it wasn't conflicting socio-musical philosophies that held the project back." Hesitating before pressing the "play" button, Wexler decides to provide some deep background to the most ballyhooed James Brown album nobody has ever heard.

"We got down to Compass Point, where the weather's always lovely," he begins, "but the climate soon turned sour. Chris Blackwell [head of Island Records] threw a big party the first night at his oceanside mansion, inviting local Bahamian dignitaries and prominent island musicians. The affair began at seven p.m.

—Dan Hartman

James told me, 'You don't know how much of "Living In America" is about my life!'"

"Now this is going to sound like a minor thing, but when nine p.m. rolled around, James was still at his beach house in the Compass Point complex, refusing to go until Henry Stallings had fixed his hair to where he thought it was perfect. 'Come on,' I was begging him. 'Think of your host, he's thrilled to have you as a guest.' But we ended up arriving over three hours late, with the food cold and everyone bewildered, offended or very bummed."

Brown, Fred Wesley and company entered into two weeks of studio brainstorming with the Sly-Robbie-Wally triumvirate still open and enthusiastic, both sides contributing original material prepared for the occasion. The mutual goodwill was destined to wilt.

"James began to get heavy with Sly and Robbie about them playing parts exactly as he dictated—and then him playing them poorly when he took over their instruments to demonstrate. Their respect was bruised but progress was being made until we got to a really excellent track Sly and Robbie had written called '(I'm A) Rhythm Machine,' which was clearly a tribute to James in its groove and mood. At the run-through, James paid Robbie the ultimate compliment by telling him he could sustain a groove without any faltering or shifting whatsoever. 'Man!' he raved, 'you don't move an *inch*! That's discipline!'

"As we began cutting the track, James began tossing his own off-the-cuff phrases and couplets into verses, which everyone appreciated—until he called a break from the session to say he wanted the publishing on the song. Now," cautions Wexler, "I believe to this day that that was just an impulsive wrinkle of the moment which could have been eliminated with diplomacy. But some staff people overreacted and called the Island Records office to complain. Right or wrong, James is a proud and stubborn cat and the vibe evolved into unnecessary sides-taking."

But Brown's insecurities and hyper-sensitive suspicions boiled over into avenues quite removed from record-making.

"At one point James told me he felt that he went through his dry spell in the latter half of the 70s because Gamble & Huff and the FCC were in a conspiracy to ruin him by keeping him off the radio," Wexler says. "He was also bitter about Rick James, who he feared was going out of his way to monitor and rip off James' ideas.

"Another time, I met James and the Reverend Sharpton for a business meeting over coffee in the Detroit airport. He persisted in talking about the Fedders air conditioners in the building corridors, saying, 'That's the noise they make at home, Rev! That's the noise!' Finally I asked what the hell he was talking about and James explained that he was convinced the government was bugging him all over the country through the air conditioners. That's why he thinks he's had so many run-ins with the IRS."

As far as dissidence levels at Compass Point were concerned, all unity of purpose was irrevocably dissolved with the advent of Henry Stallings' bleeding ulcers. "James was convinced the cooks and maids had deliberately poisoned his dear friend as part of a plot," Wexler says. "That was the last straw for the Compass Point people, who have their own pride, but James had up and split Nassau anyhow."

"I wanted a band that would punch back when I swung at 'em."

Two months later Brown telephoned Wexler to apologize, admitting he had been woefully mistaken and wanting to resume the project. It was too late. Island had washed its hands of its phobic funk exponent; Blackwell let Brown keep both the money and the master tapes from the abortive affair.

"I must accentuate that I, for one, would do it again in an instant," Wexler maintains, "because for all the bruises on his creative psyche and fears of exploitation that stem historically from very real abuses and ripoffs, James Brown is indisputably a talent of monumental proportions. History has repeatedly shown that his finished product has always made any hassles enroute seem awful paltry in retrospect.

As if to illustrate, Wexler starts the cassette. Of particular note are "ESP," a searing ballad with lightly mystical lyrics by Brown and like-minded music by Badarou; "So Tired Of Standing Still (We Got To Move)," an ebullient party groovathon guided by Fred Wesley's playful trombone invention; and "U.S. (Us)," a richly contoured reggae-funk amalgam with exquisitely dusky New Orleans piano coloration in the Dr. John mode and a transcendent scat by Brown. A joy to hear, "U.S." is the Afro-Carib funk meld Wexler had hoped the experiment under the palms would yield. "What knocks me out," Wexler says with a small smile, "is that Sly & Robbie gave their heart and soul to 'U.S.' without even smoking any ganja before the takes. James wouldn't allow it."

In 1984 Brown teamed with hip-hop honcho Afrika Bambaataa for the six-part, twelve-inch "Unity" single on the Tommy Boy label. But the record did not sell well enough to return a royalty for the Bad One Hisself.

"There was three meetings led up to me working with James," Bambaataa says. "I met him on the streets outside Yankee Stadium in 1963 when he was out just saying hello to the neighborhood. In 1973 he came up to the Bronx River Houses at East 174th to visit the mother of one of his dancing girls and he talked to us kids on the stoop. In 1983, when he caught a Zulu Nation show at the Left Bank in Mount Vernon, New York, we talked some more.

"So I told Tommy Silverman of Tommy Boy that it was my dream to record with James and he set up a meeting. We went into Unique Studio and got it down in two days, plus a video. We wanted to send a message of peace to the world, and offer a percentage to the United Negro College Fund.

"A lot of stations didn't jump on the record, though," Bambaataa continues, his tone subdued. "They didn't wanta hear the politics or the electro-funk. Now I hear 'Living In America' everywhere, with James Brown doing Dan Hartman instead of doing himself. But I appreciated the time he spent with me, and he taught me some smart stuff. He said, 'Keep your lyrics universal. Don't ever give anybody any more reason to attack you than they already go looking for.'

"He also told me a lot about the tax laws and how the government is always waiting to get you even if you give your damned money away. 'Be careful,' he kept saying. 'They got their eyes on you all the time. Somebody always wants to take what you got. Be wary and you won't be sorry.'"

It is no small irony that "Living In America," the first James Brown single to threaten a run at top of the charts since "I Got You (I Feel Good)" climbed to number three in November 1965, employs a slightly florid reworking of the previous song's horn charts. Ray Marchica's thoroughgoing drums are engaging but lack the slight-delay fatback flair of the Melvin Parker/John "Jabo" Starks/Clyde Stubblefield combinations. Fuzztone guitar and synth keyboards mixed at midrange in the rhythm bed supplant the punishing clarity of the earlier track. But there's no question that "America" is a slick distillation of the Latin/Caribbean/New Orleans off-beat accents, stammering horns and clipped bass ostinatos (perfected by "Sweet" Charles Sherrell) of Brown's post-Famous Flames

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growth period (1966-73) with the JBs—while using none of the standout personnel from this fertile heyday.

"Robin Garb, who was the executive producer of the *Rocky IV* soundtrack, called me in late June of '85," says singer/producer Dan "I Can Dream About You" Hartman. "He said he and Sly Stallone were looking for a lavish James Brown-type production number for the Las Vegas scene in the film where Apollo Creed fights the Russian on Creed's home turf. Robin knew me and Charlie Midnight, my songwriting partner, from work we'd done alone or together on the *Streets of Fire* and *Krush Groove* soundtracks, and he felt we could deliver a semi-patriotic dance track that would feel like a major-contender hit record in the movie's setting.

"Charlie and I both thought it was a ridiculously tall order, because James Brown's vocals and timing have more musical depth and sophistication than most of the top ten these days. He has a very seasoned non-pop quality. What we went for, then, was a lyric by Charlie that described some of the

Brown with "America" songwriters Midnight & Hartman

classic American working man's imagery without the turnoff of overt patriotism. Meantime I wrote, engineered and played most of the instruments for the basic track in my studio in Connecticut. I added a scratch vocal and then sent off copies to James and Stallone.

"James' only request was horns, so I contacted the Uptown Horns, a nicely gritty session unit that were on the road with Robert Plant, and they flew in from Phoenix, Arizona for an emergency overnight session. In August James flew up from Augusta and walked into Unique Recording in Manhattan about 10:30 one night. He put on headphones, listened to the track and said, 'You're doing James Brown music!' And when he saw the second verse on the lead sheet he called me over, telling me, 'You don't know how much of this railroad-track hard-roll all-night-diner stuff is about my life!'"

God got me in on the ground floor of every kind of music," Brown exults backstage at Radio City Music Hall. "He put me into the game before Prince and Sly and Rick James and the Funkadelics. When—"

Instantly Brown cancels the thought and explodes with a torrential verbal outburst: "SEXMACHINEGOODFOOTTHINK DOINGITTODEATHICAN'TSTANDMYSELFWHENYOU TOUCHMESUPERBADCOLDSWEATFUNKYCHICKENI NEEDYOURLOVESOBADBABYBABYBABY!"

He pauses, grinning ferociously, and spews it out again. The feat of precisely merged enunciation is doubly impressive on the second pass, the humming whole too specific to be psychobabble or doggerel filler, and yet not exactly a boast either. It's more of an involuntary mantra disclosure.

"Down in D.C. they talking about the go-go but I had them kids out in the streets while they were still babies, doing the popcorn with the Original Disco Man. Funk I invented back in the 50s. The rap thing I had down on my 'Brother Rapp (Part I)' and you can check that. I enjoyed my thing with Afrika Bambaataa on 'Unity' but I did it more for the message than for the music. Michael Jackson, he used to watch me from the wings and got his moon walk from my camel walk—he'll tell you that if you ask. Same way, I was slippin' and slidin' before Prince was out of his crib; that's why Alan Leeds, who used to work for my organization, is on his management team, tipping and hipping him. I ain't jealous, I'm zealous. I ain't teased, I'm *pleased*. Who's gonna do James Brown better'n *James Brown*? Think!"

He halts with a wheezy gasp, his nostrils flaring dangerously and the upper lip quivering on the brink of another mantra stampede. But it misfires: "SEXMACHINEGOODFOOT [*coughcoughcough*]—aheheheheh—yes suh! Show business!!" One more pair of these hotdogging larynx wipeouts and he'll be phoning in this evening's program from an oxygen tent.

"This is a family operation," Brown says, referring to his third wife as he idly unbuttons his silk burgundy shirt and unclips the waistband on his matching slacks. In late 1984 he wed Adrianne Modell Rodriguez, who sometimes appears on the soap operas *The Young and the Restless* and *Days of Our Lives*. "Mrs. Brown, she's an actress, a beautician and a personality in her own right and that am quite a combination. She do my production coordination, sees I'm ready for the people anytime, anywhere 'cause they can want me with no notice. I can draw 50,000 people in Arkansas like *that*, or 10,000 in Chicago on a rumor I might be there. Last summer Vice President Bush sent me a letter saying thank you for not forgetting the unemployed.

"I been friends with Presidents! Johnson, Kennedy, Mr. President Habib Bourguida of Tunisia—you know where that is? I'm trying to get the dignitaries to send me over to Moscow to get the static outta the Hot Line and start everybody talking about love. Senator Strom Thurmond, he belongs to my church, and he's somebody who's been there in the background for me for years."

How's his financial picture these days?

"Looks good, pretty good. I got me a Scotti Bros. contract since the *Rocky* movie, and Polydor and I are working on reissuing a bunch of things. Don't have all that ranch land anymore, but my wife and I still got some nice property to fall back onto. I ran into taxman troubles and had to sell my jets, had to sell my radio stations. I was the only black man in America tc own three radio stations but I travelled and left it up to accountants and they messed it every kinda way, but I'm coming back from it. I got a lotta new ideas, I wanna do a keyboard record, I wanna produce some of the young talent, find another Michael Jackson like I did before.

"And I wanna do more TV. My favorite is *The David Letterman Show*. Them people been pretty good to me, and that band is something, in a tight groove. I dig Paul Shaffer, he's my biggest fan, and that Steve Jordan, that drummer they got, he's *furious* on the beat, jus' like a locomotion man. Both of the drummers in my band are admirers of Steve Jordan because if the beat ain't there you got to send everybody home, TV show or no TV show.

"I'm not afraid to be the boss, see? That's how James Brown music came to be. Back when everybody was listening to soap-suds songs and jingles, I emphasized the beat, not the melody, unnerstand? Heat the beat and the rest'll turn sweet. I heard the percussion in everything—even the rhythm guitar sound like a drum to me. My guitarist, Jimmy Nolen, God rest his soul he's gone to his reward [the originator of the hugely influential signature "chicken-scratch" riff died of a heart attack December 16, 1983]—Jimmy knew how to get the guitar to hit like a snare for me, 'cause I wanted a band that would punch back when I swung at 'em.

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"It was a new attitude, better than the Marines, better than boot camp. I wanted the band onstage to be like soldiers, with me being the general, calling out the battle plan."

And how is troop morale?

"We gettin' on, gettin' along. Sometimes I got to lay down the law, but everybody know the rules at this point. I useta be *hard*, right," he concedes, a grin growing on his lips, "but I'm mellow now, I slowed down and lightened a little bit. I got enough veterans to take care of the vet. We funky enough to take on any takers."

Maceo Parker, an old campaigner who sparked or witnessed his share of melees and mutinies in the Brown camp, agrees. "When I came on board in 1964, it was the James Brown Orchestra, and the Famous Flames were still mostly a vocal group in the setup," remembers the impish, softspoken sax great. "My brother Melvin and I, we were getting tired of high school in Kinston, North Carolina when Mr. Brown came through and promised Melvin a job as a drummer when he got older. Next time through, he hired him and took me on in Raleigh after I bought myself the alto sax he was wanting.

"In 1967 I left to go into the army and that was when Fred Wesley took over with his trombone. I came back in 1969 and then I left again in 1970, taking a lot of the band with me to do a record as Maceo & All the King's Men, which I guess didn't make Mr. Brown too pleased. But he got Bootsy Collins on bass and his brother Catfish on guitar while we were gone so it all went down okay.

"Between 1976 until November 1983 I was doing work with P-Funk, Bootsy and the Brides of Funkenstein besides some *quick* occassional sides with James, but I gotta say my favorite work as part of the JBs was on 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag,' 'Cold Sweat,' a tune called 'Damn Right I'm Somebody' and 'Funky Good Time,' where I did a nice flute solo.

"Problem was, it used to always be kinda stressed, pretty tight quarters for all of us, in the studio and on the road. The material was worked out on the road, in the time before each night's show, with James letting us in on the grooves he'd been developing and almost giving us assignments. Everything was set up to keep you in line and sharp. Thing is, there's a right way and a wrong way to do anything, and then there was James Brown's way, which always had to be considered righter than right."

Parker says he lost patience with the fifty dollar fines and the insensitivity to *esprit de corps* they exemplified. Most grown men don't need to be told when to drink, swear or shine their shoes, but it was Brown's fierce anti-drug stance that rubbed many a sideman raw in the late 60s and early 70s.

"Everybody would be sneaking reefer and other shit on James," Bootsy Collins recalls. "He was always storming into the dressing room to ask what the funny smell was and throw a shitfit. So a lot of us headed in the other direction just to get a leg up. It was acid that eventually made things extra crazy, same as with P-Funk, which I joined after leaving James' band. One night with James, I thought the neck of my bass guitar turned into a snake. I didn't want no part of it and went back to the dressing room in the middle of the show. That pretty much cooled my deal with the Godfather."

The last straw for others on the squad was less cerebral. During a 1974 concert trip to Zaire that was carrying B.B. King, the Spinners, the Crusaders and Lloyd Price, the plane almost failed to clear the runway because it was so severely overloaded with Brown's personal effects. The luggage of others had to be removed in order to make liftoff just barely possible, and several of the passengers described the stunt as potentially life-threatening. By the end of the protracted tour the following year, Parker and other key members of the troupe had tendered their resignations.

"Last really good time I had with the whole James gang was on a bus coming back from L.A. in 1975," Parker says. "We were drinking, joking, doing the dozens and carrying on

great. It was the *heck* with the fucking rules, thank God."

Did James enjoy himself as well?

"James? On that bus with us? James Brown was not on that bus, my friend. No, no, no, no."

For the time being, Parker says he's "content—print that—content" with the situation, although he feels bad he and the rest of the present lineup did not play on "Living In America."

"When the hit is on the radio, you like hearing your contribution," he muses. "If you playing with James Brown, hearing that contribution is what you definitely come to count on. I can promise you that."

Sad to say, despite the best efforts of Parker and the rest of Brown's twenty-five-piece orchestra, the first half of the Radio City show is less than an epiphany. Al Sharpton's pallid invocation gives way to excruciating treatments of the *Entertainment Tonight* theme, "There's No Business Like Show Business" and "Take Me Out To The Ball Game." The exotically pell-mell pageant doesn't catch fire until the finale, which builds from simmering versions of "Sex Machine," "Super Bad" and "Get That Feeling" to a six-minute "Living In America." A horn-screech-*cum*-rim-shot signals the start. Dead on the reverberant *bop!* Brown drops into a full split, grabbing the throat of the mike stand as he sinks and then whipping it out to cord-length as he leaps up again. With the slack wire hooked around his pinky, he executes a double spin and snaps the mike down to within four inches of the floor, catching it in his cradled palms—*this man is fifty-three years old*—as he swiftly genuflects to growl, "I live in America—say it!!"

Time alone will tell if Dan Hartman can draw out of the mid-80s model the brand of visionary output that once kept Brown a decade ahead of his most savvy emulators.

The secret seems to be in the degree of musical autonomy that can be provided, while steering the man away from the pointless score-settling, quirky self-parody and paranoia that have sapped and distracted his muse in the recent past. The voice is still intact, the moves as deft as always when left to their intuitive grace, all or most critical quibblings short-circuited by the lasting grandeur of an American original still triumphantly immersed in his own spirit.

At the Waldorf Astoria induction gala for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Brown glad-hands with gusto all who come within touching distance to swap stories, offer congratulations or bask in his glow. And for his part, Brown goes out of his way to laud the others being honored, his entourage nodding in congenial assent.

"Lookit Chuck Berry! Man looks good, half his age...Ray Charles, still have the pipes Almighty God put in his chest...Fats Domino got that touch...Everly Brothers is fine harmonies...Jerry Lee Lewis looking pretty well...."

More nods, and then nods for the nods. Heads are bobbing blissfully in Brown's corner as Rev. Al Sharpton sidles up behind him, a tightly rolled magazine in his grip, and murmurs something in the bossman's ear. The communication feeds a smirk that becomes a grin that becomes a chuckle that turns into an outright guffaw as the beneficent repartee around him escalates to where James Brown has no recourse but to chime in with the last and best word of tidings on the topic of his esteemed colleagues, his feet aflutter and his upper lip atremble as he utters with savage serenity:

"*But James Brown is the only man in this here Hall of Fame who is entering the* Billboard *top fifteen on the same night....*"

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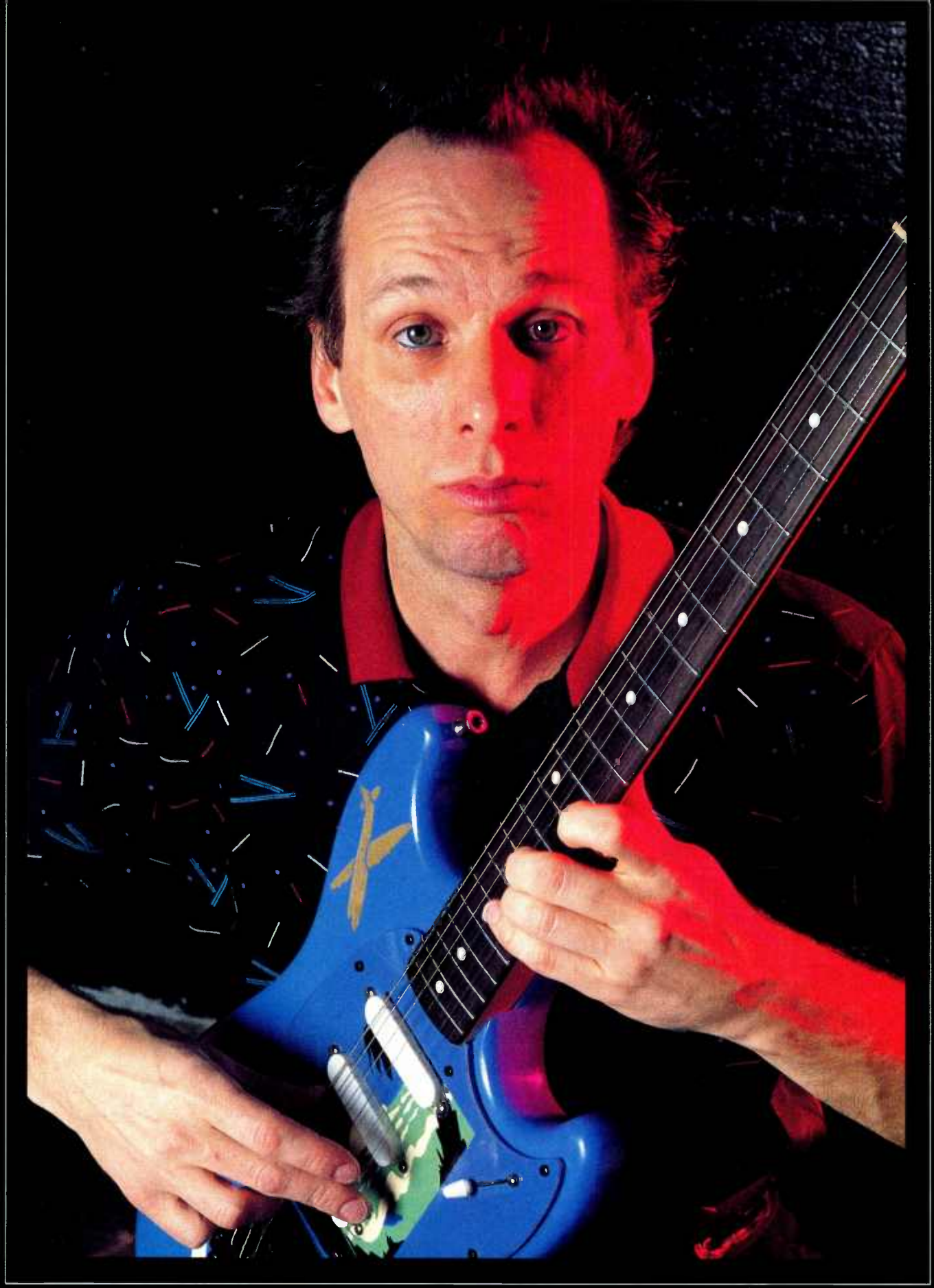

WHAT'S ADRIAN BELEW DOING ON THE CLUB CIRCUIT WITH A BAND OF BEARS?

BY LARRY NAGER

As rock 'n' roll resumes go, Adrian Belew has one of the best around. Frank Zappa, David Bowie, Brian Eno, Talking Heads, Laurie Anderson, Peter Gabriel, Robert Palmer, Garland Jeffreys, Robert Fripp and, most recently, Cyndi Lauper have all called upon the Twang Bar King to color their music with some of his startlingly original guitar sounds.

Since 1977, when Zappa plucked him out of the club band Sweetheart, Belew has earned a worldwide reputation as one of rock's most innovative guitarists. Blending electronic effects, guitar synthesizers and, true to his moniker, plenty of twang bar pumping, Belew has virtually reinvented the instrument.

So what is this guy doing back on the club circuit with a band of unknowns, traveling around the country playing short, catchy songs and teaching audiences to clench their hands into claws and growl? The answer, Belew says, is he's having the time of his life. The Twang Bar King has abdicated to become a Bear, and the claws and growling routine are just part of the group's official handshake.

After his association with Robert Fripp's King Crimson ended with the band's amicable collapse in 1984, Belew returned to his native Cincinnati, Ohio. Although he and his family make their home in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, Cincinnati is where Belew first began playing music. He soon approached an old friend, guitarist Rob Fetters, whose band the Raisins was breaking up after more than eleven years together. The Raisins, one of Greater Cincinnati's top bar bands, had a repertoire of dozens of original, danceable songs featuring smart, bitingly witty lyrics. Some of those tunes, including the local hit, "Fear Is Never Boring," turned up on the quartet's eponymous 1983 LP, produced by Belew.

Fetters brought along Raisin bassist and his songwriting partner, Bob Nyswonger. First choice for the Bear drum chair was legendary session man Larrie Londin, who had played on Belew's second solo LP, *Twang Bar King*. But due to an illness in his family, Londin was forced to remain at home in Nashville. The band turned to Chris Ar-

duser, who'd played with the Raisins in the mid-70s.

Belew had initial trepidations about Londin's replacement: "When we decided to go forth with Chris in the band, I wasn't overthrilled about it," Belew admitted. "I didn't think he could replace Larrie, and, in a sense, no one can replace Larrie in that what he does is very special. But what Chris does is just right for the Bears. He's a guitarist and a songwriter as well, so he has a real feel for orchestrating a song. That's something most drummers don't do—they just start out one place and finish one place. We just felt the immediate chemistry of it all and didn't need to search any further."

"This is it. This is the band I've always wanted to be in," Belew enthuses in late November, after the Bears' maiden Mid-

Good News Bears: Rob Fetters, Belew, Bob Nyswonger and Chris Arduser.

west-East Coast jaunt. The trip had included dates from Chicago to Boston, including a soldout show at New York's 2000-seat Ritz, where more than 1200 had to be turned away. In Cincinnati, the combination of Belew and a trio of ex-Raisins qualifies as a full-fledged supergroup. But the band was worried how the rest of the country would respond to the Bears. Would crowds just want to hear "Twang Bar King II"?

"We'd go into these places," Belew said, "not knowing what to expect from the audience, because they were about to hear a brand new band they'd never heard of; fourteen new songs that are not on record; and they may have just come to hear me play.

"I would always get this feeling like midway through the set, like 'Uh-oh, we're losing them.' It's a difficult part of the set, just a little later than the middle. It's after we've done 'The Rail Song,' which is one most audiences recognize very well, and then we go back into some of our new songs that they've never heard and there's quite a few guitar changes and odd tunings and weird things that go on in that section. But it always worked out. It would generate back to a higher peak and by the end of the evening they'd be all revved up, yelling 'Bears Bears Bears.'"

That sort of response has made Belew and the band pretty confident. "I feel stronger all the time that the Bears are really going to do something big. I don't say that lightly because I think we will need to do a lot of work. I've learned more and more in the music business that it's not just the songs and it's not just how you play. It has a lot to do with your imaging and how well you promote yourselves. So I think the Bears are just going to have to go out and play a lot and meet a lot of people and force people to like us."

For Belew, the Bears prove you *can* go home again. "I really have to say, in the back of my mind, I always kind of knew that this is where I wanted to come back. I just didn't know the components of it. I could never have contrived this situation, but when it fell together, I just realized it was right."

Belew was born Robert Steven Belew thirty-four years ago, just across the Ohio River in Covington, Kentucky. He got his musical start during the 60s British invasion, not as a guitarist but as the Midwest's answer to Ringo Starr. Renaming himself Stevie Belew (a process he was to repeat in 1976 when he became Adrian after joining Sweetheart), he drummed with the Denims, the area's best Beatle cover band.

"The Denims were the other time in my life when I really felt this kind of chemistry in a band. Maybe it was from being caught up in the whole English trend that was happening in 1964, but the Denims were a band that was together three or four years, which is a pretty long time for a band to be together back then, teenagers and all. It was very familial, and that's what the Bears are like today. It's been a long time between those two things. I didn't think we could ever get back to that feeling but I think we have."

And "that feeling" isn't just nostalgia, Belew says. He cites the Beatles' music as a continuing inspiration. The *Revolver* LP, in particular, with its revolutionary blend of Indian instruments and electronic studio tricks mixed with classic Beatlesesque harmonies and pop songs, was taken as a model by the Bears. "We look at that period of time as being the real state of the art for pop music, the best time for pop music for us. *Revolver* was just state-of-the-art Beatles," Belew said. "We decided, 'Let's start there.'"

The result is the Bears' sound, which Belew calls "East-Meets-Midwest." It brings together the Raisins' bouncy pop songs with Eastern-flavored guitar textures created by Belew's arsenal of guitar synthesizers. "One of the main things we decided at first was to focus on that trademark sound, and really make that apparent to the audience, make it a little easier for them to get into the band. The two-part vocals that we do, the rhythmic structure that we have, it's all very danceable and melodic, but a little left of the mainstream, and that's what makes it interesting.

"And of course, the Bears handshake, I think, is really important. I think it's a great physical way for people to make contact with us. There's the 'Grrrr' with it too, but it's optional."

That sort of ursine zaniness is bound to get Belew in trouble with the small-minded segment of the music community that prefers its avant-garde to be grimly pretentious artiste types. But Belew prefers the more lighthearted approach. He says, the looser atmosphere of the Bears is just as conducive to making good music as his last band—the austere Mr. Fripp's King Crimson.

"The Bears situation is much freer. King Crimson came with lots and lots of limitations imposed upon ourselves by ourselves, particularly by Robert—who can play what, what kind of things you were gonna do. The aim of the Bears is to please more people, to communicate to more people. King Crimson was more closed than that, more esoteric by nature. King Crimson was more of a learning experience than anything else.

"The Bears is just naturally a more fun-filled thing. We're very serious about our music and our intention is to make very good music that a lot of

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people will enjoy, but we're gonna have a lot of fun doing it. My whole goal of life is to wake people up to newer, more exciting and adventurous music. Maybe that sounds clichéd, but I don't care."

If Belew's words seem a bit clichéd, his playing is anything but. One reason is his use of altered tunings. His two favorites are (low to high): E-A-D-A-B-E ("It's only one note difference," says Belew, "but it's right in the middle so it changes everything") and E-B-E-E-B-E ("You bring the G down and the D up. It adds a droning sound like a bouzouki. Sort of like manual chorusing").

Another of Belew's trademark techniques is his manual tremolo, in which his right hand pushes against the upper body of his guitar while his left grabs the headstock and pulls it. He said he had learned it from Rob Fetters, back in the mid-70s when the latter was playing in the Raisins. "I saw Ted Nugent do it back in 1968," Fetters recalls. "I've tried doing it with maple necks, but they're too stiff. You gotta have a rosewood fingerboard."

"The first time I started bending the neck was out of the necessity of not having a working tremolo," Belew notes. "I can't remember what situation I was in at the time, maybe it was David Bowie, maybe King Crimson. In one year's time I had six different tremolo units put on my guitar. It was getting to be so ridiculous that I just started bending the neck instead." Today, Belew is quite satisfied with the Kahler tremolos he's had installed on all his guitars, but every now and then, he said, he still gets the urge. "It just feels great. It looks good too. It's a different kind of feel, it makes the notes feed back in a different way 'cause it's wood against wood, whereas when you're using a tremolo arm, that's metal against metal. It's really just hand techniques. They don't cost anything."

One fan of those techniques is Cyndi Lauper. She hired him to play guitar and write and arrange material for her followup to 1984's *She's So Unusual*. "I think the album will sound like her other album," Belew said. "Most of the emphasis is on Cyndi Lauper and her voice, which is the way it should be. She's an amazing singer. Every day for several weeks, I've watched her sing all day long and she just has a tremendous range and stamina." Belew's participation has also given Lauper's producer, Lennie Petze, a better look at the guitarist. Petze heads Epic/Portrait Records, one of the labels that's been interested in signing the Bears.

In addition to the Lauper project, Belew is wrapping up his third solo LP for Island Records, due in the spring. The record, entitled *Desire Caught By The Tail*, after Pablo Picasso's sole attempt at playwriting, marks a return to the format of *Lone Rhino*, with Belew playing everything himself. "I thought that title was an apt description of the music itself," he said. "It's mainly just guitar as an orchestra. I've got some percussion and things but mainly just a lot of different guitar sounds."

While his solo work continues to explore new sonic frontiers, Belew the Bear is a different beast altogether. In his new band, Belew says it's music, not sound, that comes first. "I think [solo] music was often a product of whatever sound was happening, whereas we do it a different way with the Bears. We sit down and acoustically try to work out the song. We may have our electric guitars unplugged and we may be sitting there working out the chords and trying to get the songs to sound complete in just that acoustic-guitars-and-vocal manner, and then we go back and start adding the technology."

Chris Arduser shares that philosophy. In these computerized times, real drummers are an endangered species. The Bears' drum sound, however, is purely organic. In addition to his standard drum kit, Arduser produces more exotic thumps with such bizarre beatables as log drums and tiny accent cymbals. He's also building a percussion monster made of pipes and sheet metal. "If you've got some Simmons, you can simulate a lot of different sounds," Arduser explains. "But we just want to keep finding more interesting sounding objects. It's more interesting to see something strange and hear the sound

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THE BEAR FACTS

Onstage with the Bears, Adrian Belew occasionally plays a Roland G-303 guitar synthesizer, but his trademark is his four "cubism wonderbeasts," the fancily painted, modified Fender Mustangs from his "Twang Bar King" period. Each contains one Roland hex pickup and GR-700 electronics that control his floor-standing guitar synthesizer, along with three Seymour Duncan Stack Strat pickups. The guitars feature Kahler Tremolo units and Bowen clamps that tighten strings at the tuning keys, which allow Belew to play above the nut. Two of the guitars were painted by Mike Getz, the artist who did the *Twang Bar King* cover. The other two—including what may be the world's only fretless guitar synthesizer—were painted by Laurie Anderson, whose *Mr. Heart-break* LP Belew played on.

"I've been doing a lot of programming with the the GR-700," he says. "I've programmed maybe 200 different sounds that you put on cartridges. A lot of the Eastern kinds of sounds that are so prevalent in the Bears' music really come from that. It gives me the kind of freedom keyboard players have had for years."

With the variety of sounds made possible by the GR-700, Belew has been using fewer external effects than he has in the past. His rack includes two Roland volume pedals, "one wired to a pan pedal between straight guitar and synthesizer so my mixture of guitar and synth comes from my foot." His fuzztone is a Tonebender Jumbo, "the Cadillac of fuzztones." A separate rack holds an Ibanez HD-1500 harmonizer with foot control, a Roland SDE-3000 delay with eight different programmable delays and an MXR Dynacomp compressor.

His amp is his trusty Roland Jazz Chorus JC-120. "I've had that amplifier since 1977. I've used it on everything I ever recorded. I've used the same exact settings whether playing Madison Square Garden with Bowie or playing at the 930 Club in Washington DC."

Rob Fetters uses three guitars. His main axe is a hybrid Strat made from a '56 body with a '63 rosewood neck. He keeps things simple with a single Seymour Duncan Vintage Strat pickup with a single tone and volume control. He also uses a Roland G-505 guitar synth patched into a Roland GR-300. His pride and joy, though, is a beautiful, mid-40s, single pickup, blonde Epiphone Zephyr. Fetters' effects board includes an Ibanez compressor, MXR distortion units, a Boss chorus and vibrato, a Roland Space Chorus Echo, an Ibanez HD-1500 harmonizer and an ADA flanger. His amp setup is a 60-watt MESA-Boogie brain into an "ancient" Marshall cabinet.

Bob Nyswonger holds down the Bears bottom with two basses, a '71 Fender Precision with a Seymour Duncan copy of a '52 Precision single coil pickup in the bridge position, with Rotosound Superwound strings, and a Clevinger electric upright loaned him by Adrian. It's the two-pickup model strung with Thomastic steel strings. Nyswonger uses an MXR Stereo Chorus on the Precision and 32-band MXR equalizer with the Clevinger. It's all biamped with an Ampeg SVT into a 2x15 cabinet and a 100-watt Marshall Superlead amp with a 4x12 enclosure. Nyswonger swears by Groove Tubes and has a muting system built by Cincinnati's Secret Service shop so he can tune silently.

"I use a lot of whatever I kind of happen into," says drummer **Chris Arduser**. He's in the process of changing his drum kit, buying a new set of Yamaha Recording Custom Drums with a 22-inch bass, 13-inch mounted tom and 16-inch floor tom. His snares are two "ancient" Ludwig chrome models, 14- by 5½-inches. His cymbals are a 21-inch Zildjian ride, 16- and 18-inch Zildjian crashes that he alternates and a mixed high-hat set with a Paiste 2002 heavy and a Zildjian New Beat. He uses Remo heads, Pinstripes on the snare and bass, white frosted on the toms. His sticks are wooden Regal Tip 5As. For variety, he uses two Paiste accent cymbals, a 6-inch and a 10-inch and a set of five Sunsong log drums.

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The Keyboard/Production Wiz Who Turned the Starship and Heart into Chart Contenders.

PRODUCER

By Robert Minshall

NO, NOT *THAT* PETER WOLF

It's easy to envision a nineteenth-century version of producer/keysman Peter Wolf sitting in a castle high atop a pinnacle in the Austrian Alps, laughing fiendishly as he plays some fugue on a gargantuan pipe organ, thunder crashing and lightning flashing in the night sky. The twentieth-century version of Peter Wolf lives in a more modest setting in a Simi Valley canyon just outside L.A., and he laughs less fiendishly, but he's still got a pronounced German accent, a strong classical streak and the soul of an extremist: "Music has to make you feel great. It has to be interesting, to have passion. It has to draw your attention. If it doesn't turn you and everyone else involved on incredibly, how can you expect to turn other people on? You can't. So you gotta get off every second. You've got to walk out of the studio going *yeah*! Then you have a chance."

Peter Wolf took that chance and ran with it. In an extraordinary assault on the pop charts, Wolf has multi-platinum LPs by the Starship and Heart in the top ten, with hit singles still falling out of both. Wolf also arranged and performed Commodores' comeback hit "Nightshift," did three tracks for last fall's Maurice White LP, won a Grammy nomination for his arranging work on "Why Do People Fall In Love?" by Thelma Houston and Dennis Edwards, and has Boz Scaggs, El Debarge, Nik Kershaw and (gasp) Miles Davis penciled in on his dance card. The man is hot.

In the best tradition of his native Vienna, Austria, Wolf had been a child prodigy, studying piano from age five and performing Beethoven concertos by age nine. At the age of eleven, he was exposed to the music of Bird, Miles and Trane among others, and steadfastly began the pursuit of jazz which was to lead him to first prize at the European Jazz Festival in Vienna in 1968 at the ripe old age of sixteen.

Shortly thereafter, Wolf first heard Jimi Hendrix; not only did he then begin to play rock with a fervor, but decided to make music his career. Though he had been encouraged to pursue music by his father, an accomplished pianist but a Viennese industrialist by trade, when Wolf announced that, contrary to his father's intentions, "I will never, ever set foot in your factories," dad's response was a simple one: "Get out. Now."

"There's a total art to making records; you have to have more than chops."

Wolf's first professional gig was in a jazz trio playing the midnight shift in a Vienna bar ("They made me wear clothes that were too big to try to make me look twenty-one.") He moved quickly into the Vienna music scene, playing sessions by day and club gigs by night, and soon began working with several Austrian stars.

As a keyboard player, it was a natural progression to arranging. Wolf taught himself by transcribing and studying the records of American soul artists such as Sam & Dave and Otis Redding. "America was the measure...that's where the heavyweights were," he says. Thus it was inevitable that he come to America, "where the real competition is." His first stop was New York in '74, where he soon joined a thirty-seven-piece big band called Brownie's Revenge. "We played at Trudy Heller's, a tiny little club. On good nights, we had twelve people watching us. We made something like $1.50 a night." He left to visit friends in Atlanta, and stayed in the South for about a year, where he played gigs by night and by day taught a semester of big band at the University of Montevallo in Birmingham, Alabama. Saving enough money to buy a car, he headed west for Los Angeles.

Barely a week had passed after his 1977 arrival in L.A. before he found himself auditioning for Frank Zappa, with whom he recorded and toured until 1980, playing in the band with Adrian Belew and Terry Bozzio. It was an experience he describes as fun and immensely educational. Departing Zappa, Wolf concentrated his efforts on attempting to get studio work, shunning a lucrative offer to join Jethro Tull. "I wouldn't want to join any band, unless it was one like the Police," he says. He found session work to be rough going at first, since there was the stigma of overplaying attached to Zappa alumni in the L.A. studios. "There is a total art to making records; you have to have more than chops. A good musician doesn't overplay. It's a process of growing up, to see

JACKI SALLOW

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what is necessary for a track and what is excess. We all go through that."

The first producer who gave Wolf a real shot was Ron Nevison, with whom Wolf did records for the likes of Rex Smith and Shaun Cassidy. Word got around quickly; soon he had done projects with Ted Nugent, Survivor, Pablo Cruise, etc. Wolf was becoming Ron Nevison's "musical right hand"—when Nevison produced *Nuclear Furniture* for the Jefferson Starship, not only did Wolf arrange and play keyboards on all the tracks, he penned the hit "No Way Out" with his wife, singer/lyricist Ina Wolf. The album went gold.

Meanwhile, producer Dennis Lambert had been hired for the seemingly thankless task of producing the Commodores' first record without Lionel Richie or hit writer James Carmichael. Wolf was hired to arrange one track; Dennis liked the result so much that he hired Wolf for four more as associate producer as well as arranger/keyboardist. It was a turning point in Wolf's career; one of the songs was "Nightshift." Everything on the track, save cymbals and toms, is electronic, centered around Wolf's Synclavier. That's right, the guitars too. The fretless bass? An original Wolf Yamaha DX7 patch.

The "Nightshift" project led directly to work on Maurice White's solo project. Wolf co-wrote three tunes with White and arranged the tracks, when he once again received a call from Ron Nevison requesting his assistance for the new Heart album. Nevison made a very attractive offer: co-production credit plus a production point. "That made me think," Wolf says. "Heart was already a huge rock band, and to put some soul into them and make that happen, I figured, 'God, that could be a very big album.'" And so it was. "I take a lot of credit for that," Wolf says. He's going to have to, because you won't find his production credits anywhere on the *Heart* record or packaging. Seems a funny thing happened on the way to the bank. After Wolf had arranged and played on all the tracks, he received another attractive offer: to *produce* the next Starship album. Unfortunately that gig belonged to...Ron Nevison. Nevison was angry at the Starship for offering, but *furious* at Wolf for accepting, and withdrew Wolf's production credit. As Wolf tersely put it, "His ego went berserk."

"All of a sudden, I am in the producer's chair. This is the breaking point, and I said, 'I am not going to screw this up. This one has to go all the way.'" Wolf's first act as producer was therefore to bring Dennis Lambert into the project as executive producer, and engineer Jeremy Smith (Phil Collins, David Bowie) in as co-producer. "There is

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A Stack of Wolfian Proportions

At the center of Peter Wolf's music system is a very impressive $125,000 Synclavier with full bandwidth 16-voice polyphonic sampling and a 40-second sampling time, an 80-megabyte Winchester hard disk, resynthesis, music printing, the new 76-key velocity-sensitive keyboard, full MIDI implementation, and a SMPTE time code option which allows it to track code from an audio or video tape recording. He has a large Yamaha system, with a KX 88 keyboard controller, the TX816 rack, a master DX7 for voice programming, and a QX1 sequencer with disk drive. He finds the disk drive especially helpful as it not only stores note information, but patch information from the TX816 as well. He also has several analog keyboards: a Rhodes Chroma, a Roland Jupiter 8, a Prophet 5, and a Mini Moog which he uses primarily for bass. All are MIDI'd.

Wolf uses a number of drum machines: the basic Linn, an Oberheim, a Roland, and a Dr. Click to interface the various incompatible clock pulses. He stresses, though, that "the Synclavier is the best drum machine in the world," but is looking into the Roger Nichols drum computer (Wendel) as a means of freeing up memory for the Synclavier. For outboard gear, he uses the Publison Infernal Machine (a harmonizer), AMS and EMT echo units, and the Yamaha REV 1 and REV 2 Digital Reverb units.

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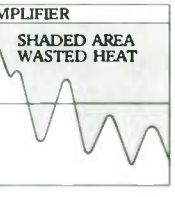

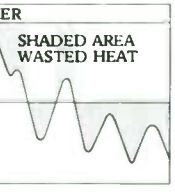

QSC Quality Service Commitment

The Power Station and Palmer's Latest LP Are Both "Heavy Metal Funk." Which Came First?

By Rob Tannenbaum

ROBERT PALMER'S POWER OUTAGE

If there was a Woodward and Bernstein that looked into this Power Station thing..." Robert Palmer says suggestively. "What a story. What a tale!" Although he's answered the door to his Central Park South hotel room this December afternoon wearing only black trousers and suspenders, the thirty-seven-year-old singer isn't quite ready to bare all about "this Power Station thing." Because of potential lawsuits, Palmer shrugs, "I'm not in a position to advertise my feelings." But over a late breakfast of Dunhill cigarettes and tea, he is willing to disclose as much as gentlemanly discretion—and his lawyers—will allow.

"The actual process of doing it was just a gas, but as soon as it became apparent that is was going to make money, it turned sour very quickly. You're doing something in the studio, with no end product in mind, just throw-it-against-the-wall-and-see-if-it-sticks, and the next minute it's a corporate merchandising effort. It's sold three million worldwide." Palmer chuckles and looks around. "So when do I get paid?"

Palmer's wry amusement at his Power Station success is born of a weightier track record. In the almost seventeen years since he joined Vinegar Joe, he's worked with many respected musicians—from Little Feat, the Meters and Motown bassist James Jamerson to new-agers such as Adrian Belew, Gary Numan, Chris Frantz and Rupert Hine. Palmer has also produced reggae pioneer Desmond Dekker, Peter Baumann of Tangerine Dream and songwriter Moon Martin, and collaborated with guitarist John Martyn. But despite steady airplay since he went solo in 1974, he's dented the U.S. top forty only twice, with Andy Fraser's "Every Kinda People" and Moon Martin's "Bad Case Of Loving You," both in the late 70s. The Power Station dealt him three top forty singles within a few months.

When the project began, Palmer was at home in the Bahamas working on his ninth solo album, *Riptide*. Drummer Tony Thompson and Duran Duran members John and Andy Taylor sent him a backing track they'd worked up, "and I was asked to make a song of it." He knew the Taylors socially, but reacted coolly to the project at first, because Duran Duran is "not my cup of tea." He smiles and reaches for his cup of tea. But Palmer discovered that the Power Station's style "was more in the vein of what I was already doing with my solo album." The first instrumental track he was sent was "Communication," which worked out well enough that the band asked Robert to work on several other songs. Soon, Palmer was commuting between New York and Nassau, working on two albums at once.

"Writing the Power Station stuff was a real strange discipline, because I couldn't change the key or tempo. There was no muse or inspiration involved—just craft. It was like fill in the dots. I enjoyed it a lot, but it wasn't very satisfying."

Palmer in fact hired much of the Power Station crew to work on his *Riptide* album—Bernard Edwards and engineer Jason Corsaro produce, Tony Thompson plays drums, Andy Taylor adds one guitar track and three other PS sessioneers also contribute. Palmer has referred to *Riptide* as "heavy metal funk," a term which could also be applied to "Some Like It Hot."

"Yeah, that's been brought to my attention," he says testily. "For the record, it was a matter of trying to maneuver Power Station material into the direction I was moving anyway." In his defense, he points out that he'd already made full demos for *Riptide* before the Taylors contacted him.

But Palmer was interested in the production team of Edwards and Corsaro, especially since he was unsatisfied with his last album, *Pride*. Although the album gave him a number one dance hit with his version of "You Are In My System," it was a stiff, static LP. The title song was about Olivia Newton-John and other modern maladies, but Palmer seemed to have swallowed a dose of dull himself. "When I took the material on the road, it developed more personality and musicality," he notes. Listening to the *Riptide* material, Palmer found some familiar symptoms. "There were mechanical aspects I couldn't get rid of. I'm not a purist, but I'm sick and tired of everybody's records sounding the same because of the machines." Rather than bringing in musicians "to articulate the parts," as he usually has, he decided to find a full band.

"'Communication' was the first time I'd met Bernard Edwards—or heard of

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him, actually. It was immediate. After I finished that vocal, before I went back, I left him a cassette of the stuff I'd been working on and said I was looking for some help. He was up for it, so we started on that right away." It was only then, Palmer explains, that the Power Station asked him to work on other songs. Furthermore, when the Power Station album was one song short of completion, Edwards suggested the band take a crack at "Go To Zero," which Palmer had written for himself. At the mention of the song, the singer's blue-gray eyes turn towards the window. "They fucked it up." So why didn't he record it himself? "I did. But, uh, their lawyers wouldn't let me release it."

As with many of Palmer's other recent albums, *Riptide* is affected by a problem of concentration—he flits from song to song, not sticking with any style long enough to develop its possibilities in more than a cursory way. *Riptide* neither repeats nor improves upon the Power Station because its musical energies aren't focused toward any end except token variety. Just as he covered Kool & the Gang's "You Can Have It" and the System's "You Are In My System" on *Pride* (to say nothing of Toots & the Maytals' "Pressure Drop" or Allen Toussaint's "Sneaking Sally Through The Alley" years ago), there are three very disparate remakes on *Riptide*. One is an electrolysized version of Earl King's New Orleans classic "Trick Bag." Another is a remake of "I Didn't Mean To Turn You On," a summer dance hit for Cherile. "I heard that tune, loved the groove and the melody, but was completely offended by the lyric. Here's this song written by two men [ex-Time members Terry Lewis and Jimmy Jam], for a teenaged girl to sing—'When I took you out/ I knew what you were all about/ But when I did, I didn't mean to turn you on.' I thought, 'This is sick. Wait a minute!? What if I sing it?' It was a role reversal, kind of a revenge song." But isn't the song more realistic sung *at* a man rather than *by* one? "Right," Palmer snorts, "because women aren't interested in men or in sex."

The title song, originally written in 1934, introduces Robert in an unfamiliar lounge-baritone he developed while singing with Kit McClure's sixteen-piece band. "You can sing in a tenor forever, but you end up singing your own licks over and over. There were other areas I wanted to attempt. Everybody said to me, 'You can't put that song ["Riptide"] on the record.' 'Yeah,' I said. 'Track one, side one.' 'Nah, man, that's self-destructive.' But I've found that it tickles people's ears, so I'm glad I stuck with it. If I'm not gonna run those risks, I may as well be in real estate."

Not that Palmer denies being a pop singer. "I mean, where do I get off saying stuff like this? I'm lucky to sell enough records to be able to have the freedom to do what I want. If I didn't at least break even, which is all I do, I wouldn't be in a position to make these kinds of remarks. I don't see that my stuff is eccentric or indulgent or inaccessible, as it's called. Right behind 'Bad Case Of Loving You' [his biggest U.S. hit, in 1979] I thought, 'Here's the opportunity to be less tentative.' And I made *Clues*, which was a massive flop here, was regarded as weird. But it opened up the whole of Europe and had two number ones ['Johnny And Mary' and 'Looking For Clues'] in many Euro-

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This Is Palmer's System

Palmer's home demo factory in Nassau centers around an Akai MG1212 12-track mixer/tape deck (it uses a cassette similar to Beta videotape). His keyboard system is a PPG 2.3 and Waveterm music computer. His guitar and bass are both Steinbergers. His drum machine is an Oberheim DMX. Palmer mixes down on to a Sony PCM 2-track digital tape machine. His outboard gear includes Urei parametric equalizers, Dyna-mite Urei 813s, house mikes are a Neumann M49 and some Sennheisers.

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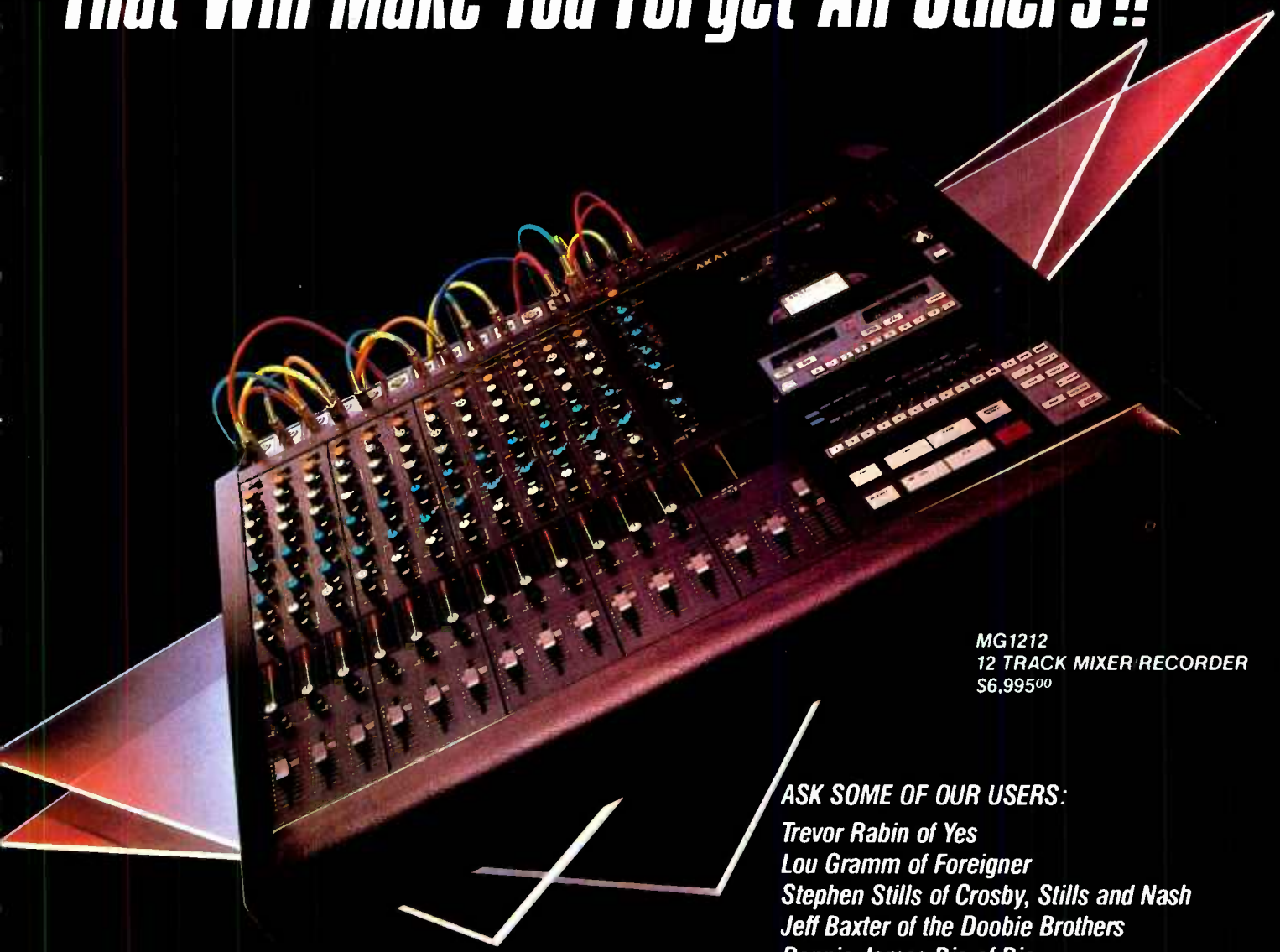

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PRODUCTS

By Jock Baird

NAMM: HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

It was just that kind of show. Record crowds, a host of music celebrities, a steady stream of dealer orders and, best of all, plenty of new-product bonanzas for rank & file musicians. It was the show that digital sampling simply exploded, the show that saw the computer music software industry cash some of the huge check it had written with its mouth, the show that saw two affordable MIDI guitar systems ready for market and several more waiting in the wings.... In short, it was a show that found the musical instrument community feeling good about itself again after the doom, gloom and woefully empty aisles of last summer's New Orleans show.

New pianos like this Korg SG-1 use digital samples for great acoustic sounds.

The lead story—hands down—was digital sampling. In fact, 1986 is already being hailed as "the year of sampling." Last summer there were four companies (not counting the Big Boys, Fairlight and Synclavier) making units that involve sampling; now there are eleven with more on the way. And that doesn't include the rising tide of sampling delays and computer visual editing systems. What's still unclear is whether the increase in available samplers will be matched by an increase in their use by musicians, or whether 1987 will be hailed as "the year of the sampling shake-out," but enjoy it while you can.

The most ambitious samplers were the Sequential Prophet 2000, the Roland S-50 and the Korg DSS-1, and of these three, only the Prophet was really ready to show. So how did it sound? Very warm, very, very nice. The 2000's appeal is that it weds its fine-resolution 12-bit sampling section to heaps of onboard analog synthesis, including a 4-pole low-pass VCF, a VCA, velocity controlled 4-stage envelopes and multiple waveforms for each of its eight voices. Even better are dozens of little perks and features. For example, you can stack two samples together, or use the mod wheel to bring one in or out. Its velocity-sensitive keyboard can control how much slap a bass sample has. It has *sixteen* samples on call, and can use MIDI Mode 4 (Omni-off/Mono) to put up to eight different samples out simultaneously! It's stereo, and can take a direct stereo feed from a CD player with no special processing for crystal clear orchestral sounds. And its operating system makes user-sampling a lot more straightforward, with helpful things like input LEDs, computer-assisted zero-crossing and zero-slope selection, truncating, reverse-samples and auto-looping aids. And there's a memory upgrade that boosts the 2000 to 512K—that's thirty-six seconds of maximum sample time. The full keyboard version of the Pro 2000 is $2600; the rack mount expander 2002 is $2300). All in all, an auspicious debut.

The Korg DSS-1 only had a few basic (organ, piano, strings) samples loaded so it really couldn't make a fair showing, but it too was 12-bit and sounded good. At $2000, the DSS-1 is mostly a sampler—it doesn't have an extensive synth section. Roland's S-50 (also 12-bit) does, with sixteen wave oscillators, a whopping 48 envelope generators, and many other sound-sculpting goodies. With 512K of sampling memory, the S-50 gives 17.2 seconds of memory at 32kHz. It too will stack, crossfade, split and otherwise sling those samples around, and also lets you plug a video monitor directly into the keyboard for visual editing. On paper this machine looks great, but since there was only a private demonstration for dealers I can't tell you how it sounds.

Roland and Sequential's emphasis on further analog editing of digital samples was mirrored over at Akai, who unveiled a $900 analog keyboard dubbed the AX60 which connects via a 13-pin DIN plug to the Akai S612 sampler.Also technically new, though it debuted at last fall's A.E.S. show, is Ensoniq's rack-mount Mirage module, the Multi-Sampler, which boasts a number of improvements in its operating system and a welcome reduction in noise levels. There's also been talk of something in the works from Oberheim. And just to show this isn't a lower-price-range phenomenom, Fairlight brought out a completely new 16-bit system that's well over sixty Gs.

Most surprising was the appearance of wildly inexpensive samplers from Casio and Yamaha, surprising in that they are both home-type keyboards. The Casio SK-1 is a ludicrous $99; it doesn't have MIDI and has those teeny Casio keys, but sounds pretty decent. $99?! Casio also added sampling to its new $600 drum machine, the RZ-1, which has twelve on-board PCM voices and four user-loadable samples of .2 seconds each. Yamaha's sampling entry was the $230 VSS-100, which includes FM presets and a basic drum box, but which also adds an 8-second sample that can be played monophoni-

This Prophet 2002 sampler module had a particularly auspicious debut.

Son of 9000: the new Linn Midistudio now boasts—what else—user sampling.

cally and mixed with the FM patches. Four samples can also be assigned to four places on the keyboard. Both the SK-1 and the VSS-100 indicate the two consumer electronics giants are wary of the overheated pro sampling market even as they've gone forward developing the technology—somewhere down the line, they'll play their cards in earnest.

The maturity of acoustic piano sampling has seen another big spin-off: dedicated sample-based keyboards with permanent ROM programs whose electronics have been fine-tuned for piano. It's safe to say these will supercede every electric piano now on the market in both sound quality and price. Roland, Ensoniq, Technics and Korg all fielded strong units. The $1700 Roland MKS-20, a rack module which uses something called Structured/Adaptive synthesis to make waveforms, was particularly impressive, including Steinway and Bosendorfer programs, lush harpsichord and clavinet, and two breathtaking electric pianos. The $1300 Ensoniq Piano also distinguished itself in heavy traffic—among its twelve patches were marimba and vibes, and a split that put an upright bass on the left hand and acoustic piano on the right. Its weighted action keyboard was simply splendid for the money. And Joe Sample gave a quiet but eloquent endorsement of the Technics entry, playing a wonderful set of solo piano meditations.

Another big area of expansion was digital synthesis, spearheaded by new keyboards from Ensoniq (the ESQ-1), Sequential (the VS), and Roland (the JX-10). The Ensoniq model, at $1295, puts three digital oscillators on each of its eight voices and adds a sophisticated 8-track on-board sequencer that can be expanded up to 10,000 notes! It also has a massive 80-character display, thirty-two waveforms, and a weighted action, velocity sensitive keyboard. In its weight class, the ESQ-1 could prove the buy of the year.

The Sequential VS uses something SCI calls Vector Synthesis, and likewise fattens its sound by putting four oscillators on each of eight voices. It has 128 waveforms (whew!) that can also be modified using the joystick. Like the Prophet 2000, the VS has loads of performance features like stereo panning, chorus, voice oscillator mixing, simultaneous access to 200 programs and velocity-sensitive keys. It's not a cheapie at $2600 but it sounds gorgeous. The Roland JX-10, loosely described as two JX8Ps, is actually a digital/analog hybrid; it's got 24 DCOs for twelve voices, and analog filtering. Among other luxuries, it can be split into two independently MIDIable groups of six, and has a small but serviceable sequencer.

The big question is whether any new digital synthesis system can overcome the DX/CZ head start of Yamaha and Casio. The former released the DX27 and DX100, four-operator FM synths that feature, respectively, a full-size keyboard for $645 and mini-keys for $445; both become velocity-sensitive when MIDI'd to that kind of keyboard. Casio came in with the $400 CZ-230S, which has a hundred non-programmable presets and an on-board PCM drum machine.

But cheap keyboards is only part of the DX/CZ lead. More important is the incredible network of software support: you can now find DX/TX and CZ voicing and librarian programs for every computer—even the brand-new Atari 520ST—and the patches are getting better and better. The low prices of Commodores and Ataris can now pay off unbelievable dividends in personalized sounds. One company, MusicData, has even figured out how to double the 32 patches on a DX cartridge, and is still dropping the price.

This software factor applies even more to sampling. One very visible new company, K-Muse (led by former Sequential/E-mu/Linn hand Kevin Kent) is coming out with a series of sample disks for the Mirage called the Sound Composer Series. These are grouped in "families" of ten disks each, the families being music types like classical, latin, R&B, New York, L.A., London, etc. Disk one is drums, disk two related percussion, disk three bass, and so on. The secret weapon of the Sound Composer Series is Arne Schulze, a mountain of a man who did extensive programming work with Michael Boddicker. Schulze has been able to get a far smoother, warmer tone out of the Mirage than any programmer thus far, and this brings an incalulable advantage to Ensoniq as they seek to fend off the many challenges to its low-end primacy. A big boost to the Prophet 2000 was software support from Digidesign, who adapted its Macintosh Sound Designer program. Or take 360 Systems' MIDI Bass—it's now improved by an extensive (if somewhat expensive) library of bass chips. Or the popular Korg DW8000—compared to the fairly ordinary patches we heard in New Orleans, there are now some fantastic ones available. And let's not forget the user's groups—Kurzweil owners, for example, can now ex-

The Ensoniq ESQ-1, a new digital synth/sequencer that piles on the oscillators.

change sample data through the PAN telecommunications network; every major sampler now has a newsletter. That's why more than any single piece of hardware, the star of this NAMM show was the sounds themselves.

No doubt if you're a guitarist, your mind has been wandering during much of the foregoing discussion. But really, everything we're talking about applies to you too, thanks particularly to two companies who showed ready-to-ship MIDI guitars. I've already waxed eloquent (well, as eloquent as I get) on the Ibanez model two issues ago, but another one popped up, the IVL Pitchrider 7000 we first saw saw last summer under the wing of Cherry Lane. It's now sold by Kramer. This $1000 system is based on a pickup strip that goes on your existing guitar—how it handles semi-hollow bodies is anybody's guess. The Pitchrider 7000 has a number of nice perks, including a pitch transposer, separate string assignments, octave shifts and pitch bending, but its tracking speed remains untested.

The issue of MIDI guitar tracking seems be splitting the tech community. There remains a solid core of the skeptical who still advise waiting, despite the Ibanez and Kramer editions. For the most part, they had to be content with visiting private suites across the street at the Hilton, where Octave-Plateau showed its excellent fret-switching prototype and a mystery entry held court. On the show floor itself, the fast track seemed to belong to a dark-horse called the Photon guitar, from the aforementioned K-Muse. It uses infrared light to read the strings of the guitar (the prototype was a black Strat copy with no electric pickup). The infra-red system gives what standard pitch-to-voltage conversion can't: speed. Its 16-bit frequency conversion system scans the strings 10,000 times a second, and it only needs one cycle of the waveform to read the pitch. The Photon uses a high-speed data transmission system called M-NET that K-Muse developed—it's purported to be sixteen times faster than MIDI, talks on 96 channels and reads SMPTE (the Photon does interface with any MIDI device). The price for guitar (one version uses all high E-strings and converts the pitch electronically), cable and rack mount is an entirely reasonable $2000. and should be available by April.

How did it sound and feel? I can't tell you. As Kevin Kent was setting the Photon guitar up the morning of the show, he noticed a software cartridge that controlled the MIDI assignments was missing from the rack. After a half-hour of rising anxiety spent searching guitar cases and his hotel room, it finally dawned on him that someone had stolen the cartridge the night before, putting the unit out of action for all three days. The act of sabotage/espionage certainly drove home the point that the stakes in this MIDI guitar derby are enormous, but consider this: Kent, with no working prototype, had written nearly a million dollars worth of orders by the end of the second day. One could easily imagine a great suspense film about this guitar, with a climactic chase scene through the NAMM show itself, the villain perhaps halted by the sampled voice of Ron Reagan saying, "Go ahead, make my day!" And some people think trade shows are dull....

Well, now that we've got the guitarists' attention, we should take note of a few overachievers. Charvel recently concluded an agreement with IMC to make guitars in Japan, and the first versions of these show very little fall-off from Grover Jackson's cottage-industry models. Best new guitar/bass is from Jim Mouradian, who designed a bass (the CS-74) that Chris Squire calls "quite simply THE bass of the 80s." It sports an unsual body shape, a rock-maple/synthetic hybrid neck and high-tech electronics. Tokai has used its classy endorsees (Stevie Ray Vaughn, Nile Rodgers) to good advantage, showing several new models. Guild seems very much on the way back with its Blues Bird series. Paul Reed Smith had a big booth this time and introduced a bass with his multi-tone pickup system.

In the amplified scheme of things, Gallien-Krueger has made tremendous U.S. inroads. Its latest offering is a series of monitor amps that are set up for specific instruments—keyboard, bass, guitar, vocals—and can then connect to a mixing board with a quiet XLR connector. Thus for big gigs or recording, you put your own monitor next to you and let the engineer or soundman do the rest. They're small, but *very* loud—an active eq system replenishes any lost bass response from the small cabinet. Prices range from $579 for the 200MB bass model up to $699 for the 200MK keyboard version. G-K is also beefing up its rack-mounted RL amp with enough power to drive two full Marshall Stacks.

Elsewhere on the amp front, Crown, realizing their Micro-Tech series had caught on in a big way, superseded the 1000 with two tiers of power: the D-600 and the 1200. The new Micro-Techs use modular boards for easier repair and have several other handy modifications like the bridge-switching buttons on the front panel. Crown also has a new series of $189 electret mini-mikes, perfect for drum-miking or clipping to a sax bell.

Other amp/reinforcement NAMM nuggets included a new 7-channel $600 powered mixer from Biamp, the Mixpak6+, so called because the seventh channel has high-speed 10-volts-per-millisecond circuitry for keyboards and drum boxes. There's an effects line and high & low eq on each channel, a 9-band eq on overall output, 250 watts of power at 4 ohms, a five-year warranty.... Hmmm.

By far the biggest splash in the outboard gear department was a $700 digital multi-effects processor from Yamaha called the SPX90. It'll handle reverb, early reflections, delay, chorus, stereo flange, pitch change, gate reverb, ADR noise gate, autopan, even a digital parametric eq program. It comes with thirty programs in ROM, while you have sixty memory locations in RAM for your own programs—you can even title them. And yes, it's got MIDI IN and THRU. Over at dbx, there was some even lower budget action, including a new de-esser, the $150 263X, and a new noise gate, the 463X. ADA brought out a studio-quality 2-octave pitch transposer, the $600 Pitchtraq. And Lexicon decided to go head to head with Yamaha's REV 7, dropping its celebrated PCM 60 reverb down $455 to $1040.

Now a random look at some other Anaheim achievers: Akai is just going crazy these days. They've released the tape transport from their 12-track Beta-type cassette mixer/recorder so you can use your old mixer; it's called the MG14, goes for $5300, and has some updates like the ability to do four different punch-ins and -outs without stopping the tape. Then there's a MIDI programmable audio mixer for $2000. It has a VCA under every control so it will recall any setup instantly; it can also change a mix as fast as 40 ms. or take as long as fifteen seconds to fade into another program. You can also cascade them. Take that, SSL! Then there's their $574 multi-effects rack, the MM99. Or the AX73 MIDI mother keyboard, the ME25S MIDI keyboard splitter for splitting unsplittables like the DX7, and the ME30P programmable MIDI patchbay. Busy, busy, busy....

Two littler companies that have made a viable niche for themselves in the past year are Forte Music and Invisible Keyboard Stands. Forte makes and installs a $1500 MIDIfication system for acoustic grand pianos—his use of the piano's mute and sustain pedals for switching is imaginative and saves mounting knobs on a beautiful instrument. Invisible came up with a keyboard support system radically different from the Ultimate tubular one that everyone's been appropriating lately. After only a year, they've turned one stand into a system, adding new Mega Bracket extender bars for Kurzweils and monster speaker cabinets and Lateral Shelf

Wires for drum boxes and mini-keyboards. It seems impossible that that one little 12-pound steel tension structure can support 240 pounds, but yes, Virginia, it does.

And Linn Electronics hasn't been idle. They took a hard look at their hit sequencer/drum box the Linn 9000 and then redesigned it, unveiling it as the Midistudio. It's now in two parts, a remote pad/control module and a mixer/disk drive brain. While the 32-track sequencer section, also marketed separately as the LinnSequencer, is mostly unchanged, the drum section is very different. For one thing, while sampling was an option on the 9000, it's standard in the Midistudio; sampling time at 30kHz is ten seconds, which can be divided among the sixteen voices. The drum sounds can be loaded from disk, unlike the replaceable EPROM chips on the 9000. It's got a SMPTE option. And the remote pad fits on top of the main brain for complete portability. The Midistudio retails for $6000, but the 9000 with disk drive and sampling cost $6630, so I call that a price drop.

It's with a certain grim pleasure that I note one last NAMM milestone—the end of Dean Guitars' "Dean Goes Hollywood" campaign—in fact, Dean was nowhere to be seen. In case you missed it, the program consisted of scantily clad models parading around a floodlit runway striking foolish poses with fur and leopard-skin guitars. Its demise is a microcosm of the changes in the post-MIDI MI market: where once packaging and marketing flash was considered an integral part of the process, no matter how stupid or sexist, now the performance per dollar of the product is the only game in town. It is a new world out here, and a brave one at that. "Dean Goes Hollywood," R.I.P. indeed. Ⓜ

Belew from page 68

it makes than just use a chip."

That's a good idea, considering how temperamental technology can get. One near-disaster occurred at the Bears' first-ever show, when Belew's Roland GR-700 guitar synthesizer went on the fritz. "Adrian's whole shtick is using that tool and suddenly, it was gone," Fetters recalls. The club, it seemed, was heavy on radio frequency interference and, Belew recalls, "the synthesizer was taking that as a signal and it was just sitting there bubbling."

"So Adrian was just sitting there calmly, saying, 'Oh, it doesn't seem to be working,' and I, inside, was having little atomic blasts go off," Fetters laughs, picking up the story. "Finally, someone said, 'Well, what we need is some Saran Wrap and tinfoil and we'll wrap up the electronics in the guitar.' I ran to Walgreen's and back in about two minutes. I cut in front of about ten people in line, I said, 'Oh, this is a drastic emergency.' What did they think I had, a dinner that was going to fail or something? But it worked. Tinfoil and Saran Wrap saved that first show."

As Fetters and Belew tell the story, alternating lines like old vaudevillians, the family feeling is obvious. Despite the quartet's years of collective onstage experience, Belew says it's the offstage friendships that make the Bears a band.

"It all comes down to chemistry," he explains. "The reason I think the Bears work is because we've worked through the bullshit that usually accompanies friendships. That's what is lacking in so many bands. A lot of them are just people thrown together who don't really have a reason for being together."

If he sounds satisfied, he has good reason to be. After years of hard work, Adrian Belew seems to have it all—a happy marriage and three kids; a hot new band; an outlet for his solo projects; high-profile session work. And, with his usual self-effacement, Belew just chalks it all up to luck: "I feel I've been very fortunate. One thing led to another in a very natural way that could never have been contrived. I just seem to meet people I can get along with." Ⓜ

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A VOODOO CHILD'S (SLIGHT) RETURN TO HIS ROOTS

PRINCE

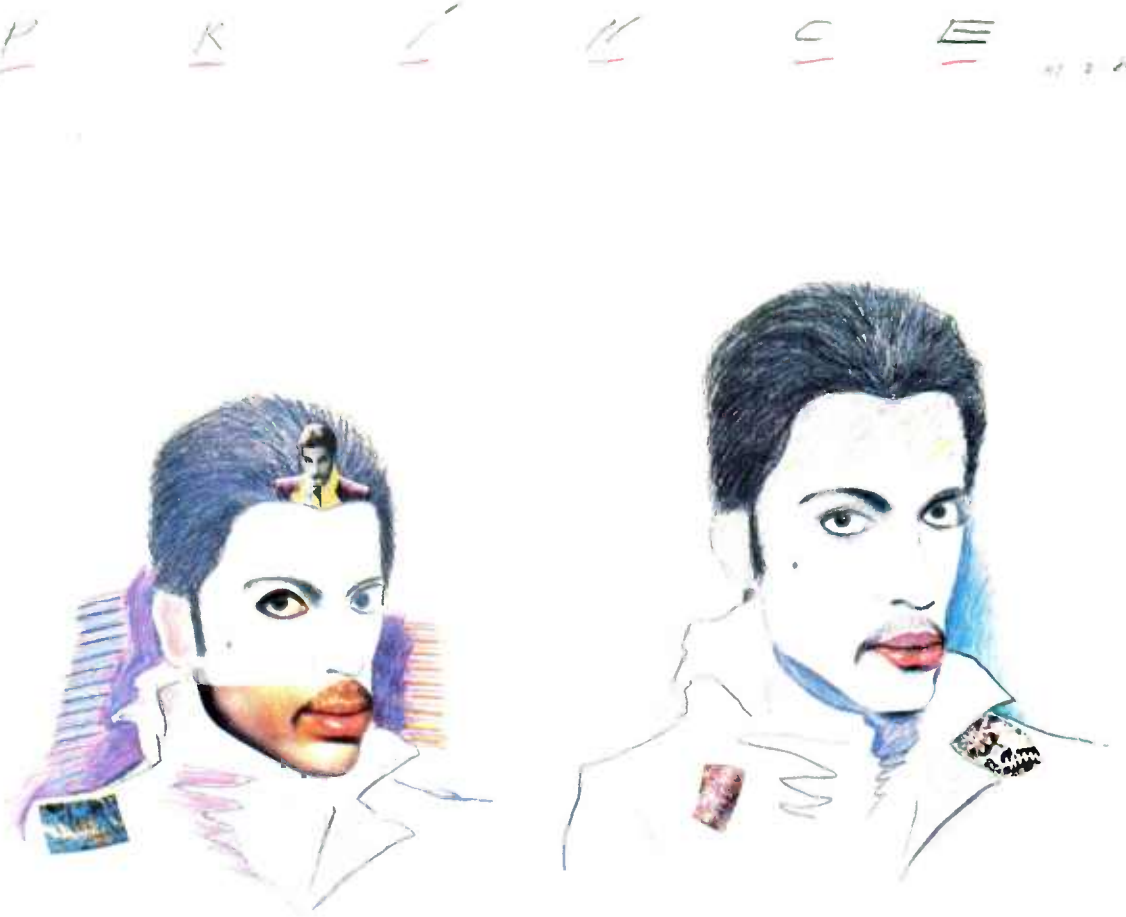
Parade
(Warner Bros.)

Well before Prince became a cultural hero, sex symbol, choreographer, cinematic auteur, spiritualist, Svengali, or even a rock star, he was just another black teen heartthrob. He courted favor with *Right On!* (the black teen Bible), gave puff-piece interviews, and posed for bare-chested photos just like Jermaine Jackson. And while Prince was being marketed as a sepia pin-up boy, his music, though precociously self-produced, still took its cues from late-70s black pop radio. In an era when Stevie Wonder reigned as a crossover king, early hits like "Soft And Wet" were consciously modeled after Wonder's smooth synchronicity of pop and R&B.

In that regard, the best songs on *Parade* don't merely echo recent brilliant B-sides like "17 Days" or "Erotic City," or the James Brownish antics of Prince's *Purple Rain* tour; they also signal this voodoo child's (slight) return to the roots of his career. "Kiss," "Girls And Boys" and "Another Lover," a trilogy of melodic, R&B dance tracks, are *Parade*'s chief pleasures. The reemergence of Prince's long-lost falsetto, and its mating with female backing choruses, horn configurations—including a blustering baritone saxophone—funked-up rhythm guitar (by who else?) and a loose dancin' in the streets ambience elevate these tracks well into the realm of big fun.

The rest of *Parade* recalls the quirkier elements of *Around The World In A Day*, as well as some Wonderously styled balladry—but not, interestingly, the pyrotechnics of *Purple Rain*, Prince's previous movie soundtrack and the music that catapulted his status from intriguing to iconic. Written for Prince's upcoming film *Under The Cherry Moon*, these tracks do exhibit a greater degree of thematic unity than on Prince's last LP, but the styles are certainly diverse. "Venus De Milo" is a nearly schlocky but ultimately beautiful piano instrumental, while the ballad "Sometimes It Snows In April" explores Prince's fascination with religious symbolism, highlighted by a weirdly engaging melody. Sonic collages "Christopher Tracey's Parade" and "Under A Cherry Moon" feature narrative lyrics reminiscent of Lennon & McCartney's acid period. Prince apparently finds this pseudo-psychedelia compelling, but compared to his more soulful material such tunes sound flat and uninvolving. So, for that matter, does an overly frantic "New Positions," his obligatory but surprisingly tame sex ditty, and "Mountains," which does at least feature a clever groove (check out the intricate drum machine program).

Like *Around The World In A Day*, *Parade* will probably frustrate those legions of rockers who reveled in Purple Rain's guitarmania. There's nothing on the order of "Let's Go Crazy" or "Purple Rain"—there is, in fact, no lead guitar here at all. That's at least a testament to a pop artist who continues to show no reluctance to sacrifice commercially compelling formulas on the altar of creativity. For connoisseurs of melody



MICHAEL THORESEN

and groove, however, Prince's latest rung up the ladder bears no cause for complaint. Some of us may even say "Welcome home."– **Nelson George**

JOE ZAWINUL

Dialects
(Columbia)

Weather Report took a sabbatical last year in part so that the band's leaders, Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter, could work on solo projects. Now that both results are in, it's easy to see why. While Shorter's recent LP recapitulated many of Weather Report's signature traits, notably a bent for introspective, knotty composition, Zawinul's *Dialects* soars in a completely different direction. As airy and evocative as the African music from which it draws considerable inspiration, it's an album that bristles with energy, invention, intelligence, playfulness and even warmth. We've always assumed Zawinul is brilliant, but who ever imagined he could be this much fun?

Dialects is very much an individual statement; Zawinul composed all the tunes, and fashions their dazzling array of sonic tapestries by layering various keyboards over programmed drum tracks, occasionally augmenting them with vocal choir that includes jazz contortionist Bobby McFerrin. Zawinul accents "Harvest"'s rhythms the way Tito Puente might craft a timbale solo, punctuating the furious groove with odd, startling accents. On "Waiting For The Rain" he alludes to the Ethiopian tragedy by creating an unsettling, eerie mood around an ominous bass figure and bent-pitched colorations. With its frantic tempos and skittering, boppish solos, "Zeebop" is more typical Weather Report fare, but here it's out of place, less for the tune's pace than its overall lack of feeling.

Zawinul really hits stride on side two. On "Carnivalito" he pastes greasy Brother Jack McDuff organ fills on a quasi-African dance track that would have fit nicely in Jacques Tati's *Playtime*. For "Walking On The Nile" he expertly modulates keyboard riffs against a shifting series of ostinato bass lines to dig the hottest disco groove of 1993. (One of the coolest things about this synth-drenched record is that it's *not* state-of-the-art; in Zawinul's hands ARPs are still funky and Prophets have honor.) The closing "Peace" turns out to be a stately anthem in which the composer of "Mercy Mercy Mercy" shows he hasn't lost his gift for classic melody.

If Wayne Shorter is Weather Report's resident Brainiac, *Dialects* fixes Zawinul as the group's guiding spirit. Word is the band's upcoming incarnation will include guitarist John Scofield, so their next album ought to be a burner. But if even a handful of records show up in the following months to touch this gem, 1986 will be a rich year indeed.

–**Mark Rowland**

THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN

Psychocandy
(Reprise)

In the tradition of other Next Big Things From England, the Jesus and Mary Chain's initial impact is based on a gimmick. The trick is an over-amplified, echo-soaked style of (self-)production that creates the illusion you're hearing the quartet from the other end of a tunnel. A dumb idea? Surprisingly, no. Though *Psychocandy* assaults the ears with jarring noises, it's a highly entertaining record, not just a freak show.

Leaders Jim and William Reid adhere to a "more is more" philosophy, regardless of the situation. There's nothing odd about encountering ear-rending feedback in punky garage rockers like "Taste The Floor" and "The Living End," but when the same piercing tones course through gentler tunes, it generates a weird sort of tension. "You Trip Me Up" mates the cries of a wounded garbage disposal with an easy-listening melody. "Never Understand" sports both a happy-go-lucky tempo reminiscent of the early Beach Boys and a shrieking guitar from hell. *Psychocandy* is intense!

It's also a showcase for one of the most pathetic personas in rock 'n' roll history. In a passive, resigned voice,

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Jim Reid recounts one ghastly tale of degradation after another. The lilting "Just Like Honey" admits, "Eating up this scum/ Is the hardest thing/ For me to do," which is even surpassed in wretchedness by "In A Hole": "God spits on my soul/ There's something dead inside my hole." Most of the humiliation is along the relatively mundane lines of "Cut Dead," where Reid complains, "You cut me dead/ You nail me down and kick my head."

Unmitigated woe ought to equal pure tedium, but *Psychocandy*'s stylized excess is more comic than dramatic. Whatever their lofty intentions, the Jesus and Mary Chain have created great escapist fare. Can they still be the Next Big Thing?– **Jon Young**

THE COSTELLO SHOW (FEATURING ELVIS COSTELLO)

King Of America
(Columbia)

Elvis Costello's gift—unless it's a curse—is that he makes it seem so easy. He practically gulps for breath between those long, entrancing juxtapositions of images married to equally sinuous hill-and-dale melodies. At his worst, Costello settles for facile craftsmanship. Now the good news: *King Of America* marks a return to top form after a couple of mediocre (for him) albums.

The Costello muse is still working overtime: *King Of America* brims with material (fifteen songs, almost an hour long), and the material o'ertops itself with o'ertopping. Not surprisingly, the weakest things here are the two non-originals: a hoarse rendering of the Animals' "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," and J.B. Lenoir's "Eisenhower Blues" (pronounced "blooz").

But it's Costello the songwriter who intrigues. He's still the master of drawn-out, playfully double-entendre metaphor; on "Indoor Fireworks," however, Costello's feeling vocal also conveys a touching sentiment behind the verbal pyrotechnics. Musically, *King Of America* further plumbs Costello's love-hate relationship with this country. Two songs contain identical "Mystery Train"/ Elvis-in-Vegas intros; on one, "Glitter Gulch," Costello holds them nasal vowels jes' like a Muswell hillbilly. "Our Little Angel" has a country beat and slide guitar; the three-quarter-time "American Without Tears" has a Cajun lilt and accordion to match. "Little Palaces" weds a 60s folk-protest arrangement to the subject of British suburban wastelands. And Costello still carries the torch for jazzy ballads like "Poisoned Rose," a dejected lover's tale with the record's most impassioned singing.

Romance, typically rancid, motivates the majority of songs. In varying degrees of baroque opacity, Costello limns entanglements not just of love, but mere living. An apocalyptic "Suit Of Lights" reveals classic Costello bile. The languid, quiet "Sleep Of The Just" ends the album with an ambivalently poignant theme.

Perhaps the kick of working with different musicians inspired Costello to new interpretive heights. The familiar Attractions appear on only one cut. Elsewhere the back-up is sensitive but resolutely back-up (unlike the Attractions). There's no question who's in charge, and Costello has every right to place his voice front and center. He plays with his words compulsively, like children play with their food, while the preponderance of medium tempos underscores *King Of America*'s deliberate effort at meaningfulness. These art-songs re-establish Elvis as a premier jongleur charting the heart of darkness. – **Scott Isler**

BILL FRISELL & VERNON REID

Smash & Scatteration
(Minor Music)

This is the kind of inspired pairing that's likely to produce either dazzling fireworks or a godawful mess. But Frisell and Reid have such dramatically different approaches to guitar that *Smash & Scatteration* would probably have been worth checking out even if it hadn't turned out to be a fireworks display.

Reid is a frantic, rock-edged player who paints in bold brushstrokes, while Frisell specializes in soft, shimmering watercolors. What they turn out to have in common is not simply their instrument (there are about as many banjos, drum machines and guitar synthesizers on *Smash & Scatteration* as plain old guitars), but a shared sense of adventure, willingness to take chances, and truly impressive adaptability to each other's approach. Frisell's solo feature, for instance ("Fr, Fr, Frisell") has a jagged, anxious quality reminiscent of Reid's harmolodic funk, while Reid's moment in the spotlight, "Burden Of Dreams," exudes more than a little of Frisell's vaguely spacey introspection.

Working together, Reid and Frisell run the gamut from "Landscapes In Alternative History" and "Dark Skin"—ass-kicking updates of *good* jazz-rock fusion—to "Last Nights Of Paris," an acoustic homage to Django Reinhardt that is loving and funny if not exactly reverent. The rest of the album ranges from sweet and lyrical ("Amarillo, Barbados," "Small Hands") to the insistent and vaguely annoying ("Size 10½ Sneaks," "Black Light"). It's not always a pretty listen, especially when the electronics are turned up full blast. But it's always pretty amazing.– **Peter Keepnews**

ROY ACUFF

Roy Acuff
(Columbia Historic Edition)

By the time he snagged a place for himself on the Grand Ole Opry in the late 30s, Roy Acuff was ready to turn white Baptist hymns, mountain folk tunes, and bluesy train songs into a great stubborn country vocal style. As an Opry star with a national following, Acuff remained the staunchest of traditionalists in a most tradition-minded field, and he always approached his material with religious gravity. As a result, he's seldom won the favor of a Hank Williams or a Lefty Frizzell with rock 'n' roll audiences, but then Acuff wasn't a singer/songwriter or a honky-tonker. He was an often astound-

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ing singer, happy to entertain and make money, an increasingly solemn C&W name with an equally solemn manner.

Still, his records have sometimes sounded plain wild, as unleashed as Acuff's conviction on "Great Speckled Bird." So it's no insult to say that *Roy Acuff*—a fine-sounding mono collection of 30s and 40s sides, plus a dour gem and a Dixie-chauvinist loser both recorded and unreleased in 1951—reins Acuff in as it showcases him. It sequences the religious ("Drifting Too Far From The Shore," "When I Lay My Burden Down") alongside the romantic ("You're The Only Star [In My Blue Heaven]," "Wonder Is All I Do"). How Acuff refocused his basically plain wail from church hymns to woman hymns is easy enough to hear. On "Lonesome Old River Blues" he invents new syllables for words like "care" and "roam." On "Steel Guitar Blues," remembering the day his girl died, he wishes he were dead. But his phrasing is unquestionably alive.

Acuff was also a serviceable fiddler—on "Ida Red" he hoedowns—and knowing bandleader. These straightforward acoustic string arrangements, rich with trademark dobro and the occasional harmonica or accordion, are as frisky as they're firm. Even the three tunes Acuff doesn't sing here are wonderful, and on one of them, a 1936 version of his famed "Wabash Cannon Ball," he hollers train noises behind Harmonica Sam "Dynamite" Hatcher's jaunty vocal.

For young fans of country music and its past, Acuff's early achievements have been obscured. This outstanding record helps bring them into view.

– James Hunter

VIOLENT FEMMES

The Blind Leading The Naked
(Slash/Warner Bros.)

From its darkly ironic title to "Two People," the wistful snippet that slams the LP shut, the Violent Femmes' third album suggests a remarkable leap from the unfocused misanthropy and amateurishness that defined much of their earlier work. Abandoning the cult mentality that insured a fervent but undemanding cult audience, the Femmes, with assists from producer Jerry Harrison and a plethora of guest musicians, have constructed sturdy, expansive musical settings which allow singer/chief songwriter Gordon Gano to channel righteous anger into full, exciting rock 'n' roll.

In the past, the Femmes too often sounded like a Velvet Underground tribute band, and while that influence is still apparent—Gano's voice suggests Lou Reed and "Good Friend" seems a cross between the VU's *Loaded* and '77-era Talking Heads—it's become more informative than intrusive. Like the Replacements, the Femmes have turned the neat trick of making their music more accessible without sacrificing "underground" credibility. Perhaps the Femmes' explicit embracing of Christianity partially accounts for the sense of hope and belonging which imbues even their darkest visions. But their recent embracing of song structure is what makes it effective: The blues-based "Faith," the Stones-derived "Love And Me Make Three" and the ominous love song "No Killing" all harken to classic rock forms without seeming derivative. "Old Mother Reagan," with politics as scathing as its music,

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should please the Femmes' faithful.

As a trio, this band still has a ways to grow; many of the more striking segments of *The Blind Leading The Naked* are supplied by guest artists like Harrison and sax player Steve MacKay. But if the Femmes are not a major band, that realm now appears within their reach.

– **Jimmy Guterman**

THRASH RECORDS

THE EXPLOITED
FEAR DEAD MILKMEN
DEAD KENNEDYS

Hardcore bands aren't what they used to be—and thank God for that. Though a nice idea for the first six months or so, hardcore ultimately instilled a deadly sameness. Consider the Exploited: Although their *Live At The White House* (Combat Core) claims to include sixteen songs, the effect is of a dozen or so sets of lyrics shouted over the same ferociously inept rave-up. Hardly the best argument for "hard-fast rules," is it?

The best hardcore bands now seem as bored as the listeners by the music's catechistic rigidity. Fear have discovered the blues, which on *More Beer* (Enigma) lends Lee Ving's vocals surprising power. The lyrics are as swinish as ever, but somehow that adds an extra edge to the band's cleverly retooled metalisms. Speaking of metal, do you think Malcolm Baldridge has heard the Circle Jerks' "American Heavy Metal Weekend," which argues that the balance of trade can be rectified by swapping Motley Crue for Toyota? Given the band's leftist politics and dry wit, it's doubtful Baldridge would appreciate much else on the upbeat and inventive *Wonderful* (Combat Core), but stranger things have happened.

Humor has gotten better in the hardcore idiom, a promising development. A couple of years ago the average fan's idea of a joke was to call his band Jerry's Kids. Nowadays, we're blessed with the Dead Milkmen, whose *Big Lizard In My Back Yard* (Enigma) pushes the Ramones' geek world-view one giant step towards surrealism. How else to explain "Plum Dumb," in which one-too-many plums uncork the libido of a comely young hitchhiker?

Such goofiness is relatively rare in the genre. More often the humor is laced with outrage. The Milkmen satirize car culture with the sarcastic "Bitchin' Camaro," while the Dead Kennedys attack the same subject from a slightly different angle in "Goons Of Hazzard." But "Goons," as with the rest of *Frankenchrist* (Alternative Tentacles), exhibits unusual musical sophistication, matching souped-up surf riffs to typical thrash dissonances. The LP is packed with musical detail, offering tricky time-changes and complex arrangements while still managing to pack a punch. No wonder the PMRC is afraid of them!

(Combat Core, IRD Mail Order, 149-03 Guy R. Brewer Blvd., Jamaica, NY 11434; Enigma, Box 2428, El Segundo, CA 90245; Alternative Tentacles, Box 11458, San Francisco, CA 94101)

– **J.D. Considine**

Wolf from page 72

nothing wrong with getting people involved," Wolf insists. "If you win, everybody wins. I like to bounce off an engineer that I can trust. I don't like to constantly look over an engineer's shoulder. I like a lot of high end...not that I want to lose the bottom, but I love that crispness, that brightness. Dennis Lambert, who is an incredible song man, basically just watched me."

Wolf views record production as a three-step operation: "First of all, you put together the right material for the act. The material has to be totally right for the vocalist. It has to be him, it has to stretch him, and sound new, interesting and fresh. And then you go in, and you execute that material, which means great arrangements, great playing, great sounds, great vocal performances. And then, when you mix the whole thing...when you hear that tune, it has to press those buttons in you, so you go *yeah*!"

The departure of Paul Kantner from the Starship was a cause for concern; Kantner had been a primary lyricist, and Wolf was worried that the resultant reaction by Starship fans would be to consider the band "lyrical lightweights." "You'd be surprised. With all the cats out there writing tunes, you would think that there would be a lot of good material, but it just isn't so. Out of maybe a hundred tapes, I might find one good tune. My test is always in my car. If the tune is cool, I hear that, no matter how it's played. As an arranger, I immediately hear arrangements. I hear the string parts, the horn parts. You don't actually have to perform them for me."

A tape submitted for the project by composer Martin Page and lyricist Bernie Taupin contained such a song. Wolf felt that "We Built This City" was a perfect theme for the Starship; a legitimate anthem for a band that was instrumental in building the San Francisco rock scene. "But the tune didn't have a chorus. It never grabbed me. I loved the lyric and I loved the verse and the 'B' section was cool, and then it stopped. The 'B' section was their chorus. I called Dennis and said, 'What would you think

continued on page 97

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SHORT Rock TAKES

Public Image Ltd.
Album (Elektra)

Given the calibre of John Lydon's hired guns—Steve Vai, Riuichi Sakamoto, Tony Williams and Ginger Baker among others—it's no surprise that *Album* is PiL's slickest release yet. Oddly enough, it works; not only does the famous-name drumming provide a magnificent mega-wallop, but Vai's fleet-fingered exoticisms offer an ideal compromise between PiL's latent orientalisms and the Pistols' post-metal crunch. As for Lydon himself, he delivers lines like "Anger is an energy" with the fervor of a true believer.

Janet Jackson
Control (A&M)

Janet's declaration of independence goes well beyond the title track's talk of control, for this youngest Jackson is less interested in getting her own than getting *down*. 'Course, it doesn't hurt to have Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis grinding out the grooves—the drum track alone is enough to give "Nasty" an R rating—but it's Jackson's unabashed femininity that's ultimately winning.

Frankie Miller
Dancing In The Rain (Mercury)

Cue up "I'd Lie To You For Your Love," and you'll hear Frankie Miller do Otis Redding with an ease Rod Stewart can only envy; play the title track, and you'll hear how handily Miller makes that sound his own. But if great singing were everything, Miller would have made it big years ago. The real magic here, as the cover of "Shakey Ground" bears out, is drummer Simon Kirke. Rhythmic melody is nice, but melodic rhythm is sheer heaven.

The Alan Parsons Project
Stereotomy (Arista)

Unnecessary surgery.

Feargal Sharkey
Feargal Sharkey (A&M)

In a way, Feargal Sharkey is a perfect parody of Irish tenors. With his keening upper register and impossibly fast vibrato, his singing is almost all mannerism—but so what? It's hard to imagine Maria McKee infusing her "Good Heart" with the same heady mix of vulnerability and passion, and even Chrissie Hynde's famous deadpan can't top Sharkey's sonic shrug on "Made To Measure." But as every Undertones fan knows, Sharkey's quirks are what counts. Producer Dave Stewart saves Feargal's incredibly droll "It's All Over Now" for last, illustrating empathy beyond the call of duty.

The Pogues
Rum, Sodomy & The Lash (MCA)

Funny how Britain's newest sensation turns out to be little more than Makem and Clancy after hours. No complaints there, of course, for the Pogues put the Irish tradition in terms hard-rocking enough to make Fairport Convention seem museum-bound. And isn't that the way traditions are rejuvenated?

Hoodoo Gurus
Mars Needs Guitars! (Big Time)

There's enough garage grunge here to keep the Hoodoos healthily out of the mainstream, but there's also enough melodic allure to promise more than a cult following. After the deadpan wit of "Hayride To Hell," the Beatlesque turns of "Death Defying," the big-beat clowning of the title cut and the irresistible chorus to "Bittersweet," it's hard *not* to fall for this record. (6410 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90038)

Buckwheat Zydeco
Waitin' For My Ya-Ya (Rounder)

Considering his covers of hits by Fats Domino, Lee Dorsey, Slim Harpo and the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, if this is zydeco's great "young" hope, maybe now's the time to stock up on Clifton Chenier records. (Box 154, N. Cambridge, MA 02140)

The Everly Brothers
Born Yesterday (Mercury)

Despite their impact on rock, the Everly's roots are in country, which explains why Dave Edmunds' production works so well. There aren't many winners—"Always Drive A Cadillac" is ridiculously overblown and"Born Yesterday" verges on treacle—but when decked out in those sibling harmonies, even the weakest songs seem strengthened.

Original Soundtrack
Pretty In Pink (A&M)

Though it relegates new music to the status of a fashion accessory, the combination of hit-movie maker John Hughes and nubile nymph Molly Ringwald is guaranteed to bring these bands their biggest audience ever. Which, no doubt, is why A&M saw fit to shoehorn such non-new wavers as Jesse Johnson and Suzanne Vega into the package. But given the lackluster quality of those tracks, it's hard to imagine anyone being won over. As for the Psy-Furs' remake of the title song, well...let's just hope they got a lot of money for it.

Clannad
Macalla (RCA)

Speaking of quirky Irish singers, say hello to Maire Ni Bhraonain. With a voice rich and resonant enough to make Sandy Denny seem almost a pretender to traditionalism, Ni Bhraonain doesn't simply interpret a song, she inhabits it. Granted, the Gaelic is a bit off-putting, but there's enough English here—especially on "The Wild Cry" and "In A Lifetime," an exquisite duet with U2's Bono— to snare even the most skittish. Be the first on your block.

Various Artists
Unsigned (Epic)

What a break...for Epic, anyway. Not only didn't the label have to cough up contracts for this sampler of underground America, but thanks to CMJ's *New Music Report*, they didn't even have to dig for cuts! Assuming there's something close to justice in the record biz, the offerings from Sussman Lawrence, the Pressure Boys, Blue Sparks From Hell and the Radiators ought to corral contracts anyway.

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

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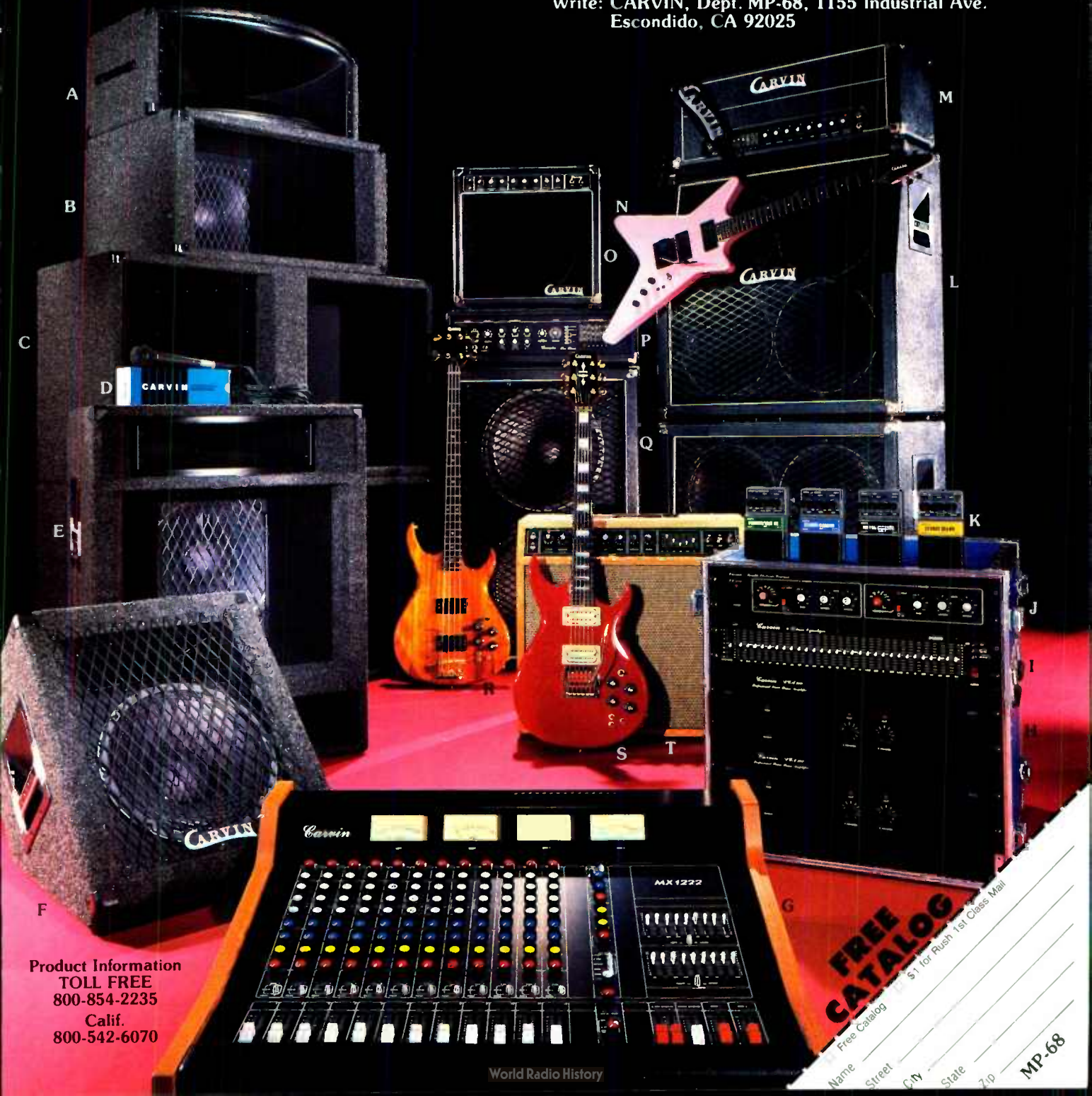

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SHORT JAZZ TAKES

Don Joseph
One Of A Kind (Uptown)

Joseph, you might not remember, was a cornetist who hung around the Village jazz scene in the early '50s, jammed with Charlie Parker and then returned from whence he came, which was Staten Island. If Chet Baker had taken his lithium all these years, he'd sound like Joseph: warm toned, melodic, fragile—but happy. The record's cleverly arranged; Joseph swaps choruses with Al Cohn, duets with drummer Joey Baron. Strip the word charming of its pejorative connotations, apply it here.

Jimmy Rowles/Red Mitchell
The Jimmy Rowles/Red Mitchell Trio (Fantasy)

Masters of quietly intense, slow-burn playing, pianist Rowles and bassist Mitchell also have big ears; when one lays out a typically terse and clipped phrase, the other talks back. Musical interplay is rarely so subdued yet sophisticated. Half the cuts feature muted trumpet solos by Rowles' daughter, Stacy, and on another Jimmy sings—an acquired taste.

Third Kind Of Blue
Third Kind Of Blue (Minor Music/PSI)

This trio of John Purcell, Anthony Cox and Ronnie Burrage is all about black tie elegance. Cool saxophonist Purcell swings over a variety of backgrounds: vamps, straight four, pop rhythms. Synthesizers and electric drums are so well entwined it doesn't even give me the hives.

Sidney Bechet
The Complete Blue Note Recordings of Sidney Bechet (Mosaic)

Sidney Bechet was one of the first great jazz soloists. His playing has twice as much blue as the sky on a nice day. His ear for pitch, for placing the perfectly bent and angled note, can't be beat. He's also the guy to blame for all the Coltrane replicants wasting away playing soprano saxophone (he also influenced Steve Lacy and Johnny Hodges). This six-record set covers a big chunk of what Bechet recorded between '39 and '53; some is brilliant, the rest merely very good. There's a masterpiece—"Blue Horizon"—Bechet's famous "Summertime," two weird duets with Josh White, a session with Bunk Johnson, and part of the fabulous Port of Harlem session, which overlaps a previous Mosaic release. My advice: Buy them all. (Mosaic, 197 Strawberry Hill Ave., Stamford, CT 06902)

Ray Anderson/Kark Helias/ Gerry Hemingway
You Be (Minor Music/PSI)

If this trio's well-constructed, stop-start arrangements didn't exist, this would be a solid, swinging blowing date. Since they do, it's more than that—well-sculptured and detailed music with a wide range of emotions and some healthy tension. Trombonist Anderson makes nicely obnoxious and rude noises throughout.

Serge Chaloff
Blue Serge (Affinity)

A relaxed blowing date circa 1956, featuring cult fave Conrad Yeatis "Sonny" Clark on the 88s. Chaloff's slick and wiry Four Brother's baritone bounces it right along towards the classic category.

Peter Zummo
Zummo With An X (Loris Bend/NMDS)

Half the record is witty, drunk minimalism: Two notes of varying intervals repeated over sloppily changing rhythms slowly go out of sync, as if the players were at the dry end of a Thunderbird bottle. On the other side, Zummo, dried out and playing trombone, supported by tabla and cello, suggests the light, dancing quality of Indian music (which makes sense, since it was commissioned by a dance troupe).

Various Artists
Sun Records: The Blues Years 1950-1956 (Charly)

These nine records are some kind of manna, I'll tell you. Though not complete by a long shot—and some are available on other Charly compilations—forty-seven tracks of the the set are previously unissued and most of it is obscure. The first couple of records are not precisely "Sun" records—they were produced by Sam Phillips for sale to other companies—most boast Phillips' characteristic production—loud, nasty, raw, loose and funky (after all, the average session cost $20.25). Though Phillips was ultimately looking for something white called Elvis, he spent nearly ten years recording all the music black Memphis had to offer. This set covers everything from Sleepy John Estes' rural declarations to Rosco Gordon's friendly mixture of slicko cityfied sophistication and backwoods skronk. Highlights include the first Sun record (a wild alto, tenor, piano and drums workout called "Drivin' Slow"), the infamous "Rocket 88," and Rufus Thomas' near insane "Bear Cat," the answer song to Big Mama Thornton's "Hounddog." Talk about authentic: a few years after the great fuzz tone guitarist Pat Hare recorded "Gonna Murder My Baby," he really killed her. (And served time, too.) An essential set that combines classics, one shots, and weird, completely appealing go-nowhere cuts to create a tapestry of what musical life was once like in one part of the South.

Benjamin Lew/Steven Brown
A Propos D'Un Paysage (Crammed Discs/NMDS)

A gauzy mixture of electronic and acoustic instruments, with a hint of Arabic influence. Seductive and ethereal it often sounds like a soundtrack to an out of focus film on Tangiers.

Red Prysock
Cryin' My Heart Out (Saxophonograph Import/Tower)

In the mid-50s, when these tracks were recorded, tenor saxophonist Prysock sat right on the nexus of R&R, R&B, jump, and jazz, and he could honk with the best of them. But what's surprising, at least for someone who in 1955 released an LP called *Rock And Roll*, is his urbanity. Prysock's phrasing recalls Lester Young, and he rarely reduces himself to clichés.

BY PETER WATROUS

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Wolf from page 90
about taking that tune and writing a chorus for it?'" It took little more than ten minutes for the two of them to build a chorus by simply adding a few chords an reprising the title around a few phrases of new melody.

Did he anticipate a number one hit? "Fuck no. The record is a very good one, but you can never say, 'This is a number one,' I don't believe that. You can only do your best, do it all the way, work on it. Every producer thinks that he has a little bit of a clue of what to do, but you can never say, 'There is no doubt on this, that is a number one.' You have to always stay humble. You're only as good as your *next* record. I hate guys who think because they've done it once, they hold the world in their hands. *Bullshit!*" Still, he is optimistic about the follow-up single, "Sara," penned by Wolf and his wife Ina.

There are now two projects which Wolf is working on concurrently, both as co-producer with Bill Schnee. One is Boz Scaggs' first effort in four years, for which Wolf has co-written several songs. The other is Sergio Mendes' latest, for which he and Ina have once again contributed a beautiful ballad. There's a also a stint with El Debarge in the cards. Other possibilities include producing several tracks for Miles Davis' first record for Warner's, and British teen dream Nik Kershaw.

What Wolf describes as "my biggest baby," however, is the project with his wife they call Wolf and Wolf. They have already released several records, one in Europe in the early 80s, and one on Motown's Morocco label in 1984. Both died quick deaths. It is now important to Wolf that he find a company that is willing to commit to a three-album deal, giving them time to develop as artists.

"When I produce somebody, I am a hired gun. I do my job right, do it like I'm supposed to do it, working with the artist, trying to bring out his best. But on my own, I have the luxury of doing the music that I really want. Ina and me, we feel exactly the same way, that this is what this whole thing is about. A good artist will make a record company money over years and years. Fashion can get you money fast, but they're gone tomorrow. I don't want to work just in the fashionable department." Ⓜ

Palmer from page 76
pean countries. Now, that album sounds kind of pop mainstream."

Palmer admits his inconsistency. "There's very little continuity between my stuff," he agrees. His impatience with styles reflects his background, growing up on the Mediterranean island of Malta. The country has been invaded so many times that it's a cultural melting pot. Young Robert picked up stations from Italy, north Africa and the Middle East, as well as pop music on the American Forces Network. At eleven, Palmer's family moved to England. "I couldn't understand why my parents had brought me to this horrific place. I was brought up on a beach, in the sun, with people from all around the world, and all of a sudden I'm stuck in this archaic, gloomy place." He also lived in

New York before locating in Nassau in 1976, but his accent is still British.

Now it's time to move again. When Palmer relocated to the Bahamas, "it was just the bush." But in the past few years, Compass Point Studios has become a popular place to record. "It's gotten a bit too rock 'n' roll down there. So I'm moving to the mountains of Switzerland. I've got an atomic bomb shelter in the basement, which I'm going to turn into my studio because it's got air conditioning and it's completely soundproof."

Whereas he used to use musicians who were older than he, self-taught guitarist and keyboardist Palmer seems to favor younger players. "Well a lot of the older ones are dead, aren't they?" he explains. "James Jamerson, Lowell George. Either that or they're not into it any more. They're more into show business or drugs." Even with the young talent, there are only a few he works with regularly—Frank Blair or Guy Pratt on bass, keyboardist Jack Waldman, drummer Donny Wynn—and they're hardly name players. "They're versatile, so that works out. Sometimes I'll pick up a player and suddenly decide I want to introduce a new kind of thing into the set, and it runs right across their grain. I remember starting to play tunes with just straight eighths in them, and I was working with [guitarist] Leo Nocentelli of the Meters. Everything has to swing for him. He said, 'You mean you want me to go [*he clicks eighth notes*] all the way through the tune?' It wasn't his thing."

Although still hiring a band for a spring tour, Palmer has enlisted guitarist Eddie Martinez (Run-D.M.C./Mick Jagger) and Nigerian drummer Gaspar Lawal (who played on "Sneaking Sally.") And he's only two songs short of having written a whole new album, which will most certainly be self-produced. "That's another dodgy issue," he says smiling. "Not to make too fine a point of it, but [on *Riptide*] I was let down in the end, they didn't follow through and mix it, so I had to take the whole thing over—finish it, cut the missing parts, edit it. I did it with Eric Thorngren, who I consider to be the best mixing engineer around."

"I don't think I'll ever live the Power Station thing down. It's bizarre. The last time I had some interest here in what I was doing was 'You Are In My System,'" Palmer recalls. "There would be an audience that came because of that song, and I'd see them nudging each other at 'Every Kind Of People' or 'Sneaking Sally' or 'Pressure Drop,' and going, 'Oh, it's him that does that.' People know the stuff, but they don't know who did it."

For his next album, Palmer promises "the photographic negative" of *Riptide*. Changing again, Robert? "Well I haven't got it right yet," he replies, laughing. Ⓜ

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