

P. 72

THE BOSS ON THE RECORD

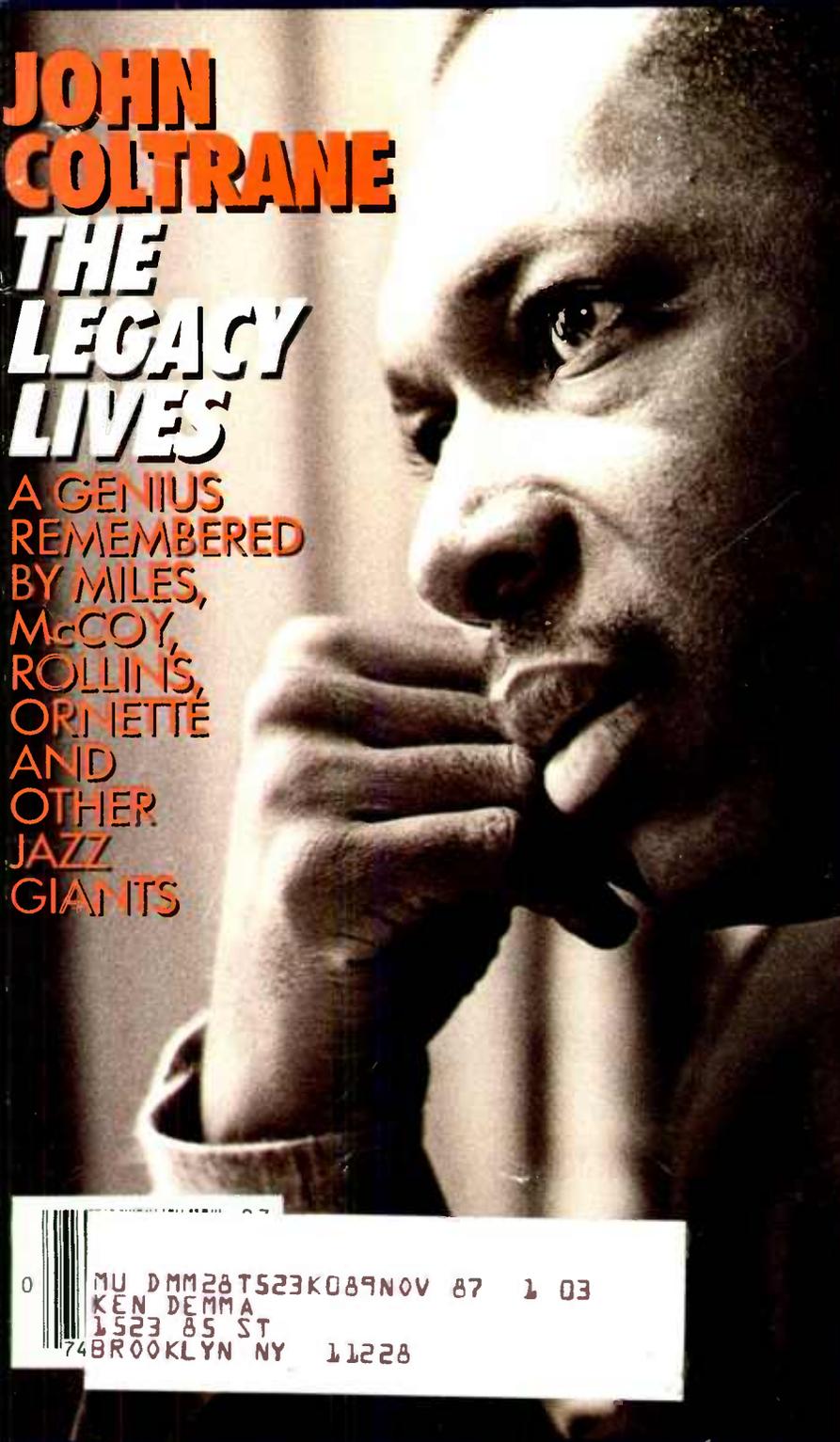
MUSICIAN

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JOHN COLTRANE

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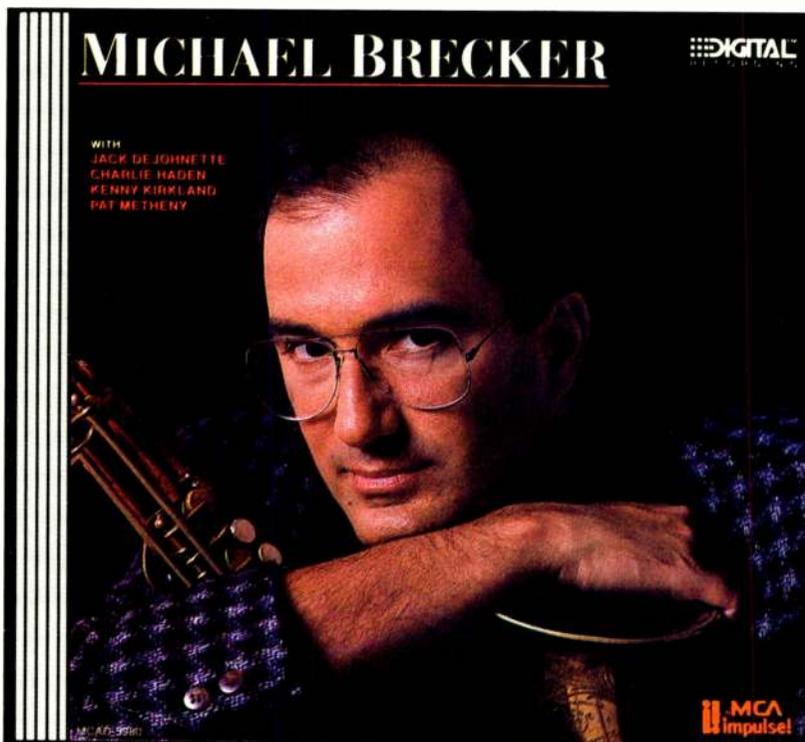
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CLASSIC JAZZ!

A Life Supreme

John Coltrane died on July 17, 1967. In the twenty years since, he has gone from jazz giant to cultural myth, and his life has started to get lost in his legend. Who was the man behind the beautiful fury that continues to transform?

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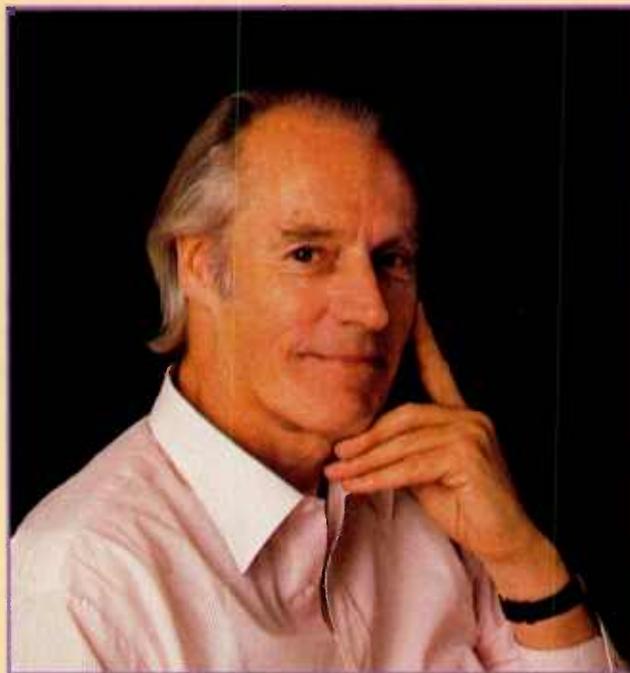


CLASSIC ROCK!

No Surrender

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The Replacements Go Over the Ledge

Is there a best American rock 'n' roll band in the 80s? Well, who else could it be? Everyone wants the Replacements to make it big. Except maybe the Replacements. True confessions in the Twin Cities.

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH OF JOHN COLTRANE BY JIM MARSHALL/ARTIST PUBLICATIONS AT THE HOUSE OF THE LATE RALPH J. GLEASON, BERKELEY, CA, 1960
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN PHOTOGRAPHED BY DAVID GAHR

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OMAR & THE HOWLERS HARD TIMES IN THE LAND OF PLENTY



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LETTERS

Van on the Mountain

Mighty interesting headline(s) on your April '87 cover: VAN MORRISON STONES CDs.

I can picture it clearly: Our man Van perched high on a rock in the rolling Irish foothills melancholically tossing stones at a select (but quite large) pile of new age, post-punk, 80s rock, dinosaur, comeback, techno-this and neo-that CDs—not to mention a similar blend of articles from the music press, record companies and radio stations.

Van probably has good reasons for not being more open with the press and more comfortable with his audience's expectations. Some people just won't accept that he's merely trying to do them a simple but powerful audio favor. He's always been as nice as he can, even too nice, given the heart-dampening circumstances. Adulation, ego-blabbering and pride are poor substitutes for an open heart and mind. "Oh no! Don't ever let spirit die."

Michael Tesorch
New Orleans, LA



Not-So-Simply Read

There may be more truth than Mick Hucknall intended (Apr. '87) in his comparison of Simple Minds to native American music: Both are musical forms of very religious quality. Hucknall is entertaining—but Jim Kerr is inspirational.

Seth McCulloch
Fredonia, AZ

Stones: Back to Mono?

Any serious Rolling Stones fan would be wise to seek out the import editions of *Hot Rocks I* and *Hot Rocks II* as opposed to the domestic compilation of the same, despite the feelings of Andrew Loog Oldham and Scott Isler regarding the stereo mixes on the British CD (Apr. '87). There are several differences worth noting between the domestic and import CDs.



Rolling Stones on CD: You Can Get What You Need. by Scott Isler

On the import, "Play With Fire," "Satisfaction," "Get Off Of My Cloud," "Mother's Little Helper" and "Paint It Black" are in stereo; on the domestic CD they are not. The domestic CD contains an earlier mono version of "Time Is On My Side," quite different than the stereo take on the import. "Heart Of Stone" appears in stereo on both versions of the CD. Later material such as "Honky Tonk Women," "Brown Sugar" and "Wild Horses," which appeared on record in stereo, possesses no separation on the domestic CD.

These ears would rather hear the Stones in glorious stereo, warts and all, as opposed to the muddled mono being released to the public as the "definitive" versions of the Stones on CD. Since the release of the domestic CD, the import editions are almost impossible to find, but they

are well worth the time and effort (and expense) of obtaining them.

Louis Sessa
Gaithersburg, MD

Sadkin Go Home

On behalf of American musicians, I'd like to comment on Richard Buskin's Alex Sadkin article (Apr. '87). When Sadkin says that American artists actually "rebel" against his ideas, he seems to be implying either closed-mindedness or ignorance on their part. Of course, we here in the States must surely realize that Alex has merely had his feelings hurt by a few uncompromising American artists who know, as they damn well should, what they ought to sound like and would prefer Alex keep his gated ass out of their faces.

I am a drummer and I tune and treat my instruments to sound the way they should, i.e. the way I want. If an engineer or producer can't reproduce that sound, then (s)he's nixed. If (s)he can't do the job, (s)he's out the window. People like Sadkin make studio life unlivable for artists who choose to maintain control of their own work.

Steven Heineman
Pittsburgh, PA

Hurray for the Irish

Hurray for Bill Flanagan's review (Apr. '87) of U2's *The Joshua Tree*! I'm a singer/songwriter who has been greatly influenced by Bono, and it was satisfying to have my own gut-level reaction to the album echoed by Bill's review. My own first words were, "So new, yet so U2." Bill elaborated on this, showing that U2 has the purest and strongest sound today. No other band has explored and grown while maintaining the strength of expression as

they have. I avoid idolatry, but I have often said a little prayer to be just a little bit more like U2.

Helene Milenkovic
Bronx, NY

Well, first you'll have to change your name... - Ed.

Madhouse's Inmates

I was extremely confused by Steve Perry's review of 8 by Madhouse (Apr. '87). While I appreciate his interest in Prince, it's disappointing that in reviewing their record Perry chose to ignore the very musicians involved.

The musicians that comprise Madhouse are Eric Leeds, flute and saxophones; Austra Chanel, keyboards; Brother Bill Louis, bass; and John Louis, drums. While they aren't listed on the album jacket, neither is Prince!

Prince does *not* play in Madhouse. If he did, the music on 8 would sound like *Sign "O" The Times*. Furthermore, with a dance single ("6") in the top five of *Billboard's* Hot Black Singles chart, Madhouse would seem to defy categorization. As one member of the group said, "It's just music that we like to hear."

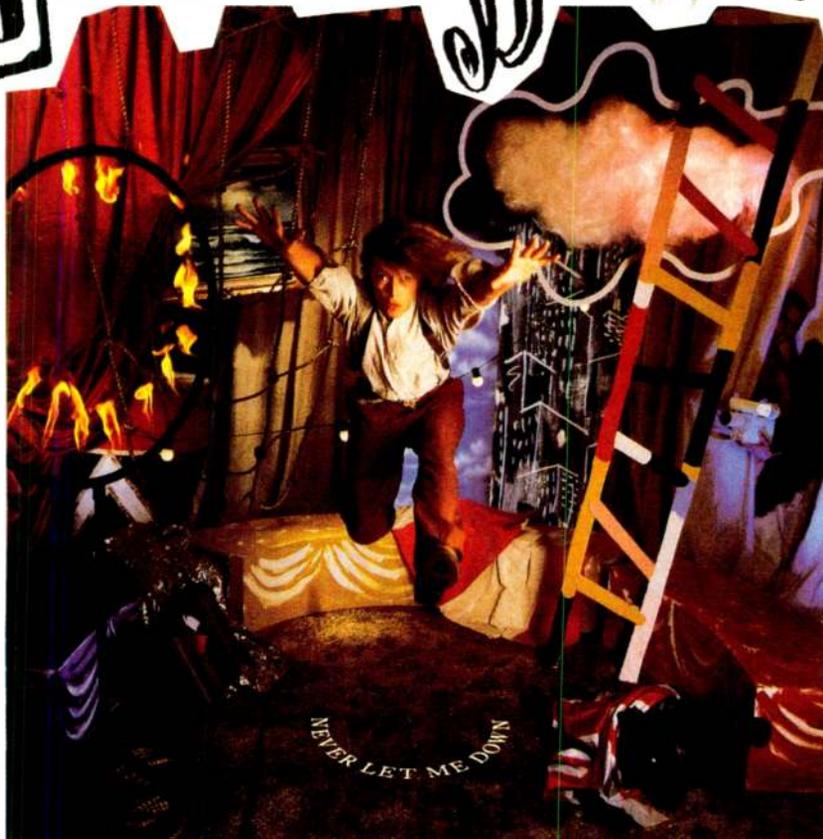
Alan Leeds
Eden Prairie, MN

Steve Perry replies: "Tell you what: Have 'Austra Chanel' call me sometime. Better still, how about a conference call with Chanel, Jamie Starr, Alexander Nevermind and Joey Coco?"

Tube Boob

Guitarist David Hidalgo of Los Lobos (Apr. '87) uses a Tube Driver made by Chandler Electronics of San Francisco. We'll say it again: Chandler.

David Bowie



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World Radio History



JODY
WATLEY

*Shallow No More:
Life After Disco*

Disco: A four-letter word with five letters. One hundred twenty-eight beats per minute, and not an ounce of emotion or soul in any of them. Rhythm without blues.

As a member of the group Shalamar—a trio put together from the ranks of Don Cornelius' *Soul Train* dancers to promote an already-existing hit record—Jody Watley helped to perpetrate her fair share of mindless examples of the D-word.

She probably wouldn't call her new self-titled solo album an atonement for those sins of the past. But on the other hand, several of *Jody Watley's* nine cuts do boast the sort of sass, texture and depth that were glaringly absent during the Shallowmar days. And she says that's no accident.

"I kind of wanted to have topics that, when people are at a club [and] the beat is happening, they can groove to it, but when they're at home or in their car, the lyrics are saying something that maybe will touch on someone's life." In other words, Watley's into bi-level dance music because "I don't consider myself just wanting to be a disco artist."

As the tang and spunk of her dance hit "Looking For A New Love" attest, Watley has left behind the time when she was seen, fairly or not, as "just a disco artist"—a pretty decoration between her groupmates Howard Hewett and Jeffrey Daniel.

"I'd always get people commenting about I should be singing more," she recalls. "I have a distinctive enough voice where I probably could've handled a lot more than I was given. We were unique in that there were different things about each one of us that people liked. For me, I wanted to be known for more than just being the girl in the group."

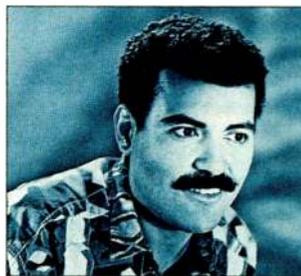
— Leonard Pitts, Jr.

HILTON
RUIZ

*Putting It Together:
Jazz con Salsa*

Pianist Hilton Ruiz needs nothing short of a toll-free hotline to keep his public up to date with all his gigs. One night he's in New Haven throwing zingers behind Dizzy; twenty-four hours later he's waxing pretty in a New York bistro with bassist Ray Drummond. Then, if he's not sitting with the Leaders, it's out to rehearsal for a Salsa Meets Jazz gig at the Village Gate.

That being said, you've gotta wonder how he chiseled out enough time to put together one of the most as-



sured major-label debuts in the last year.

"Are you kidding?" he questions. "I've wanted to do this forever. And besides, once we got in the studio, the whole thing went like a breeze. Everybody was really into it—both the band and the label."

Making things easy seems one of Ruiz's fortes. His new RCA/Novus release, *Something Grand*, is a smart,

groove-dominated blast of mainstream jazz that isn't shy with its Latin rhythms, remaining true to artistic goals as well as being quite marketable. And, unlike so many similar attempts at mainstreaming by today's younger players, it doesn't come off as retro-baiting.

Since the early 70s, when he manned the keyboards for Rahsaan Roland Kirk's last band, Ruiz has been a hired gun for some of New York's best leaders. He's also done some dates leading his own trio. His jaunty, two-handed style stands strong on its own as well, but he readily admits having a "preference for playing with drummers."

On *Something Grand* he gets his wish: With Ignacio Berroa, Daniel Ponce and Charlie Santiago, it's percussionist heaven. Their gracefully woven Latin rhythms integrate well with the Horace Silver bluesiness of Ruiz's tunes.

"That's because it's all the same thing," he explains; "it's all African roots basically. Some of it comes through the Caribbean and some through Europe, but it's a drum language." Still, he cautions, "You've got to know how to put it together."

Something Grand's put together right. It's not only going to give Ruiz higher visibility, but remind many listeners that jazz and salsa can compliment each other handsomely (and swingingly).

"Right now I'm just trying to play better," Ruiz sums up. "But if I can make a contribution in that way, I'll be proud." — Jim Macnie

CHARLES BROWN

Still Deep in the Blues

People who come to see me play say, 'Are you Charles Brown or are you his son? After all these years, you should be walking with a cane!'"

He can't keep from chuckling, and no wonder. While most of his contemporaries from the post-World War II R&B boom passed on long ago, Charles Brown is still going strong in his fifth decade of performing. He recently staged a comeback with *One More For The Road...*, an album which finds

his gift for elegant, after-hours blues ballads undiminished by time.

Along with such flamboyant figures as Amos Milburn, Roy Brown (no relation) and Wynonie Harris, Brown was one of the hottest black artists of the pre-rock era—and one of the most influential. His vocal with Johnny Moore's Three Blazers on the 1945 hit "Drifting Blues" popularized a relaxed, intimate approach to singing that quickly spawned a host of disciples. "I didn't even realize I had a particular style until people started imitating me," he recalls, noting that the young Ray Charles was one of his biggest admirers.

A string of solo R&B smashes like "Black Night" and "Seven Long Days" kept Brown in the limelight until



1952, when record company hassles and changing public tastes ended his chart run. However, he remained a presence on the music scene in one way or another. In 1961 Brown resurfaced with "Please Come Home For Christmas" (later recorded by the Eagles); the next year Sam Cooke "borrowed" his "I Want To Go Home" and called it "Bring It On Home

To Me." More recently, Bruce Springsteen performed the singer's "Merry Christmas Baby" on the B-side of "War."

Through all the ups and downs, Brown, who doesn't smoke or drink, never fell prey to the excesses that felled some of his friends and never stopped working. He recently finished a tour with B.B. King and plays club dates "two or three nights a week, which is just right for me. I don't want to kill myself to earn a few dollars," he notes. But with what Brown laughingly calls his "introductory album" winning new followers, this living legend sees no reason to ponder retirement. "I don't even think about age," he explains simply, "because I have a youthful outlook." — Jon Young

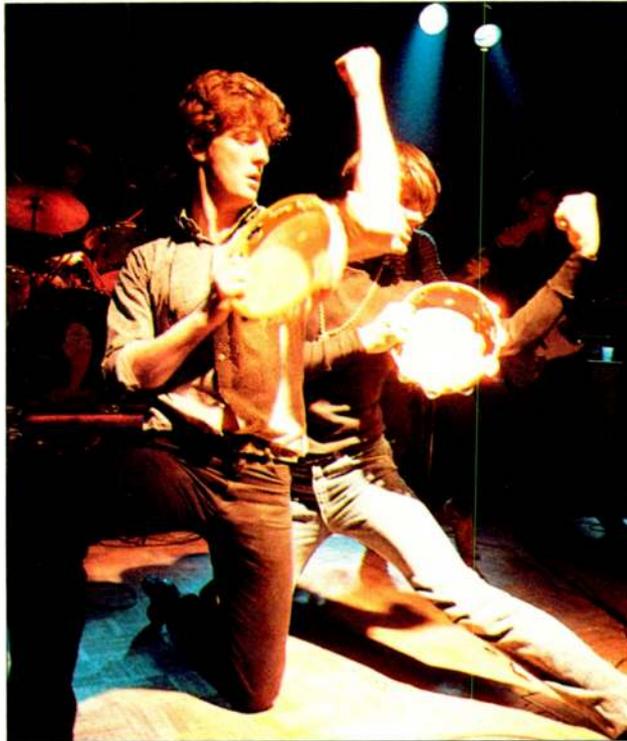
THE FLESHTONES

Success Without the Trappings

According to Fleshtones frontman Peter Zaremba, the Official Record Industry Reaction to his band these past eleven years consists of a flick of a corporate cigar and one incredulous query: "You want your '73 Datsun and a record deal too?"

With their fourth album, *Fleshtones Vs. Reality*, the New York-based quintet is still cruising on blind faith alone. They're still putting out vinyl when and where possible (their current indie home is Emergo Records) and still waiting for their slam-and-crunch blend of 60s influences and 80s sensibilities to break them out of the cult circuit and book them into a better class of motel.

That they've managed to hang in for so long is a victory. After all, in high-rent Manhat-



tan too many musicians are vying for too few gigs on a non-existent club scene. The mortality rate is high.

"There's very little opportunity for New York bands," says Zaremba, who moonlights as host of *The Cutting Edge* on MTV. "The thing that kills them is the bitter-

ness factor. It's 'Gee, why don't we have a record deal? How come we're not driving Rolls-Royces by now?'"

He admits that in certain East Coast circles the Fleshtones are tagged. "People say we're mindless. And maybe it's true. What we do is *not* the Next Big Thing, but

it's a constant reminder, a conscience that influences other things. Other bands."

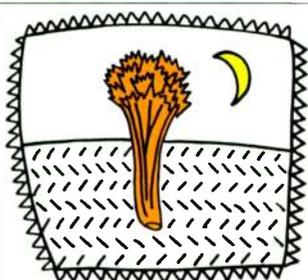
Rock veterans might shed a wistful tear during the band's homage to the early Kinks with "Way Up Here," or to the rave-up finale of "Treat Her Like A Lady." But to many younger kids it's a new sonic ball game, and Zaremba feels "that's an advantage. To them it's even fresher. There's no nostalgia where there's no recognition, and nostalgia would work against a band like ours."

Indeed, the Fleshtones strive to be anything but slavishly true to their hal-lowed influences. "We're *not* pure," Zaremba says. "We're a mongrelization of everything we've heard on the radio and seen on TV. We're fans ourselves. We're one big greasy lump, and we're happy because we're a success on our own terms."

After a decade of slogging though, a small Rolls or two wouldn't be bad, right?

"Yeah, but where would we *keep* them? I have enough trouble finding parking space for that '73 Datsun."

— Dan Hedges



Celery Stalks at Midnight

England's Stranglers have come a long way musically since their debut album ten years ago. The same cannot be said of their behavior—at least when provoked.

All went well at the band's April 16 show at New York's Ritz club until a plastic cup hit guitarist Hugh Cornwell just before the encore. He announced the band didn't appreciate being used for target practice.

Once they started playing, a fully loaded cup—tossed from another part of the club than the first one—made a direct hit on J.J. Burnel's bass. He stopped playing to wipe down his instrument. When the other Stranglers noticed they were bassless, they all stopped playing and Cornwell asked that the beer-hurler kindly take the stage.

Eyewitnesses report that a fan at the front of the stage—origin of neither of the cups—took advantage of the invitation to meet his idols. After he clambered up, Burnel flipped him down and kept a knee on his chest; the others held him down, pulled down his pants and underwear and inserted a handy celery stalk where celery stalks are rarely found. They then released the hapless fan, who slowly regained his clothes (if not his composure) and got kicked offstage. The celery fell out.

Cornwell later mentioned this was the fourth time the band has employed its celery defense. Rowdy concertgoers and celery-growers of the nation, take heed.

WIRE

State-of-the-Art Return to Action

Wire is back. After a "sabbatical" of some seven years, the British group released a four-song EP of new material titled *Snakedrill*, and *The Ideal Copy*, an album they promise to support with their first proper U.S. tour ever.

In 1980, after recording one live and three studio LPs that have since become cult classics, Wire dispersed by mutual consent to pursue individual projects. It wasn't until 1985 that the original line-up reunited to perform at the Oxford Museum of Modern Art. Bass player/lyricist Graham Lewis recounts, "We were curious to see what it would sound like our-

selves." They composed a powerful new repertoire during rehearsals; following a series of much-heralded live dates, the group decided to document it on record.

Having enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with their first producer, Mike Thorne, Wire had very particular reasons for choosing Mute Records head Daniel Miller and engineer Gareth Jones to coproduce *Snakedrill*:

"They're people we like, and they were sympathetic to what we wanted to do," Lewis explains, still sounding enthusiastic after a day on the phone to American press. "It was also important that they both have created a lot of high quality, technically polished music [producing Depeche Mode, Yaz, Erasure, Fad Gadget]. They have excellent programming techniques and an awareness of present technology."

By the time Wire was ready for the follow-up LP, Miller was busy on another project. The band had enough confidence in Jones' production abilities to proceed with their recording plans and book time at Hansa Studios in Berlin, where David Bowie recorded *Low* and *Heroes*.

Almost immediately they achieved remarkable results, transforming many songs in the studio. "Gareth had brought in an Atari with a Steinberger program that we used on six tunes," Lewis recalls. "That, allied with sampled sounds, was a major part of *The Ideal Copy*."

The album marks a triumphal return for these one-time punk *enfants terribles*—sure to please old fans with its militant methodical mad edge and win plenty of converts with its assured, if wily, state-of-the-art popcraft.

—Howard Wuelfing, Jr.



Is Less More?

With compact discs providing up to seventy-five minutes playing time, RCA Records has a better idea. The company's Nashville A&R department sent memos to its country-music producers that all new albums be lim-

ited to nine songs. Currently the country standard is ten cuts per LP.

The move will save money on production costs and song royalties. With the label purportedly pulling more singles from each album, RCA Nashville vice-president and general manager Joe Galante maintains

that fewer tracks provide better value for money. "Musically the consumer doesn't get any less because most of the songs are expanded versions," Galante said in a prepared statement. The first album under the nine-song policy, the Judds' *Heartbeat*, runs under thirty-three minutes.

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MASON RUFFNER

BY J. D. CONSIDINE

BOURBON ST. BLUESMAN BLENDS HIGH-TECH & LOW-DOWN

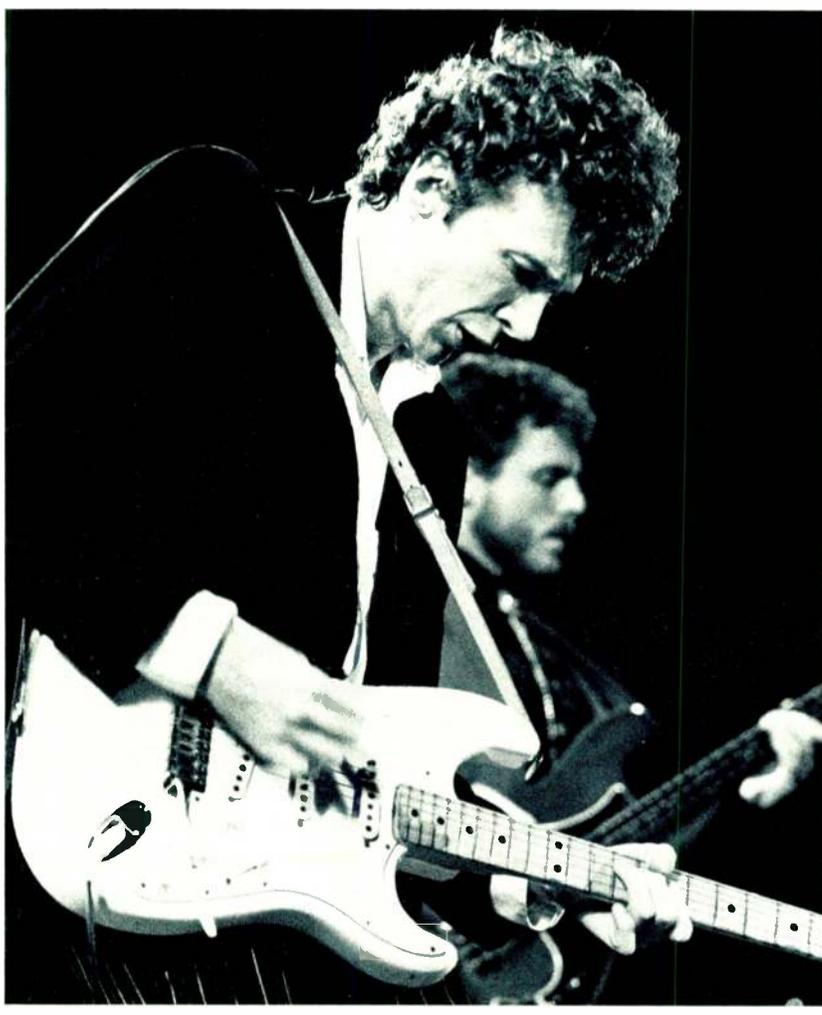
One of the best breaks Mason Ruffner ever got was getting fired. A recent arrival in New Orleans, the Texas-born guitarist scuffled around until a country-and-western cover band asked him to leave. Undaunted, Ruffner took it as a cue to do his own thing. "I bought microphones and started singing. Just had a little trio, playing blues, country, whatever I wanted. Didn't make much money or anything, but it started from there.

"Now that I look back on it," he adds, "it was subconsciously a smart move in trying to develop my talents, and not worry about any pay or anything."

Indeed it was. Leaping into the bar-band grind, Ruffner found himself playing six-hour shifts at the 544 Club, "a real torture-marathon place." Nonetheless, he had few regrets about the hours. "I felt if I wanted to come anywhere near what I wanted to do with my life as a musician," he says, "that's what it took."

Ruffner's blues-based repertoire was also an advantage. "I really got to stretch out on the guitar. It was something I could do that had a base to it, rather than just be a jukebox or something. The blues was my base playing the guitar, and it was my base as a writer."

It was also the basis for his reputation. Within five years, Ruffner managed a near-miraculous transformation from mediocre bar-band sideman to the hottest guitarist on the Gulf Coast. A Bourbon Street star, he and his trio became a magnet for rockers passing through town; before long, the lanky fretboard virtuoso counted Jimmy Page, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Billy Gibbons, Leon Russell and members of Iron Maiden among his fans. Along the way Ruffner landed a recording contract. His self-titled debut album of late 1985 left the music press raving the way Page did when he crowed that the young guitarist "knocked me out."



"I'm kind of a marathon man when it comes to playing."

Somehow, though, Ruffner remains unspoiled by all the attention. It isn't simply that he shrugs off compliments with a confession that he still feels "heavy under the influence of a lot of other people." Influences, after all, are a natural part of any songwriter's growth.

Ruffner cites blues great Robert Johnson as an example. "He absorbed the soul, the mood, some of the licks, and used it in his singing style. But he wrote his own things, and I have a feeling he knew what he was singing about.

"That's what you should do with music," Ruffner insists, and that goes double for the blues. "If you just try to copy all the riffs and stuff, you're missing it, man. You can't do that. They were the masters of it, and it'll never be done as good as they did it."

His experience in London recording the new album, *Gypsy Blood*, reinforced that lesson. Ruffner headed into the

project feeling cocky, with roughly twenty bluesy bar numbers ready to go. But his producer, roots-rocker Dave Edmunds, was less than impressed.

"He told me to write more stuff," the guitarist laughs, "but stay away from the blues. I had plenty of those, a mountain of experience. We ended up using hardly any of them except 'Red Hot Lover.'"

A lot of songwriters would have been discouraged, but Ruffner felt positively energized by Edmunds' criticism. "He just knows how to handle me," the guitarist says. "He's got me down, that's all I can say. He inspired me, and after he talked to me, I wrote some of my very favorite stuff on the record. We tried it his way and it worked."

Not that Edmunds had any specific method. When it came to recording, Ruffner says, "we did it all kinds of ways. Two songs are absolutely live on that album: 'Runnin'' and 'Baby, I Don't Care

No More.' On 'Runnin' we overdubbed a tambourine, that's all, swear to God. Dave likes these natural, earthy things."

On the other hand, Edmunds also took advantage of the latest recording technology. For instance, the demo for "Fightin' Back" was recorded in keyboardist Mark Avsec's basement studio in Cleveland, with MIDI-controlled synths and drum machine. Ruffner figured the tune would be re-recorded in London. But Edmunds "heard those demos, and he said, 'I like those drums the way they are. I'm not going to change

it. We're just going to sample some drum sounds when we get in there,' and he made it even better.

"I really liked it, but I wouldn't want to make a whole album like that; it's wrong for me. I gotta keep that blend of using some of the technology that we have today. That's one thing I'm really proud of with my record: There are very technical songs, two cut totally live, and some in the middle. But it all fits together."

Cutting the album took three weeks, plus a week for mixing. That's pretty fast for a major-label release, but it left

Ruffner itching to get on. "I couldn't imagine spending much more time than that," he says, "because the recording process is something I'm still not too used to. It can get to me, all the waiting you do. I'll go into the studio, make my music and get out.

"I love it, don't get me wrong," he adds, "but I think it's so mentally draining. I get restless. I haven't touched my guitar in two days, I've been on the couch listening to this and that, I'm not even involved in the song, you know?"

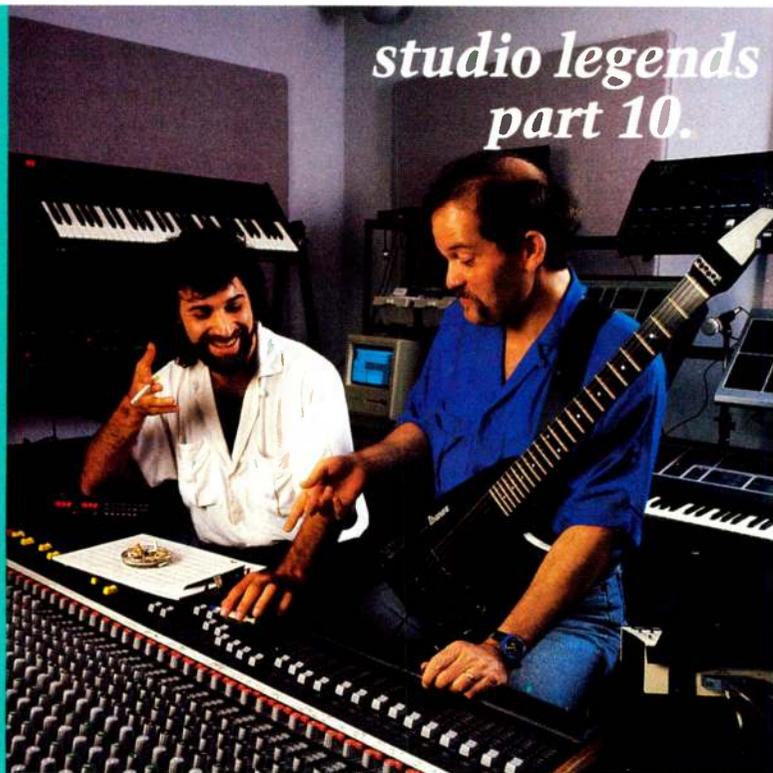
The only thing worse than waiting around in a recording studio, Ruffner says, is waiting around during a video shoot: "I did that for the first time a couple weeks ago, and the amount of waiting time to get prepared for the lights or the tape blows me away." The best thing about the clip—which Ruffner describes as "hot rods and T&A, what else?"—is Ruffner's playing (or miming). With his dark, gravelly voice and rich Texas accent, he comes across as a Southern-fried Mark Knopfler on the verses. But when he gets into the solo, the guitarist really comes into his own, throttling the whammy bar of his Strat, playing behind his back, and generally hot dogging—in other words, acting like Mason Ruffner.

It's a loose, confident performance. That it was filmed at the Old Absinthe Bar, Ruffner's Bourbon Street hangout, adds to the impression that the guitarist is utterly at home with the crowd. Despite having opened for stadium acts like the Firm, Ruffner prefers club dates. "If I only get a chance to do a couple songs as an opening band, it's hard to grab an audience. In a club, something's going to hit."

He also seems satisfied with the long grind. "I'm kind of a marathon man when it comes to playing," Ruffner shrugs. "I'll get up and play an hour or two without stopping. Rest a little bit, and then go and do it again. I have the repertoire to do it, and I enjoy it." 

TOOTHsome GUITARS

Mason Ruffner is a Stratocaster man, right down to the guitar on his gold-capped tooth. He owns two, a '59 and a '65; aside from the five-position switch he installed in the '59, both are completely stock. His guitars are strung with medium-gauge GHS Boomers, and played with a large Fender medium pick. His amplifiers of choice used to be old Fender Super Reverbs, but *Gypsy Blood* was recorded with a Marshall Studio-15. His only effect is an Ibanez Tube Screamer.



John Abercrombie knows when to experiment... and when not to.

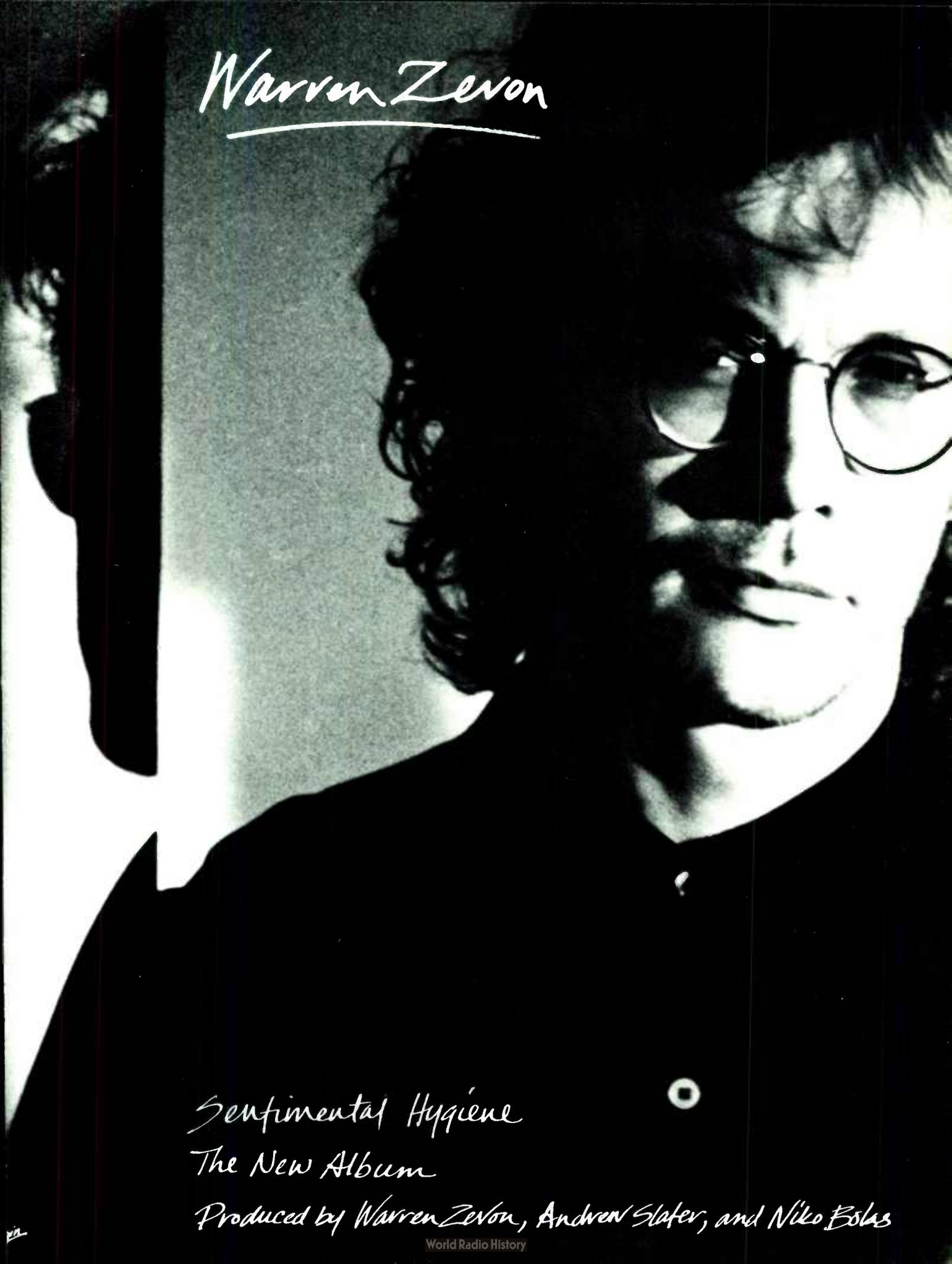
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The patronage of Paul Simon has brought new visibility to Joseph Shabalala and his “mental vision.”

LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO

BY PAMELA BLOOM

DIAMONDS FROM THE SOUL OF SOUTH AFRICA

Somewhere in Germany there’s a trunkload of white-and-black fur loincloths, ten matching oxen-skin headdresses, one Zulu warrior sword and a pile of grass leggings, armbands and ankle bells. “What can we say?” laughs Joseph Shabalala, the forty-six-year-old founder and visionary leader of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, the all-male dectet who appear on two of their four American-released albums decked out in full tribal garb. “Somebody left our costumes on the tour bus. We’ve been looking for them ever since.”

Bare chests and hairy legs notwithstanding, Ladysmith Black Mambazo has been a startling addition to the South African line-up put together by Paul Simon for his Grammy-winning album *Graceland* and subsequent tour: ten

naked voices—one raw guttural soloist crisscrossing over tight chorales—spiced by some high-stepping, Temptations-style choreography. What makes them really special, aside from the lack of instrumentation, are the undervoicings: one alto, one tenor, and seven basses create a bottom-heavy effect that exploits the natural richness of their vocal timbres.

Their pristine balance between space and motion suggests earthy Gregorian chants and a contrast to the fierce, aggressive stomping traditionally associated with Zulus. Sung at weddings, funerals and other tribal events, it’s a kind of township chorale singing called *ischatamiyah* (loosely translated “walking softly on the toes”), practiced and perfected in the urban single-sex dormitories by migrant workers who’ve left their families behind to eke out a living in South Africa’s gold and diamond mines. So it is music of intense longing as well as celebration—one of the last surviving bridges between sacred tribal traditions and enforced urban realities. Black Mambazo is but one such group, but probably the best. Even B.P.S. (Before Paul Simon), their twenty-year career and twenty-four South African-produced albums had propelled them to star status among the Zulu-listening audience.

Munching on chocolate croissants and peppermint tea in the interview room of

his new American label, Joseph Shabalala is tasting the first fruits of a low-gloss crossover which defies commercial stereotypes. A stocky man with an easy nature and open grin, he is dressed in Western slacks and sweater; only his lilting accent and occasionally cracked English betray his foreign roots. Guarded in press conferences, where journalists badger him with political inquiries, he relaxes more in private conversation. The Warner Bros. publicity department has insisted that politics be off-limits—one false step and Mambazo’s tenuous visa could be revoked. In any event, the larger implications of Shabalala’s message can be read between his words, and projected against the ugly backdrop of apartheid.

Shabalala grew up in the district of Ladysmith, a rural grassland halfway between Johannesburg and Durban. With six children and two parents in a mud-grass hut, there were no phonographs and no radio. Like most men of his culture, he left home as a teenager to find work in the city. “When I first started this music, I did it because I felt something in my veins, in my bloodstream,” he says.

“In my room in Durban, I asked some friends to join me on the weekends and practice. I knew at Christmas we would go home and sing for my parents just as my father did when we were children.

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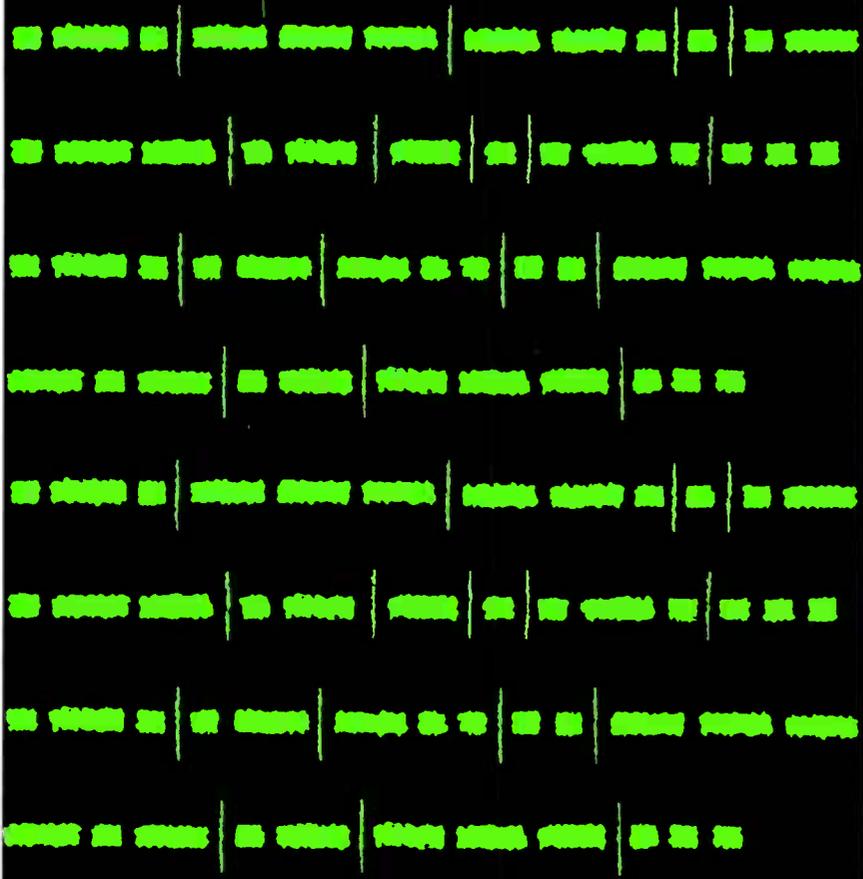
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One day my friends said, 'Now we sing nice, we must go to the hall.' And I said, 'Nooooo, man.' You see, where we were born, you don't go to the hall because there are gangsters, people with knives who will kill us. But because I was afraid they'd run away I finally agreed to go."

The group began to compete in the "ngomabusuki" (night music), fierce choir competitions held on Saturday nights in Durban and Johannesburg where a bystander—"don't matter if he's drunk or not"—is pulled in from the street to act as judge. Shabalala might have gone on this way, part of an obscure ensemble belting out spirituals, pop songs and trade union anthems, were it not for a psychic-spiritual event that changed his entire musical concept.

"I got my 'Teacher' from a dream," he explains. "Every night I would see this concert where children were floating between the stage and the sky, singing with their beautiful voices. At first I thought God just wanted me to be happy, but as time went on I caught the tune and copied down their actions. Unfortunately I didn't understand their strange language so I made up my own words."

Shabalala tried teaching his "new tune" to the group—once waking them in the middle of the night to show them dance steps—but it proved difficult. "Before that dream," he explains, "we didn't care about each other. As long as everybody knew the words, it was okay. But after that dream, my ears started to hear—this note is wrong, or this one is out of tune. But because I did not know them, I failed to teach that first group."

By 1973, Shabalala had rounded up a more dedicated group. He picked the name Ladysmith Black Mambazo (the black axe of Ladysmith), and soon the ensemble had won so many local prizes they were barred from amateur competition. An invitation by the South African Broadcasting corporation to perform live on radio caught the attention of West Nkosi, a prominent black producer who worked for white-owned Gallo records in Johannesburg.

"West Nkosi found us in Durban and said he wanted to record us," Shabalala recalls. "First time we say, 'Nooo we are not going to Johannesburg. You are a gangster. You are coming to kill us.' We didn't know nothing about selling records. Until he showed us a letter from a famous radio announcer who always played our records, we refused. From then on we trusted him."

Since 1973, however, the members of Black Mambazo (the name is a symbol for power) have been working full-time

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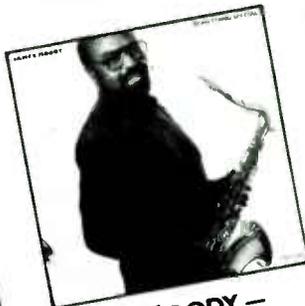
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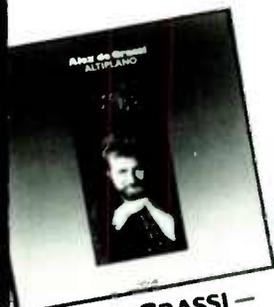
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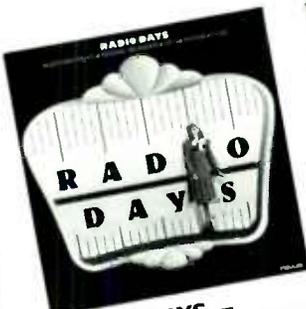
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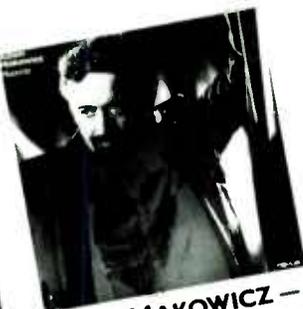
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as singers, some supporting families of nine or ten children. Their first album, released in 1972, became an international best-seller. The group now includes Joseph's three brothers and his cousins from the Mazibuko family. Practice sessions are long—at least eight-hour days—and their repertoire includes over 1,000 songs.

Since no one in the group reads music, Shabalala teaches each part separately, then learns his own line by improvising over the harmony. They study their old records for details, and refine the choreography, which is continually revealed to Shabalala via what he calls a

“mental vision.” Since 1975, when a stranger suddenly appeared off the street and healed his wife and two band members (even the witch doctor had failed), his lyrics have turned increasingly spiritual. He became a pastor in his church and the group is often asked to lay hands on their audience.

Shabalala sees a connection between that first visitor and the stranger who arrived ten years later. “One day in 1984 when we were on tour,” he recounts, “I called my wife at home and she said, ‘Hey, there’s a call here from Johannesburg. Paul Simon wants you.’ Funny, I’d been thinking about him. One of my

neighbors had his record—*Troubled Waters*—and I liked it very much. So I went to Johannesburg and he said, ‘Are you Joseph Shabalala, leader of Black Mambazo?’ Then, ‘I’m your friend.’”

The next day a tape and a small letter arrived. Simon had written the words: “Homeless, homeless, moonlight sleeping on the midnight lake,” and added the following message: “Joseph, don’t worry about the tune. I’m trying to imitate your tune. Just add some lyrics, Zulu or English, whatever you like.”

Joseph decided Simon had scribbled down neither the beginning nor the end of the song, but its middle. For the intro he borrowed a Zulu wedding melody and added lyrics about hungry and lonely men, sleeping in caves with only their fists for pillows. When a telex arrived reading “I want Black Mambazo in London,” the group was ecstatic, since they’d only traveled outside South Africa for German music festivals in 1981 and ’82. But the first day of rehearsal at the Abbey Road Studios, the magical mystery tour suddenly disintegrated.

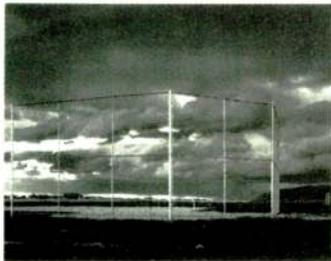
“Paul punched the key on the organ for our pitch and said, ‘It’s here, Joseph,’ but we failed right away. It was very hard for us to imitate that sound. Finally, he told us just to sing it like we feel it, any way we like. So I said, ‘Okay, just listen to me,’ and I started singing. He came right in, and it turned out very nice.”

Simon’s voice weaving effortlessly over and around the lower interlocking harmonies on “Homeless” recalls the similar passion for counterpoint that characterized songs like “Scarborough Fair” twenty years back. By coincidence, even his reference to “homeless” had multi-cultural meanings. “In my home,” Joseph points out, “when you propose to a girl, you say, ‘I’m homeless, I have no house to sleep in’—because you are still looking for a home. And all the time we are singing it, we are thinking about God, that our home is in heaven. So it’s a song that can fit everybody.”

Produced by Simon, the songs on Mambazo’s new album *Shaka Zulu* are sung alternately in English and Zulu (with full translations provided), and range from original Christian hymns of suffering and forgiveness to go-away-blues and flirtatious come-ons: A winner on tour is “Hello My Baby” with its cute little kiss smacked perfectly on beat. Deceptively simple, their harmonies revolve around I-IV-V progressions transformed by a complicated rhythmic structure which freely flows in and out of a 4/4 meter. Intimately connected to each other’s breathing patterns, the

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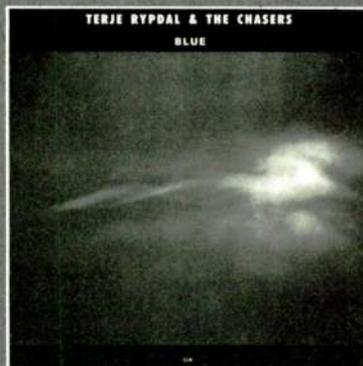
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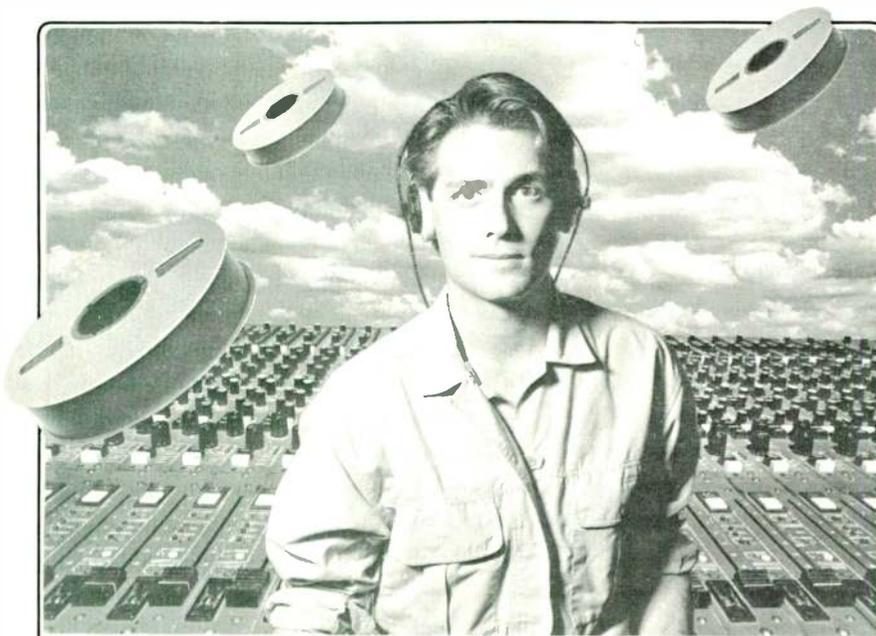
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guys have developed a kind of swooping vocal attack that can sneak up on a pitch en masse, then shape a four-part harmonized riff that seems to hover in the air. The approach is virile, but subdued in Western terms; high-pitched throat flutters and diaphragmatic growls add drama, but the real sensuality lies in the dizzying undulation of their phrasing.

"But we learned many things from Paul," insists Shabalala. "Like singing easy. In our country, there are no powerful microphones; we are used to singing out. Paul taught us to calm down, like we're practicing. And it feels very nice."

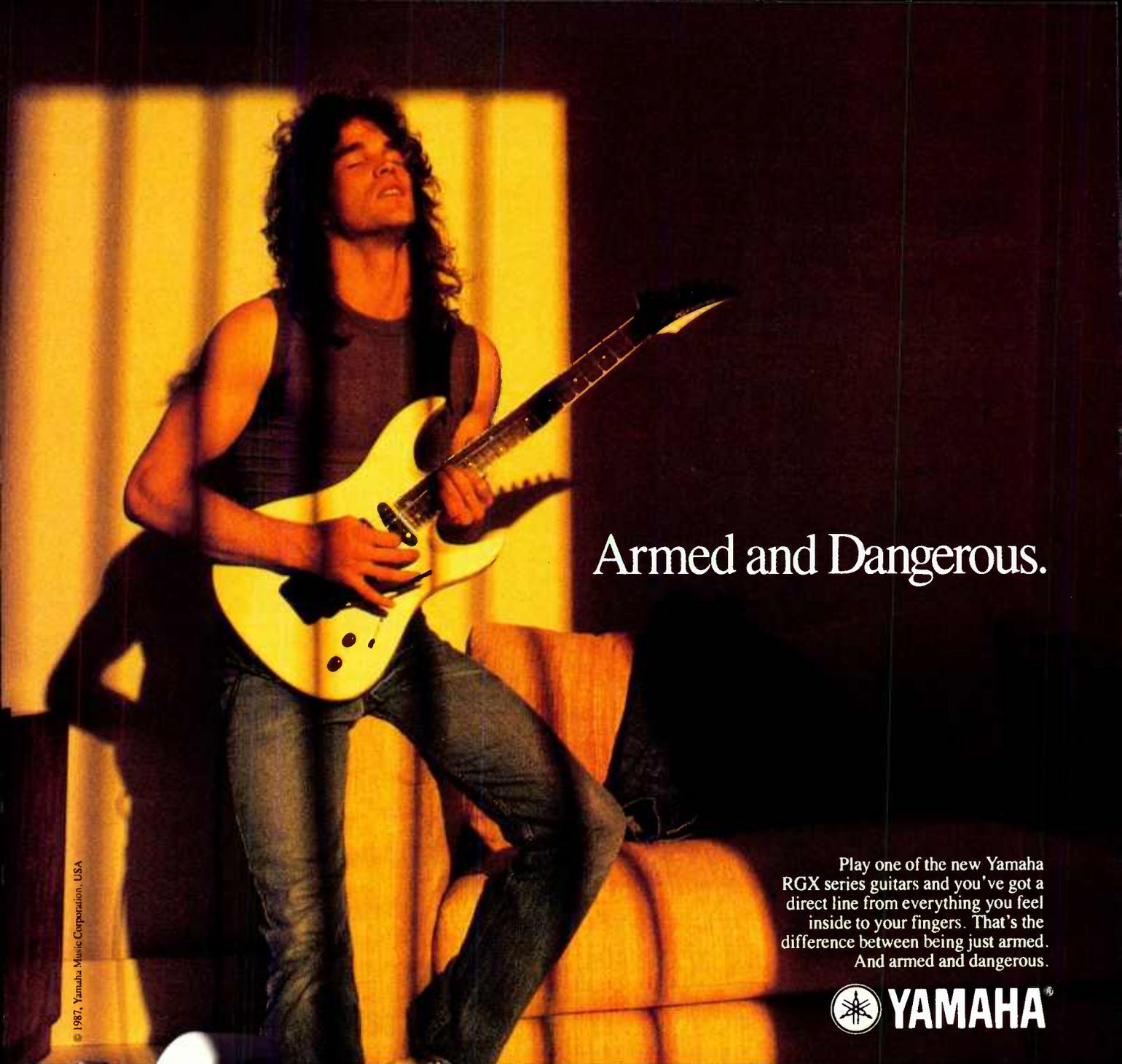
For Shabalala, too, the tour is an ear-opener; although he admires Manhattan Transfer and talks wistfully of Louis Armstrong, he's just learning about other outstanding African groups like Fela, King Sunny Adé and Toure Kunda—records not available for sale in South Africa. Despite worldwide publicity, Black Mambazo's artistry hasn't received any official recognition from the South African government. That they have been allowed to travel so freely is likely due to Shabalala's spiritual bent and his aversion to overt political pronouncement. But upon closer inspection, Shabalala's lyrics and the purity of his performance suggest an attitude that's less naive than transcendental. A Gandhi-like perspective prevails.

"When there's somebody talking about apartheid, I just get lost," he says. "I grew up on a farm. When I went to Durban in the beginning it was better than farm. Then I just started singing. I don't know nothing about apartheid. Once you come to apartheid, it's black to me—like at night, all the time."

"That's the way of life in South Africa," explains Mambazo's manager Denzyl Fergelson (who's white). "Everybody has to make the best of it. All those feelings [of hostility and frustration] come and go. In order to maintain sanity, you have to carry on. We can talk apartheid—yes, it's a terrible disease—but the only way we can deal with it—as musicians—is to keep doing what we do best."

Shabalala continues: "I remember one day when I was going along the road to a hall in Johannesburg where we were performing. The police stopped and asked me, 'Hey! What are you doing? Did you come to do the fighting here?' And I said, 'Nooooo, man, I'm doing my job. I came for singing, that's all.'

"And you know," he says, "they let me go. They just let me go. Even the little children know that Black Mambazo is singing." ■



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IS THERE LIFE AFTER MAJORS?

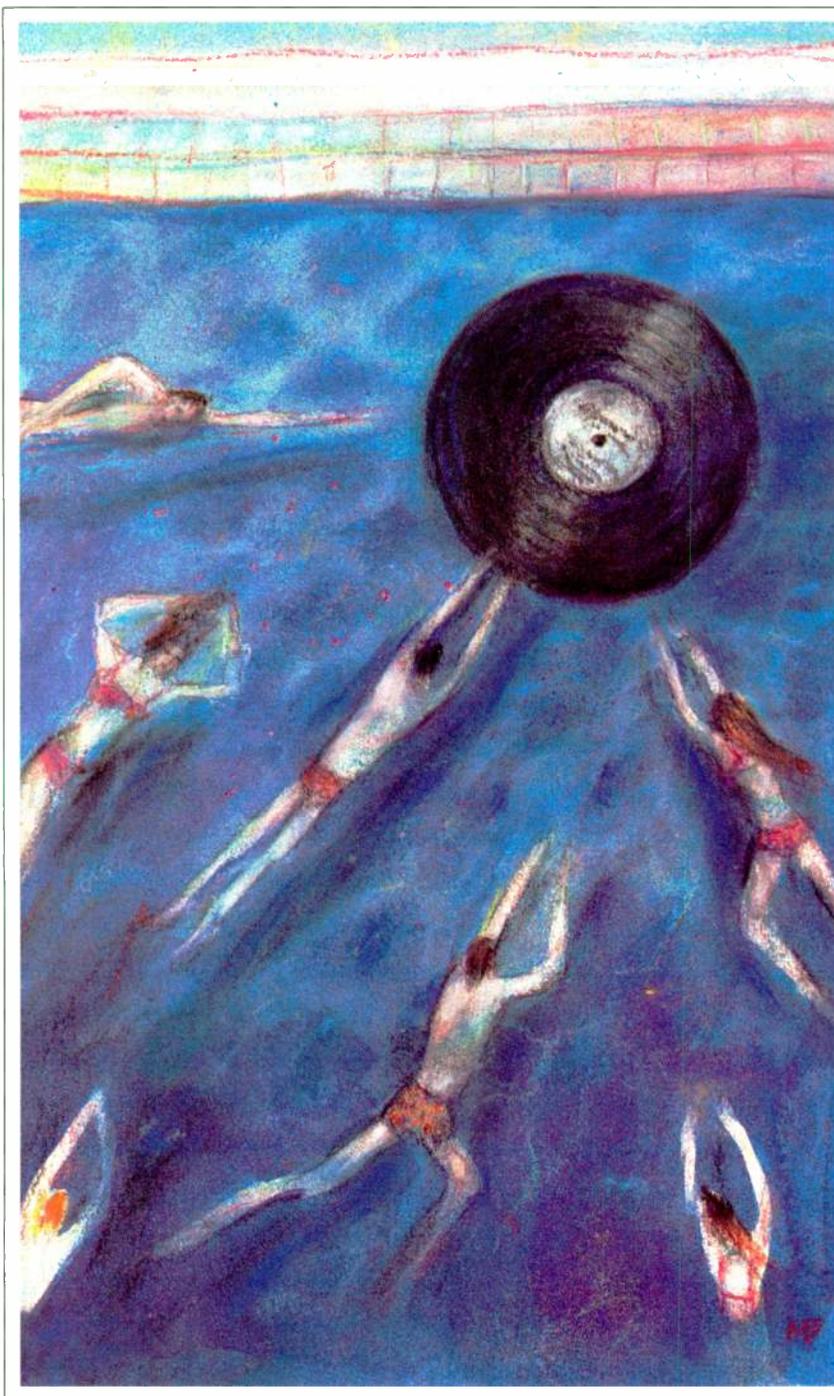
BY ROB TANNENBAUM

AS THE BOTTOM LINE RISES, ARTISTS FIGHT TO STAY AFLOAT

When is a profit not a profit? According to a lot of major record labels, when it's not a *big* profit. In the 1980s the top American record companies seem to have decided that pop artists who regularly sell fewer than half a million units are not worth having. This is not their attitude toward classical, jazz or country acts—but then, pop has always been where the big bucks are. The new trend is a distinct change from the days when labels bragged of supporting beloved cult artists as rock 'n' roll *noblesse oblige* (and as long as they made *some* money).

Now acts who generate only a modest profit are finding the doors of the major labels closed. Public awareness of this new criterion was aroused in 1984 when Warner Bros. Records dropped more than thirty artists from their roster, including T-Bone Burnett, Bonnie Raitt, Arlo Guthrie and Jonathan Richman. At the same time, Warners ended their long association with Van Morrison. The pruning has continued ever since at Warners and other major labels, though without the publicity that accompanied the '84 purge. It's easy not to notice this trend because it manifests itself as absence. The Roches, Tom Verlaine, Tom Robinson and Kate and Anna McGarrigle disappeared quietly, after losing record deals because of insufficient sales. Bonnie Raitt and Rodney Crowell each spent five years without recording an album after Warner Bros. rejected completed LPs for commercial reasons. And it's difficult to locate new releases by Jonathan Richman and Tom Paxton, who record for independent labels, and Arlo Guthrie and John Prine, who formed their own self-sufficient labels rather than submit to major label expectations.

In the past, major labels supported such prototypical cult artists—critics' sweethearts with small, loyal audiences—in the hope that they might

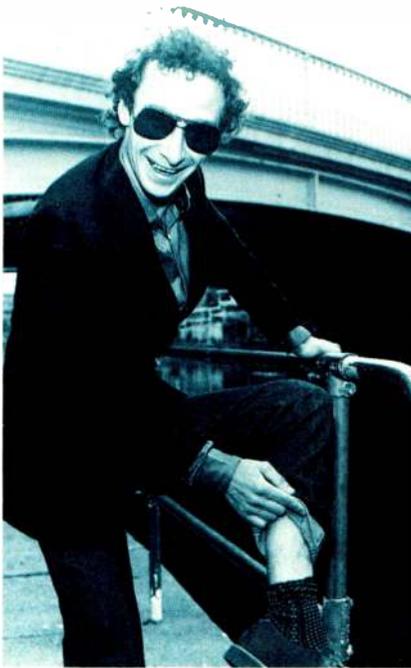


sprout into superstars (as Billy Joel, Bob Seger and Bruce Springsteen did after years of cultdom), or at least draw people into record shops, where they might buy records by newer bands. During the industry's boom era, subsidizing an artist with negligible sales was an affordable luxury. But that luxury has fallen to a search for optimum profits which extends from cheaper packaging and vinyl to the proposed tax on home taping. Pop's planned obsolescence is more rapid than ever; the list of inactive

artists includes not only 60s folkies and 70s singer/songwriters, but also charter members of 80s new wave.

"Why are you so interested in having record companies make records with artists that sell 50,000 records?" asks Frank Rand, vice president of A&R at Epic/Portrait. "That's something only reviewers and critics want, and we don't make a lot of money off of. But this is the music *business*."

"You don't even go in and make a record with somebody because they're



Graham Parker: "I've been making records that cost too much money."

prestigious and they're not gonna sell," he continues. "Why? What does prestige do for you when you go to the bank? It doesn't do shit." [As we go to press, Rand has left Epic.]

It shouldn't be news to anyone that the goal of the music industry is to make money, and that if, in the process, they make art, that's considered a nice dividend. It's easy to blame Bonnie Raitt's disastrous *Nine Lives*, to pick a current example, on Warners' demands to "come up with a hit." But case studies demonstrate that record executives and artists alike merely abide by the ineluctable rules of the marketplace.

"There is most definitely a ledger for every act," states Dick Wingate, head of A&R at PolyGram, whose roster includes Van Morrison, the Everly Brothers and new signing Leonard Cohen. That individual ledger provides the information behind a label's decision to keep or dump an artist, which is why it's necessary to examine the mathematics of record company accounts before understanding why labels say they can't make money on certain artists.

The debit side of a musician's ledger includes the cost of recording an album and making videos, tour support, and the label's marketing and promotion of the record. A quarter of a million dollars is "a pretty fair figure" for recording an LP and making two videos, according to Wingate, and with other costs figured in,

an album often represents an investment of half a million.

The black side of the ledger consists mostly of record sales. The wholesale cost of a record is about five dollars, but after you deduct manufacturing costs, songwriters' copyrights, freight and distribution, the label is left with about two dollars profit per LP.

Thus, a band can amass a huge debt very quickly. After two LPs, for example, Face To Face owed Epic "well over half a million" dollars, according to Frank Rand. Nonetheless, Rand wanted them to stay at Epic, and PolyGram's Wingate—who originally signed them when he was at Epic—lured them to his label. Why would a record company invest in a proven loser? "If you can see [sales] growth, there's always room to make a decision to go further," notes Wingate. And if the company takes another bath, he adds, the label drops the group and writes off the loss on its taxes.

Today's darling is tomorrow's orphan. Warner Bros. has maintained a hip reputation by signing Hüsker Dü, Laurie Anderson and the Replacements; but since the purge of 1984, the label has dropped Tom Verlaine (after three albums), Rodney Crowell (after three) and the Roches (after four). It remains to be seen if Warners will be willing to maintain support of Hüsker Dü if the band never passes Verlaine's sales figures.

Record companies lost money on the vast majority of albums released in 1981. To compensate for this imbalance, labels adopt a long-ball swing, which sports fans will recognize as the Dave Kingman Factor: They strike out a lot, but every now and then have a huge hit which compensates for their failures. And because they're busy searching for the Next Big Thing, they don't have time for a career cult artist like Van Morrison, who is unlikely to make hit singles.

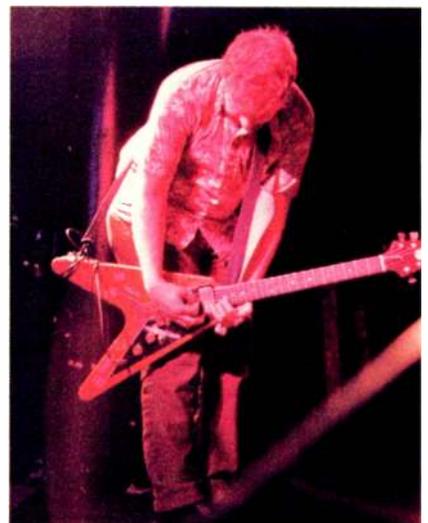
Although Jay Boberg, president of IRS Records, freely criticizes the hit-or-miss profligacy of other major labels, he stresses that unreasonable budgets are often created *by the artist*, that there are "a lot of situations where the record company is really being taken advantage of." Frank Rand explains how these situations arise: "Most of the time, when you get an artist that sells 100, 200 or 300,000 units, they expect more money, more investment in marketing and promotion. And you end up giving them more. Before you know it, your very good, mutual deal—where the company and the artist made money—becomes a big deal." When that artist's sales don't increase "and he's tied into a contract

that provides a half-million dollar advance," Boberg concludes, "you don't have to be a brain surgeon to figure out that just ain't gonna work."

The unacceptable disparity between a large advance and modest sales accounts for Van Morrison's leaving Warner Bros. Morrison signed to the label early in 1968, and his first release was the fabled *Astral Weeks*. His next four albums spawned a string of FM hits, and the size of his advances grew to reflect his commercial success. By the late 70s, Morrison had stopped making radio music. His sales dropped, but Warner Bros. was locked into a long-term contract with large advances. When the label and Morrison split in '84, even Van's lawyer admitted that Warners "took a bath" on the contract's terms.

"Whether an artist can make money for a label depends on what the deal is," emphasizes Rand. "We've been party to deals where artists sold 300,000 records and their deal was so substantial that we were losing significant amounts of money. It's not a one-way street."

Morrison was subsequently signed to PolyGram, who negotiated a "very reasonable deal," according to Wingate, with advances adjusted to reflect Van's



Hüsker Bob Mould:
Dü it yourself.

recent sales. "And very quietly, he sold enough records to pay for the deal last year." Wingate quotes sales of about 150,000 for Morrison's *A Sense Of Wonder*. "Nobody's gonna get rich, but we're not losing any money. If I can have Van Morrison on my label and break even, I'm happy." Despite Rand's assertion that prestige "doesn't do shit," Wingate's comments suggest different-



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ly. As another A&R man points out, Capitol Records' signing of Paul McCartney may make the label more attractive while bidding for new artists, even if they don't show a profit from his record sales.

"I've just gotten the new Van Morrison album, and I think it's extraordinary," Graham Parker enthuses. "Every home should have one. But can you imagine if somebody said, 'Hey Van, there's no single?'" Although Morrison has been nearly oblivious to record company pressure, commercial de-

mands can often have a ruinous effect on an artist. "I can't say that's never happened," concedes Wingate. "There are bands that went down the tubes by compromising with a company screaming for a single."

When Arlo Guthrie presented his *Someday* LP to Warner Bros., label president Lenny Waronker said they didn't like it. "They told me they would put it out, but they weren't going to give it any kind of priority," Guthrie recalls. "I wasn't satisfied with that. I said, 'Give it to me, then, and I'll put it out.'"

Guthrie, who now releases his albums through his own Rising Son label, says he's "making a lot more money doing it myself. I can sell a quarter of the records I sold at Warner Bros. and make more money. I'd be a fool to deal with them."

John Prine told *Music Row* magazine he rejected offers from major labels in favor of forming his own Oh Boy label "after deciding that they couldn't do anything for us we couldn't do ourselves." The process is simple, he said: "You go out into the desert, you put your hand on a rock, and you say, 'I am a record company.'" And it's proven profitable for Prine, with sales of about 40,000 for his *Aimless Love* album. Prine says that he's seeing more cash with his own label than he could with a major. "There used to be a stigma attached to not being with a major label," Guthrie concludes. "And the only thing that broke that was the economic benefits of not doing it that way."

Due to financial necessity, major labels are the domain of artists who aspire to a large audience. The market niche they ignore has been serviced by indie labels, and the artists have their choice of which game to play. When sales of his Warners albums remained low, Guthrie realized that a "national response" wasn't feasible given his style of music, and chose his homemade label. Being dropped from or shunned by a major label shouldn't silence a determined musician, says Bob Mould of Hüsker Dü, who signed to Warners after putting out a number of indie LPs. "You can always put them out yourself," Mould notes. "You can always go back to putting out 200 cassettes."

That's also the attitude of industry executives. "Why do these artists have to be on a major label?" asks the head of publicity for a major label. "I'm sure Rhino or Big Time or Flying Fish would be glad to have them." "The Roches would be better served by making records for a small, independent label," added Wingate, weeks before the group released an EP with Rhino Records.

A similar conclusion convinced Craig Sussman to leave CBS Records and form the Los Angeles-based indie Cypress Records. "I just thank big record companies for not signing moderate-selling acts, because it gives me the chance to," he says. "There are some great artists without record deals." The label's first release was Jennifer Warnes' *Famous Blue Raincoat*, a lovely collection of Leonard Cohen songs which benefited from faultless production quality, the input of top session players, string



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arrangements, even guest appearances by Stevie Ray Vaughan, David Lindley and Van Dyke Parks. "Since we know who our audience is, we can concentrate our spending in specific areas which should have more impact," says Sussman. Thus, even with its major-label sound, the Warnes album had to sell only fifty-to-seventy-five thousand copies to break even, according to Sussman. The LP's sales quickly approached a quarter of a million. Buoyed by that success, Cypress has also signed Kenny Rankin, Wendy Waldman and Tim Weisberg—major-label refugees all. Following similar instincts, record exec Danny Goldberg has formed a label called Gold Castle to put out albums by commercial middleweights such as Judy Collins, Joan Baez and Peter, Paul and Mary.

"You have to keep all the economies of scale in proportion," emphasizes IRS head Boberg, whose label has prospered since 1979 despite releasing only four gold albums in that time. "You spend money in proportion to the sales you expect to attain." Boberg doesn't expect huge sales on Stan Ridgway or Hunters & Collectors, and his modest budgets don't require it. In defiance of the Dave Kingman Factor, IRS tries to build sales gradually, and Boberg points to R.E.M. as a positive example of the artistic and financial profits of gradualism.

For years, the country, jazz and classical divisions of major labels have exemplified economies of scale. Because they can work on frugal budgets (many jazz LPs are recorded in just a day or two, and less money is necessary for independent promotion), sales of just 50,000 can turn a profit for the label.

But with the advent of digital recording, strict budgets are more difficult to maintain. Jimmy Bowen, president of MCA Nashville, estimates that the cost of producing, marketing and promoting a country album has increased fifty percent in the last five years. And since "costs and sales must be compatible," he agrees there is increased pressure on country artists to sell more albums. In one cost-cutting move, RCA Nashville has notified its producers to limit albums to nine tracks. [See *Faces*.]

As an experiment in small-scale economics, MCA has reactivated their Dot subsidiary. The Dot label will be home to "five or six eclectic artists who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to be on a major," says Katie Valk, MCA's vice president of East Coast artist development and publicity. The label won't waste money pushing these artists to radio stations, she says, because they're

not "mainstream" acts. Although Dot won't be fully operational until the fall, they recently released an LP by T-Bone Burnett, which was recorded live to two-track in only four days.

"The problem is, a lot of the money you spend on a record does not end up in the grooves," notes Boberg. "If an act knows they've got \$75,000 to make an album, they'd better know damn well what songs to record, have them well-rehearsed, and spend two weeks with a producer before we ever go into a studio. A lot of artists that have larger budgets literally write songs in the studio, try fourteen remixes and all of that." IRS artists, he argues, "appreciate and benefit" from the label's penury. "Selling 35,000 copies is a success to us. IRS gives artists a license to grow. Because no growth occurs after a band has been dropped.

"The main point is that people equate dollars spent with results. The key is to know when that money is necessary, and when you can achieve a greater advantage by actually *not* spending money."

Since 1978, when Graham Parker described his relationship with Mercury as "the worst trying to ruin the best," he's been through two more record labels—Arista (for four albums) and Elektra (for one). He's now signed with Atlantic. Reminded of the accusations in his song "Mercury Poisoning," he concludes, "I don't think much has really changed."

Parker points to John Prine for proof. "John Prine has written brilliant stuff, songs which make me look stupid," he exclaims. "It's amazing that his records are mail order now. Record companies *have* to support people like that."

But subsidizing art isn't required of any huge corporation, whether it's IBM or Elektra Records. "They're selling a product," Parker acknowledges. "In most industries, if somebody comes up with a product that doesn't sell, they're not going to hold on to it for too long. So I can see that point of view perfectly well. But I think it's wrong. Because a lot of money is wasted in the record business. I've been making records that cost too much money." Parker claims that it cost \$300,000 to record *Another Grey Area* in 1982; although Arista won't release sales figures on the LP, it peaked at number fifty-one.

Despite Parker's record at Arista, Elektra signed him, released *Steady Nerves* and, he says, "spent a hell of a lot of money to promote it. It appeared on the radio, shall we say. How they did that, I don't really want to know."

GRP

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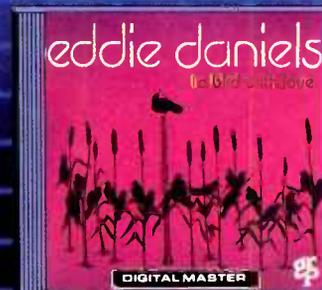
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Whether or not they hired independent promo men, as Parker seems to imply, Elektra's investment could be a first-year economics case study in the law of diminishing returns: The initial promotion of the album helped sell it to Parker's fans, and then the label invested even more money to make the record a smash, which didn't happen (the album peaked at a disappointing number fifty-seven), just as it hadn't happened for four previous albums at Arista. "The fact is, Elektra spent too much money," says Parker. "They couldn't keep their com-

mitment going. The record didn't turn into millions of sales, which is what they would have needed.

"Throwing money at the wall and hoping some of it sticks wasn't the right idea. There are very different stratas in the American music scene. One is a fairly awful heavy metal cabaret thing, like Starship or Journey. The public seems to want large quantities of that.

"But there's another public that's buying Los Lobos and R.E.M. and me, that kind of stuff. I think a record company has to look at it realistically. Let's

not look at this artist as someone who's going to be played alongside the Starship on radio, 'cause they ain't. 'If Graham Parker does a video with Michael Jackson's video producer, we might break the album.' It ain't gonna work."

The kind of realistic perspective that Parker and Jay Boberg and Craig Sussman talk about is feasible at a major label. Sussman explains that CBS, his old label, could just as easily have made Jennifer Warnes' new LP and turned a small profit on it. Van Morrison's success at PolyGram demonstrates that cult artists can thrive at a major label under the right conditions. The mathematics are simple—there's no point in making a video, since the MTV demographic is hardly the Roches' or Tom Robinson's target audience, and tour support is often unnecessary for established acts. So with a \$100,000 recording investment from the label, an artist would only have to sell 50,000 copies to break even.

Although this could reactivate a group of artists readers of this magazine would probably like to hear from, its desirability is debatable. Marketplace pressures have ruined some artists, but they have also roused others from the insular protection of a loyal audience's support. The desire to reach a broader audience can result in an artist's best work, as demonstrated by Paul Simon's *Graceland*. In a recent *Rolling Stone* interview, Simon described his commercially disastrous *Hearts And Bones* as "an odd record that wasn't top forty-oriented," and conceded that if his next project had been similar, it "was not in any form or reincarnation going to be a popular record." *Graceland* has been successful not because it's "top forty-oriented"—its surprising showing among the top five LPs came in spite of a lack of radio exposure—but because Simon's South African journey led to his most relevant music since *Bridge Over Troubled Waters*.

And, just as importantly, Warner Bros. maximized the commercial potential of *Graceland*, demonstrating how ably a major label can promote an esoteric album. According to Bob Merlis, Warner Bros.' national director of publicity, the label was "very serious" about making *Graceland* a hit. They delayed the album's release to plan a promotional campaign, and brought Simon and the entire national promotional staff to Los Angeles for a pep-talk-cum-listening party. At press time, *Graceland* had sold over two million copies in the U.S. "It's a great example to us [of] what can be done," says Merlis. "We really take

continued on page 133

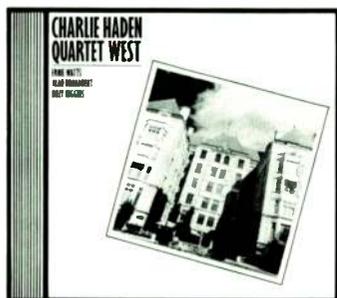
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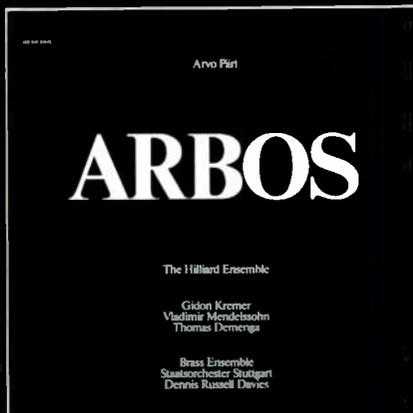
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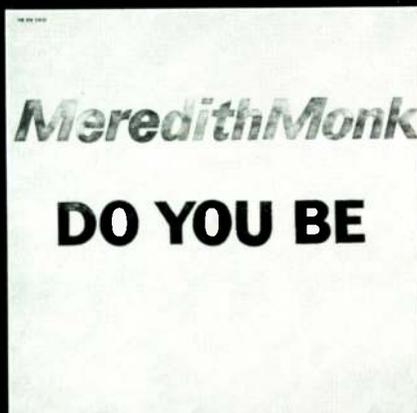
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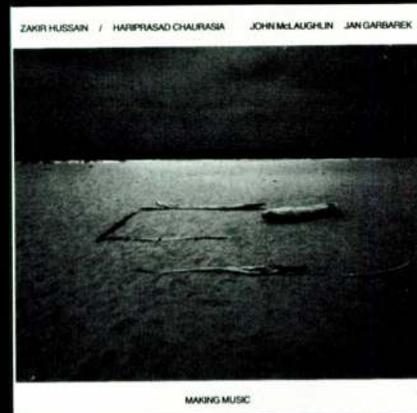
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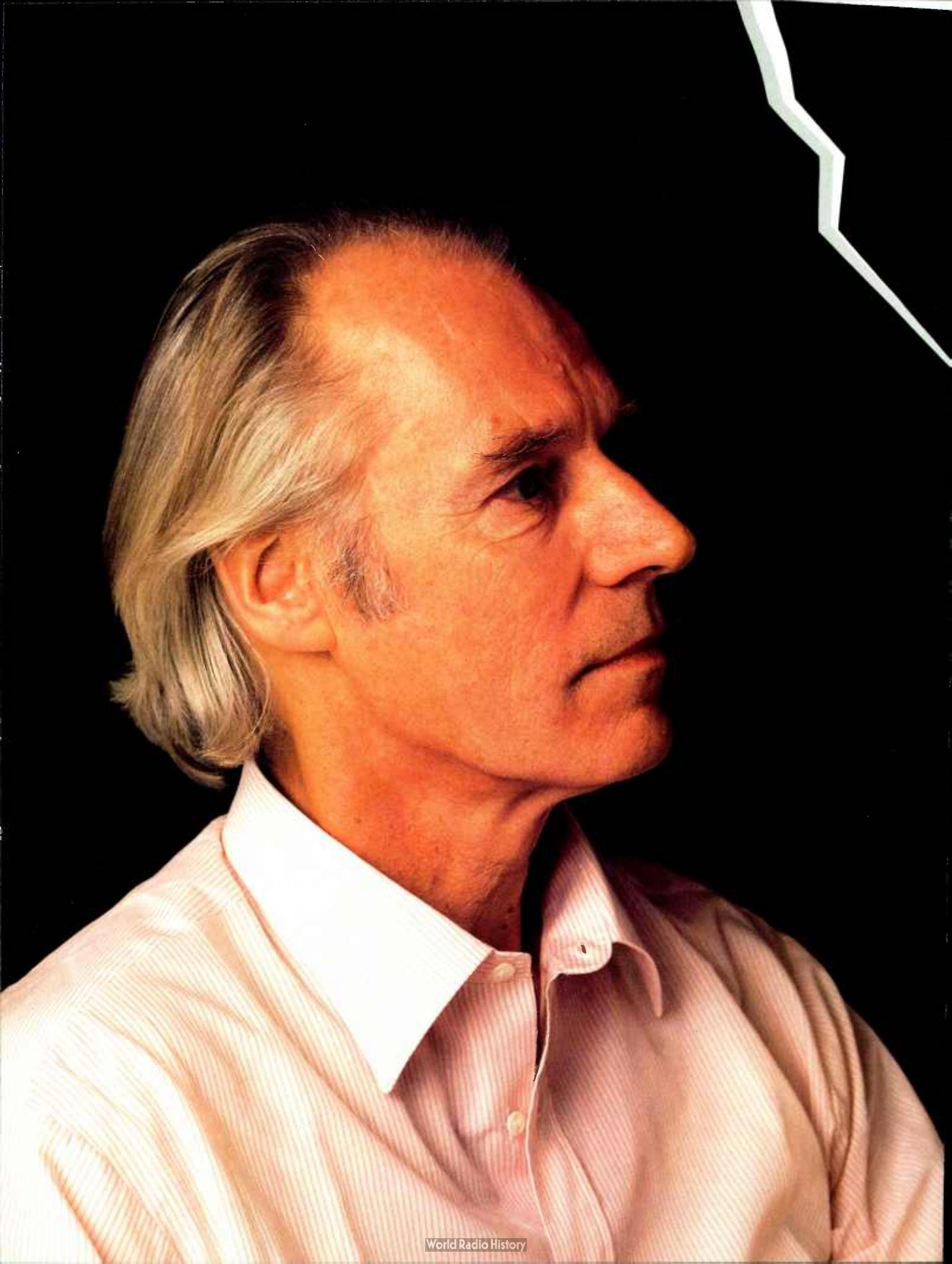
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By Richard Buskin

Jogging George Martin's Memory

As far as the music was concerned, John Lennon was always looking for the impossible, the unattainable," says George Martin, the Beatles producer. "He was never satisfied. He once said to me, in one of our evenings together when we were reminiscing, 'You know, George, I've never really liked anything we've ever done.' I said, 'Really, John? But you made some fantastic records!' He said, 'Well, if I could do them all over again I would.'"

Few would agree with John Lennon's opinion of the Beatles' recorded output. From New York to Moscow, London to Adelaide, Tokyo to Rio, their records continue to sell in the hundreds of thousands, inciting, inspiring, infusing and seducing. The long-awaited transfer of the Beatles catalog to CD and the twentieth anniversary celebration of *Sergeant Pepper's* release have only fanned the flames of Beatlemania higher. George Martin, who

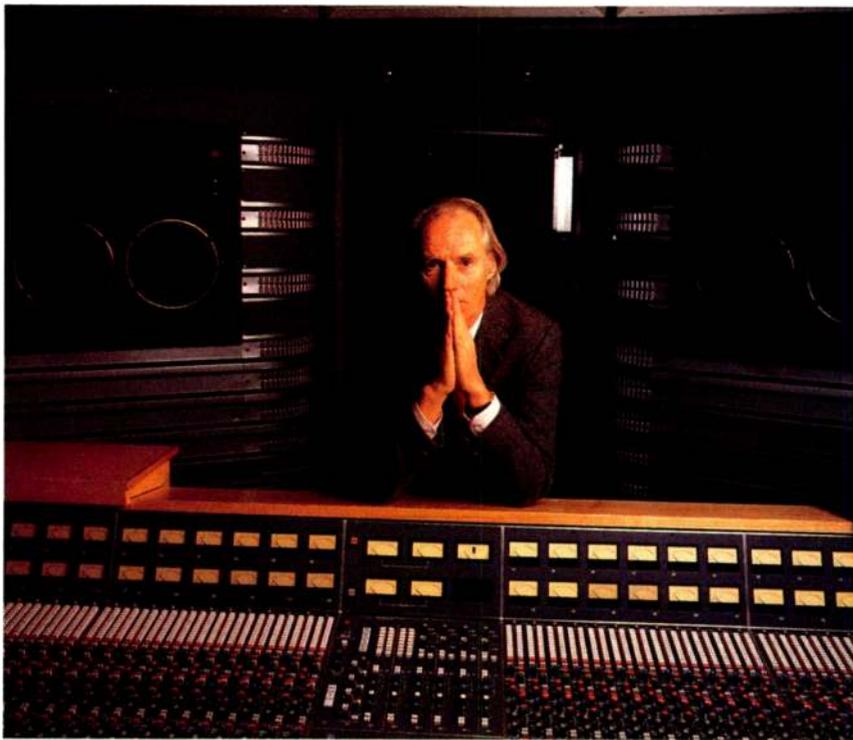
produced the Fab Four throughout their seven explosive studio years together, was drawn into the festivities last December when EMI Records' all-powerful Beatles Committee asked

him for help in preparing the old Beatles masters for digital. Since this was fairly late in the process, his main contribution to the first two CDs was to talk EMI out of using the "fake" stereo mixes and to go back to mono.

"I was, however, asked to look at the next three: *Help!*, *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*," Martin picks up the tale. "These obviously had to be stereo, and when I listened to them—particularly *Help!*—the stereo was not very good at all. So I went back to the original 4-tracks, and I actually did remix *Help!* and *Rubber Soul*. *Revolver* and *Pepper* didn't require remixing, however, as by that time I was getting better, along with the technology. I was tempted to right certain wrongs, but the Beatles Committee wanted it to be exactly as our original issue, and I thought, well, perhaps I shouldn't indulge in retrospective thoughts after twenty years, perhaps I should leave what I did all that time ago and say, 'Well, that's what I did, folks, and I'm not changing it now!' What I did do, however, was to clean

**THE BEATLES'
PRODUCER
RECENTLY WENT
BACK TO THE
ORIGINAL
MASTERS AND
FOUND SOME
THINGS ARE UN-
FORGETTABLE**

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVIES & STARR



“I was out to get performance, the excitement of the actual live action.”

up the individual sounds, going back to the original 4-track source, and I have, in fact, brought the image in a little bit.”

This is not the only occasion Martin has preferred to not “indulge in retrospective thoughts”. Within the last year he had let it be known he would be interviewed only on the condition he would not be asked about the Beatles. Which was fair in that Martin had already been thoroughly debriefed on the subject and tended to repeat the same stories. But his recent experience cleaning up the sacred master scrolls of Beatledom has jogged loose a whole batch of new memories which Martin is ready to share. And what he remembers best was not the technical details, but the feeling.

“Looking back, some of the plops that we got on the mikes were pretty awful, but I was out to get *performance*—the excitement of the actual live action—and technical things like that didn’t worry me too much. Sometimes the engineers would express disdain that I wasn’t worried, but it was important to get the feeling rather than anything else.”

Two more obvious examples of the errors and imperfections that crept in were small vocal discrepancies between John and Paul on the last verse lyrics of both “Please Please Me” and “Drive My Car.” “That was never intended, but

they did it that way,” smiles Martin. “It was live, and things such as that slipped my attention. Once it went through and I saw it was there, I didn’t think it was worthwhile calling them in again to replace a line; life’s too short!”

Martin instead used his influence as producer for more weighty musical recommendations. It was his idea that “Please Please Me” should be an up-tempo number, rather than a Roy Orbison-type ballad as originally conceived by John and Paul. It was his idea to commence “Can’t Buy Me Love” with the chorus, he who orchestrated the “pop” song “Yesterday” and who generally translated John, Paul and George’s fanciful far-reaching ideas into usable musical form.

“We didn’t set out to specifically give an album a different sound from the last one, but there was this eternal curiosity that the boys had to try something new. They were growing up, and they were like plants in a hot-house. When I first met them, George and Paul were nineteen and twenty years old: kids. In just over a year they became world stars, and so their normal kind of growing-up period was taken away from them by the pressures of fame. They therefore grew up in the studio with me, and up to the point of *Pepper* they were expanding

their ideas. Consequently, they were thirsty for knowledge, curious to find out what else they could have, and with their fame came the opportunity to experiment. So George heard of a Rickenbacker twelve-string, wanted to have one and he got one. Then everybody wanted one.

“Once you started something, for a while it almost became the fashion. For example, once I’d turned John’s voice around on ‘Rain,’ played his voice backwards to him and put it on the track, it was ‘Great! Let’s try everything backwards!’ So George started doing backwards guitar solos, there was backwards cymbal on ‘Strawberry Fields,’ until that was exhausted and it was on to the next gimmick. It was a healthy curiosity to find new sounds and new ways of expressing themselves.

“In order to record the backwards guitar on a track like ‘I’m Only Sleeping,’ you work out what your chord sequence is and write down the reverse order of the chords—as they are going to come up—so you can recognize them. You then learn to boogie around on that chord sequence, but you don’t really know what it’s going to sound like until it comes out again. It’s hit or miss, no doubt about it, but you do it a few times, and when you like what you hear you keep it.”

Martin often lent a hand on the solos when required, especially keyboards. One of the most notable examples of this was the Elizabethan harpsichord break on “In My Life.” A gap had been left in the song for an unspecified solo, and Martin decided to experiment with the idea of Elizabethan keyboard while the Beatles were out of the studio. This was successful, but the only problem was that he was not quite able to play the fast tempo required. He therefore played the entire piece at half-speed, and the tape was sped up to produce the desired sound.

Drum sounds were another matter. George Martin was, in effect, turned on to drums by Ringo Starr, and was initially quite surprised by Ringo’s care and assistance in ensuring that they sounded as he perceived they should. Though proponents of technique would wince, on several occasions Paul McCartney has stated that Ringo was the best drummer in the world for the Beatles; Martin agrees and explains why.

“When I recorded the *Tug Of War* album in Montserrat with Paul and Stevie Wonder, we had Ringo playing drums and we also had Steve Gadd. Now



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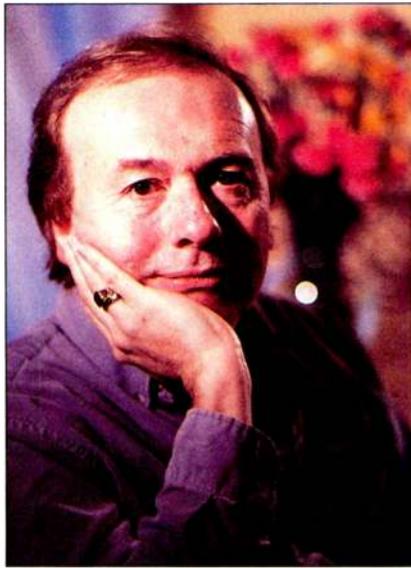
Steve Gadd is a great technical drummer—one of the best in the world—he's done everything, and he's meticulous. We actually had the two drum kits in the studio, and Ringo and Steve playing together. First of all it was most interesting that for the same mike setup the sounds were so completely different. I mean they were light years apart! I was shaken by it. Ringo gets a sound out of his drums which is all Ringo.

"Secondly, although his time-keeping isn't rigid, clinical and of quartz-controlled accuracy, he's got tremendous feel. He always helped us to hit the right tempo for a song, and gave it that support—that rock-solid backbeat—that made the recording of all the Beatles' songs that much easier. He was sympathetic. His tempos used to go up and down, but up and down in the right way to help the song. His use of toms was also very inventive. The 'A Day In The Life' timpani sound on the toms was very characteristic.

"Obviously in those days we never had the studio effects that there are now," says Martin, "but we used to try different things. That was always fun, and it made life a little bit more interesting. The most notable case was 'Yellow Submarine,' of course, where you can hear the noise of bubbles being blown into tanks, chains rattling and that kind of thing. We actually did that in the studio. John got one of those little hand mikes, which he put into his Vox amp and was able to talk through. So all of that 'Full steam ahead...' you hear was done live while the main vocal was going on, and we all had a giggle.

"We weren't averse to putting recorded effects in, too. There were all sorts of sound effects that you could get on record, so in the case of 'Good Morning, Good Morning,' for instance, there was a whole farmyard of animals dubbed in from a disc."

Martin went even further for Lennon's acid-filled, quasi-religious masterpiece, "Tomorrow Never Knows." "John Lennon never liked his own voice," notes Martin, "and I could never understand this because I thought his voice was terrific. He always wanted it to be mixed down, and on 'Tomorrow Never Knows'—which borrowed lyrics and inspiration from the Tibetan Book of the Dead—he wanted me to make him sound like a 'Dalai lama singing from the highest mountain top,' while still being able to hear what he was singing. Of course it was an impossible task, except that he obviously wanted a kooky effect,



Engineer-as-Sancho: Geoff Emerick

and Artificial Double Tracking was the only thing we could think of. Needless to say, in those days we didn't have machines like harmonizers or anything like that, so what I did was to put his voice through the Leslie rotating speaker of the Hammond organ. That gave it the effect you can hear, and to my knowledge that was the first time anyone ever did that." Lennon would later opine that the song would have sounded better with monks chanting in the background as he had originally wanted.

Not all Martin's newfound recollections involved major alterations. For instance, Martin noticed that he had overdubbed a part of Paul McCartney's vocal on "Yesterday." This helped explain his mistaken notion that a small part had been double-tracked: "Originally I recorded Paul singing and playing at the same time, miking up both guitar and voice. Then later on I wrote and overdubbed the strings, and on my fourth track I got Paul to have another go at recording the voice, just in case we got a better performance. Well, we didn't—not in my opinion anyway—except in one particular part which was at the end of the first section. [*I said something wrong, now I long for yesterday...*] So I used that as an alternative voice, and during the past twenty years I've forgotten about it and have always thought that is where I decided to double-track the voice. But it's not double-tracked, because in fact it's voice with leakage from a speaker as we didn't use headphones."

Prior to meeting the Beatles, George Martin was completely responsible for EMI's Parlophone Records label, involving himself in the recording side and in all financial and contractual negotiations. As head of A&R he signed the Beatles to their first contract in the summer of 1962, which allowed for the generous royalty of one British penny per single sold, divided between the four of them and manager Brian Epstein.

As the Beatles and the other "Merseybeat" acts in Epstein's stable prospered, Martin was able to gradually distance himself from purely business concerns and concentrate on studio work. Matters reached a head in the monumental year of 1963 when records that he produced spent thirty-seven weeks at the top of the British singles chart. Matters also reached a head with EMI when, after monetary disagreements, he departed in August 1965 to form his own company—Associated Independent Recording (AIR)—along with some industry colleagues. Thereafter a production deal was struck between AIR and EMI, and in this way Martin continued to produce the Beatles.

Yes, what they say about all those classic Beatles LPs being done on 4-track is true: "The 1-inch 4-track system lasted right through *Pepper* up until *Abbey Road*. We experimented with 8-track in one case on the *White Album* at another studio, but *Abbey Road* didn't have 8-track until *Abbey Road* itself. EMI always tended to be a bit behind independent commercial studios."

At first, studio time was not very forthcoming; it was EMI's policy during the early 60s to allocate a maximum of three recording sessions to each album. It was also generally expected that two single A-sides and two single B-sides be produced from a three-hour session. The Beatles' first album, *Please Please Me*, was recorded in a single day, from ten a.m. to eleven p.m. By the time sessions for what turned out to be the *Sergeant Pepper* album commenced in December 1966, though, things had changed quite drastically. Apart from the band members' elevated positions as recording artists, Martin was in a strong enough position to determine the budget and duration of a project largely by himself.

"I was always very much my own boss at Parlophone," Martin points out, "and always a bit of a maverick; and although I never had much money I did have my own way—and I will say that EMI let me



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CONSEQUENCES: When pushed hard, most tweeters simply fail. Transient detail blurs, and the material itself deforms and breaks down. Other materials can't take the stress, and crack under pressure.

TRUTH: The Frequency Dividing Network in each 4400 Series monitor allows optimum transitions between drivers in both amplitude and phase. The precisely calibrated reference controls let you adjust for personal preferences, room variations, and specific equalization.

CONSEQUENCES: When the interaction between drivers is not carefully orchestrated, the results can be edgy, indistinctive, or simply "false" sound.

TRUTH: All 4400 Studio Monitors feature JBL's exclusive Symmetrical Field Geometry magnetic structure, which dramatically reduces second harmonic

distortion, and is key in producing the 4400's deep, powerful, clean bass.

CONSEQUENCES: Conventional magnetic structures utilize non-symmetrical magnetic fields, which add significantly to distortion due to a nonlinear pull on the voice coil.

TRUTH: 4400 Series monitors also feature special low diffraction grill frame designs, which reduce time delay distortion. Extra-large voice coils and ultra-rigid cast frames result in both mechanical and thermal stability under heavy professional use.

CONSEQUENCES: For reasons of economics, monitors will often use stamped rather than cast frames, resulting in both mechanical distortion and power compression.

TRUTH: The JBL 4400 Studio Monitor Series captures the full dynamic range, extended high frequency, and precise character of your sound as no other monitors in the business. Experience the 4400 Series Studio Monitors at your JBL dealer's today.

CONSEQUENCES: You'll never know the "truth" until you do.



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have my own way. So when it came to planning anything I had the final word. If I wanted to spend five months on doing an album, that was up to me. My neck was on the chopping block if I didn't make it, but I did make it, so there was no problem. I'm sure there was panic in the offices of EMI when we took four months to record *Pepper*, but nobody could say anything to me or threaten me because it was in my charge."

Over the years quite a few different engineers worked sporadically with Martin on the Beatles sessions, but only

two filled this role on a consistent basis. The first was Norman Smith, who engineered on the recordings prior to the *Revolver* album, and who then decided to become a producer himself and pursue work with a new up-and-coming group that had attracted his attention: Pink Floyd. Thereafter, the man who engineered all of the Beatles' albums—with the exception of the troubled *Let It Be* project—was Geoff Emerick. He was an eighteen-year-old tape-op when Martin offered him the chance of a lifetime.

"At first, working with Geoff was a

case of telling him what I wanted and getting it," notes Martin. "Then, not very long after, he knew what I wanted, so I didn't have to say much. To this day, I can work with Geoff and I will know that what I'm getting is what I want."

"It was a great working combination, just incredible," agrees Emerick. "In fact, everyone used to think it was a little bit odd because of the way we'd virtually go through a session without saying two words to each other."

"If there was a new thing Geoff wanted to try out, I'd listen to it and then give him my judgement," says Martin. "On the other hand, it also eventually got to the sort of cooperation where he would say to me, 'Have you noticed that harmony of George's doesn't quite work?' He would overspill into my area, but that was fine, it was a good formula. I think it's much better than a producer/engineer, who's worrying whether that note's in tune at the same time as worrying about what the spill is like on the drum mike. You shouldn't have to do those two things together."

Emerick well remembers "the way Ringo's bass and snare drums sort of thunder out on the 'Sergeant Pepper' theme and the reprise—no one had heard that in those days. The bass drum was just padded with woolen articles; later on we would take the front skin of the bass drum off. Before that, people recorded bass drums purely for the note and the beat value. So it became quite exciting to actually have it right up front and sort of slapped in your face. I used to position the mike about six inches away from the front, angled towards the floor a little bit to stop the wind-blast bashing its diaphragm. Later, when we took the front skin off the bass drum, we would normally place the mike inside, of course. We wanted to get the snap of the hammer hitting the skin, and again we'd stuff the drums with cushions or rags to deaden it and make a solid note within there. That's now normal practice, but it wasn't then."

By *Sergeant Pepper*, the Beatles were getting Martin and Emerick to go even further. "Everything—vocals and instruments—was doctored in some way on *Pepper*," laughs Emerick. "The technical approach up until that time had roughly been that you can't do it, because on paper it looked horrendous! We used to liken it—without any disrespect—to the BBC approach; if a vocal happened to be sibilant on a broadcast, someone would be told off for it! Things we were doing at the time of *Pepper* were horrendous, and would never have been allowed by EMI

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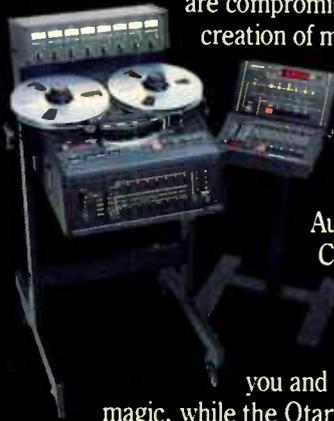
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eighteen months prior. We were driving the equipment to its limit.

"Like Lennon's voice on 'A Day In The Life'—that was achieved with tape echo. We used to send the feed from the vocal mike into a mono tape machine. They had separate record and replay heads, so we'd be recording the vocal on the tape, taking the replay and feeding it back through the machine itself. There was a big pot on the front of the machines, and we used to turn up the record level until it started to slightly feed back on itself, and gave this sort of twittery vocal

sound. Of course John was hearing that echo in his cans as he was singing—it wasn't put on after—and he used that as a rhythmic feel for singing. That tape echo on the vocal always suited John's voice, because he had a cutting voice that used to trigger it so well. For certain things, such as the background vocals on 'Yellow Submarine,' we always used to use live chambers. EMI did have echo plates then, but we never used them.

"Technically *Pepper* still stands up as the best album, knowing what we were going through," Emerick continues. "I

mean, although it was a bit laborious and it can't be done today, every time we either changed tape or we copied something, everything was meticulously lined up and re-biased—you can't do that now with twenty tracks of analog; no one's going to line up twenty tracks every time you throw another tape on, even though the Ampex machine does it automatically. No one bothers anymore. But you just had to be disciplined—it wasn't that hard—and that's the only way we kept that quality maintained throughout the album. It's still the work I'm most proud of, and get the most excitement from.

"On *Pepper* we were using the luxury of utilizing one track for bass overdub on some of the things. I can't quite remember what tracks we did that on, because some of the time we actually did four to four, but not on all of them. We used to stay behind after the sessions, and Paul would dub all the bass on. I used to use a valve C12 microphone on Paul's amp, sometimes on figure-eight, and sometimes positioned up to eight feet away, believe it or not. DI wasn't used on the guitars until *Abbey Road*—I've always been against direct injection; it sounds wishy-washy to me and you don't get the power of the amp. Although it's rich in content it's also feeble, but I suppose it goes with the transistorized sound of today."

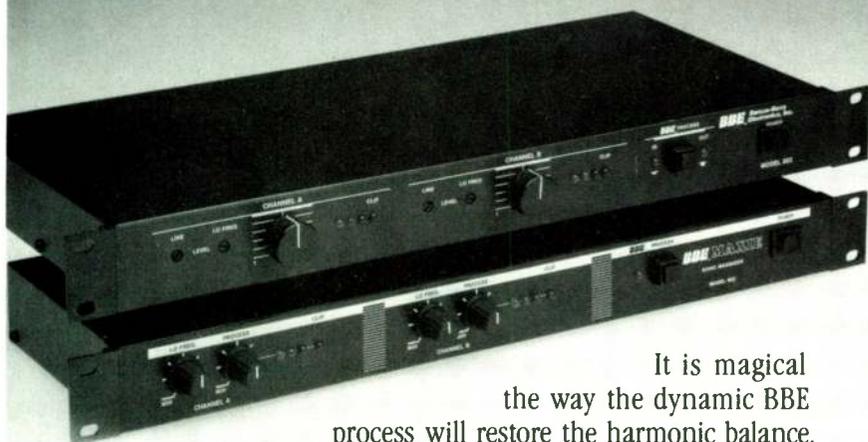
Tracks such as "Within You Without You" presented problems in the recording technique, due to the concern then caused to musicians when hearing their gentle, quiet instruments—such as tabla, dilruba and tambouras—being amplified much like electric guitars. Close miking, compression and equalization were required, and for the latter the top of the REID console lifted up and an eq box was plugged in. This had the settings "pop" and "classical"; the assumption then was that the high top-end reached by orchestras could not be attained on pop records.

Emerick is especially proud of his contribution to "A Day In The Life": "On the orchestral rush at the end of the track, by careful fader manipulation I was gradually building the crescendo to a peak. My technique then was a little bit psychological, because I would bring it up to a point and then slightly fade it back in level, as I had a long time to do so. It was just a case of really feeling the music, more than the technical side."

Peter Vince, who engineered on the track "It's Getting Better," mainly remembers the *Pepper* sessions for their occasional state of pandemonium: "Lots
continued on page 68

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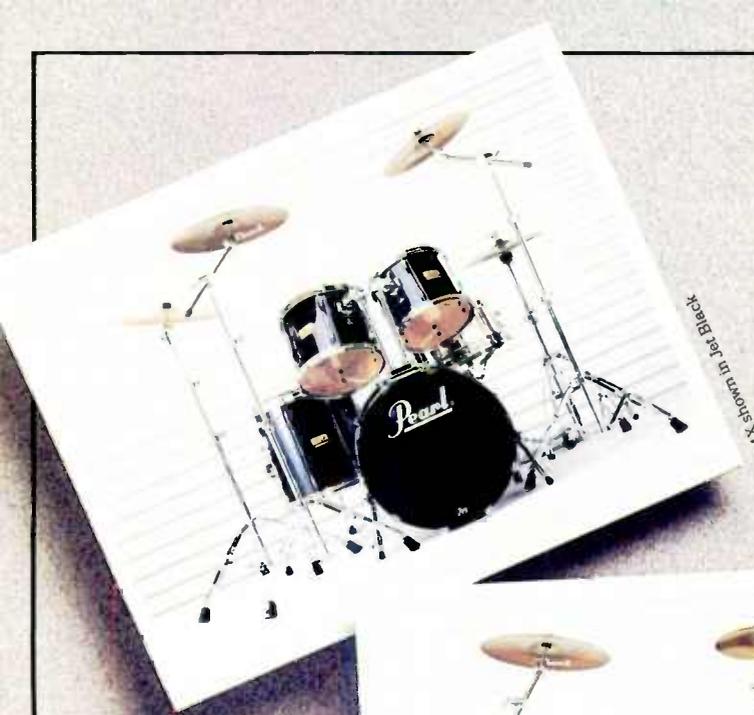
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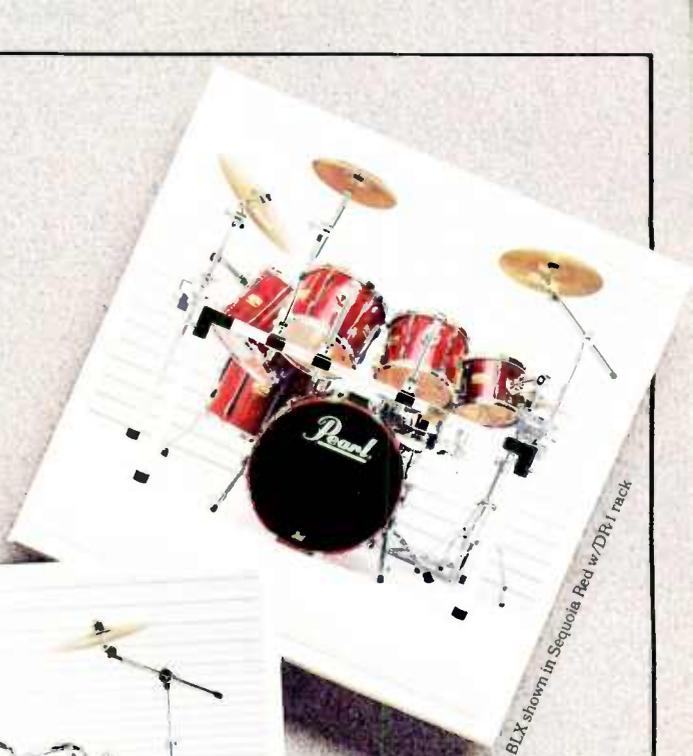
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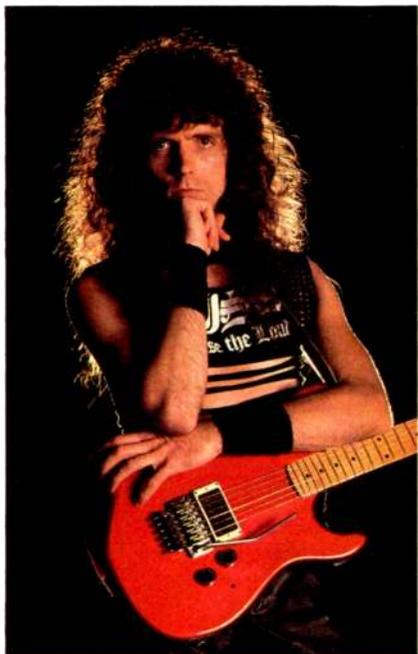
Tommy Lee - Mötley Crüe



Heavy metal workaholic

By Larry Nager

DAVID T. CHASTAIN



"I think I sound more European than American. American heavy metal is more interested in commerciality."

DAVID T. CHASTAIN JUST MAY BE the hardest-working man in the heavy-metal business, and it's finally starting to pay off. The Ohio-based guitarist has recorded five albums in the past two years: three featuring his studio band, Chastain, and two by his performing group, CJSS. The records, released on small labels like Leviathan and Shrapnel, have been making noise, receiving airplay on America's heavier metal radio outlets and garnering clippings in metal mags.

But until now Chastain, like Jerry Lewis, has gotten most of his fan mail from France. And Germany, England and Holland, where the heavy-metal rags—the primary source of rock news in those government-controlled radio wastelands—have been falling all over themselves about the guitarist for years.

The French fanzine *Enfer* has called him a "genius soloist," "a future star of heavy metal" and, in the days of Halleymania, "The Cincinnati Comet"; England's *Kerrang!* praised his "amazing, fast-fingered axe-ploits" and said he "makes Yngwie Malmsteen sound like Nik Kershaw"; and Holland's *Sledgehammer* gushed over his "unforgettably great solos."

Now American headbangers are spreading the word, thanks largely to Chastain's tireless efforts. Jimmy Swagart and Tipper Gore may be all shook up over heavy metal's Satan connection, but Chastain is one hard-rocker who worships the Protestant work ethic. The second half of 1986 saw him put out two LPs—*Ruler Of The Wasteland* by the band Chastain, produced by Steve Fontano (WASP, Icon, Billy Sheehan) for Mike Varney's Shrapnel label; and the self-produced *Praise The Loud* (Leviathan Records) featuring CJSS. He's just released a new Chastain album, *The Seventh Of Never*, and he's already writing material for an as-yet-untitled solo instrumental debut due this fall.

While he's labored, he's seen his drummers hit the big time. Fred Coury, who pounded out the brontosaurus rhythms on the first Chastain LP, *Mystery Of Illusion*, is now a member of the multi-platinum pop-metal band Cinderella. Ken Mary, who worked on the other two Chastain albums, is the drummer for Alice Cooper's comeback tour.

But Chastain can take satisfaction in the fact that he's a self-made guitar hero.

He insists on handling his own business and working with independent record companies. So far, he's avoided relocating to the Spandex capital of the world, L.A., instead working out of Cincinnati, hardly a city known for its hard rock. And unlike Bon Jovi and the rest of the current crop of American pop-metallers, he refuses to take the MTV-video, three-minute single route to success, preferring the Gothic *Sturm und Drang* of the European metal bands.

"I think I sound more European than American," Chastain admits, trying to explain his early acceptance overseas. "American heavy metal is more interested in commerciality. Most of the European metal bands are not that worried about it. In America, Ratt and Motley Crue and Twisted Sister are just gigantic and they're not really that big over there. There's definitely more classical influences in the lead guitar players over there. You're not going to hear them play 'Smokin' In The Boys Room.'"

Of his two bands, CJSS is a bit more American—and commercial. "CJSS is somewhat concerned with getting airplay," he admits. "Whereas the Chastain stuff is more, as Varney likes to call it, 'musical masturbation.' There's a lot going on and nobody's worrying about getting a hit single out of it. He just wants me to get as far out as possible."

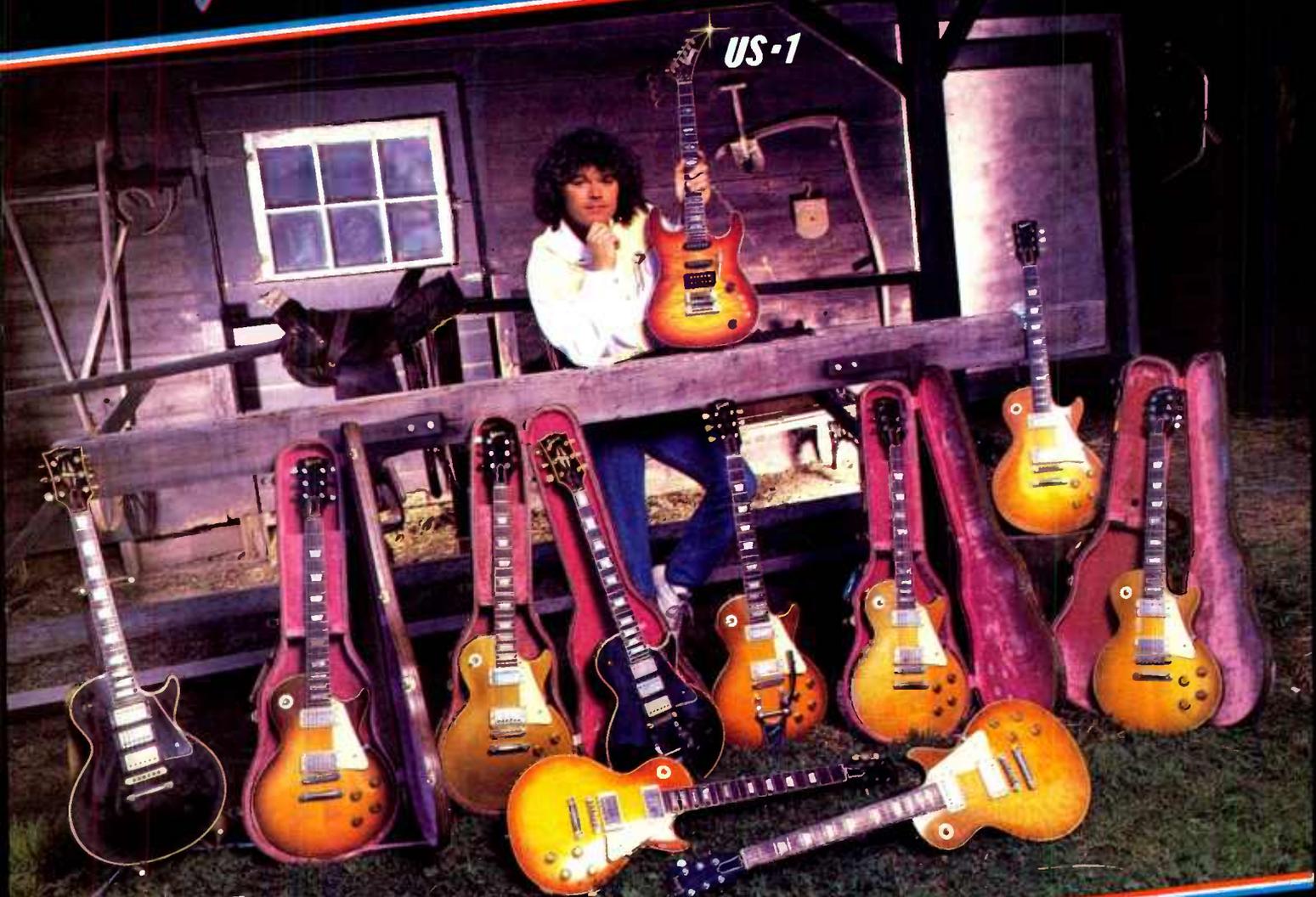
Unlike the Chastain band's metal-for-metal's sake, CJSS thought it had a potential hit on its hands with its remake of Led Zeppelin's "Communication Breakdown," on its first LP, *World Gone Mad* (Leviathan).

"We just tried to make it sound like what they would sound like if they had come out now and had influences from the 70s and 80s, instead of the 50s and 60s. We just tried to make it sound fresh, like what Van Halen did with 'You Really Got Me.'"

"And I think we achieved that. The performance is good. It sounds good coming over the radio. But the stations we wanted to hit with it would not play it. To be honest we were told so many times, 'It's a lot better than the original and if we play it it would be sacrilegious.'"

Even without much airplay, Chastain's two bands have enjoyed respectable sales, particularly for independent label acts. The first Chastain LP, *Mystery Of Illusion* (Shrapnel), has sold almost 30,000 copies; CJSS's more recent *World Gone Mad* has already passed that. Recent licensing arrangements have made Chastain's records available in Japan, Europe and South America. But sales figures don't tell the whole story.

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Chastain insists.

"When you're in the independent market, what you actually sell and what you get paid for are two entirely different things. A lot of these distributors are not the world's best on paying up, and if they think you're a fledgling independent they won't pay you at all, thinking you'll go out of business."

But Chastain still prefers the independent route to dealing with major labels. When Spike, his working band prior to CJSS, released an LP, RCA Records put out feelers about picking it up. "We were tagged along by RCA into thinking they were gonna buy it, so we made no efforts to release it nationally."

With no record sales outside the Midwest, Spike's *The Price Of Pleasure* quickly went out of print. Chastain says it will soon be back, rereleased with the addition of a sticker reading "Early Recordings of David T. Chastain."

Spike was the reason Chastain left his hometown of Atlanta, Georgia eleven years ago. After playing the local bar band circuit, he got the offer to join the Cincinnati-based hard-rock quartet. It seemed like a good opportunity—Spike toured regionally and there was talk of a possible record deal. With a set list made

up almost entirely of original material, the band made a name for itself packing clubs throughout the Midwest. Thanks to a well-connected manager, the band landed the opening slot when Black Sabbath and Blue Oyster Cult's Black 'n' Blue tour played Cincinnati's Riverfront Coliseum. But Chastain's ticket out of Atlanta ran into a dead end.

"We just wound up in that ridiculous club scene which you get into and it's really hard to get out. You get used to making your \$200 a week."

When the band's LP flopped, it was the final nail in Spike's coffin. "A couple years ago, we just decided that Spike was too synonymous with being a bar band and we'd exhausted all of our record connections, so we thought it was better that we just start from scratch."

So Chastain started CJSS, a band that includes one of his Spike bandmates—drummer Les Sharp—along with bassist Mike Skimmerhorn and lead singer Russell Jinkens. At the same time, Chastain took Varney up on his offer of producing an LP showcasing his fretwork and the sessions began for Chastain's *Mystery Of Illusion*. In a world filled with fingerboard-tapping, twang-bar twiddling Eddie Van Halen clones,

Chastain stood out from the crowd and people began to notice.

"One of the things that makes my style different is that I've never picked a lead off a record. Everybody goes, 'Oh, I know every lick Eddie Van Halen ever did, every lick Yngwie ever did.' Well, I don't know any lick by anybody. When I first started playing I was in a band about a week and we were out playing all original material. So I've never been influenced heavily by anybody."

Chastain does admit to a few idols. "I started playing in the early 70s: basically Black Sabbath and Cream and Hendrix. I listened to psychedelic music, early heavy metal. I love those twenty-minute Cream jams. And there were a lot of bands in Atlanta that never really made it that were probably bigger rock guitar influences than the big guys, 'cause I could go out and sit in the front row and see these young players that were really, really good. But nobody ever heard of them. They just came and went."

"As I evolved, it went up. Obviously Hendrix was an early influence. John McLaughlin in the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Allan Holdsworth. Although I don't play like him, if I could listen to one guitar player it would be Allan Holdsworth."

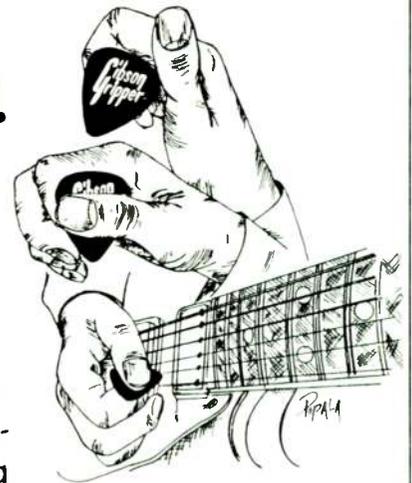
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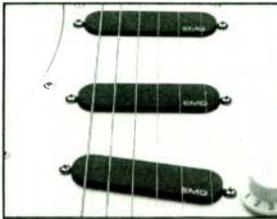
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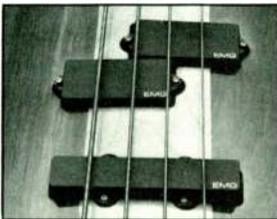
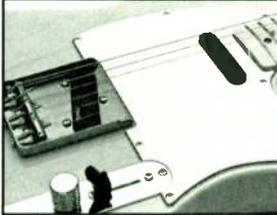
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Those influences are the key to what sets Chastain apart from the headbanging herd. "I'm trying to approach the metal context from more of a fusionistic angle, as far as lead guitar playing goes. Like Malmsteen wants to sound like Paganini, I would prefer, even though I'm using those type scales, to come more from a fusion feel where I have a lot of chromatic stuff in it."

While Chastain's previously recorded work gives a hint of his metal-fusion approach, he says his instrumental LP will be the real ear-opener. "It will be sort of like Dixie Dregs goes metal. It's pretty sophisticated. There's a lot of time changes."

CJSS' recent *Ruler Of The Wasteland* includes a taste of what the Chastain instrumental project should be like. "Thunder And Lightning" is a guitar showpiece that packs more key changes and time signatures into its four minutes and five seconds than most metal acts go through in an entire career.

Chastain's sophisticated approach is drawing increasing legions of fans. His two most recent LPs are selling faster than the earlier albums, but sales of all five continue to mount. That may force him to rethink his attitude toward the

continued on page 133

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His tremolo unit is a Floyd Rose ("It takes ten minutes to get them properly tuned. But when you do, they stay in tune for a week"). Strings are also DiMarzios: .008 to .040, specially made for the Floyd Rose tremolo system. Picks are ten-year-old Fender heavys ("I bought a gross of them back then. They're classic picks and I'm about to run out").

Effects include Ibanez harmonizer and delay units with a Yamaha reverb and an Eventide harmonizer on the soundboard. For amplification, Chastain says it's Lab Series heads played through—need you ask?—a Marshall stack. "When we play live, we have like thirty Marshall cabinets up there. We don't use a lot of them, but we have them up there for effect. When you're competing against the big boys, you have to look like the big boys." Much to the roadies' relief, the dummy Marshalls are empty.



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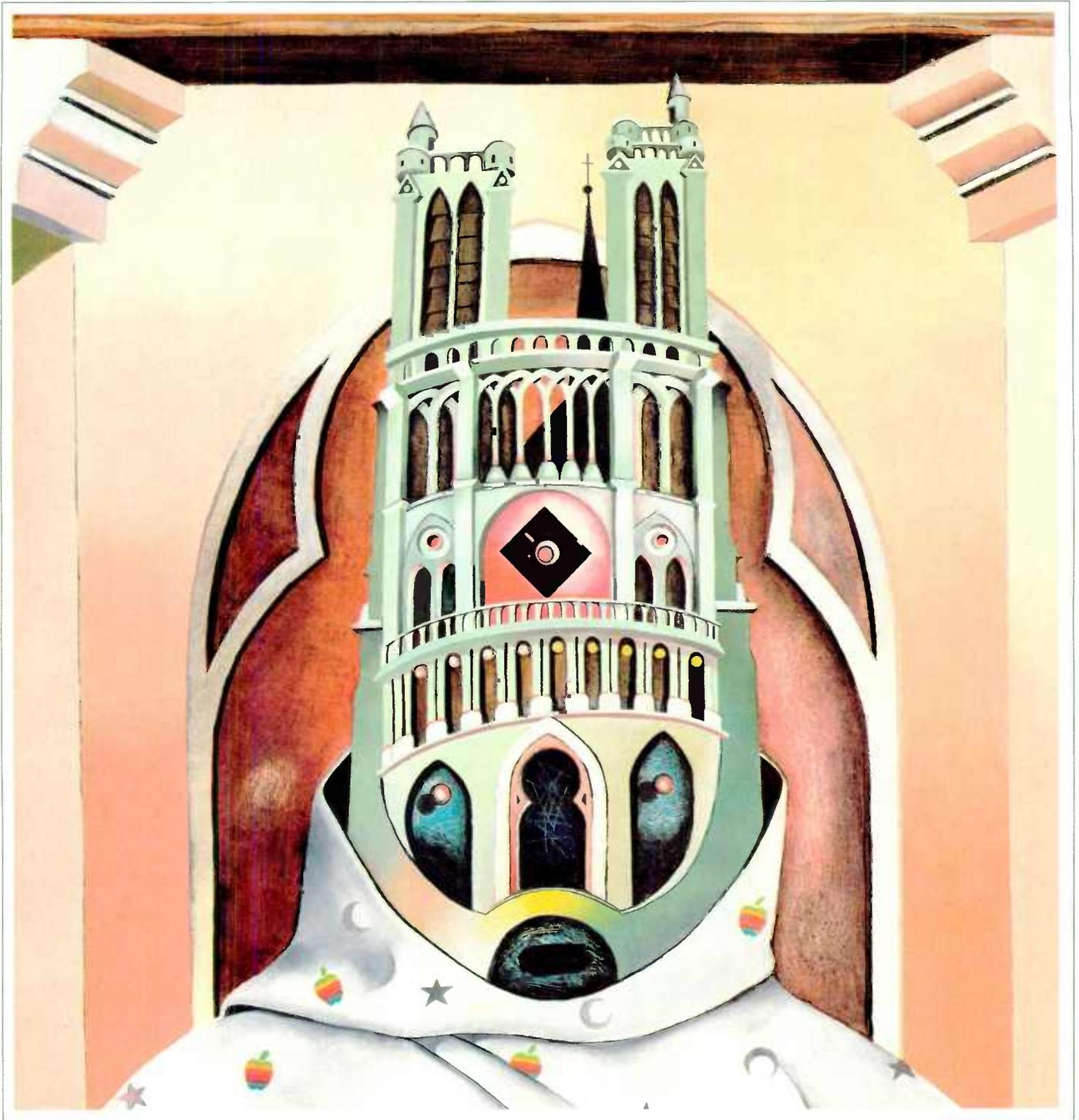
The cult originated in the corridors of Corporate Power, which, of course, explains a lot. Including their Second Great Tenet: The more loot a computer commands you to lay on the sacrificial altar, the more Divine it is. As with all cults, there's a great deal of elitism going down here. In a tone that's equal parts eggheaded smugness and macho swagger, the Initiated will tell you there are only two *real* Deities: the IBM PC and the Apple Macintosh. (Yeah, the Mac is easier to use than the IBM, but its price tag still allows it admission to the Pantheon.) Comparative religionists note a parallel phenomenon in the Cult of Unimaginative Auto Purchasers, who restrict their worship to the BMW and Mercedes Benz.

Want to thumb your nose at all this crappola and still take advantage of everything a personal computer can

do for your music? It's easy. Buy an Atari ST. The Culties *hate* it. Why? That's simple. It's an inexpensive, squalid-looking gray box that's just as powerful as their four-figure thunderbolt chucks. (You can buy a 520 ST for about \$500 and a 1040 ST for about \$700.) And it isn't even hard to use. It also has the effrontery to come with built-in MIDI ports. It's an iconoclast. A rock 'n' roll computer.

At first, the Culties could fall back on the standard defense: "Oh, there's no software for the ST." But that one has long since gone moldy. Especially when it comes to music software—particularly sequencer programs. And that, if you haven't twigged by now, is what this article is all about.

At last count, there were at least three professional ST sequencers in the stores and ready to follow you home: Hybrid Arts' MIDITrack ST, the Steinberg Pro 24 (distributed by the Russ Jones Marketing Group) and Dr. T's Keyboard Controlled Sequencer (KCS). At least two more—the Sonus MasterPiece and Transform XTrack—are just around the corner and



Hallelujah! Sequence without
sin or sainthood on the
Atari ST, the rock 'n' roll computer.

By Alan Di Perna

may even be out by the time you read this. Not enough for you? Well, Hybrid, Steinberg, Dr. T and Sonus also have affordable sequencer programs for entry-level MIDI neophytes. And programs like the MIDISoft Studio and MIDI Play (Electronic Music Publishing House, Inc.) provide further under-\$100 options. *Still* not convinced the ST's the real thing? Maybe you'd be interested in some of the music scoring/sequencer programs that are starting to appear, such as Dr. T's Copyist, Quiet Lion's Mu-Script, the forthcoming Transform

ing audio signals on tape. The ST professional sequencers I've checked out all make use of the multitrack metaphor (although all offer non-real step time entry as well). But some are more successful than others at imitating the standard Studer.

The Steinberg Pro 24 (Vers. 1.1) is perhaps the most successful in this respect. Maybe it's that German penchant for symbolic thinking. The Pro 24 *does* come to us from the land of Goethe, Wagner and Nina Hagen, where the ST caught on earlier than it did here. With

recording. This is done by specifying the beginning and end points of the sequence in bars, beats and "ticks" (or pulses, clocks or steps—the nomenclature varies). The Pro 24 has a resolution of 96 pulses-per-quarter-note (ppqn). But fear not, earthbound child of Woman, these values can be set by clicking with the mouse, dragging a cursor along a scroll bar or—if you're so inclined—good old-fashioned typing.

At every turn, the Pro 24 provides options for those of us who would rather not commune with the Pythagorean perfection of Arithmetic. Once you've recorded a sequence, you can give it a nice cozy name. (I prefer ones like "Herbert" and "Philomena" to cold, impersonal epithets like "Verse Riff 1," but to each his own.) So if you want to edit a sequence later on, you can call it by name—like a faithful dog—instead of memorizing a bunch of cabalistic sequence numbers.

The beginning and end points of each sequence on a track can be assigned to any of the ST's 10 function keys for instantaneous auto cue location (a must-have on any pro sequencer program). The same kind of mouse clicking, cursor dragging or typing operations can also be used to set in and out points for automated punch-ins (another must-have). But if you prefer a more spontaneous approach, you can also punch in manually at any time during a playback simply by hitting the Record control.

Beam Team is another software company that began its terrestrial existence in the Hyperborean Northland of Germany. And this has enabled it to spring up fully grown on the American scene almost overnight—just like Athena popping out of Zeus' brow. Well, almost. Transform Xtrack—Beam Team's ST sequencer—wasn't quite completed at the time of this writing. But it too will feature mouse-driven transport controls, and what the company describes as "an unlimited number of tracks." (Talk about your Omnipotence.) Beam Team seems fairly committed to cutting out the usual dickey-poo that goes with computer use. For example, the Xtrack will be fully interactive with the company's other ST programs. So you can, for instance, install the Xtrack and Xsyn patch editor/librarian on the same disc. This will enable you to edit patches while you're working on a track and have the luxury of hearing the patch in the context of the track you're editing. All without the usual, tedious "disc-jockeying."

The Sonus MasterPiece is another sequencer that was not quite ready for



Paradise cost: Atari 1040 ST with Hybrid MIDITrack main screen

X-Notes and Sonus' imminent Super Score Writer.

Since it *is* such an irreverent little upstart, Atari's apostate isn't afraid to mimic the gods. It rips off the Mac's convenience features (a mouse, pull-down menus, scroll bars, etc.) and the "classic" IBM PC-style function keys. The best ST sequencing programs take full advantage of this presumptuous combination.

Data Recording: The Big Tape Metaphor

As I said, most musicians wouldn't be caught dead chanting the Ritual Creed:

*Hail Computer. You're Supreme!
We love it when you treat us mean.*

So ST sequencing software generally tries to spare you the bloodstained ordeals of traditional computer worship. For example, the celestial CRT screen actually deigns to appear on earth in a form that won't frighten musician mortals. It disguises itself as a lowly multitrack tape machine. Inputting of MIDI data is set up *as though* we were record-

ing audio signals on tape. The ST professional sequencers I've checked out all make use of the multitrack metaphor (although all offer non-real step time entry as well). But some are more successful than others at imitating the standard Studer. The Pro 24 *does* come to us from the land of Goethe, Wagner and Nina Hagen, where the ST caught on earlier than it did here. With recording. This is done by specifying the beginning and end points of the sequence in bars, beats and "ticks" (or pulses, clocks or steps—the nomenclature varies). The Pro 24 has a resolution of 96 pulses-per-quarter-note (ppqn). But fear not, earthbound child of Woman, these values can be set by clicking with the mouse, dragging a cursor along a scroll bar or—if you're so inclined—good old-fashioned typing. At every turn, the Pro 24 provides options for those of us who would rather not commune with the Pythagorean perfection of Arithmetic. Once you've recorded a sequence, you can give it a nice cozy name. (I prefer ones like "Herbert" and "Philomena" to cold, impersonal epithets like "Verse Riff 1," but to each his own.) So if you want to edit a sequence later on, you can call it by name—like a faithful dog—instead of memorizing a bunch of cabalistic sequence numbers. The beginning and end points of each sequence on a track can be assigned to any of the ST's 10 function keys for instantaneous auto cue location (a must-have on any pro sequencer program). The same kind of mouse clicking, cursor dragging or typing operations can also be used to set in and out points for automated punch-ins (another must-have). But if you prefer a more spontaneous approach, you can also punch in manually at any time during a playback simply by hitting the Record control. Beam Team is another software company that began its terrestrial existence in the Hyperborean Northland of Germany. And this has enabled it to spring up fully grown on the American scene almost overnight—just like Athena popping out of Zeus' brow. Well, almost. Transform Xtrack—Beam Team's ST sequencer—wasn't quite completed at the time of this writing. But it too will feature mouse-driven transport controls, and what the company describes as "an unlimited number of tracks." (Talk about your Omnipotence.) Beam Team seems fairly committed to cutting out the usual dickey-poo that goes with computer use. For example, the Xtrack will be fully interactive with the company's other ST programs. So you can, for instance, install the Xtrack and Xsyn patch editor/librarian on the same disc. This will enable you to edit patches while you're working on a track and have the luxury of hearing the patch in the context of the track you're editing. All without the usual, tedious "disc-jockeying." The Sonus MasterPiece is another sequencer that was not quite ready for

Teutonic thoroughness, the Pro 24's main screen covers every transport and track function you'd find on a multitrack tape machine. There's a full set of transport controls (Rec, Play, Stop, FF, Rew, FFF, Fast-Rewind and Return-to-Zero), 24 "record enable buttons" which you use to select one of the sequencer's 24 tracks for recording, editing and muting, and even a row of 24 plasma meter-style displays which read out MIDI velocity levels for each track. All of these recorder-style controls can be accessed via the mouse, and many can be controlled from its keyboard as well.

But even great Jupiter's mortal disguises outlived their usefulness at a certain point. And so it is with ST sequencers. Unlike tracks on tape, each track on the Pro 24 (and the other programs we'll be discussing) can be subdivided into a number of separate sequences. Sequences on different tracks can have different lengths and each can repeat and loop with complete disregard for what's happening on other tracks. Try *that* on multitrack tape.

The Pro 24 does ask you to be just as meticulous as *it* is and define the length of your sequence before you begin

RANDOM SAMPLING

Volume I

Notes and News from Kurzweil Music Systems

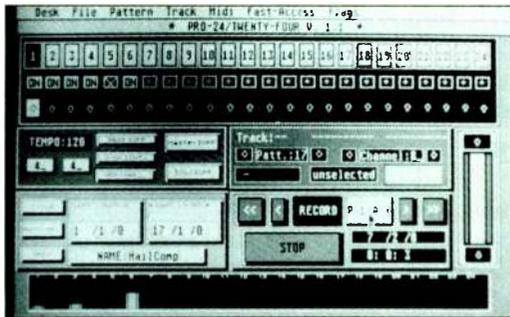
Issue No. 1

Introducing RANDOM SAMPLING—from *Kurzweil Music Systems*. **RS** really isn't an ad or an editorial. It's a synthesis of the two...with a touch of fun so we don't get bored. You'll be seeing **RS** in music magazines everywhere...and at your local Kurzweil dealer...so you can keep up with all the special news from Kurzweil! **SPEAKING OF SPECIAL**...how about the new **Sound Modeling Program™** for the Kurzweil 150 Fourier Synthesizer? Using the 150's additive synthesis capabilities, **SMP** manipulates the frequencies and amplitude envelopes of up to 64 partials right on the screen of your Apple IIe. The result: an infinite number of **new sounds!** **SMP's** price is just as incredible...**FREE!** You do need Version 1.6 software for your 150FS...but that's free too. If you haven't checked out **SMP**...well...what can we say? **TAKE FIVE**...a quick five...because **Patrick Moraz** is joining the **Moody Blues** tour June 12-July 17...fully "**Kurzweiled**"...and again August 24-September 6. Can't catch the tour? Patrick's "**Human Interface**" solo album is due out in early June...and like he says, it's "about 90% Kurzweil." Now that's music to your ears! **TAKE FIVE, TOO**...with Advanced Electronic Music Production's **Phil Shenale**. Using a Kurzweil K250, Phil's programmed keyboard

and percussion parts for movies like **Little Shop of Horrors**...major studios like **NBC** and **Tri-Star**...stars like **Rick Springfield** and **Barry Manilow**...and **Jack-in-the-Box** and other commercials. Phil starts a new **Olivia Newton-John** album in June. He says, "The Kurzweil is at every session—always." Next on Phil's list? "I want to expand **AEMP** to 24 tracks...and add one or two **250RMX's!**" **DID SOMEBODY SAY 250RMX?**...All right. We knew the **250RMX** would be hot...but how hot can you get?! We've kicked production right in the **ROMs** to meet the demand. So if you've already ordered a **250RMX**, don't worry. It's on the way...soon! After all, our **ROM** wasn't built in a day. **KURZWEIL OWNERS**...WHERE ARE YOU?...What?!? You haven't sent in your warranty card? How are we supposed to send you our quarterly newsletter and update notices? Send your name, address, and Kurzweil serial number to: **Kurzweil Music Systems, Inc., 411 Waverley Oaks Rd., Waltham, MA 02154**. And if you need to locate a Kurzweil User Group let us know and we'll help you find one. ...So what do you think about **RS**? We want your **feedback!** We want to hear from you! Who knows? You might just see your name in print! Now wouldn't that be news?!?

release at the time of this writing. But I was able to get a sneak preview at the Sonus headquarters. Here too, I found the Big Tape Metaphor lounging comfortably at a large desk. The MasterPiece's main screen displays 32 "record enable buttons" (one for each track) and a full set of transport controls.

But Sonus has adapted the tape metaphor to its own purposes by adding an extra set of FF/Rewind controls. These



Steinberg Pro 24 main screen

are used to access cue points. The cue system is structured something like tabs on a typewriter. You can set up as many cue points as you need (to a resolution of 192 ppqn) and move back and forth among them using the extra FF and Rew icons. (But for the Old Believers out there, this function can be achieved via keystroke commands, as can every MasterPiece function.) You can also set in and out points for automated punches (one per pass) or do real time punches (also one per pass) on the fly.

So you see, it isn't always necessary for a sequencer program to imitate *everything* a tape machine does. Like the personal computer itself, multitrack-style functions are just a means to an end. Nothing to get all swoony over. The 60-track Hybrid Arts MIDITrack ST is a perfect case in point. It takes the multitrack metaphor in a slightly different direction. Half the main screen is devoted to a master track list, which is also used to select tracks for recording and editing. (On the Pro 24 and MasterPiece, you have to go to a pull-down menu to see a track list.) On the other side of the main screen, there's an abbreviated set of tape transport-style controls: Stop, Play, Pause and Rewind (accessible via mouse or keyboard).

Unlike the other sequencers we've looked at so far, the MIDITrack has no separate Record control. Nor is it necessary to specify in advance how many bars you intend to record. You simply select a track, put the machine in Play and start wailing. If you like what

you've played, you click on a "Keep" button before rewinding. There are plenty of Idiot Boxes and a Track Protect function to keep you from accidentally erasing a track you've already recorded.

The MIDITrack ST is, in many respects, one of the easiest and most fun ST programs I've played with. Helpful on-screen prompts guide you through any operation that involves more than two steps. And the graphics are a scream. The punch-in icon is a boxing glove (the program lets you set up one pair of punch points and one pair of cue points to a resolution of 96 ppqn). The MIDI channels are displayed in black octagons that look just like *TV Guide* channel boxes. During playback, the track list flashes a series of non-alphabetic characters (!@#\$%&*). It looks like the program is letting you have it with a string of comic strip obscenities. But don't worry; you haven't pissed off the Almighty Computer or anything. The characters are actually part of a code that tells you how many notes are being sounded at any given time on that track.

But perhaps my favorite graphic is the metronome/tempo icon. The metronome's baton actually flicks back and forth with waggish abandon. Anyone who has ever tried to follow the anemic audio click put out by the ST's undernourished speaker will immediately see how helpful this visual aid can be.

In its original version (1.0) Dr. T's KCS seemed specifically designed to quell this kind of frivolity. An adaptation of Dr. T's Commodore sequencer, the ST KCS betrayed its origins at every turn. A kind of multi-track style recording was offered by the program's Track Mode (one of three operational modes). But there were no mouse-driven functions, no transport controls, nor any of the other convenience features we associate with ST use. Instead, there were a lot of arbitrary "function key" assignments to memorize. In short, the whole thing was a throwback to that Old Time Computer Religion.

*Hail, Omniscient Memory Buffer!
Give it to us; make us suffer.*

But the Doctor and his minions have since realized that these rock 'n' roll punks who buy computers today have no damned respect for *that* sort of thing. So they've launched an all-out drive to adapt the KCS for all the little softies. Version 1.5 of the program, they promise, will remedy all. In the meantime, they're releasing a series of "interim" KCS incarnations, of which Version 1.2 is the

latest. The track page is indeed quite an improvement. There are mouse-driven transport controls (Rec, Stop, Pause and Play). And the KCS is one ST sequencer that has always provided a visual *and* an audio "click." Tempo and one pair of Cue points can now be set more easily, but tempi are available only in pre-set increments. On the software I received, for example, the tempo jumped from 128 to 131 BPMs (beats per minute); there seemed to be no way to get 129 or 130.

So, as of Version 1.2, the KCS is on the right track (ooof); but it hasn't quite reached the station yet. Like a properly stern and patriarchal deity, the program still spends a lot of time telling you what to do. For example, you *still* aren't allowed to select which of the KCS's 48 tracks you will record on. (Hey, what do you want? Free will or something?) Instead, the lowest-numbered empty track is always in record-ready mode. And now that transport controls have been added to the track page, the on-screen display for tracks 37 through 48 has been removed. These are tracks, moreover, which must be accessed via an occult alphabetic code instead of their numbers. But you shouldn't write the KCS off just because of its track page. As we'll see, it offers quite a few editing features that you can't get anywhere else.

And some of you will prefer the KCS' punch-in system. You don't punch in on the same track you recorded. You mute



Dr. T's KCS note list edit screen

the appropriate portion of that track, record your "punch-in" part on a new track and merge the two tracks. (Maximum resolution, incidentally, is 96 ppqn.) The procedure takes you through a few more steps than a straight punch-in would, but it gives you the luxury of being able to keep your original performance if you decide not to replace it after all.

As I said, the ability to do automated punch-ins and chase to at least one cue point are absolutely *comme il faut*, and

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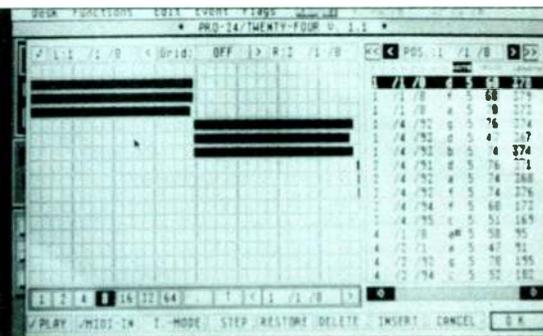
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you can find them on all the programs mentioned above. Other important track/transport management functions that they all provide include auto-rewind, step recording, track mute and the ability to loop patterns in real time so that you can jam over them. At the professional level, the features are all there. So it's just a matter of how the software draws on the ST's resources to make those features available. Like Ike and Tina's rendition of "Proud Mary," they can make it nice-and-easy or they can make it rough. It's a question of style, really. And the ST market offers some-



Steinberg Pro 24 note edit screen

thing for every PC persuasion... Orthodox, Conservative or Reformed.

Note Editing: Listing the Night Away

You may get to feeling pretty transplendent once you've penetrated the mysteries of data recording and you've got a few tracks saved to disc. (And perhaps rightfully so.) But recording is merely the first chamber in the mystic pyramid of computer sequencing. The editing phase is where the truly eerie metamorphoses take place. Half-baked compositional ideas transform into well-wrought confections, and ham-fisted performances take on sylphid subtleties.

There are three basic levels of editing you should look for before you buy into an ST sequencing program. First is the ability to edit the individual notes you've played—whether it be to correct errors or make compositional changes. Second, there's editing at the overall track level. And third, there's the job of assembling and reassembling your tracks and sequences into a complete song.

If you're going to do any editing on a sequencer program, chances are very good you'll be dealing with event lists. They're only a *little* less inevitable than death or taxes, and maybe only a little

more fun. (Some may disagree with this last observation.) Event lists vary in nature and complexity, but they all boil down to this: a vertical column of numbers representing every note, or MIDI event, in your track, sequence or song.

Part of the Pro 24's Note Edit page is devoted to an event list that specifies each note's position (in bars, beats and "ticks"), pitch, velocity and duration. With this, you get a visual aid: a grid that can display 8 quarter notes' worth of music (two 4/4 measures). Notes are represented as black strips on the grid. The horizontal length of each strip corresponds to the duration of the note. Using the mouse, you can change the length of the strip—and thus the duration of the note—or move it to a new location, so it occurs at a different time.

Either way, it's a quick, effective editing system...if you keep one piece of advice in mind: Try to record short, preferably two-bar, sequences at the outset, if you know you're going to be doing a lot of editing. The editing screens on most ST sequencers can only accommodate about two 4/4 bars' worth of music. If you're listening to playback of a sequence that's four or five times longer than that, it's easy to get disoriented.

The Transform Xtrack is also slated to include grid-style note editing facilities. And in its first commercial release, the Sonus MasterPiece will come with event list editing. The company plans to make grid editing available as an optional update, reasoning that tastes in note editing systems diverge as dramatically as tastes in alcoholic beverages.

Event lists come on even stronger in the KCS program. In Track Mode, you use an event list to perform note edits on each individual track. But in Open Mode, an event list is used to edit all the tracks that make up an entire sequence or song. (More on this later.) The lists are identical in format. Each event in the track, sequence or song is given its own ID number, measure number and position number. The list also gives a MIDI channel assignment for the event and specifies what type of event it is (note on, controller command, etc.). In the case of note-on events, the list specifies the pitch (A4, G2, etc.), velocity and duration. But all this is just a light aperitif. The KCS' ability to list events other than notes gives it editing powers far beyond those of mortal sequencers.

The actual editing procedure on the KCS is very much like using an ST word processing program. You move the cursor to the value you want to change and type the new value over it.

Hold me! Squeeze me! Drag me! Delete me!

And now we come to track edit functions. All the sequencers I examined provide a whole slew of them. Basic features include the ability to quantize tracks (to correct timing errors), transpose, merge and delete tracks, copy one track onto another, and scale the MIDI velocity values of the track. The latter can come in very handy when you're building a single track out of many short patterns that you've recorded at different times and in different states of inspiration/frustration/intoxication. Your keyboard velocity may vary markedly from pattern to pattern, but you can use velocity scaling to make the whole track sound like one continuous, consistent performance.

To these basic track editing functions, the Pro 24 adds some other useful ones, such as the ability to delay a track (handy when there's a MIDI lag in the system or if you want to set up an "echo" effect), alter the MIDI volume, or split the track so that high notes play one MIDI channel and low notes another. Many of these functions are accessed via a Track Info box, which lets you apply them to either the overall track or to just one sequence on the track.

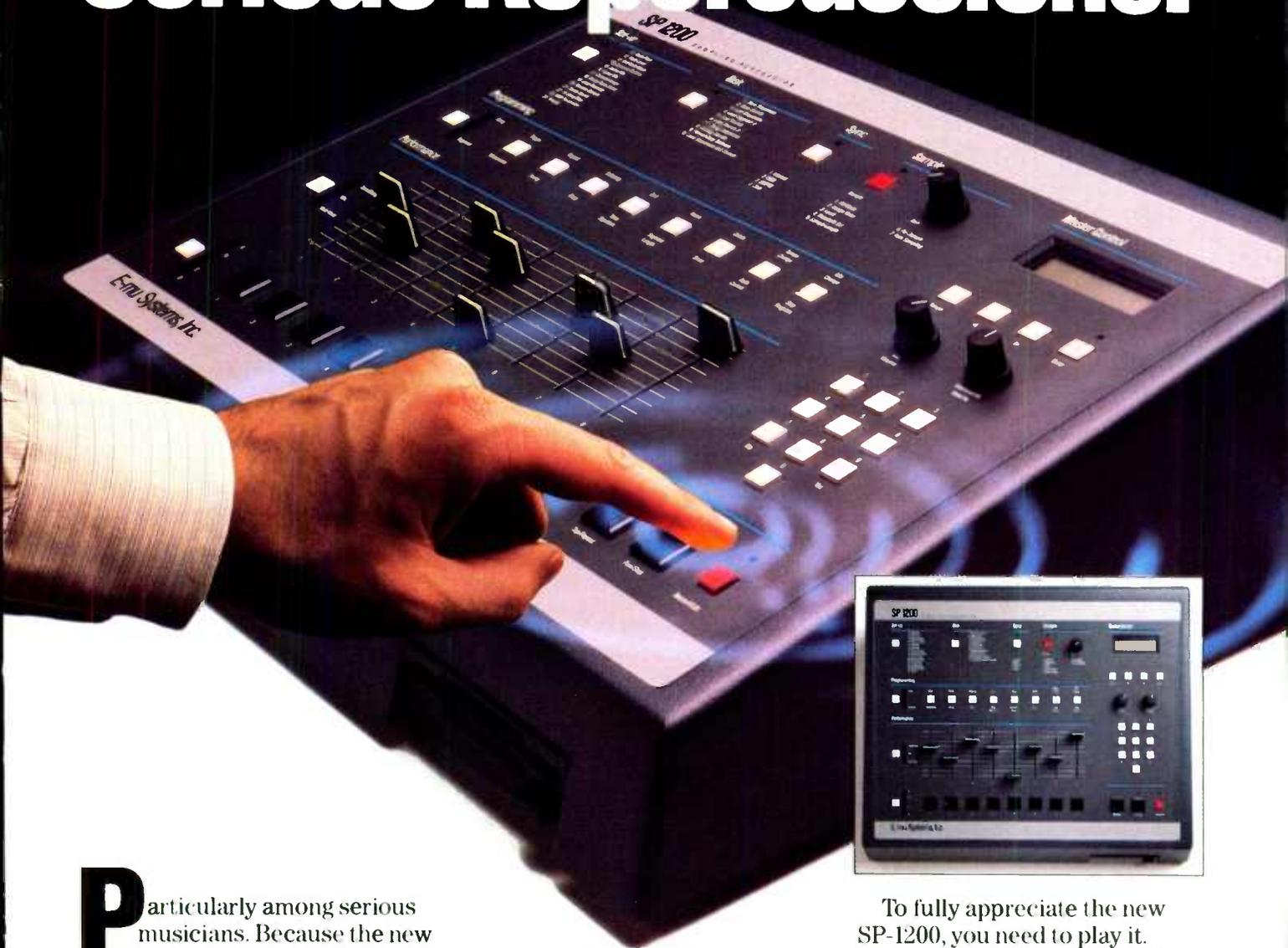
This is all fine. But choosing a sequencer can be a little like choosing sex partners. It's not only *what* they let you do that counts, it's *how* they let you do it. And when it comes to the "how" part of track editing and management, the Sonus MasterPiece looks very provocative indeed. A lot of the most-frequently-desired acts can be performed just by dragging submissive icons around the screen with the mouse.

So if you want to merge two tracks on the MasterPiece, you just drag one "track enable" icon on top of another. You can also drag tracks from one sequence into another sequence. To erase a track or sequence, you can just drag it to the "Trash" icon. (Only those Sonus guys run a class operation. They call it "Refuse.") Tracks can also be stored in a memory buffer called the Tracorder and held in bondage for future use. And beyond all this fast-and-furious dragging action, many other track management functions can be accessed via pull-down menus. For example each track can be made to take on four MIDI channels at the same time. Sound exciting?

And if sequencers are like lovers, you have to give Dr. T's KCS top marks in

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the "kinky weirdness" category. Yeah, it gives you all the usual edit functions. But it throws in some dang unusual ones too. Things like Time Reverse, which lets you play the sequence of notes backwards. And Auto Channel assign, which sends each note out on a different MIDI channel. (Composition majors call this hocketing.) You can even scale pitch as well as velocity! That's right: move the pitch of each note closer to or further from some designated "center" pitch by any designated amount. Needless to say, these functions are all great when you're in one of those aleatoric, John Cage kind of moods that we all experience from time to time. And, as with event list editing, all these deviant operations can be carried out in Track mode to pervert individual tracks or in Open mode, to lead entire sequences or songs astray.

Song Editing: Life on the Chain Gang

When it comes to structuring your tracks and sequences into complete songs, the KCS gives you a couple of options. If you want, you can use Open Mode to assemble songs. It lets you type in various start and stop commands for each of your patterns, which allows you to build all sorts of ambitious structures with multiple overlapping patterns just like you find on Yes and Frank Zappa records. But for the rest of us pop-oriented morons, who think in terms of verses, choruses and bridges, there's also a Song Mode that lets you chain patterns in a quick-and-easy manner.

The Pro 24 and the MIDITrack ST differ in this respect: The Pro 24 makes you define the length of your patterns before you record them; the MIDITrack lets you record tracks with unimpeded abandon and then go back and break them down into patterns (or sections in Hybrid nomenclature). The sections are fashioned into a song via the Assemble Chain pull-down menu and window. In typical Hybrid fashion, it's very straightforward. Just string the pieces together by section number, print a master "chain track" and you've got a song.

At the heart of the Pro 24's song-building scheme, there's something called the Multi-Copy pull down window. Using it, you take the patterns you recorded and re-copy them onto other parts of your track, or onto other tracks. So, for example, if you've got a verse that repeats three times, you copy all your verse tracks onto the appropriate sections of your imaginary multitrack

tape. You then "checkerboard" your choruses (or whatever) into the blank "spaces" between the verses. Thanks to a function called Data Copy, you can make each copy autonomous, i.e., if you make a change in the first verse, the other verses will be unaffected. But you can also defeat the Data Copy function, if you want all your copies to be identical.

There are times when the Multi-copy apparatus can get pretty Teutonically oblique. (Remember those Germanic roots?) There are a lot of unexpected orders that must be obeyed. Like: "You can only copy onto a track that already has something recorded on it." So to copy something onto a fresh track you have to go back to the main page and record a few bars of "nothing" on it. "To the Pro 24, nothing is something," advises the manual with all the clarity of a tract by Heidegger. Hey, Nothingness implies Being. *A priori*, natch.

Communing with Unseen Forces

As I said at the outset, the Atari ST comes ready to rock with its own MIDI In and Out ports. Just plug right in. You're automatically exempt from the Dark Rites of the Separate Interface Box: handshaking, interrupts, smart vs. dumb processors and all the other purse-snatching perplexities that used to go with computer sequencing. Or:

*Hail, Great Microcircuit Brain!
We love it when you jerk our chain.*

The MIDI ports are there. The real question is: What can the software do with them? The first thing to look for is MIDI Echo or Thru capabilities. Essentially, these provide the Thru port that the Atari lacks. They enable you to play your master keyboard/controller in real time while playing back previously recorded tracks. Needless to say it's another must-have; and thankfully, all the ST sequencers I've seen come with MIDI Echo and/or Thru. But remember, these Echo/Thru capabilities only cover the function of one MIDI Thru port.

And because MIDI lag remains a public and private nuisance, it's nice to be able to filter unneeded MIDI commands. In this connection, the Hybrid, Steinberg, Sonus and Dr. T programs offer generous facilities for filtering out all kinds of data, including aftertouch, pitch bend, assorted controllers, program changes and even note events. Beyond this, the Steinberg program lets

you configure each of its tracks with the MIDI mode and type of note-off message best suited to the instrument you have on that particular channel or channels. And the Sonus MasterPiece throws in the ability to map MIDI controllers, i.e., turn sustain pedal commands into mod wheel commands, pitch wheel commands into patch changes, etc.

As you'd expect, the ST sequencers under scrutiny here can sync to and generate MIDI timing clock data. So MIDI drum machine applications are no problem, whether you slave the sequencer to a drum machine or record the drum machine data onto the sequencer and use the sequencer as a master clock.

But there's a vast world beyond the pale of MIDI, and the ST is sensitive enough to commune with it. The Hybrid MIDITrack ST is sold with its own SMPTE sync box, the SmpTeTrack ST. The box does drive the price of the software a little higher than the competition (there is a less expensive non-SMPTE version, the SyncTrack ST). But if you're likely to be encountering a wide variety of sync sources, it seems a more than worthwhile investment. With it, the MIDITrack ST can read *and* write SMPTE/EBU time code in all of its formats (30, 29.97 [drop frame], 25 and 24 frames per second). And it can sync to click tracks or a whole range of drum machine ppq codes, FSK synthesizer tape sync codes and Hybrid's own Hybrid-Sync. Put it this way: I was able, in a matter of minutes, to slave the MIDITrack ST to everything from a SMPTE-encoded multitrack master tape to an ancient, cheapo-cheapo beat box.

Sonus is planning an optional SMPTE read/write box for the MasterPiece, and the Pro 24 is also SMPTE-ready, thanks to Steinberg's optional SMPTE/MIDI Interface. Again, it's hardly a bargain item, but if you run into SMPTE a lot, you'll find it indispensable.

By now you should be convinced that pro sequencing programs for the ST can get pretty sophisticated—even though the software *and* the computer to run it can cost you less than some dedicated hardware sequencers. How's that for an Eternal Mystery? The Great Cult of Computer Worship may be reluctant to enshrine the Atari ST; but the rock 'n' roll computer is more than ready to take its place in the Pantheon. I'll be the first to support its candidacy. But then you never know... after this, I may be found murdered, with a jewel-encrusted ritual dagger buried deep in my back and a note bearing this message: "BEWARE THE WRATH OF THE CULT." ▯

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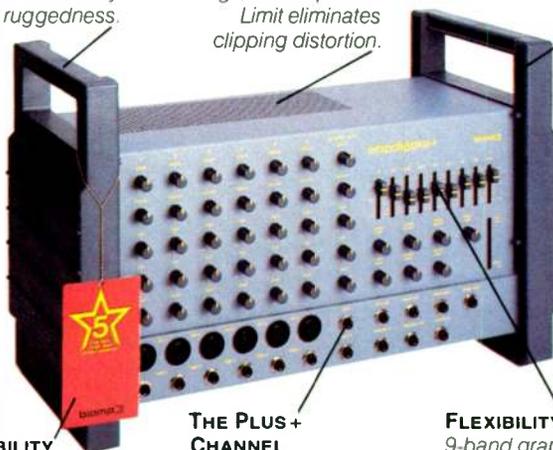
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The SMPTE-MIDI connection

By Jock Baird

DEVELOPMENTS



Steinberger GMITA

IT'S BECOMING A SMPTE-FIED universe more rapidly than anyone would've expected, and the SMPTE link-up with MIDI is pretty much a *fait accompli*. Why should that surprise anyone? Well, even though they're both digitally derived, they're very different types of numbers. Getting the time code used by the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers, expressed in hours, minutes, seconds, frames and subframes, to communicate fluently with

MIDI data expressed in tempo and elapsed bars is like grafting an apple to an orange. Consider that a SMPTE measurement of an event is a real-time number (this crash cymbal occurred at 2:47 a.m.), while a MIDI measurement is based only in reference to specific bars and beats (the fourth beat of the twenty-seventh measure). It's like giving directions to your home—a MIDI address would be expressed as, "Take your second left, fourth right, and it's the seventeenth house on the left." If the sixteenth house had been torn down yesterday, you'd be lost. A SMPTE address would say, "It's 43362 Fontaine, bub, and step on it." Small wonder translating one to the other can be fraught with compromises.

Tascam looked at the situation and, somewhat surprisingly, decided not to mess with MIDI at all. In designing their new ES-50 synchronizer, the goal was to get an absolutely full-function pro SMPTE unit which, at around \$3500, would perform as well as the industry-standard synchronizers selling for twice that. We're talking subframe accuracy of hundredths of a frame (needed for film), a frame sync function that uses both time code pulse and vertical sync, chase-lock accuracy within fifty microseconds and the ability to read time code from a thirtieth to a hundred times regular speed. The ES-50 has five contact closures which can be activated by preprogrammed addresses—this can do things like start an SFX machine, do an MTR punch-in or -out, or turn an effect unit on or off. It also runs in momentary and latching modes and allows you to rehearse punch ins/outs. And also in the ES-50's bag of tricks is an external sync reference input for composite video and a jam sync capability for continuous code generation. This baby'll go anywhere.

No synchronizer converting SMPTE

to MIDI has all that stuff, but ever since **Fostex** kicked off the affordable MIDI-SMPTE link-up with its 4050 and 4030 controllers, things have been cooking. The latest entry is the SyncController from **AMR**, the recording arm of **Peavey**. Software-based and therefore easily updatable, this is descended from John Simonton's classic SMPL system that helped open the door to home-studio SMPTE a few years ago, but it's been upgraded to derive MIDI time clock and song position pointer from the master SMPTE code. The SyncController has, among other capabilities, ninety-nine event control points which can be loaded and saved to tape, punch in/out rehearsal with a helpful guide tone, and jam sync. Although it'll handle all four versions of SMPTE (24, 25, 30 drop frame and 30 non-drop frame), it doesn't read subframes. Still, at a thousand dollars, it can get the home recordist into the SMPTE-to-MIDI game in a big way.

Although it'll run with anything, the SyncController is tied to the release of **AMR's** MCR4/S, a new version of their high-class cassette 4-track deck that packs a 25-pin syncro port for full SMPTE control. There's also a switch to defeat the track-4 noise reduction (NR plays havoc with time code strips). And another cassette 4-track unit entering the SMPTE game is **Fostex's** Model 460, a mixer/recorder with a more sophisticated transport system and full SMPTE/EBU sync smarts.

Another type of SMPTE-MIDI processor comes from **Steinberg**. Called the SMP-24, it actually shades to the MIDI computer side of the street, performing a number of MIDI interface, switching and merging functions. It saves its own configuration programs, sends transpose, velocity, channel and splitpoint info, and even has a new 62.5 kbaud double-speed MIDI option. Although not blessed with subframe resolution, it reads all four versions of SMPTE and can alter SMPTE speed from 20% to 160%.

Of course, if all you want to do is sync MIDI to tape and you're not involved with film or video, **Harmony Systems** has a new chase-lock sync system that is not SMPTE-based but does a lot of similar things. It uses something called "beat code" (would Jack Kerouac approve?) that interprets all tempo functions, including accelerandos and decelerandos. Called the MTS-1, it also includes a MIDI merge function and two MIDI outs. Best of all, it costs only \$229.

We're heading into the next generation of all-purpose MIDI foot controllers.



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AMR SyncController



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Eighteen months after Peavey unveiled its RMC 2000 unit, here's a complete rethink dubbed the RMC 4512. It has noticeably increased potency, first of all in that it can now send virtually any kind of MIDI command, from song position pointer to mod wheel change, making it part MIDI mapper. Even more interesting are the four independent MIDI outputs, each of which can handle all sixteen channels—now you don't need a second pedal controller when your rig starts to mushroom on you. And talk about setups—the 4512 holds 530 programs, which can be up- and downloaded to computer via system exclusive. For \$300, this is a lot of pedal.

To make sure this new controller has other Peavey products to talk to, there's also a new MIDI digital effects unit, the PEP 4530, and a MIDI effects patcher, the MFP 2128. The PEP also holds a whopping 530 programs and does most everything you'd expect a digital processor to do: hard echo, chorus, flange, doubling, slapback and up to 4095 ms. of delay. It'll also sync the delay effect up to an external MIDI time code or sync pulse so you can skip all that trial and error tempo-matching you do now. Not bad for \$700. If you still love your old-time stomp boxes too much to replace them (or can't afford to), maybe you should look at the MFP 2128 MIDI patcher. This is basically a switcher that holds 128 effects routing schemes—it has locations (with 9-volt power) for five boxes, but will also work with rack-mount units. The \$300 MFP 2128 also can create a stereo image out of mono and/or stereo inputs, and can pass along program changes and other MIDI commands to units down the line.

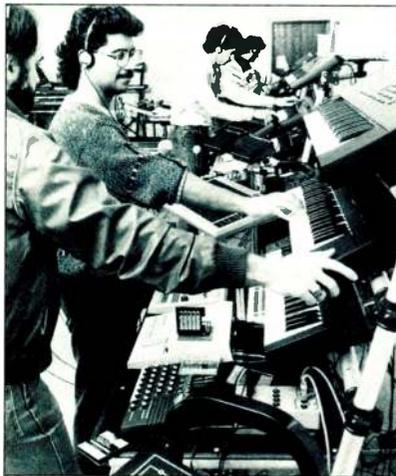
Sometimes covering new products can overwhelm you with waves of seemingly arbitrary numbers and letters. That's why more attention should be given to the naming of equipment. Take, for example, a classy new \$1000 equalizer from SWR. Did they name it the CEQ-6734B? Heck no, they called it Mr. Tone Controls. Now, Mr. T.C. is no gimmick—it achieves boost or cut by adding or subtracting the original signal to or from itself, minimizing noise, distortion and strange sound colorations. Even better, each of the nine bands, which has its own frequency-select knob as well as level pot, is completely independent of the other. Being able to choose how you'll allocate those nine bands gives a lot more flexibility—for example, setting two bands to the same frequency gives you a great notch filter.

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OVER THE BOUNDING WAVEFORMS

Roland's Digital Ship Comes In

For a long time, it really looked as though Roland might miss not one but both of the sportiest boats sailing the high-tech seas: digital synthesis and sampling. But now it appears they just decided to take a safer, if slightly slower, route to the same port of call. With two sampling keyboards (the S-10 and S-50) and a new digital synth (the D-50), the company has finally ven-



Action at Roland's Learning Center

tured into lucrative digital waters in a big way. And according to RolandCorp U.S. president Tom Beckmen, there were definite navigational advantages to hanging back and watching while everybody else steamed out of the harbor with no chart and untested instrumentation. When I visited Roland's L.A. headquarters recently, Beckmen explained the company's outlook on the digital marketplace.

"It would have been easy for us to enter the sampler market the same time as everybody else," he contends. "Mike Matthews of Electro Harmonix had offered us his sampler technology. At the time, however, we were well under way with the design of our own sampling chip; so we decided not to get involved. He went over and gave his design to Akai, which actually put Akai in the sampling business. But in order to be really competitive in the world today, you have to develop custom chips. In the old days, when we used discrete circuits, we used to be able to get an idea out on the market within ninety days. But when you have to develop a chip, it takes at least fourteen months. You have to take that

window into account nowadays."

The chip in question may have a Monty Pythonesque name (the Very Large Scale Integrated circuit, or VLSI), but it's no dead parrot when it comes to capabilities. Thanks, in part, to this chip, you can do visual waveform editing on the S-10 and S-50 without having to buy a personal computer or separate software. The necessary computing power is all part of the S-10/S-50's own operating system, which is booted via a 3.5" diskette and the S-50's onboard disk drive. All you have to do is plug a suitable CRT monitor (like your TV set) into the S-50's 8-pin RGB connector or monochrome RCA jack. But if no monitor is handy, the samplers' onboard LCD display provides above-average visual feedback for this price range.

In terms of specs, the S-50 is a serviceable rather than sexy craft. The top sample rate is 30 kHz, at which you get a maximum sample length of 14.4 seconds. There's also a 15 kHz sample rate option, which brings us out to 28.8 seconds of sample length. The A to D and D to A converters use a 16-bit linear digitization scheme. But waveform data is actually stowed onboard in a 12-bit format. This difference in resolution perhaps accounts for the fact that the S-50 does not appear to need any user-adjustable input filters. And that streamlines the S-50's sampling procedure quite a bit. In fact, it's so simple that I find I often don't bother to rig up an external monitor until *after* I've recorded a sample on the S-50. The monitor facility really starts earning its berth when the time comes to truncate and/or loop a sample. When performing these surgical procedures on an ailing waveform, nine out of ten doctors agree: There's nothing like actually being able to see the patient.

Roland has just come up with updated software for the S-50 (Version 2.0), which I had a chance to examine during my field trip. Version 2.0 will enable you to hook up a digitizing pad and actually redraw waveforms and amplitude envelopes. (Like most popular samplers, the S-50 includes an output filter and envelope generator among its sample-manipulating tackle.) The new software also gives the S-50 the multi-timbral capabilities the origi-

continued on page 134

465 watts 10 pounds.*

*8 ohms: 465 watts RMS per channel, 10 lbs., 12 oz.



HOW THE CARVER PROFESSIONAL MAGNETIC FIELD AMPLIFIER PM-2.0t SHEDS NEW LIGHT ON THE PROBLEM OF WEIGHT VS. OUTPUT.

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MARTIN

from page 46

of their friends would come in, dressed in the beads and bells of the time, and would just be sitting around playing sitars, tablas, you name it! They would all be playing together, there would be no screening between the individual instruments, and everything would be drowning everything else out!"

George Martin states that he never seriously lost his nerve at any point during the *Sergeant Pepper* project, but admits to having harbored very slight reservations about the orchestral sequences on "A Day In The Life."

"One part of me said, 'We're being a bit self-indulgent, we're going a little bit over the top,' and the other part of me said, 'It's bloody marvelous! I think it's fantastic!' I was then thoroughly reassured before I put the thing together, when I actually let an American visitor hear a bit of 'A Day In The Life.' When that happened he did a handstand, and I then knew my worries were over.

"After the project was finished, I felt we could extend that. I thought we could make another album that would be a little bit more controlled, in fact, while still

allowing for the Beatles' originality and ingenuity. I tried to get the boys to accept that there had to be a definite form in the records, and Paul would listen to me but John wouldn't."

In musical terms, the real parting of the ways within the Beatles was signified by the *White Album* in 1968. Thirty-two songs, largely composed while the group was in India, were mostly recorded in piecemeal fashion by artists who were working increasingly apart, utilizing three separate studios within the same building at the same time. Both Martin and Emerick thought that many of the songs should be rejected in favor of releasing a single album, but neither was aware at the time that the Beatles' new contract with EMI stipulated that it would terminate either after a specific number of years, or after a specific number of songs had been recorded.

Emerick now confesses to having "hated" the *White Album*. Tensions were rife, and Ringo was the first member to quit the band. Before he rejoined a few days later, Paul played drums on "Back In The USSR."

Emerick was absent for the *Let It Be* fiasco, co-produced by George Martin,

Glyn Johns and Phil Spector, but returned for the Beatles' swansong, *Abbey Road*, considered by many to be the band's crowning achievement. It is George Martin's personal favorite among all their albums.

"I never thought we would get back together again, and I was quite surprised when Paul rang me up and asked me to produce another record for them. I said, 'If I'm really allowed to produce it, I will. If I have to go back and accept a lot of instructions I don't like, I won't do it.' But Paul said they wanted me to produce it as I used to, and once we got back in the studio it really was nice.

"*Abbey Road* was kind of *Sergeant Pepper Mk. II*—the last thing we ever did—and Paul went along with the idea, but John didn't. So it became a compromise, with one side of the album very much the way John wanted things—'Let it all hang out, let's rock a little'—and the other being what Paul had accepted from me: to try to think in symphonic terms, and think in terms of having a first and second subject, put them in different keys, bring back themes and even have some contrapuntal work. Paul dug that, and that's why the second side sounds as it does. It still wasn't quite what I was looking for, but it was going towards it."

After the Beatles officially split up in 1970, George Martin fully expected never to work with any of them ever again. Although McCartney later sought Martin's critical ears for *Tug Of War*, Martin doesn't feel any of the foursome needed his services: "They each learned a great deal in the decade we were together, and every one of them became excellent producers. George and Paul made very good recordings, and John had tremendous invention. In terms of their music, over the past twenty-five years they really have been remarkable in every sense."

What, finally, did Martin think was the most important thing he brought to the Beatles' music? Martin smiles, "When you get as rich and famous as the Beatles, everyone thinks you're fantastic—and you are, of course—and everybody tells you so. A lot of people don't mean to be sycophants but they are, and they wouldn't dream of saying anything untoward. There aren't very many people who are able to say to the emperor, 'You aren't wearing any clothes, Jim,' but that's one thing I've always been able to do." ■

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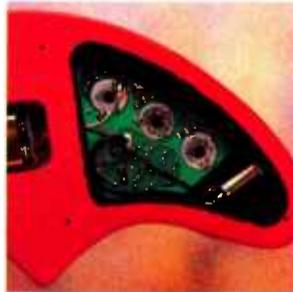
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AFTER THE EXPLOSION: BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN EXAMINES THE SONGS THAT TELL HIS STORY.

BY DAVE MARSH

The *Born In The U.S.A.* tour ended just after midnight on October third, 1985, with a last, rapturous rendition of "Glory Days." Still toweling themselves dry, Bruce and the E Street Band immediately dove into vans and were driven to their West Hollywood hotel, the Sunset Marquis. Rather than staying at his house, Bruce had rented a large suite there for the evening, the better to accommodate the end-of-tour party.

The ritual festivities at the end of a tour are usually mildly uproarious, featuring hard dancing to tapes of British Invasion and soul hits and large quantities of Kahuna punch concocted by Clarence Clemons. At the end of *The River* tour, in Cincinnati, Springsteen danced fifty people into the ground and

everybody stumbled aboard the next morning's plane looking happily ravaged.

But the *Born In The U.S.A.* tour party was subdued. Music played but there was little dancing; Clarence made up his mixture, but most contented themselves with sipping beer or wine. Band, crew and a scattering of friends talked quietly in small knots. The evening still bore a glow, but it stemmed from simple satisfaction. The tour had been a herculean undertaking and they'd pulled it off all but flawlessly.

The air was also melancholy. Off the road these people often didn't see each other for long stretches, and after so many months together their partings were reluctant and regretful. For that matter, it wasn't only a question of the tour coming

to an end—what about everything else that *Born In The U.S.A.* had stirred up? Did that just stop, too? No one knew and Bruce wasn't offering any clues.

But Springsteen had more than clues about how he felt about what they'd just accomplished. It was no mystery at all.

"Basically, by the time that we got on the road, things were real relaxed, and everybody was experienced and older, so everything was a lot more stable. And we were enjoying what we were doin' more than we ever had. The *Born In The U.S.A.* songs were a lotta fun to play live. And eventually, once again, the whole thing was more focused; I had a better idea of what I wanted to do. And then when we started to get involved in different local or-

RENDERER



“Unattached from community it’s impossible to find any meaning. And if you can’t find any meaning you will go insane and either kill yourself or somebody will do the job for you.”

ganizations, I felt that that was really the first step in beginning to reattach the thing to the different communities that you would play in. Once again, if you want to personalize an event, you have to constantly find some way to do that. You gotta work at doing it. That’s why doing something different in every town was important because you got to meet with people from that town. You know—what’s their story and what’s going on? And it was a way of dealing with any impersonalness that could creep into a show of that size.

“This particular tour, everything seemed pretty clear to me. And not only did it seem clear to me, but it seemed clear to other people. I remember there was a year-end *People* magazine where they had one page on the tour, and it was about things that we did—it was about the work we were doing. And I said, gee if that weird light of celebrity or whatever you want to call it [can be focused in that way], I felt that we’d done a good thing. On that particular page, that was what it was about. It was about what we were doing, what we’d done over that year. I said, ‘Well, if it was gonna get lost, what we were trying to do would get lost here.’ But I felt that we’d kept the focus on the important stuff, and the superfluous stuff that attracts a lot of attention was minimized for the most part—and that I was pretty comfortable in the shoes I was in.”

Back east again, Bruce and his wife Julianne spent the majority of their time in Rumson but made frequent forays into New York City, where they eventually bought an apartment. There was even a spot of work for Bruce to do. “I’m Goin’ Down” was completing its chart run, and with Christmas again on the horizon, it was time for one last single (the album’s seventh). The choice was “My Hometown,” a song with heavy resonance during the holidays.

Putting out another single didn’t require much from Bruce besides assent. But by now it was expected that each of his singles would have a flip-side not taken from the album—there was hardly anything left on the album that hadn’t been released as a single or given saturation AOR radio play—and there was also the question of video.

The first idea was to make the B side a live take of “War” from the Los Angeles Coliseum shows. But when Jon Landau went back and listened to the Coliseum shows, something bigger leaped out. Rather than sending Bruce “War” in isolation, he sent a tape that included four songs in sequence: “Born In The U.S.A.,” “Seeds,” “The River” and “War.” Strung together like that, with their spoken introductions intact, the songs owned a startling unity.

Landau was already thinking about a live album. Bruce was a lot less certain. In fact, when they’d discussed the possibility just after the tour ended, he’d simply said no.

“I was against it,” he said. “I never listened to any live tapes, really, and it just seemed like you were rehashing things. Maybe I was superstitious about it. But he sent me down that tape, and that was when I started to think that maybe there was something to it.”

Late in the year Bruce briefly visited California. During that trip he was surprised by an invitation from his father. Doug proposed spending a week fishing in Mexico. They didn’t catch much, but the weather was fine and the pair enjoyed their time together immensely.

When Bruce returned to the East Coast, he and Jon began seriously talking about a live album for the first time since *Born To Run*. For just that long, fans and businessmen had campaigned for such an album, the former because they wanted a souvenir to take home, the latter because Springsteen’s live-performance reputation would make it a guaranteed gold mine. Both points were underscored by the proliferation of “bootleg” live albums; according to record collectors, by 1985 Springsteen was the most bootlegged artist in history. Bootlegs—the term refers to music recorded and manufactured without the artist’s permission—were difficult to find, extremely expensive (averaging about \$20 per disc), usually poorly recorded, and haphazardly packaged. Yet hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Springsteen buffs cherished bootlegs and clandestinely recorded tapes of his shows.

Springsteen made his disapproval clear by allowing CBS and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), an industry trade group, to pursue bootleggers aggressively in his name. (A couple of them even went to jail.) Even prosecution didn’t end the practice. It only slowed from a flood to a trickle.

“I never wanted to do just a live record,” he told writer Robert Hilburn. “It wasn’t ever interesting enough for me. What I was interested in was finding out what kind of songs I could write and finding my way around the studio to get some of the feeling that the band gets onstage.... I get interested in what I can do next; I get curious and anxious about writing more songs.” In a way, then, Bruce’s reluctance to satisfy the demand for live material was akin to his avoidance of hit singles, embedded in his general suspicion of things that came too easily.

David Hepworth confronted Bruce with the same question during a BBC *Old Grey Whistle Test* interview in 1984 and got a different kind of answer. “A lot of what we do at this point is about *being there*, which is why we haven’t done much television or too much video,” Bruce said. “A lot of the problem is that it allows too much distance. What our band is about is breaking down distance, and I think it’s important that people come out, they come down, they go some place where there’s a bunch of other people.

“And then the other thing was, [on] a live record, a lotta times you’re doing things that you’ve done already. I think it’d probably be a little boring to work on, maybe.”

However, he was starting to bend now, perhaps because some of his recorded songs—often the best ones—acquired a different and larger life onstage. “There are songs I want to re-record, that I was unhappy with the original studio recordings of,” he told Hepworth. “Mainly the *Darkness* album, which was a record that I thought had some of my best songs, but I always felt was a little dry recording-wise. I felt



After facing down his demon, Bruce had to face the Big Kahuna.

we underplayed and oversang a little bit. That stuff sounds quite a bit different in performance, and I'd be interested in getting different versions of some of those songs."

Bruce later acknowledged that he'd been wary of a live album in part because he just didn't know what had gone onto the live tapes they'd been making for the past decade, usually when near the sophisticated remote recording facilities of New York and Los Angeles. "I didn't understand that the band had played really well over the years," he said. "I mean, I knew we'd been doing something right, but I didn't know exactly what. And I wasn't so sure I wanted to find out. It seemed things were going well, and I was kinda superstitious about it."

Landau *had* listened to those tapes, and he knew that the band was playing well (if not always impeccably) straight through. And once Bruce listened, he agreed: "I'd never really heard the band until I heard the tapes," he said, sounding a little like someone who'd just heard his first E Street Band concert. "When I heard the band on the tapes, it gave me a whole new insight as to what it sounded like and what we had been doing over a ten-year period. And mainly, they were just doing their job really well. Like Danny—on the record, he's incredible."

"I was never completely satisfied with any of the recorded versions of things we did—certainly not before *The River*. I never felt the band learned to play in the studio before *The River*. On 'Badlands' or 'Darkness,' the live versions are the way that stuff was supposed to sound. And we couldn't have ever got that in the studio, even if we had been playing well—because the audience allows you to attack something with a lot

more intensity, and if you did it the same in the studio, it would sound overdone or oversung.

"So the surprise when we listened to all the tapes was that we could just mix 'em and put 'em out. Even when the playing wasn't what you'd call a technically high level, the enthusiasm was so crazy that it kinda lifted the whole thing. Like, listen to 'Rosalita.' 'Rosalita' is so funny, there's so many strange parts, but people were playing so hard and so intensely and so happily, that the whole thing just kinda takes off."

Columbia Records was eager for a live Springsteen album; they'd happily issue an expansive (and expensive) multidisc set. The advent of compact discs, which could accommodate more than seventy minutes of music per disc, made multi-hour recordings more practical and even more desirable. And the CD technology could be tested—even given a public boost—by the most recent live tapes (from 1984 and 1985), which were digitally recorded.

Most important, once Bruce and Jon came upon the idea of doing a record that wouldn't be a live album or a greatest hits album so much as it would be the *next Bruce Springsteen album*, the issue resolved itself: This album would be as long as necessary to tell the story, and since the story was an epic, that might be real long.

Still, Springsteen was cautious as man and artist, and he moved slowly. He and Landau spent some hours together listening to tapes. A key moment came when Jon dredged up the tape of "Thunder Road" from Bruce's show at the Roxy (a Los Angeles club) during the *Born To Run* tour in 1975.

“‘Rosalita’ was funny because the guy’s trying to get the girl. And he’s got the record deal and he’s trying to get away. And if he gets all these things he thinks everything’s gonna be great...and *that happened.*”

“Bruce and I were sitting one day that December [1985] and just playing cassettes and starting to get into the process of making that record,” Landau said. “We put it on and one of us said, ‘Well, if we ever did do a live album and it was a retrospective, *that’s* what should open it.’ And from that point on that’s always been the song that opened the album. Looking back, that was probably the first thing we knew about this album. If it existed, it was gonna start with this version of this song. And I think that that was almost a handle for Bruce to get into the album, because that already established the idea that we could make a live album that would just be a creative endeavor. Because that was a creative decision.”

For Bruce, “Thunder Road” was also the key to understanding the record’s historical reach. “That kinda opened the thing up to take in the time span, ‘cause we knew we wanted to use that version. And if we’re gonna use that and ‘War,’ what’s the matter with all the stuff in between?”

That Roxy version of “Thunder Road” was remarkable at the time by virtue of Bruce’s simple audacity in opening the show with such a radical revision of one of his best-known numbers. As the opening track of *Born To Run*, “Thunder Road” was presented in full-band grandeur, a sweeping statement of romantic questing on a broadly mythic American landscape, from the opening reference to Roy Orbison to the final declamatory “This is a town fulla losers/ And I’m pullin’ outta here to win.” But when the *Born To Run* tour began, Bruce wasn’t playing the song with the full band. Instead, he came out and did it as the first number of the night, standing stock still at the microphone, guitar slung behind his back, accompanied only by Roy Bittan on piano and Danny Federici playing electric glockenspiel. The result was a tender and vulnerable recasting that transformed a promise into a plea. By situating this revision at the very beginning of his shows, at a time when his image was just being locked in, Bruce suggested a more open, less monolithic vision of both self and show. You felt that between the time he’d recorded the song and began performing it, Springsteen had outgrown its conceits without letting go of its hopes.

In fact, the origins of the rearrangement were more prosaic. Bruce remembered that “the band just couldn’t seem to get a handle on the arrangement.”

Landau remembered why. “When we cut the track, Bruce wasn’t singing,” Jon said. “And where he sings, ‘Tonight we’ll be free, all the promises will be broken,’ he intended the music to go on for an extra line so those words would float more gracefully into that spot. But when we cut the track he forgot about that, so it’s just the length it would normally be, musically. So when you listen on *Born To Run* (and it would never bother anybody at all), he sings it right up against the limit of the music.”

“But when he went to perform the song, he hadn’t figured out how to do that little piece of business with the band the correct way. So he did it with the piano. And when you listen on that 1975 version, he puts in that extension that he always

wanted to have.”

Springsteen and Landau had access to about thirty professionally recorded shows, far fewer than the number that had been bootlegged. But those shows were more than sufficient to their purpose, and anyway, they couldn’t have used any less technically sophisticated material and maintained the necessary sound quality. In the end, the digital tapes from the *Born In The U.S.A.* concerts set an extraordinary standard for everything else. This meant that some memorable moments simply weren’t available. For instance, the concert rendition of “Racing In The Streets,” preceded by and

On the Distraction of Celebrity

In the summer of 1984 during an interview with British disc jockey Roger Scott, Bruce said, “One of the problems is that the audience and the performer have got to leave some room for each other to be human, or else they don’t really deserve each other in a funny kinda way. I think the position you get in is unrealistic to begin with, ‘cause you’re just basically a guy. You know, you play the guitar and you do that good, and that’s great, that’s nice. If you do your job well, people like it and admire you for it or respect you for it or something; that’s a plus. But...the idealizing of performers or politicians doesn’t seem to make much sense. It’s based on an image, and an image is always basically limiting and only a portion—and only the public portion—of that individual’s personality. Which is not to say that it’s necessarily false; it’s just not complete.”

“The thing is, the inspiration comes from the music. And the performer, he’s the guy that’s doin’ the music, but he’s not the thing itself. The thing itself is in the music—that’s where the spirit of the thing is.”

“I guess I basically feel it’s like Elvis. People say they got disillusioned or something. Well, I don’t feel that Elvis let anybody down. Personally, I don’t think he owed anything to anybody. I think that, as it was, he did more for most people than they’ll ever have done for them in their lives. The trouble that he ran into, that’s the trouble you run into. It’s hard to keep your head above water, but sometimes it’s not right for people to judge the way that they do.”

On the other hand, he set a higher standard for himself. “I feel that the night you look into your audience and don’t see yourself, and the night the audience looks at you and don’t see themselves, that’s when it’s all over, you know?”

“I don’t feel that people ‘sold out.’ I don’t think Elvis sold out when he lived in Graceland—people never sold out by *buying* something. It wasn’t ever something they bought; it was something they *thought* that changed....”

“My audience, I always hoped, would be all sorts of people—rich and poor, middle-class people; I don’t feel like I’m singing to any one group. I don’t want to put up those sort of walls. That’s not really what our band is about.”

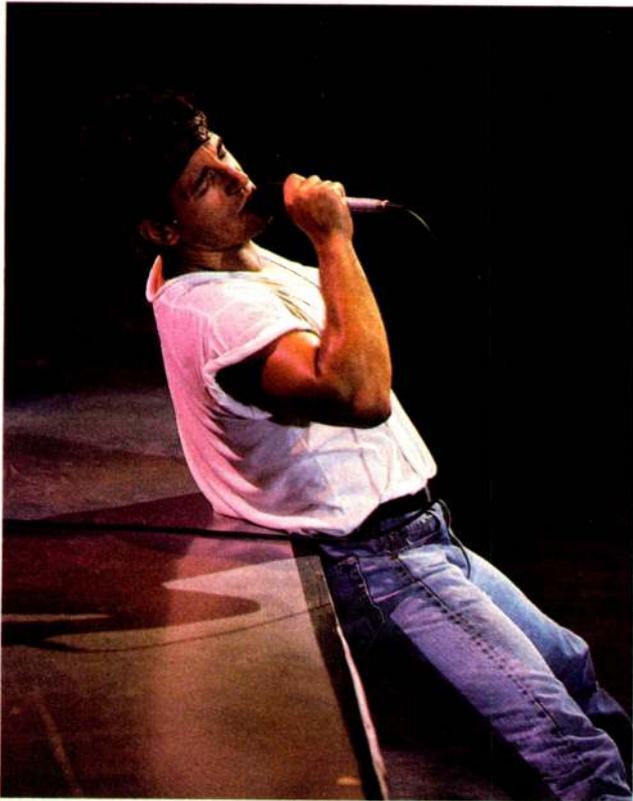
SOME OF THE WORLD'S TOP MUSICIANS ARE SHAMELESS NAME DROPPERS.



Dean Markley

concluded with Bruce's narration, didn't make the record because it had never been professionally recorded.

"Sequencing was real important, because that was how we were setting up the story to be told," said Bruce. They chose the right takes of as many songs as seemed fitting. Sequencing the album was also a matter of narrowing it down, putting the right songs in the right order to reflect the personal and musical evolution of an entire decade. They didn't want to make a record of curios, so the rarity of a song counted for nothing



Sorry girls, he's married.

and, when the chips were down, neither did any individual song's everyday power. For instance, "Badlands," Bruce's original post-"Born To Run" anthem, was the last song added to the sequence, and then not until the following summer.

Everyone endured some frustrations, including Bruce. "In the end, there's no 'Glory Days,' which is one of my favorite songs. Like hey, I got my complaint, too," he said, referring to the moans of fans disgruntled by the lack of this or that selection. "I would've liked to put that on, and I tried to the bitter end, and I just couldn't fit it on."

They had comparatively few workable takes of any given song, and there was no way to get more. "Born To Run" was a special problem. "That was a song that for a long time we didn't know how to play," Bruce admitted. "It was hard to sing and hard to play." In the end they used a rendition from the Giants Stadium shows of August 1985, more than eleven years after they'd begun performing it. "I was so happy when I put that version of it on, because I *never* thought we were gonna have a good live version of that song on tape."

In general, the idea was that this was a *record*, and that meant it had to reward the casual listener as well as the one

who paid close attention—you had to be able to simply sit back and listen. When it was finally released, the live album was criticized for wandering away from the point after "War," but, as Bruce pointed out, that was part of the concept, too.

"It's just a break in the action. The whole point is, there's times when you have to take the record as a whole. And at that point, you're not gonna put 'Jungleland' in there. You need songs for what they're *not* saying right then. You gotta bring it back down to everyday life. Life goes on, man, life rolls on," he said. "The whole idea of the record was that you could put on any side at any time, that it would be a record that would contain a certain group of ideas but that those ideas were not necessary—it was just a rock record, it was just like a rock 'n' roll record. Dance to it, listen to it, do whatever you wanna do with it. That was the point of the thing, you know.

"From the very beginning that was how we wanted to present the thing, you know. And this came up in the sequencing a lot. When we began to sequence the thing, if we began to construct it too intellectually or too conceptually—too superficially conceptually—it started to sound like, 'What are you trying to do?' The whole point was, it had to roll. And in the end, that's what made it what it was. So after 'War,' we're rolling a little bit, you know. It's gotta keep going, and it's gotta scale back down.

"We wanted the record to rock, and one of the most important things we were trying to do with the record, we were tellin' a story. There's a story bein' told here. And the record had to have its internal logic. It wasn't a greatest hits album; there were certain songs we knew we would like on. But nothing was sacred; anything could've been left out if it really and truly wasn't gonna work."

"The record opens with 'Thunder Road,' and as I've said before, when the *Born To Run* album came out, the record was so tied in with who I was, I felt like, hey, I felt like I was born," Springsteen said in early 1987. "I felt like it was a birthday. I know that's why those words are in the title. *Born*—why is that word there? That's there because it's real. And"—he began to laugh at his own presumption—"that's probably why the word *Run* is there—that's real, too.

"And that 'Thunder Road' is the birth song; it's the panorama, the scene and the characters, setting the situation. So that was why, from the very beginning, we knew that that was gonna start the live album.

"Then you get 'Adam Raised A Cain'; we wanted a gut punch right after that, just so you'd be ready for what was gonna happen. And then you get to 'Spirit In The Night,' which is kinda the cast of characters—friends. It's a real localized situation. Then you get 'Sandy.' That's the guy and he's on the boardwalk, and I guess that was me then, when I was still around Asbury. And there's the girl.

"That first side, that's the whole idea: Here it is. This is the beginning of the whole trip that's about to take place. All those people. Some of 'em are gonna go, some of 'em are gonna stay, some of 'em are gonna make that trip, some of 'em aren't gonna make it. And let's see what happens.

"And then you flip the thing over. 'Paradise By The "C"'—the Clarence instrumental—that's bar band music, that's who we are. And that's real important. That sets the tone. That's what we were doing in those clubs—we were blowin' the roof off with that kinda stuff. People were dancin' and goin' crazy and havin' a great time. And then you get that 'Growin' Up.' That's sort of a little bit of a statement of purpose. And then there's the rest of that—'Saint In The City,' 'Backstreets,' 'Rosanita,' and 'Raise Your Hand.' 'Rosanita' was funny because,

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“It’s like that great scene in *The Last Picture Show* where the guy hits the brakes and turns around. *Darkness* was a confrontation record... All those people, all those faces, you gotta look at ‘em all.”

even though it came before ‘Born To Run,’ the guy gets the girl—or he’s trying to get the girl. And he’s got the record deal, and he’s trying to get away. And if he gets all these things, he thinks everything’s gonna be *great*. And I guess that was kind of... *That happened*, I guess.

“Then the ‘Hungry Heart’ side with all those songs from *The River*, which is funny, because that side felt right there even if it was a little out of chronological order... and I think felt right because the next thing you hear, you hear that big crowd. Right after ‘Rosalita,’ you get ‘Raise Your Hand,’ and that’s the idea: You want it and then, bang! You got it.

“And the rest of that side is kind of ‘Two Hearts’ and ‘Cadillac Ranch’ and ‘You Can Look But You Better Not Touch.’ And now the underside starts to kinda sneak in there; you start to pick up a little undercurrent there.”

That undercurrent motivated Bruce’s best songs from *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* to *Born In The U.S.A.*, from “Badlands” to “Reason To Believe” to “Dancing In The Dark”—that is, from the confidence of youth to a crisis of faith to the realization that you overcome only when you keep moving. Like all journeys to experience, it began with questions that seemed simple: Why me? What about everybody else? What next?

“At some point I said to myself—and I know this is one of the things that caused me a lot of distress—I said, ‘Well okay, what if I am the guy in ‘Born To Run,’ with the bike and the girl, shooting down the road,’” Bruce said. “But when you get out there a little ways, there’s not that much traffic. And you can’t see the people in the cars next to you; all the windows are tinted. And all of a sudden you’re out there, but where is everybody? So I guess I kinda thought, ‘Well, all right, you know; so maybe I get to do these things, but what about everybody else?’

“And that didn’t come from a real selfless motivation or some idea to do good. Because I understood that it was a self-preservation question. I realized that you will *die* out there, simple as that. I understood that underneath this illusion of freedom was an oppressiveness that would kill me. And that where maybe I was different was that I knew it.

“So when I got in that situation, I felt tremendously threatened, and I did not know why. It was totally instinctive. Matter of fact, I don’t think I really knew why until not that long ago. But initially, when I was twenty-five, it was just instinctive—I felt threatened, I felt in danger. And it was funny because those were the exact opposite responses that people generally have. But I didn’t know why I was havin’ ‘em; I was just havin’ ‘em.

“So initially, I wanted to just reject the whole thing—‘This is bad; all this is bad’—as people have done before. I think you look at some of the older rock ‘n’ rollers, they’ve chosen to reject it and their opposite choice was to move to religious fundamentalism. But I got so alienated from religion when I was younger that there was no way that was ever gonna be an alternative, in that sense, for me. I just could never see it.

“I think when I got in that spot, I really did feel—and not in a paranoid fashion—attacked on the essence of who I felt that I was. So at that point I realized that, unattached from community, it was impossible to find any meaning. And if you can’t find any meaning, you will go insane and you will either kill yourself or somebody will do the job for you, either by doping you or one thing or another.

“I began to question from that moment on the values and the ideas that I set out and believed in on that *Born To Run* record: friendship, hope, belief in a better day. I questioned all of these. And so *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* was basically saying, you get out there and you turn around and you come back because that’s just the beginning. That’s the real beginning.

“I got out there—hey, the wind’s whipping through your hair, you feel real good, you’re the guy with the gold guitar or whatever, and all of a sudden you feel that sense of *dread* that is overwhelming everything you do. It’s like that great scene in *The Last Picture Show* where the guy hits the brakes and turns around. The *Darkness* record was a confrontation record: ‘Badlands,’ ‘Adam Raised A Cain,’ ‘Racing In The Street’—all those people, all those faces, you gotta look at ‘em all. Right through to ‘Darkness On The Edge Of Town’—that was a whole other beginning.

“Now, you strip a whole bunch of things away from the thing, and you lose a lot of your illusions and a lot of, I suppose, your romantic dreams. And you decide... you make a particular decision. And that is a decision, I believe, that saves your life—your real life, your internal life, your emotional life, your essential life. Because you can live on, and a lotta people do; there’s all sorts of people livin’ on out there, you know. But I knew—and this ties right in with the discussion I had with Jon about *Born In The U.S.A.*—that the reason I began to do what I did was for connection. I desperately needed connection. I couldn’t get it; I wanted it.

“And that’s why the guitar was my lifeline. That was my connection with other people, more than anything else. Because other things will not sustain you. Maybe for a while you’ll be distracted and have some fun, but in the end, your real life, you’ll die, you will really die. And then once that happens, I believe there’s only a certain amount of time before the physical thing catches up to you.

“So you’ve got that situation, where I turn around—on the live record, that’s where ‘Badlands’ fits. Then you’re there—from ‘Badlands’ through to ‘War’ really. But from ‘Badlands’ through ‘Reason To Believe,’ that’s kind of an investigation of that place.”

Springsteen began to question not only the values he’d found in rock ‘n’ roll but whether rock ‘n’ roll itself, which offered the best romantic illusion of heroic Yankee individualism imaginable, was worth the effort. It all came back to the questions he’d asked himself as he put together *Born In The U.S.A.* “Is making the Loud Noise worth it?” is how he put it in the winter of ‘87. “That’s a question that I feel like I’m constantly asking myself, and the only answer I come up with



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is, 'Well, you don't know unless you try.'

"I think that when I did the *Nebraska* record, obviously I was in a deepening process of questioning those values that were set out on *Born To Run*. I did the *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* thing, and with *The River* thing I allowed some light to come in, part of the time. I had to—had to. In a funny way, I felt that I didn't have the center, so what I had to do was I had to get left and right, in hope that it would create some sort of center—or some sense of center. That probably wasn't embodied in any one given song or something, and that was the juggling that I had to do on that record."

So the same Bruce Springsteen who had sung "I'm pullin' outta here to win" at the beginning of *Born To Run* found himself opening *Nebraska* by imagining someone being hurled into a "great void." But that wasn't all.

"Here's where this thing breaks down all the social type barriers that we put up in society. That void that you feel in that situation is the same one you can feel breathin' down your neck when you got that sun behind you, drivin' down the road; you got the girl, got that guitar. It's the same, for some reason. Because of that isolation. There are guys who come home from the factory, sit in front of that TV with a sixpack of beer, that are as isolated as the *Nebraska* record, if not more so."

It's the spectre of that void that sends men down to the river when their dreams fall through or their marriages crumble or the plant closes and leaves them not just without a paycheck but empty of purpose. And rich or poor, when they've stared long enough into that void, they make a leap. They may jump into the abyss of doubt or across a chasm of faith, but they leap.

Having reached that desperate place himself, Bruce

Springsteen pushed forward, not because he rejected the hopelessness he found, but because he accepted it. "That was the subject of the *Nebraska* record," he said. "And it's the central thing at this moment in our band; we're kinda locked in with this. That was just the idea of that band, from the very beginning, from the minute when I touched the guitar for the first time. That was what moved me, what motivated me. And that's why as you follow the way the whole thing has developed, the moment after *Nebraska* and before *Born In The U.S.A.* is where I'm having this conversation with Jon... about these things. These are what the records are about.

"When you're in the live record, you run up to 'Reason To Believe' at that point—well, that was the bottom. I would hope not to be in that particular place ever again. It was a thing where all my ideas might have been working musically but they were failing me personally.

"I always feel like I was lucky. I got to a point where all my answers—rock 'n' roll answers—were running out. All the old things stopped working—as they should've and as they have to, and as time and the world and the way it is demands and dictates, in order for you to go on. They run dry, not as a joyous thing in and of itself, but as some sort of shelter for your inability to take your place in the world, whatever that may be. That's when either you recognize that that's happening or you don't and you continue with your trappings and your ceremony, whatever *that* may be, and slowly you just get strangled to death and you die. You just die."

It was at this point that Bruce Springsteen did a remarkable thing. Rather than surrendering to the "trappings and ceremony" of show biz rite or retreating into a cocoon of

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World Radio History

protective "artistic independence" (as Neil Young and Dylan had done), he reached out, opening himself in a way that very few public figures have ever done. He found a response as powerful as any public figure has ever known and learned to live with. Was he another Elvis? Of course not. He didn't start something; he helped put it on the road to completion. But Bruce Springsteen had finally become like Elvis in another way. He used popular music to change himself and the slice of history he could affect. And rather than dying, he lived more whole than before.

Bruce Springsteen had finally circumvented—or rather, defused—the trap depicted by the Band's Robbie Robertson:

*See the man with the stage fright
Just standin' up there, givin' all his might
And he got caught in the spotlight
But when we get to the end, you wanna start all over again*

Springsteen escaped this Sisyphean fate by ignoring the advice given in "Stage Fright": "You can make it in your disguise/ Just never show the fear that's in your eyes." On the contrary, he'd taken the risk of turning the glare of his personal terrors full upon his audience and, what was most startling, found that many recognized them as their own.

When they did, Bruce Springsteen crossed the line between idol and hero as defined by the art critic John Berger: "The function of the hero in art is to inspire the reader or spectator to continue in the same spirit from where he, the hero, leaves off. He must release the spectator's potentiality, for potentiality is the historical force behind nobility. And to do this

the hero must be typical of the characters and class who at that time only need to be made aware of their heroic potentiality in order to be able to make their society juster and nobler. . . . The function of the idol is the exact opposite to that of the hero. The idol is self-sufficient; the hero never is. The idol is so superficially desirable, spectacular, witty, happy, that he or she merely supplies a context for fantasy and therefore, instead of inspiring, lulls. The idol is based on the *appearance* of perfection, but never on the striving towards it."

But what Springsteen achieved also confounded Berger, because he'd done it through the mechanism of popular culture, mediated by one of the country's largest industrial corporations. Like most good leftists, Berger believes that culture to be bankrupt; like any pragmatic member of the working class, Bruce Springsteen worked with the tools that came to hand.

If Springsteen proved able to restore a sense of center to rock 'n' roll without entirely dulling that idiom's status as the cutting edge of popular culture, it was not only because he'd dared expose to a mass audience what seemed to be his least conventional thoughts and feelings but also because he'd done that while risking the inconveniences and dangers of genuine mass popularity. It would have profited him not at all to gain the pink Cadillac and lose his own soul, but it would have served him equally poorly to have hardened his heart against the public from which he sprang. In that regard, his success was genuinely antihomian, because it sprang not from a refusal to participate in social conventions, but from a refusal to be excluded from them.

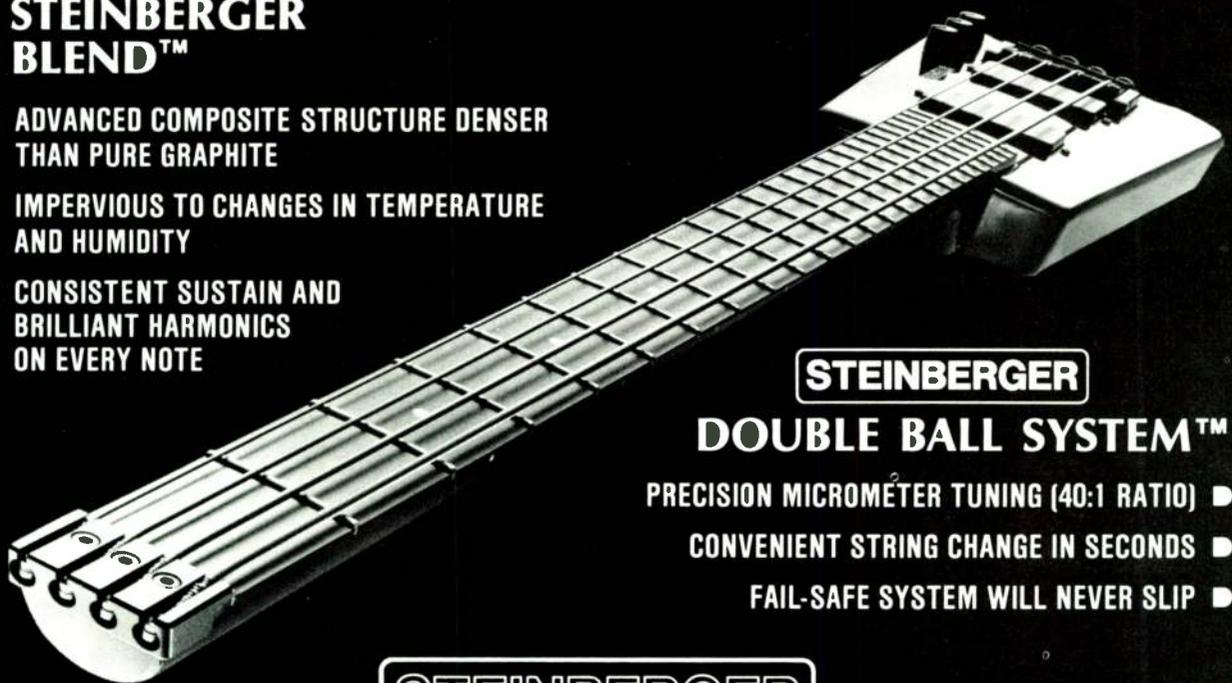
For its first five sides, then, *Bruce Springsteen And The E*

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Street Band Live! 1975-1985 defines a dream and chronicles its dissolution and the ways that dawning realizations transform the dreamer. Its final four are concerned with how you live with what's left. The transition is expressed on Side Six, which runs from "This Land Is Your Land" to "Reason To Believe," a leap every bit as long as it looks. Introducing Woody Guthrie's greatest hit, Springsteen acknowledges that Guthrie wrote in anger, but when Bruce sings the song it's about dreams and visions. What's emphasized isn't the grandeur of the landscapes or the mockery society makes of them, it's the voices that call out at the end of each verse, promising something better.

"Nebraska" and "Johnny 99" are songs about people who cannot hear those voices, the consequence of which is a death sentence. But "Reason To Believe" is something worse: a requiem for those who have heard the voices, pursued them to the end, and then discovered that they were lying. It's about the greatest menace that lurks in the darkness on the edge of town, about the compulsion to leap into the river and be swept downstream, about the temptation to run and keep on running, not toward freedom but away from the facts. Springsteen defines the song precisely: "That was the bottom."

"But at the end of *Nebraska*—it's kind of ironic—I wrote another song with the word *born* in it, which is really weird," Springsteen observed. "And from that point on, the answer to 'Reason To Believe' was 'Born In The U.S.A.'—I guess either record, but particularly the live version. That's the answer to it. That's the only answer I can perceive. That connects back to 'Badlands,' you know. And that was the moment that I felt I'd gotten things in a little healthier perspective, and that I

stopped—I didn't stop using my job; I stopped abusing my job, which I felt part of me had been doing. In the end, I just understood a lot more about what it takes to get by.

"No, it ain't gonna save you; you gotta save yourself. And you're gonna need a lotta help."

The rest of the record—and, it is not entirely unreasonable to imagine, the rest of Bruce Springsteen's work—is about giving that help and, just as important, receiving it. It begins with "Born In The U.S.A.," with that singer "born down in a dead man's town," but at the end, standing in the shadows of a prison, the singer has made a choice: He will run, and keep on running, but he will never *fail* to look back. He will always remember what's been done to him—and his friend at Khe Sanh, that woman he loved in Saigon, and the Viet Cong—and those memories will shape his future, no matter where it leads. In order to be "a cool rockin' daddy in the U.S.A.," you have to go beyond hearing the voices Woody Guthrie wrote about; you have to try to answer them back—you have to join them. And that is exactly what "Seeds," "The River" and "War" do.

"The 'Born In The U.S.A.' side, that's everything I know—at the moment, or at that time," Springsteen said with a short laugh. "And I know Jon felt that the opening section of 'The River' was the real center of the record. It moves out in all directions. The band on that night, the thirtieth of September 1985, they were great that night. They just played better than other nights. And it was a thing where just intensity and the forward thrust of the music was the best it's ever been."

Springsteen knew exactly what he was doing in the live show when he didn't stop for a reaction after "War." He compared

continued on page 134

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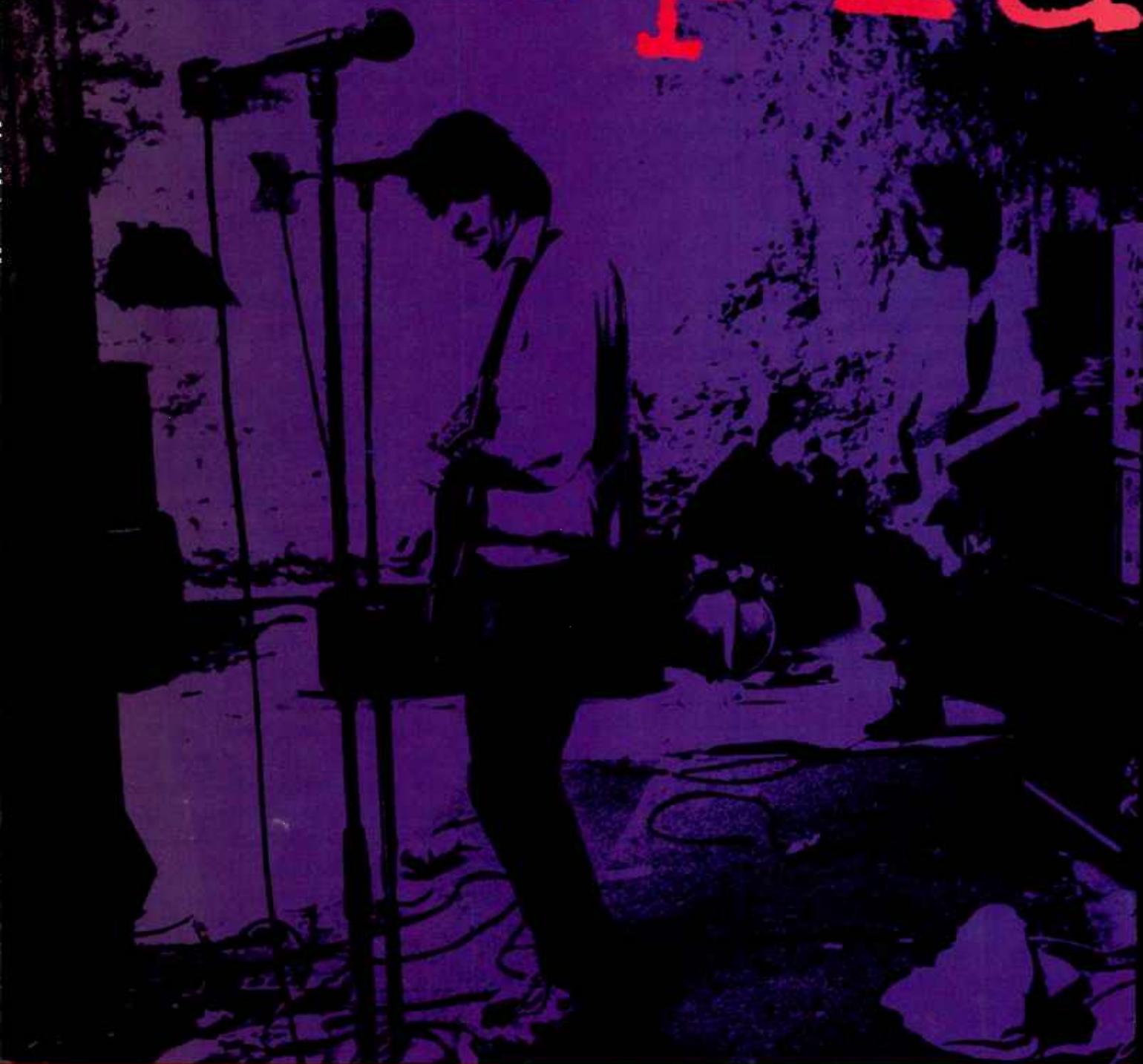
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repla



Well, here we are in Minneapolis and the Replacements are in trouble again. Last Saturday the band got mad at their old label, Twin Tone, for not paying them royalties they claim they're owed for the four albums they released before signing to Sire/Warner's in 1985. Paul Westerberg and the boys figured they had as much as thirty grand coming and could sure use the money. The last straw was when they heard Twin Tone was releasing their early albums on

cassette. So the Replacements got a wild idea and over a couple of cocktails that idea started looking better and better.

They drove over to Twin Tone and one Replacement kept the receptionist busy while the others waltzed inside and found their master tapes. Maybe somebody at the record company noticed and paid no attention. There goes one of our artists with an armload of tapes. So what? Maybe he's doing a remix for CD or something. The Replacements

by Bill Flanagan

cements

Paul Westerberg's
band may ascend
to the stars
or splatter all
over the road

headed straight for the Mississippi River. When they got to her noble banks they took the tapes and threw 'em in. So long, *Stink. Sorry, Ma*—forgot to take out the lifejackets.

The Replacements did not drown their work with the childish abandon of rock stars wrecking a hotel room. They did it because they thought they were in danger of losing control of their music through lawyers and fast talk and things over which they had no control. So they took control. And

maybe to prove that it was about something bigger than money, they didn't keep the tapes for themselves. They threw them in the river.

The joke around Minneapolis is that sometimes Prince himself sits on the banks of the river playing his guitar. What if his Purpleness is sitting there looking for inspiration when the Replacements tapes float by? Can't you see it? "Sheila E.!! I am having a vision! Fetch those tapes and bring them to my

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID STEWART

"I can be very fragile when it comes to the band's feelings. I guess I wimp out when I get to the crossroads."

studio!" Next Prince album—soggy hardcore.

Did the Replacements go a little overboard, so to speak? It's such a great story you could almost think it's a lie—that band leader Westerberg has the tapes buried in his basement and wants Twin Tone to think they are floating toward the Gulf of Mexico. But all the not-for-attribution stories told around the Twin Cities agree. Splash.

Paul Westerberg's attitude toward the compromises of the music business has been a frequent source of his inspiration. On the Replacements' new song "I Don't Know" he says it pretty plain: "One foot in the door, the other one in the gutter/ The sweet smell that they adore: I think I'd rather smother."

"Yeah," Westerberg nods. "That's us. That's the Replacements. The record company wants us to be big stars, but we're uncomfortable with that. We don't want to give them everything. We don't want to give them a hundred percent. As soon as you do that you've got nothing for yourself. We want to be in control of what we're doing. We don't want to be Bon Jovi. We want to sell records, we want to be popular, but we don't want to even be promoted the way the Del Fuegos are promoted. They know what they're doing. They allow Warner Brothers to say, 'Okay, we want this. Get it for us.' Whereas we hem and haw and say, 'Well, we would like this if you could do it our way.' It's like a card game and we haven't put our cards on the table yet. We're still upping the ante."

Westerberg is sitting in the shadows in a booth in the back of a Minneapolis bar. He's trying to lay a little low. Twin Tone Records is right next door and if one of those boys comes in for a pop, well, Paul may exit by way of the window.

"They put it down to us," he goes on, speaking of his new label. "They say, 'You can be big stars, you can make a lot of money if you do this and this. Make a video and show your face and film it live and look cute and the little girls will love it' and all this crap. And we have this gut feeling that that's wrong. Because what we do live is live and you should come see it live. I don't really know what to do about that. But we're not doing bad. I think they have faith in us now. They're coming around."

It all sounds noble—except the part about not giving a hundred percent. "It's a broad statement," Westerberg says, "but it's true. I guess it's the fear of failure. I don't want to give everything and have it turn out to be shit or have people not like it. I hold a little for myself. I'm lazy, too. If I get seventy-five percent of the way there I'll pretty much say that's it, close enough. I'm not a perfectionist when it comes to songwriting. I'm more of a perfectionist when it comes to the instrumentation. I'll let nonsense words go by just 'cause they feel good. 'I.O.U.' [the first track on the new LP, *Pleased To Meet Me*] has a nonsense chorus. I could sit down and get words to fit that, but I figure it doesn't need it. It sounds good enough to me."

For a guy who says he's holding back, Westerberg sure appears to put himself all the way out. Under the loud guitars his songs are as personal and moving as any sensitive folkie's, and when it comes to giving a hundred percent, this is the rocker who highlighted his last New York concert by taking an impromptu swan dive into the crowd—and played the rest of the show with a broken hand.

"When I say I hold back," he clarifies, "I mean not finishing something, not getting it perfect. As far as being honest, though, it's a hundred per cent honest."

And there you have the central paradox of the Replacements. They give blood in their music, their fans fervently identify with them, critics and college radio count them as one of the very best rock bands going—but they are frustratingly reluctant to become big stars. The radio needs them bad, MTV needs them worse, high school kids listening to the Cult need them most of all. Yet the Replacements keep playing Hamlet, refusing to become the big stars they should be. Sometimes they seem to be snobs. After all, what's wrong with having teenage girls like you?

"Because," Westerberg says, "we don't want people coming to see us just because they saw this three-minute commercial of us on TV. It would kill us in the end, it really would."

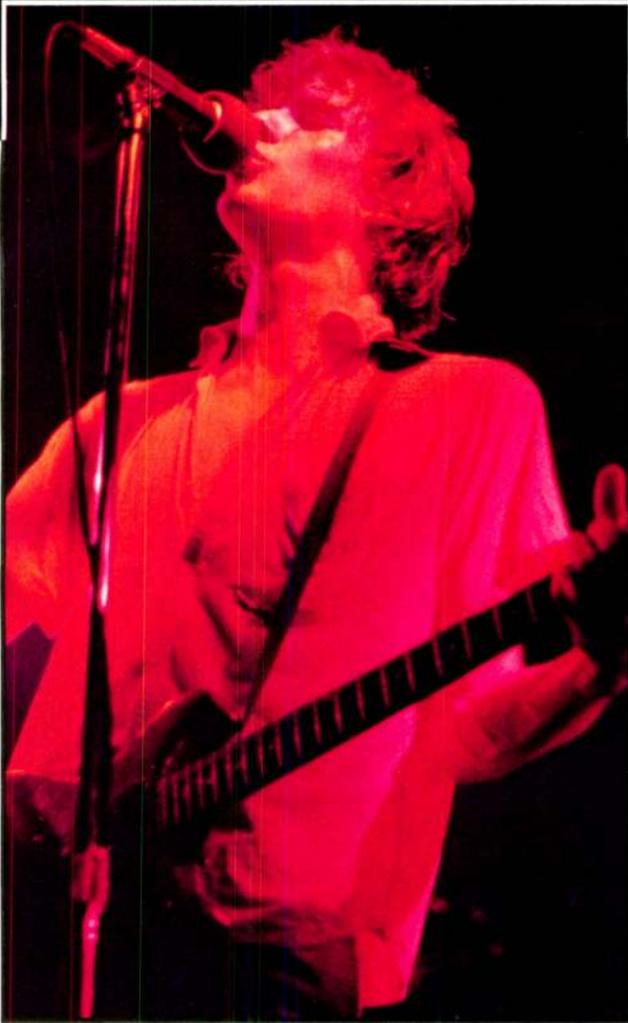
"We want to do it a different way. Who was the first one to latch onto video and say, 'This is cool, man, this is a way to sell the band'? He was smart. There's gotta be someone now to say, 'Let's try something else!' We'd like to try a different way. We'd like to *lead* something different. I'd just as soon not be a huge plastic monster of an act because a bunch of thirteen-year-old girls saw our video. There's no satisfaction in that. There's a little more money, but we ain't in this for money. It's been seven years and we've made only a little bit of money; we're ready for none. We've got to hang tough for a *little* while longer at least."

Westerberg falls silent and someone punches up a Phil Collins song on the jukebox. "*Shut up*," he moans.

Okay, maybe he's got a negative attitude. But the Replacements are a terrific rock 'n' roll band, and Paul Westerberg is one of the strongest songwriters to emerge from American pop music in this decade. His band rocks hard and funny and loud, and the songs never fall into cliché. Whether he's singing about the lonely life of an abandoned mother or the bass player's tonsillectomy, Westerberg says things nobody's said in rock 'n' roll songs before. And he does it without holding up a sign saying "Big Statement" or "Comedy Relief." The Replacements come on like fighters for the best reason in the world—their music is worth fighting for. And when they do finally make it big—look out. Kids used to flattened-out, compromised, artificially preserved rock aren't going to know what hit them.

Pleased To Meet Me is the Replacements' shot at the big time. They recorded it in Memphis with a real producer, worked hard to stay in tune and in time, even used horns and a few strings. So what have they picked as the first single? "The Ledge," a song about teenage suicide. Lots of airplay there, boys.

"I came up with the minor key riff and it made me feel like there should be something sad said to it," Westerberg explains. "And I was feeling down that day. It's sort of half and half through the eyes of myself and someone who doesn't have anyone to turn to. It was written in October or November—before this teenage suicide epidemic. I didn't even think about it at the time. When everybody heard it they said, 'Oh, man, are you gonna get in trouble! Is this about the kids in New Jersey?' No, no. I'm not trying to glorify that or jump on that bandwagon. I've tried to kill myself before. Never seriously. I mean, if you really try to kill yourself you kill yourself. To me someone who jumps off a building really wants to kill



Westerberg: "Pretty good at hiding things."

themselves. It ain't like slitting your wrist and hoping Mom's gonna catch you quick. It's a total desperation deal."

Westerberg seems to have a big chunk of himself in every character he describes. That's why "The Ledge" comes off as more than exploitation; he makes the character's case so convincingly that the listener understands the kid about to jump. "I can feel for it," Westerberg nods. "I couldn't write a song about being an accountant 'cause I can't feel that. I'm not suicidal or nothin', but I know how it feels. I'm old enough now to know that there are people around me I can turn to. But I remember when I was younger and there was nobody. It was God or drugs or death or rock 'n' roll. Or all four.

"I've written some good stuff being depressed, but you can write about it just as well when you're happy. You don't have to be on the verge of suicide to write a song about suicide. I'm fine, I'm not going to kill myself. But I felt it that day I wrote it."

At the time of the Replacements' second record, the appropriately titled *Replacements Stink*, Westerberg came down with a bout of affectation—pretending to be meaner than he was, copying Black Flag. ("I couldn't write hardcore worth a shit but I certainly tried to sound as tough as I could. It was all bullshit. I figure those tapes are probably around Memphis or New Orleans by now.") Since then he's worked at stripping away falseness, writing in something close to his real voice.

"I get no satisfaction pretending I'm someone else," he shrugs. "I used to try that. This way it's more painful if people say they don't like it. If they say, 'This song is really wimpy and stupid,' I can lie and say I was pretending I was Gordon Lightfoot. But no. That's me." He smiles. "What the hell?"

Kind of an introspective guy. Yet a whole lot of rock fans are anxious for the Replacements to pick up the mantle carried for so long by the Stones and dropped by the Clash—who decided they didn't want it. In fact, we could get some of our college-trained rock psychologists to explain how the Replacements are filling the void left by the Clash—the need for an uncompromising, defiant punk band with hearts of gold. The *Give 'Em Enough Rope* opening salvo of the Replacements' "Bastards Of Young" made a strong claim for that Clash territory. Only one problem: "I never liked the Clash," Westerberg says. "Joe couldn't sing and he can't sing. I drop my voice. Maybe they're nice guys and true to their beliefs and they're a tough rock band, but I never liked them. I bought the Sex Pistols and the first Clash album and I returned the Clash the same day."

So who are the Replacements' heroes?

"The Faces were my favorite band of all time," Westerberg says. "I think they were the best band ever. Period." And that makes a lot of sense. The Faces were drunken rowdies who could switch gears from the harshest rock to a melancholy ballad to cry in your beer by. Even the toughest Faces tune held on to a thread of vulnerability, and even their saddest laments kept a sense of humor.

"A lot of those tender ones were Ronnie Lane's," Westerberg notes. "When I started to play guitar I listened to Ron Wood. It took me a few years to realize Wood didn't really know how to play all that good. I thought he was the end. Just the fact that he was drunk—that's what I tried to mold my playing after. He had to work hard at being bad to get that sound. He had a good tone, too. At the time everyone was playing Marshalls cranked full up—that big distorted sound. It was the opposite with him—Wood's *rhythm* guitar was fuzzy and loud and the *lead* was this little *plink plink plink*."

"I think it has a little bit to do with being a loser. They were losers and I think we are too. But not your dumb, down-and-out loser who's got nothing. Somebody who's got a little talent but isn't real sure of himself. The Stones always seemed real sure of themselves: They knew what they wanted and they went for it. The Replacements are like the Faces in that they knew what they could do but were...afraid of it? They could feel for the loser who had to stand in the soup line or the woman who lost her husband." Westerberg takes a slug of beer and sums up his ideal: "The nice guys who finish last."

Westerberg is driving through Minneapolis, pointing out the street where he lives while humming along with "Venus in Blue Jeans" on the oldies station. He's heading to Ray's Uptown Grill, a local hangout. "Maybe we'll see Bob Stinson there," he says, referring to the band's recently fired lead guitarist. "I haven't seen him since. Then you'll have some color for your story. You'll get to see him kill me."

He pulls into the parking lot of the Uptown Grill and takes his usual place in the corner booth. A succession of regulars comes by to spread the latest gossip about Curtiss A., a local singer

"I remember when I was younger and there was nobody. It was God or drugs or death or rock 'n' roll."

and Uptown Grill homeboy who is hiding from the cops. Seems Curtiss' ex got a judge to slap him with a restraining order to stay away from her and he failed to keep his distance.

Enter Robert "Slim" Dunlop, another regular and the Replacements' new guitarist. He slides into the booth next to Westerberg. Slim is close friends with fugitive Curtiss and more locals come by to ask the news. "He's gotta do ninety days," Slim sighs. "Starting when?" asks a local rocker.

"As soon as they find him," Slim says. "He's hiding out." A story is circulating that Curtiss asked Slim to be his alibi, and when Slim refused, his pal threatened to shoot him. Slim doesn't want to talk about it. Curtiss is just upset. "My main worry," Slim says, gesturing to Westerberg, "is that my liver won't hold out."

Slim describes himself as "a lifer, a terminal music addict. If people offer me a beer I'll go play. The recording and publicity ends of it are not really my thing, but I'll never get enough of the rush of playing live. When I'm an old man I'll find some little polka band to go jam with. For me, this is the chance of a lifetime, because I'll play with anybody who calls me up. I'm registered with the union, I do country & western, any kind of dates. I have some strange addiction to it. That's my whole life story—just stumbling from one gig to another."

But Slim doesn't think he should be quoted in a Replacements story. He says he's too new to the band and anyway, Paul is the voice of the Replacements. "Slim's played for everybody around here," Paul says. "If your guitar player got sick you called Slim. He's better than me but he's not a virtuoso. We thought about getting a real hot player, but then we thought it was better to get someone we got along with, and Slim fits in good. He's a real humble guy and he likes to take a drink and he owns a gun. What can I say? He's in the band."

Early the next afternoon, Westerberg can't find the band. Mostly he's checking the local diners. Finally he decides to try the Replacements' rehearsal space in the basement of an industrial building. The elevator's barely hit the cellar when a screaming electric guitar rings out above the clank and grind of heavy machinery. "That's Tommy," Paul says. He heads down a winding corridor, avoids a moving forklift, and tries the door that stands between him and the howling Les Paul. Locked. He knocks. No answer, the guitar's too loud. He pounds on the door. No answer. He yells. "Hey, Tommy! Hey, Tommy!!" No answer. He kicks it. "Hey STOOPID! Open up!"

The guitar stops and Tommy Stinson opens the door, long haired, skinny and grinning—the true rocker. If Westerberg is the brains of the Replacements, Tommy is the heart: the cackling twenty-year-old kid who has been in the band since he was thirteen, the tenth-grade drop-out who regularly out-talks interviewers, the bassist who falls over laughing onstage and gods band and audience into taking nothing seriously. Tommy's the one who keeps the ballads that Westerberg slips onto Replacements albums out of the live shows. Maybe all great rock bands have one guy who writes about it (Brian Wilson, Jagger, Rotten) and one guy who lives it (Dennis Wilson, Brian Jones, Sid Vicious). Tommy lives the Replacements. They agree on a rehearsal schedule and Paul heads out to grab a bite.

The Replacements were formed as a teenage garage trio by

Tommy, his big brother Bob and drummer Chris Mars. Westerberg, the kind of kid who wrote songs in his bedroom, says it was seeing thirteen-year-old Tommy that made him want to join. "As soon as I saw Tommy," Westerberg laughs. "That was a kid who came halfway up his amp and played as good as he could. It seemed like a novelty."

Now Westerberg's twenty-seven, Chris Mars is twenty-three, and Tommy's pushing twenty-one. "I would not be surprised one bit if Tommy went on to become a big star and the rest of us come see him and get thrown out on our ear," Paul smiles. "Tommy dropped out of tenth grade to go on tour. How many kids would die for that? They're sitting in a tenth-grade algebra class and Tommy's drinking from a bottle of Jack Daniels, going down the road. He's come out of it real good. If you weren't strong enough that would really screw you up. Like being a child circus performer or something."

One of the reasons Tommy's mother let him go off with the Replacements was that his older brother Bob was there to watch out for him. Now the band's fired Bob. "It's tough," Westerberg concedes. "But Tommy was right there with me and Chris. We didn't want to go down the toilet with a guy who wasn't willing to play. Tommy wanted to see Bob straighten up, but he wasn't and he wouldn't and he's gone."

Westerberg takes a booth at Hoyt's restaurant, across from the rehearsal space. Tommy shows up and says hi to his friend behind the counter, who asks if he heard right—that the Replacements were involved in a shooting last night? Oh, Tommy explains, that was a *photo* shoot. He sits with Paul. Asked about being a Replacement at thirteen, Tommy looks pained.

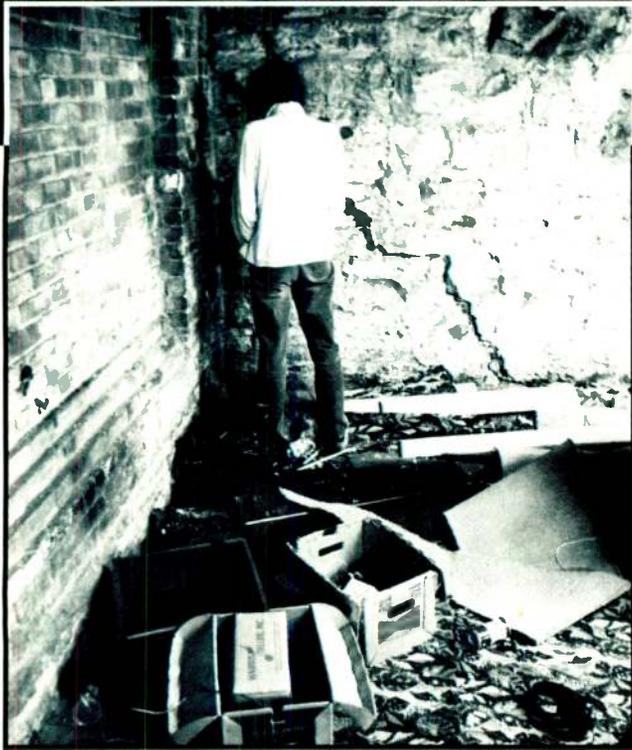
"That's the oldest question, man," he sighs. "I never had anything to do with school. I was in the band and I went to school and the two didn't even work together until I quit school for the band. The teachers didn't even know I was in a band. I didn't talk about it. The only ones who knew were a couple of guys I hung around with. That was all. It was all pretty quiet."

Okay, let's bury such questions. The Replacements have grown up, to the consternation of those who want them to be drunken teenagers forever, and the joy of those who want to see a great rock band keep evolving. Each record has shown growth (except 1982's *Stink*). If *Pleased To Meet Me* isn't a hit, it won't be for lack of great songs or hard work in the studio.

But the toughest change was firing Bob Stinson. Bob was a lead guitar player capable of a rough, inventive melodicism. Bob was also the wildman of a wild group, notorious for improvisations like taking the stage dressed in a diaper. At some point Bob crossed a line the other Replacements have avoided—the line between liking to get wrecked all the time and needing to get wrecked all the time. Bob's guitar playing onstage became distracted and undependable. He had to go. It must have been murder on Tommy.

Now Tommy tells Paul that last night he went to see his mother and ran into his brother for the first time since the firing. He was scared Bob wouldn't speak to him, but he talked Tommy's ear off. He was in good spirits, had a job, and was rehearsing with a new band. To Tommy's amazement, Bob even asked how Slim was working out. Relating this to Paul, Tommy is clearly delighted and pretty surprised.

"It was weird at first," Tommy admits. "I'm sure it's always



How the Mats spell R-E-L-I-E-F.

going to be weird. At least for the next few years. It was kind of hard. He's still in the same situations with his life that he was in when it all came down, but at least now he doesn't have all the stress of being in the band on his back. He can handle things a little better.

"I think it kind of drove him nuts a little bit. I don't think it was what he really wanted. I think he felt real strange about not having a lot to do with the songs. When we'd practice he just didn't fit into any of the new material—for the last couple of years. I think it's a relief for him to not have someone saying, 'No! You're not doing anything right there! Do something creative! Don't do what I'm doing!'"

Tommy's description pretty much kills the myth that the Replacements are guys who just go in and thrash around on their instruments. Nobody gets real good by *accident*. Right after firing Bob the band went to Memphis and recorded *Pleased To Meet Me* as a trio, with Westerberg handling all the guitar parts. That pretty much kills the myth that Westerberg's not much of a musician.

"I figured it out after we got down to Memphis to record," Tommy continues. "After we'd talked to Slim about playing with us. The reason I wanted Slim in the band was to *replace my brother*. I've known Slim for years so it was a good thing. We couldn't have some guy from L.A. with hair down to his butt come in. It had to be someone I liked."

How did the Stinsons' mom feel about one son firing the other? "My mom was totally supportive of the right move," Tommy says. "We mentioned it to her before we mentioned it to him. When he was in treatment. She said, 'You guys have to do what's right for you guys.' She's not really gotten involved in that sort of stuff. When it came to contracts she wanted to know what I was getting into. When it comes to what we do, it's not really her place. She likes to know what's going on.

"Bob kind of dug his own grave. The family—and every-

one—tried to help him for God knows how long. After a point it got to be a real futile effort to even get him out of the garbage. But now that he's doing it on his own I think he's probably wised up a little bit about what's going on with his life."

It's unusual for Tommy to talk like this with a tape recorder rolling. Westerberg has been sitting silently and now the silence falls on the whole table. Paul motions to the cassette and says, "We might have to *wash* this when we're done." That cracks everybody up.

Pleased To Meet Me found the Replacements working with a producer, they say, for the first time. Tommy Ramone produced *Tim*, but Westerberg says he was as nonchalant as the Replacements themselves. The new LP was different, though. The band put themselves in the hands of veteran producer Jim Dickinson (Alex Chilton's Big Star, Ry Cooder) for two months.

"He generally won the arguments," Westerberg says. "We weren't ever ready to hop on a plane and go home, while he made motions a few times that he might want to call it a day, I think just to see how we'd react. We didn't react. We'd say, 'Fine.' I guess he wanted us to be a little more like 'No don't, please!'"

"But he pretty much let us do what we wanted. The main thing he did that was different was he got Chris to play in time. Before we would get bored after two or three takes and if there were drum drops we wouldn't give a shit. But Jim would make us do a song three or four times for two weeks. 'Alex Chilton' being the prime example of one Chris couldn't get a handle on. Chris finally did, but by then Tommy and I were drunk or bored so we had to wait another week. Jim had a sense of the thing that we didn't understand: 'It has to be in time and in tune!'"

The Replacements played by Dickinson's rules—better they figured than getting into click tracks or drum machines or heavy overdubbing. Westerberg says he played all the guitar, "except when Dickinson had his fifteen-year-old son come in and play the Van Halen noises on 'Dirty Pool.' We didn't say anything. The consolation we got out of it was that there was no Lead Guitar Solo, just the noises. Dickinson's a nice guy. He's the best producer we ever worked with...and the first."

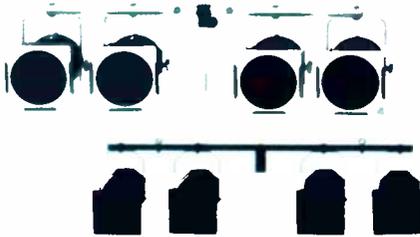
One thing Dickinson accomplished that no one else had was to get a good take of "Can't Hardly Wait," a song that the Replacements had been failing to get on record for three years. Although a rough version of the song appeared on the live cassette, *The Shit Hits The Fans*, the version of "Can't Hardly Wait" that closes *Pleased To Meet Me* has new lyrics, a steady tempo, horns out of Van Morrison and strings out of Norman Whitfield. It's the Replacements' best-ever shot for a hit.

Westerberg: "The reason it sounds like it does—I'm not apologizing for it—is we had the opportunity to use the Memphis Horns. We said, 'If we're gonna do this, let's make it a different song. I do not like the strings, I'll say that. They were not my idea. I can see he was trying to make it sound like Memphis 1968, the Boxtops or something, a pop tune. But it doesn't feel comfortable to me. I can listen to it like I'm listening to somebody else's tune and go, 'Man, this is kinda cool.' But knowing that it's us I laugh every time the happy horn riff comes in. It's a guy sitting in a hotel room saying, 'Goddam it, when am I gonna get home?' And then you got..."

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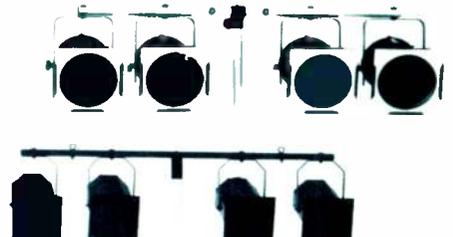


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Westerberg mimes the horn riff, giving it a kazoo-like tone.

But a little blue-eyed soul is not half as shocking a departure as "Skyway," an acoustic ballad that really could be lifted from Gordon Lightfoot.

"The band didn't play on it," Westerberg says. "Chris tapped his foot. But better that song than if I was to whip up another bullshit rocker. I feel the good songs should go on and 'Skyway' was better than six or seven rockers that were left off. If Tommy and Chris want to fight about it I'll fight 'em. But they're smart enough to know a good song when they hear it. I'm not trying to pat myself on the back, but it was certainly better than 'Beer For Breakfast.'"

The Replacements practice incredibly loud. Even ears half deaf from years of sonic overexposure feel like they're about to blow after five minutes at top volume in the band's tiny, Oscar Madison-decor rehearsal studio. But it's worth it 'cause the songs are so good. For two and a half hours they stand there in a row: Slim watching carefully for the changes, Chris behind his drums, and Tommy with a perpetual grin. Half facing them is Westerberg, the maestro. He calls for "The Edge," "I.O.U.," "Alex Chilton," "I Will Dare," "Never Mind," "Never Mind" again (Tommy cracks up every time he steps up to the microphone to strangle out the high harmony), "Unsatisfied," "Answering Machine," "Go," "Valentine," "Dirty Pool," "Red Red Wine," "Bastards Of Young," "Lay It Down Clown," "Little Mascara." This is a body of work! When they get to "Can't Hardly Wait" Slim struggles valiantly to compensate for the lack of those horns and strings, and the band gets bogged for a while in organizing the timing for a long break in the middle. Throughout the afternoon Slim is studious—he plays some of Bob Stinson's leads, some of his own, and always defers to Westerberg. After he re-creates Bob's lead on "Bastards Of Young," Tommy says to Slim, a Fender man, "You've gotta get a Les Paul! Get that fat sound!"

Maybe that's where new wave got lost. When they all started playing Strats. The Replacements' tone is a Les Paul tone—thick and dirty.

By the time they move on to "Kiss Me On The Bus" Tommy is restless. He asks if they can play "something fast." Paul launches into a breakneck version of "Kids Don't Follow" (from *Stink*) and Tommy's face lights up. When it slams to a halt he smiles, "We haven't played that

song that fast in four years!"

Some of the evolution in the Replacements songs has been subtle. In the old days, Westerberg explains, "I would write the riff and sing to it, and try to get Bob to play my riff while I did the simplest chord changes behind it. But in the past year or two all the songs are in open tuning, so I can play rhythm and whatever fill at the same time, while

LEFT OF THE DIAL

I got a '56 Les Paul," Paul Westerberg says, "my trusty gray guitar—and I've got a plexiglas Dan Armstrong, I think it's a '71. I've got a Yamaha acoustic. For keyboards Paul claims to have "a little Shittone, made exclusively by Shittone Incorporated."

What kind of bass is that, Tommy? "I don't know, it's been so repaired... It's a sort of a Fender, part Rickenbacker. Say it's 'hand-customized.'"

Paul says we should play it safe and say Tommy plays through an Ampeg amp, but that would be a lie. "It's yellow and orange and big," Tommy explains like a true technowiz. "It's a square thing with a bunch of tubes. You come over and try to describe it!" So we did and it was a big yellow and orange thing with a bunch of tubes.

Slim is still a Fender loyalist. He has a '61 Telecaster neck on a 1970 Tele body. "My '61 body got completely destroyed," Slim sighs. "Me and a friend one time, just in fun, started putting little hacks in each other's guitars with this ice pick. Then we got carried away. He took a chisel and a hammer and took a big hunk out of my Telecaster. I just about cried. So I took his Stratocaster and took a big chop out of that. Anyway, it got to where there wasn't much wood left on my Tele."

Remarkably, Slim turned down the band's offer to buy him another guitar for the road. "I've never had the need for multiple guitars," Slim explains. "I never really had a tuning problem because I play with a thumb pick which doesn't really push the string. A heavy pick will just knock your guitar out of tune. I get used to one guitar and it's hard to switch. I work it into the ground. You get better on one guitar than you are on others. Paul is really good at playing two or three guitars with really different necks."

"I can't play," Westerberg cuts in. "That's the difference! I can play 'em all bad. Bring 'em on!"

The Replacements will probably use a combination of Marshall and Fender amps onstage. They figure anyone who says you only need a small amp to feed the P.A. is a fool, a liar or a wimp.

Chris Mars says, "Sears drums—that's all I can say."

singing. I think that's what fucked up Bob a little, because things weren't cut and dried like they were in the early days when we were playing pretty much punk stuff. Then it was just D-A-D and Bob would play a lead whenever I stopped singing. Now it's more structured. I play the structure of the song and the lead guitar player, Slim, uses his own taste to fill in where he wants."

So sometimes evolutions in style owe less to commercial or artistic forethought than to open tunings. Or living in an apartment. Those early Replacements songs were written on electric guitar at Westerberg's parents' house, while his folks were at work.

Now his father's retired, and Paul has to write in his own apartment—where the neighbors limit him to an acoustic guitar. So now there are more "Skyway"s than "White And Lazy"s.

It turns out that even the songs on which Westerberg shares credit with the other Replacements all spring from his head. "I have to be delicate here," he says. "I don't want it to sound like I run the whole show, but I do come up with all the major ideas. 'Alex Chilton' will be the best example. They're credited as writers on that. In actuality they did not write the song. But when I came up with the three chords I said, 'This sucks!' And they said, 'No, this is good, let's do this!'"

They were excited about it, they got me excited about it, and I went on to write the rest of it. To me their willingness to be into something and to pull me along and say, 'Paul, this is good, let's do this,' constitutes writership. They're entitled to a third of it."

The other Replacements' influence is also felt in their reluctance to play ballads like "Skyway" and "Here Comes A Regular" onstage.

"That's a band decision," Westerberg nods. "I write most of the tunes and if the band don't want to do 'em then we don't do 'em. I'm not going to make Tommy stand there like an asshole and play a little plunk plunk song if he doesn't want to. It's the same thing for me if they want to do a song like "Dose Of Thunder"—a song I hate that Bob and Tommy and Chris loved 'cause it was like Ted Nugent or something. I didn't want to do the damn thing but I would try 'cause they wanted to, and it sucked pretty much all the time."

Westerberg admits he has some parts of himself he's not putting into his Replacements writing: "I'm kind of saving it, to be honest. The time ain't now, it doesn't fit the band. Not that 'Skyway' really fits the band. I'll be around for a long time and I can do that stuff someday."

He's just as happy to not have everybody pick up on how much of himself he reveals. "Some songs are hard for me to sing live," he says, "but I've gotten pretty good at hiding things. I can have meanings only I understand. I can be real evasive when it comes to showing myself between the lines."

He's also real good at hiding the fact that this punk hero suffers from stage fright. "Once I get onstage I'm fine, beforehand I have stage fright. On tour I go to bed about four in the morning and I'll wake up about seven or eight. I can't sleep, I'm nervous that day. I know there's a show coming and I can't do anything. I can't read, I can't watch television, I can maybe do an interview 'cause then we're gonna be talking about rock 'n' roll. I'm afraid every night before we go on. So...we drink. And it helps. I would advise it to any young band in the world. Have a couple of drinks. Not to be a raving alcoholic, but if you're not sure of yourself, have a few drinks, relax. Ain't nothing wrong with it."

If the Replacements get really big, the attention on Westerberg will almost surely push him farther apart from the rest of the band—at least in the public consciousness. Do they talk about that?

"It's something we don't talk about

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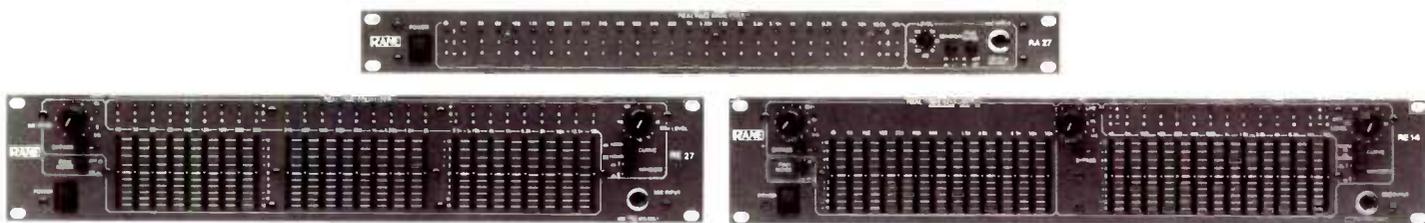
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unless we're really tanked," Paul says. "We're all smart enough to realize that the Replacements are what we got. I could make a solo album tomorrow and so could Tommy, and who's to say which would be better? Tommy's would probably appeal to the initial Replacements fan who likes the rawer rock stuff. Chris is an artist, too. He does country things. I don't pull a lot of 'Skyway's on 'em 'cause that only makes them want to bring out their own little things.

"The songs are Replacements tunes. I write 'em but they're for the Replacements to play. We figure we're gonna ride this till somebody's had enough. Nobody's gonna get fired at this point. If somebody quits, it's over. Then I'll do what I want and they can do what they want, but at this point what I want is to keep the Replacements together. 'Cause I think we're a good band. I can be as egotistical as hell and say, 'This is a great song! We should do this one!' and they'll bring me down to earth. They'll roll their eyes and say, 'This is pretty cool, *James Taylor*.' "And then it hits me: Yeah, why should I subject them to this? It's not rock 'n' roll, it's not the Replacements. I used to say we'd stay together forever,

but Bob leaving the band sort of shook me there. I figured we were supermen, we could always keep it together—to the bitter end. Now we'll keep it together till it isn't fun anymore.

"We've been together longer than the Faces! I remember when I saw them in 1975 the preview in the paper called them a 'Veteran English Band.' At the time I was mad 'cause I thought they were calling them old. Now, Christ, by the end of this tour we'll have been together eight years. So we'll stick together and then after that..."

Westerberg says he figures no big rock band has gone out smoothly yet. Then he breaks into a grin and says, "Another thing—if Tommy wants to record those songs of his, I *do* want to slit his throat."

For a hard guy, Westerberg's songs sure have a lot of references to being scared and weak. As he said in "Swingin' Party," "If being strong is what you want then I need help here with this feather."

"I can be tough," Westerberg says, "but sometimes I'm not strong when it comes to tender things. That song was partially about a relationship and partially the band. I can be very fragile when it

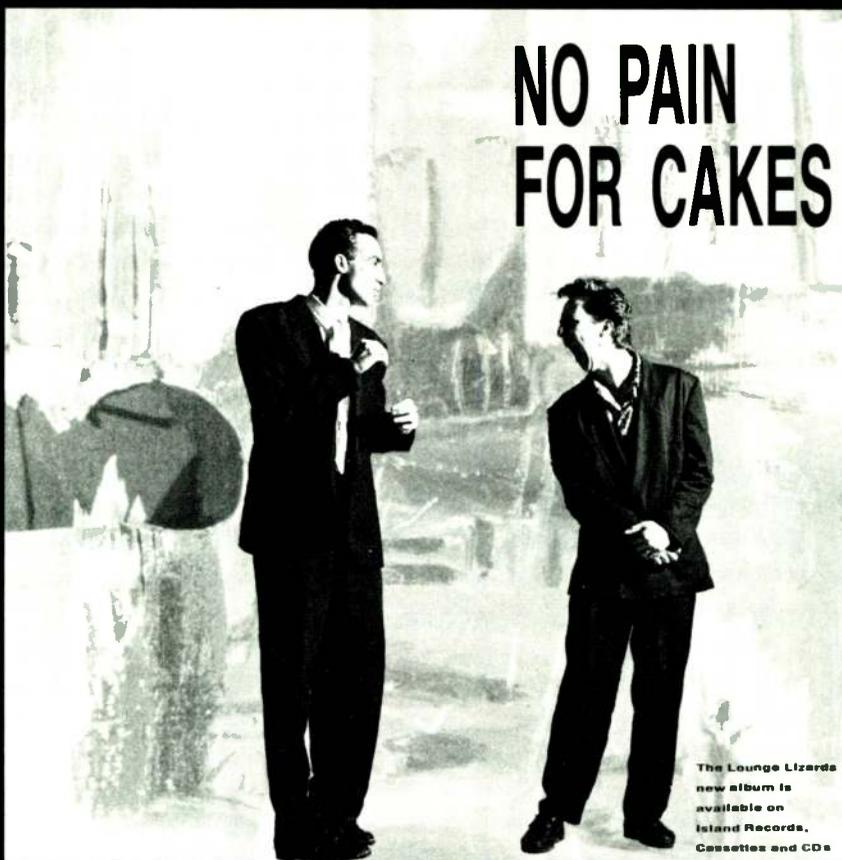
comes to the band's feelings. I don't want to be the heavy guy who says this is what we have to do and this is the road we have to go down. I lead the band. I guess I wimp out when I get to the crossroads. Then I look for everyone behind me and say, 'Now what do *you* want to do?'"

Another funny thing about "Swingin' Party" is its vampy cocktail ending. In fact, another subtlety of the Replacements' evolution has been a tendency to put tightly arranged endings—often different from the structure of the body of the song—on their recent records.

"I saw a thing once," Westerberg says, "that said what constitutes a song is a beginning and an ending—nobody listens to what's in the middle. I was twelve years old. It was impressed in my mind. I used that a couple of times. I thought, 'On the shittier songs we'll find real good beginnings and real good endings.' It's like guitar solos—start it cool, end it cool, and in the middle you can shit on the stage. I don't matter. They're gonna remember the beginning and the end." Westerberg breaks into a smile. "Same thing with an article, right?"



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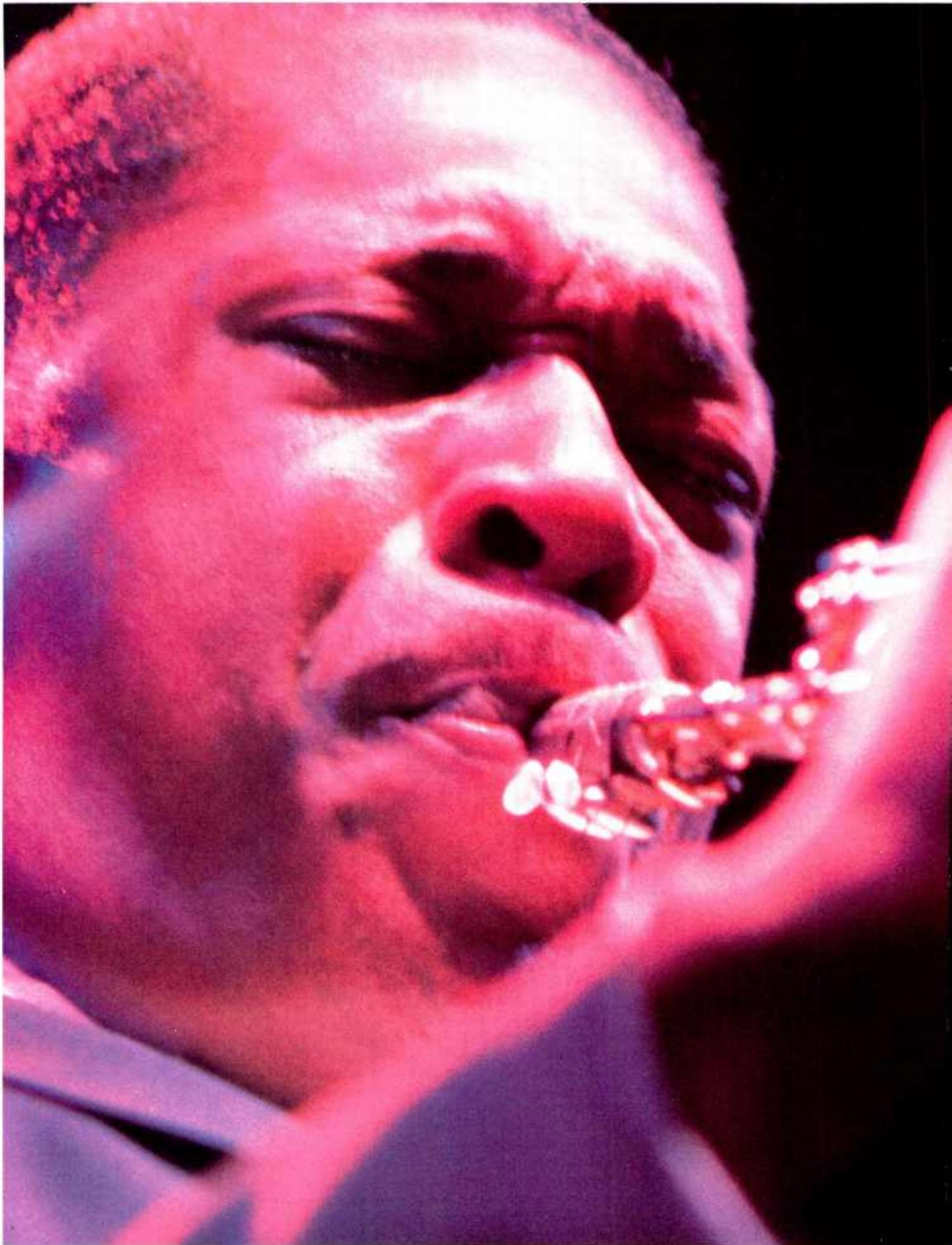
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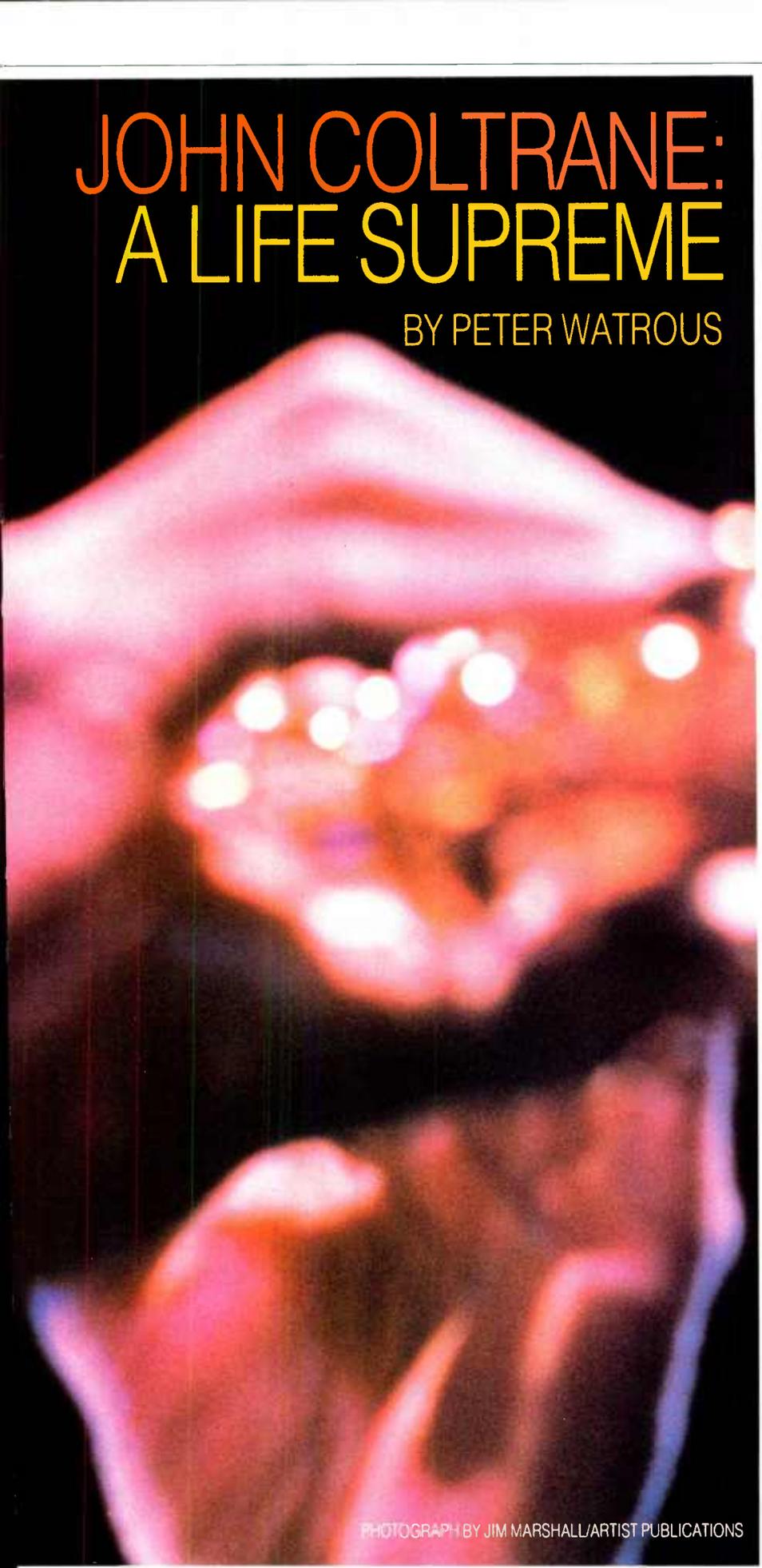
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JOHN COLTRANE: A LIFE SUPREME

BY PETER WATROUS



John Coltrane died in 1967, twenty years ago this summer. America had seen the rise and assassination of Malcolm X and was about to experience Martin Luther King's death. It was more than just dancing in the streets; there was a riot going on, perhaps the greatest urban turmoil in the country's history. The arts were in upheaval, too: The Beatles were finishing *Sgt. Pepper's* and reshaping notions of pop; the Grand Union, a New York school of dance including Twyla Tharp and Merce Cunningham, were using improvisation and random motion; junk and pop art were replacing the established abstract expressionists. There was a rupture with the past going on, in other words, and John Coltrane, who'd started out as a saxophonist deep in the jazz traditions, was one of its leaders.

In a sense he is the archetypal 60s artist, the man who reshaped the iconography of jazz genius from the brilliant burnout of Charlie Parker—a 50s beat idea—to that of the abstaining saint, paradoxically meditative and angry, Eastern and yet American. He became the paradigm of the searching artist. Though it can be argued that Coltrane helped end jazz's mass popularity with his expressionistic, visceral approach to music, his own appeal and influence was immense, reaching way beyond the confines of jazz or even music. And after two subsequent decades of often jarring cultural and political cynicism, his trademarks of honesty, forthrightness, and an overwhelming desire to change, to do things that haven't been done before, seem more than just appealing. They seem necessary.

For me, Coltrane's astounding emotional power comes from his sound, that chillingly personal cry that's his identity, the one note that can be heard from his fumbling, early recordings with Dizzy Gillespie to the last dates five months before he died. It's not a warm sound, or a friendly sound, it's simply a

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM MARSHALL/ARTIST PUBLICATIONS

fact that carries with it an indifference to acceptability. To me Coltrane has always sounded lonely, a three a.m. blue wail that gives succor and sympathy to those in trouble. There's passion in everything he played—even the hundreds of blowing sessions he tossed off—to remind us what it means to be alive. You feel his rawness, his lack of equivocation, his honesty.

Coltrane was a natural. He also worked extremely hard at cultivating his talent. He didn't "do" anything in a Hollywood sense: His life reflects an almost monastic dedication to learning and to advancing, both as a musician and as a person. The son of a tailor and grandchild of two ministers (his mother's father, also a state senator, was known for fire and brimstone sermons), he grew up in High Point, North Carolina, in what passed for the black aristocracy. In school he played in Reverend Steele's Community Band. By the time he graduated from high school in 1943, he already exhibited the sort of aloofness that made him seem mysterious—actually, he was shy—and he was known as *the* musician in High Point. As choices available for black people to make a living were severely limited, being a musician would be considered risqué in some circles, a source of pride and admiration in others. For Coltrane, it meant giving up college.

In 1944, Coltrane and two of his best friends moved to Philadelphia where he began his fanatical practice routine, from ten to twelve hours a day. Following a Navy stint, he joined an R&B band led by Joe Webb and featuring the great blues shouter Big Maybelle, then twenty-two, who loved Coltrane's tone. He went to California, as part of Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson's group, where he met and played with his idol Charlie Parker. But Vinson wanted him as a tenor player, not an altoist; the change of instruments allowed him to move away from Parker's influence. "On tenor," said Coltrane, "I found there

was no one man whose ideas were so dominant. I listened to almost all the good tenor men, beginning with Lester, and believe me, I've picked up something from all of them, including several who haven't recorded."

Post-war Philadelphia was musically fertile; clubs were everywhere, and since the city was on the black tour circuit, local people were often picked up by big-name groups. "Philadelphia was a mecca [for] bebop," says saxophonist Jimmy Heath, a soft-spoken, intelligent man who was one of Coltrane's best friends. "There was a lot of jamming going on; everybody was trying to learn. It was a family type of affair." That year Miles Davis blew into town; having recorded with Charlie Parker's group, he wasn't quite a star but his style was already well-known. Coltrane sat in with him at the Audubon Ballroom in New York and knew, according to biographer O.C. Simkins, that he'd "one day like to play permanently with him."

"I heard Trane in Philadelphia," says Miles Davis. "When he picked up the tenor, his eyes were on Dexter and Sonny Stitt. I used to have him and Sonny Rollins in the same band, and Art Blakey. That was a *baad* band I had, *Goddamn!* So he started working with me. I got him and Philly Joe. And Paul Chambers. He was playing, you know, like Dexter, kicking out different long phrases. I *loved* when he would do that, when he would imitate, like Eddie Davis. It was so funny."

Heroin was endemic to the jazz community of the time; it was cheap, and the long-term effects of addiction hadn't yet become obvious. Coltrane, twenty-two, was fitting in. "There were a lot of guys that were messed up on drugs," says Sonny Rollins, "[but] I never looked at John in that way. He was never that type of guy. It's incongruous. But I guess it happened, and at times he was messed up. It was out of character." To support himself, Coltrane would play R&B dates around the city, walking the bar and honking. "We all had to walk the bar," says Heath. "That was the fad of the time. People would throw money in the bell of your horn. John could adapt to it, but that wasn't his forte, there was too much repetition, the 'Flying Home' type solos." One night Benny Golson entered a club just as Coltrane was stalking the bar. Embarrassed, Coltrane jumped off the bar, walked out the door and never came back.

Nineteen-fifty-five, when Charlie Parker died, was also the year Miles Davis put together his first famous quintet, with Philly Joe, Paul Chambers, Red Garland and Coltrane. John had been working a two-week stint with organist Jimmy Smith, who asked him to join when Philly Joe called him to make a date with Miles. The same week, Coltrane married Niama Grubbs, after whom he would name two songs. She was both traditionally religious (a Moslem) and into astrology, interests Coltrane himself would pursue for the rest of his life.

The Miles Davis group of 1955 set the course for jazz over the next five years. Though deeply rooted in bop, the two horn players took idiosyncratic approaches to its language, Miles by distilling the essence of a phrase into a few notes, Coltrane by cramming bushels of them into a small harmonic space. His early playing with Miles seems slightly out of control; snatches of undigested Dexter Gordon and Sonny Stitt float by, and Coltrane's lines come at you in all directions, sputtering one moment, graceful the next. But he has the "it" Jack Kerouac wrote about: the sound, the excitement and unpredictability of blowing; the way he puts together notes, the way he's thinking about what phrase makes sense next to what phrase. Mark him, Miles would say to Coltrane's critics, as someone who was finding his own way.

He was starting to record frequently: a Davis date in late 1955 (*New Miles Davis Quintet*), with Elmo Hope for Prestige in 1956, and the *Tenor Madness* date with Sonny Rollins, a

SONNY ROLLINS (tenor sax):

I first heard him in a band with Kenny Clarke. I remember very well. John and Kenny, it was fantastic. And I recall thinking that John was a puzzle. I could never figure out how he arrived at, how he came up with, what he played. It was one of the things that made him unique. I never got a better fix on it through the years. Like any genius, it's hard to get a handle on how they come up with their ideas.

"His influence was very pervasive. But I don't think it's necessarily bad to have influences. It's inevitable. Any guy who's that much into music is bound to be listening heavily to someone before him, like I did with Coleman Hawkins. The individuality will come out if it's there. It depends whether or not the individual player can transcend the influence. To play what we call modern music, you need some antecedents.

"Although he had a sense of humor, he was quite serious most of the time. Almost like a guy who would be a minister, especially about music. You realized you were in the presence of someone who held the sacred in high regard. His humor wasn't about cracking jokes or anything like that, he was more droll or wry.

"I remember when I heard the news of his death. I was working somewhere and I took some people back to Brooklyn. In those days we wouldn't get out of the clubs until four in the morning. By the time I got back home it was light out. I was listening to WOR and there was a quote from Elvin to the effect that John never hurt anybody. It was a shock; I had just talked to him two weeks earlier. We were always close."



With Eric Dolphy in 1961: "A sense of urgency, like he couldn't get everything he wanted out."

legendary match-up of the up-and-coming tenorists.

The session, their only recorded meeting, came about by accident. "John went out to the date with us," says Sonny Rollins, with characteristic off-handedness, "because in those days a lot of musicians hung out together. There were more friendships, people would be immersed in music twenty-four hours a day. You'd be over at somebody's house listening to records for days at a time. John was either with Red Garland or Philly Joe Jones, I believe. Money wouldn't have entered it. John had asked me right after that period to make [another] record together. Much to my regret, we never did."

Much was made about tensions between the two top young tenor saxophonists of the time. Rollins, who considered Coltrane one of his closest friends, never saw it that way. "It was hard to be competitive with John, because he was bigger than that, his playing and his person. [We were] competitive in musical terms, sure, to a degree. I think all guys are judged by who's around you. But I don't think he spent a lot of time trying to consciously compete with other people."

By 1956, Coltrane's drug and drinking problems had worsened; he was looking bad onstage, and using up all his money. In St. Louis, Paul Chambers and Coltrane checked out of their hotel via the window. Miles disbanded the group. "He was no trouble," says Miles. "But when he was there he used to say [*in a hurt tone*], 'You never talk to us.' Well, 'You never sober up enough for me to talk to you.'"

Back in New York, Coltrane was still drinking heavily and playing badly, and Reggie Workman confronted him about it. He went off the bottle, but after three days his thought patterns had screwed up, and he couldn't speak properly. He stayed in his house for about two weeks, prayed a lot, then woke up one day without the urge for a drink. "The person who gets all the credit for helping him to clear up is Niama," says Workman. "She's the one who stayed with him through everything and helped him clear his life."

Nineteen-fifty-seven was the turning point in the Coltrane odyssey, a watershed that only an extremely disciplined person could effect. He set up schedules for studying, practicing, listening to other players. He had a second dream in which Charlie Parker came to him (in the first Parker had told him to give up alto) and suggested he "keep on those progressions 'cause that's the right thing to do."

Prestige Records, not known for its largesse to musicians, offered Coltrane a contract in March, and he began to record regularly (at least thirteen dates in '57 alone, including *Dakar*, his first as a leader). Critics, who for the most part hadn't liked what Coltrane was playing, soon realized he'd achieved a profound mastery of his instrument, that he was crossing musical frontiers. He came in second in the New Star category in *downbeat*, recorded the well-received masterpiece *Blue Train*, and most importantly joined Monk for his legendary gig at the Five Spot in New York, which drew audiences beyond

jazz circles, including painters Franz Kline and Willem de Kooning; the latter called Coltrane “an Einstein of music.”

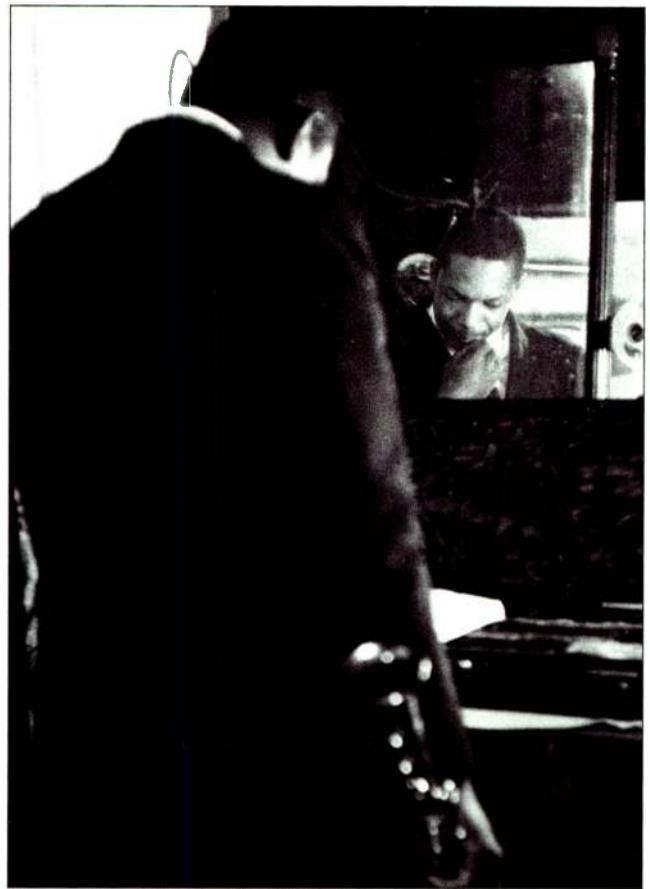
The difference between his tentative solos with Miles the year before is astonishing. His solo on “Chronic Blues,” for instance, is angular, rhythmically aggressive, with arpeggios flung right and left. A marvel of technique, he’d started experimenting with different ways to approach the same chords. The moan, the quick upward glance, is there too. Four months later, on the classic *Blue Train* session, he’s playing hotter and faster, a sort of hyper-bebopper, draping the changes with waves of notes. By now he’d shed his influences and was deep into harmony, superimposing chord after chord, creating a sheen which critic Ira Gitler would name “sheets of sound.” He was working on multiphonics, which he’d learned from saxophonist John Glenn and from Monk. Intrigued by harp music, he would check the paper for Marx Brothers movies, and persistently asked Niama to take up the instrument.

Coltrane rejoined Miles at the end of the year; the group now featured Bill Evans on piano, Cannonball Adderly on alto, and a book which used modes as a way to simplify harmonic movement. It was completely antithetical to what Coltrane was working on at the time—the superimposition of chords, dense harmonic webs—yet he fit in perfectly, using the harmonic spaces to experiment with all the chord substitutions he was thinking about. Miles places Coltrane’s development: “I said, ‘Trane, you can play these chords against the tonic of another chord,’ and he was the only one who could do it. Lucky Thompson, maybe. Plus, when I did *Milestones*, with Bill Evans, I wrote out these little things for Trane, these little things within a mode, to see what he could do on them. It was always a challenge for him. The chords I showed him were just like dominant chords against dominant chords, a minor, diminished and half step...he could play that in one chord and the trick is, not the trick, but to play them so you can hear the sound of the chord you’re playing against. It’s always a challenge if you’re up in the air, because you’re tired of the suspended diminished chord after everything. It’s like not having an orgasm, but holding it in.”

By late 1958, Coltrane had become a big enough star to leave Prestige and ask for a \$1000 advance per album. Not only was he playing with Miles Davis, which was placing him in front of audiences beyond jazz fans, he was becoming a figure of controversy, acknowledged to be doing something different.

Coltrane’s own commitment had gotten to the point where he’d take the saxophone to the dinner table with him, fall asleep in bed with the reed in his mouth. He’d practice until he couldn’t play anymore, sometimes for twenty-four hours straight. One result was *Giant Steps*, recorded in May of 1959, and an album which seemed to put an end at the time to the possibilities of chord changes. The title composition sounds like the sort of complicated exercise music students write for themselves to help master chordal playing. Coltrane sounds mechanical; the tune reinforces his occasional rhythmic stiffness. Still, the record has rightly become a masterpiece. Partly it’s the writing—listen to the stunning forthrightness of “Cousin Mary”—partly Coltrane’s assertive, startling playing.

At the time, the date seemed like nothing out of the ordinary. “I was living on 101st Street and Coltrane was on 103rd Street,” pianist Tommy Flanagan recalls. “He came by my apartment with this piece, ‘Giant Steps.’ I guess he thought there was something different about it, because he sat down and played the changes. He said, ‘It’s no problem. I know you can do it, Maestro’—which is what he called me. ‘If I can play this, you can.’ There *was* no problem just looking at the changes. But I didn’t realize he was going to play it at that



“An Einstein of music” reflects.

tempo! There was no time to shed on it, there was no melody; it was just a set of chords, like we usually get. So we ran it down and we had maybe one take, because he played marvelous on everything. He was ready. As he said later on, the whole date was tunes he wanted to get out of his system.

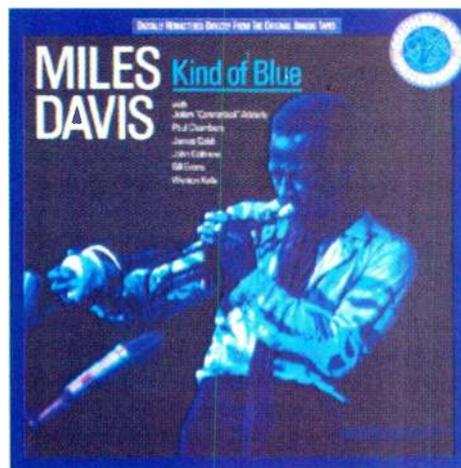
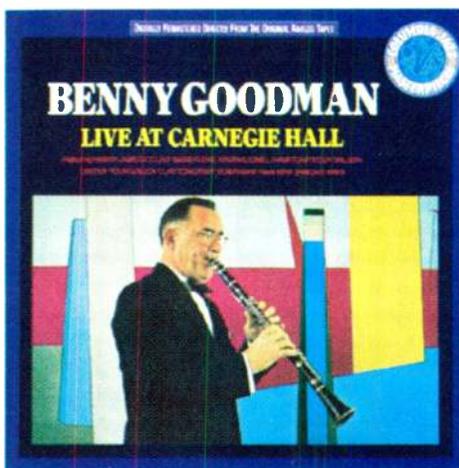
“He was using that sequence in the bridge of ‘Body And

ORNETTE COLEMAN (alto & tenor sax):

He called me up and asked if I would join his band. I was very interested in trying to get the things I was playing in the public’s eye, but I was having too much trouble with the business, so I hadn’t been out in clubs for a long time. I thought I’d better go out and see what’s going on. When I went to the Vanguard, Max Gordon called me over and said, ‘Somebody just cancelled—could you bring in a band?’ And that’s the only thing that stopped me from joining Coltrane.

“In the early 60s he was studying with me. He was interested in non-chordal playing, and I had cut my teeth on that stuff. He later sent me a letter which included thirty dollars for each lesson, and thanked me. [That influence] showed up very clearly because all of a sudden a guy who had been playing very ‘legitimately’ started playing strictly from his own spiritual and emotional state without worrying about his past. Had he lived, Trane would probably have legitimized that concept. I thought he had a beautiful tone. I thought it was very humane.”

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Soul.' I thought it went down very smooth. 'Giant Steps' was just a part of three songs he was going to use called *Suite Sioux*. One was based on 'Cherokee.' It was one of the ones we really didn't get, it posed too much of a problem. It was still at that tempo, and it was supposed to go from 'Giant Steps' to 'Suite Sioux,' to 'Countdown,' which I think was faster yet. Paul [Chambers] had no solo on those pieces, but just keeping up with the sequence of the chords was hard, they were going down so fast.

"I had no idea [how influential the date would become]. A date with Trane, you knew it was going to be important. It seemed like years later people started saying, 'What was it like?' It was like any other date to me. It was a date."

"We had rehearsed at my mother's house in Harlem," says Arthur Taylor, the drummer on the session. "He wanted to rehearse with me before the date. So he brought his horn. We



McCoy Tyner chasin' the Trane in 1963

just ran over the pieces for about half an hour or so, and he left.

"I don't put that much importance on the record myself. I've done better records than that with Coltrane. It still remains a heck of a document, people all around the world look to that, and musicians also; that's the thing. I don't like the sound of it. John was very serious, like a magician too. He was serious and we just got down to the business at hand."

Ironically, *Giant Steps* ended Coltrane's dense approach to harmony. *Kind Of Blue*, Miles Davis' masterpiece of modality, was recorded at the same time, with Coltrane playing an integral part. Coltrane absorbed a lot of knowledge through mentors—Miles and Monk are just two examples. By late 1959, he was talking with Sun Ra about recording together. Soon after that he began to play the soprano saxophone.

He'd increased his reading to include books on art, music theory, African history, physics, math, anthropology. His record collection had music from Africa, Afghanistan, Russia, France, early England, Greece, American Indians, India, Arabia and all types of black American music. "He was into Indian music and into African music, and different social groups," says McCoy Tyner, the pianist who charted the idiosyncratic harmonic sound of the classic Coltrane quartet of the 60s. On "Dahomey Dance" (from *Ole*), he had a record of

these guys who were from Dahomey, which is why he used two bassists. He showed that rhythm to Art Davis and Reggie Workman. So the influence was there."

By 1960, it was time to leave Miles Davis' group and head out on his own. A live recording from March of that year, done in Europe during Coltrane's last tour with Davis, finds him straightjacketed by Jimmy Cobb's drumming. His intensely detailed, whirling lines seem to be seeking the more mutable, interactive drumming he'd find with Elvin Jones, and a less rigid context for improvisation. On "Green Dolphin Street" he reduces the tune to nothing, unleashing torrents of notes that obliterate the changes.

Giant Steps was well received, and after returning from the European tour, Coltrane gave Miles two weeks' notice. The owners of the Five Spot (the club that had Monk and Coltrane three years earlier) now ran a club called the Jazz Gallery; they offered him a twenty-week engagement, which suggests their appraisal of his drawing power. Coltrane put his first quartet together for the gig, including drummer Pete La Rocca, Steve Kuhn on piano, and Philadelphia bassist Steve Davis. The first set of the first night, during a Coltrane solo, a bald man dressed in a loincloth ran up to the stage, followed by Monk, yelling "Coltrane, Coltrane." The stay lasted nine weeks and proved hugely successful, with Ravi Shankar, Cecil Taylor and others coming by to listen. Coltrane quickly fired Kuhn and La Rocca, replacing them with McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones (who Coltrane had in mind the whole time anyway). In a few months, Steve Davis was replaced by Reggie Workman (who would later give way to Jimmy Garrison), and the quartet found its

WAYNE SHORTER (tenor & soprano sax):

He invited me to his house after we met and said he wanted to get together with me because we were playing...not the same way, but in the same areas of the horn. He said, 'You're playing some funny stuff.' He wanted to sit down and talk about it. He was playing the piano mostly, I think it was the beginning of 'Giant Steps,' those augmented thirds over and over. He'd get his horn and play two notes for a long time. Then two others, then two others. We also talked about doing impossible things with your instrument. We also talked about starting a sentence in the middle, and then going to the beginning and the end of it at the same time.

"George Tucker, the bassist, would come by, Cedar Walton too, Freddie Hubbard. He'd ask me to spend the night. That happened more than once. We'd cook food. Then he came to Jersey to my parents' house, on Thanksgiving. He'd talk with Ayler, he liked him. He wanted to check out what was going on with the scene. Not just tenor, but flute and other things; I think that's why he grabbed that bagpipe toward the end. It was all-encompassing. Charlie Parker was realizing that before he died, too.

"From 1955 on, he had a sense of urgency. Like he couldn't get everything he wanted out. I think Trane knew something about his health, even if he couldn't pin it down.

"I think one of John's legacies is that any melody has a flexibility beyond what it initially seems. Nothing is frozen. He said that everything can be opened up but it's a lot of work. There are people who say you've got to do 'Nature Boy' just the way it is. And the 'Star Spangled Banner.' Hey, you can really take the 'Star Spangled Banner' out!"

JOHN COLTRANE

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GREG OSBY (alto sax):

People still romanticize that stereotype of a strung-out musician not in control of his life. Coltrane was one of the first to rise above. He studied, he implemented new ideas, his business was together. That's why he represents, to me, somebody in control of his destiny.

"I heard him when I was still listening to funk, I guess it was around 1974. I hadn't been playing more than two years, but I was listening to Coltrane, playing my funk licks on top of 'Giant Steps.' I didn't know what he was doin', or any harmonies, or any of his musical logic, but I could enjoy it; I knew it was 'bad,' and one day I wanted to get with that.

"That's what jazz is about; you're supposed to be versatile, derive from other sources, I mean alien sources. I hear some players today who are so conservative they could be on Reagan's staff."

LEO SMITH (trumpet):

He was a train that pulled a lot with him. He tried, in every place, to show people what he really saw. And he wasn't afraid to take young players and lead them. Many players have been unwilling to do that. A lot of people put fashion between them. And of course the spiritual connotation and properties of music; no one talked about those things before he came around. That was a big influence for Albert Ayler and many other people of the day. At home I listen to 'Dear Lord' or *A Love Supreme*, *Africa Brass*, *Om*, *Ascension*: those are the ones I often return to."

sound for the next four years.

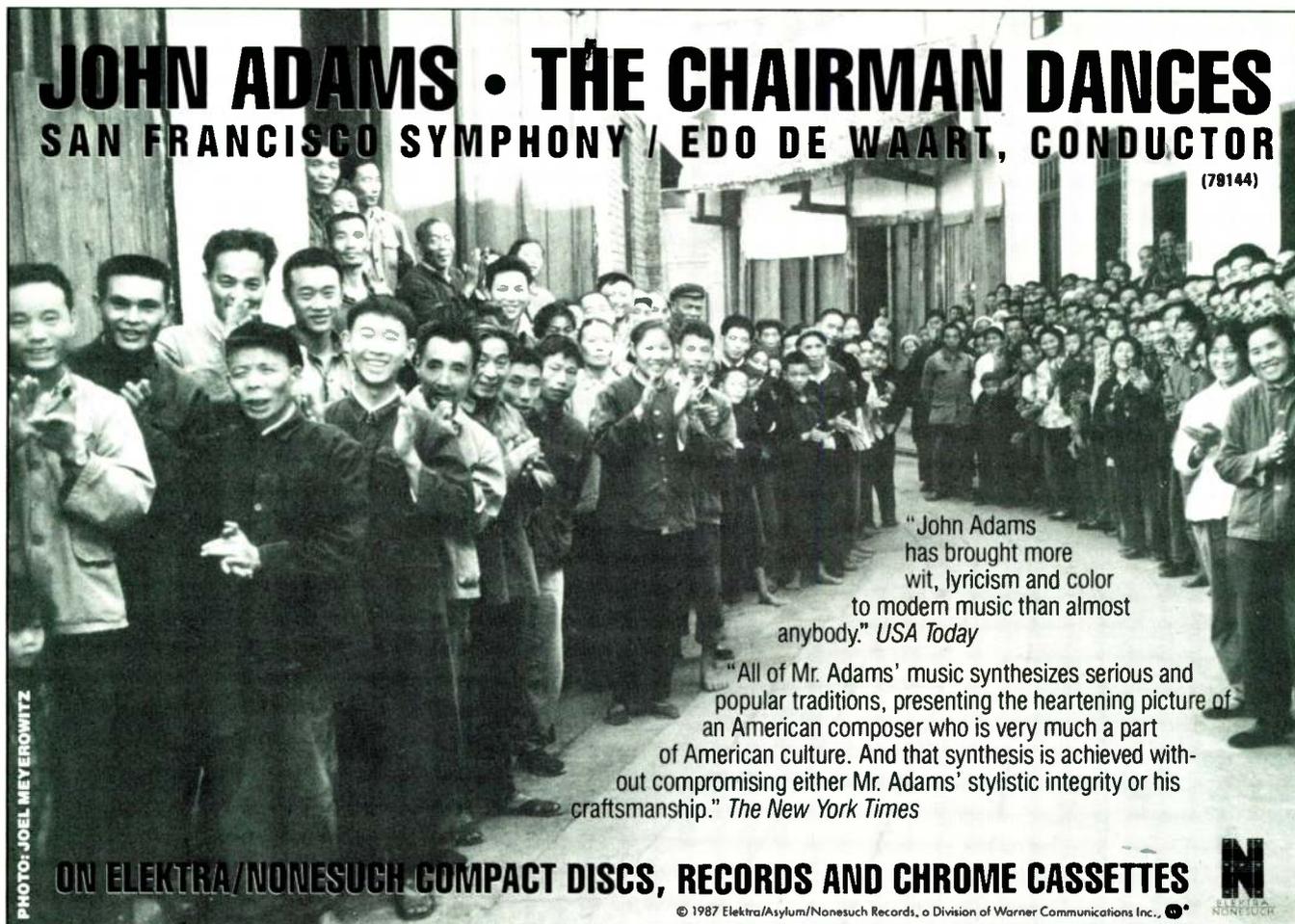
Coltrane ran his group like Miles Davis had his, with little or no interference. They rehearsed a total of six or seven times during McCoy Tyner's entire tenure. "He was a great leader," says Tyner. "Never self-imposing. I loved working for him. He was more like a brother. I had a chance to develop. Just playing and listening to him every night and creating something underneath him and creating our own thing when it came time, was quite challenging for a young guy.

"Never did he say how to play piano. He was just not that kind of person. He picked people he didn't have to do that with. Which I thought was very, very smart."

My Favorite Things, his next release for Atlantic, brought Coltrane his widest recognition. Here he embraced the modality he'd learned with Miles Davis, but turned the stark impressionism of Miles' approach into extroverted intensity; his novel treatment of the title track laid the groundwork for the next five years of his life, until the radically different *Ascension*. Completely unlike anything Coltrane, Davis, or, for that matter, anybody had done, the record still swings in a loose, open way. Harmonic vistas open, Coltrane sounds relaxed, his soprano wafting over the pliant background; the fury and impatience of his playing with Miles has been assuaged by a group whose rhythmic liberties match his own.

Just how empathic the group became is spelled out by Tyner, who remembers one night in the early 60s when Miles tried to sit in at Birdland. "There wasn't any room. He didn't quite work. We were very special. It was very difficult for anybody to walk up and come into the band."

Once, with Miles, when Coltrane explained he didn't know



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how to stop soloing, Davis suggested that he take the saxophone out of his mouth. Now his tunes were getting longer, between an hour or two in live performance. Nonetheless, *My Favorite Things* went gold, and *Newsweek* covered Coltrane's week-long stay in July at the Village Vanguard. Eric Dolphy joined the group that summer, and they recorded *Africa Brass* for Impulse, a gorgeous, agitated big-band album arranged by Dolphy and McCoy Tyner.

His next record, *Live At The Village Vanguard*, featured "Chasin' The Trane," a side-long blues named by Rudy Van Gelder (who had a tough time following Coltrane's horn for the recording) which caused outrage among critics and listeners, even inciting a double review, pro and con, in *downbeat*. Critic John Tynan coined the ignorant but telling term "anti-jazz." "Chasin' The Trane" is one of the magnificent recordings of jazz. It begins with a simple opening melody and gradually, maintaining the same level of emotionality, gets more complex. Coltrane starts blowing harmonics, raising the ante; McCoy Tyner keeps out of the way, and what's stunning is the way that Coltrane and Elvin Jones reinvent straight-ahead, 4/4 swing, turning the tune into a tumultuous event.

"He was very much a man of conviction," notes Art Davis, one of Coltrane's favorite bassists, "even though a lot of people said a lot of very bad, hurting things about him. He'd say, 'That's their opinion,' rather than cursing someone out or saying, 'If I see that motherfucker, I'm going to beat the shit out of him.'"

Coltrane had six years to live from the time he made *Africa Brass*. He recorded an astounding twenty-five albums in that time, not counting the alternate takes and snippets that began

KEITH SPRING (tenor sax):

I got to see him at the *downbeat* festival in Chicago in 1965. It was the quartet and Archie Shepp, and if you look back at the documentation on that time, it was quite controversial. They played for about forty-five minutes straight through. After they got going, McCoy sat out, because you couldn't hear him; it was before the days of monitors. I remember waves of spontaneous clapping, although some people were pissed off. That music really upset the people who thought that *Giant Steps* was the end of the world.

"The sound his group had in the mid-60s was—on the surface—easy to reproduce, because so much of it is in C minor, and long, modal stretches. And that drone kind of sound of McCoy's was easy to imitate superficially. The same way that if you pick up a Rickenbacker twelve-string you've got to play a Byrds tune. But Trane's influence was available on a variety of levels. He had a very non-smarmy approach to spiritual music. The only others that could get away with that for me were Duke Ellington, Sun Ra or Albert Ayler.

"A lot of time the music which means the most to you, you listen to the least, because you don't need to; you've got it inside. I was swayed by the *feel* of Coltrane's music; in other words every note isn't necessarily a gem, but the feeling that comes through makes them worthwhile. The way he played on *Giant Steps* was the culmination of a certain kind of playing; I thought that what he did in the 60s was a beginning."

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MARTY EHRLICH (multi-reeds):

Besides his incredible popularity and meaning to people who listen to jazz and black culture in general, he also commanded the attention of many people who didn't listen to jazz. It's interesting because he wasn't a commercial artist in the sense of someone reaching across boundaries today; his was a very serious and at times difficult music. A lot of that had to do with the times. His music certainly reflected the energy of the 60's. I've found an interesting parallel between him and Béla Bartók: people who didn't listen to contemporary music often listened to Bartók. Both were innovative, expanded the language of their idiom, but at the same time, both used traditional folk materials a lot in their music. Radical conservatives. They grabbed you intellectually and emotionally in a way that not much music achieves. *A Love Supreme* was a gold record; it's very hard to think of a record of that intensity being a gold record. But people wanted a bit more seriousness in music during that time. In that sense, he was an example of what a committed musical artist could be.

"I like all his stuff. At the end of his life, like on *Expression*, you can hear new areas of time along with very beautiful harmonic motion. Consistent definitely; maybe a little bit obsessive. We hear the long solos and we're used to shorter forms these days."

"He could've stopped at any point, like in the late 50s, and still had a career as one of the top saxophonists, but he didn't. Playing in the same language for many years allows you great conviction, but it's harder when you're trying to find new things, because how do you ever know? You can't be sure. That made his music so intense. You could feel that musical and personal discovery. His music was really about what you should do in your own music, not just keep playing *A Love Supreme*."

EUGENE CHADBOURNE (guitar):

I discovered Coltrane's music at a really unhappy time of my life; I really had the blues. Something about the sound of those saxophones always made me feel better. When that happens, it amplifies the attraction you have to music already.

"There was so much love in Coltrane's sax. I remember once having an argument with someone about Trane, where he said 'I heard some good dixieland last night and God it felt good to hear it after all this hate music.' And I said 'Well, what I hear is love music.'"

"Living in North Carolina, his image is around me again. He was born here, he went to school here; they have big celebrations on his birthday. And they're really pushing Coltrane as another important black American. He's famous to a certain extent, but they want statues of him put up, a holiday, everything. I'm all for it."

to surface after his death, with the overall level of quality virtually unparalleled. After *Live At The Village Vanguard* come a series of albums which take his certain type of oceanic modalism to its limits. *Impressions* (the title track is based on the minimal harmony of Miles Davis' "So What?") and *Coltrane* led into three dates which were suggested by Impulse: *Ballads*, *Duke Ellington And John Coltrane* and *John Coltrane With Johnny Hartman*.

Bob Thiele, Coltrane's producer, pretty much gave him the

keys to the studio, to the point of risking his job. "To the best of my recollection, Coltrane had a contract that called for two albums a year to be recorded and released. Well, hell, we recorded six albums a year. And I was always brought on the carpet because they couldn't understand why I was spending the money. Most of the critics and the various music magazines were putting Coltrane down. And there's one time I did suggest to him, 'Why don't we just go in and show these guys.' I suggested we do an album of popular songs, which became *Ballads*, a beautiful album, and he loved it. And that started to turn the critics around."

By 1962 and 1963, the radical edge was beginning to show on records and American society. Civil rights leader Medgar Evers was murdered in his garage, while in Birmingham, Alabama, four young girls were killed when a black church was bombed. Bob Dylan released *The Times They Are A Changin'* as the folk movement was aligning itself with the political New Left. Coltrane recorded what may be his most overtly political composition, "Alabama," in memory of the four children killed in the church bombing, and based on the cadences of a Martin Luther King speech about that tragedy.

Politics were integral to being black and a jazz musician: They were integral to the time. Acquaintances could read various meanings into Coltrane's character because he was shy, or political connotations into his music because he rarely clarified himself. These assumptions often have to do with what part of Coltrane's life people knew him from, though they also underscore how Coltrane was accepted by different generations. "He was not involved in politics," says Milt Jackson, who was with Coltrane in Dizzy Gillespie's group and appeared on Coltrane's first album for Atlantic. "I can't draw any parallels between the social times of the 60s and John's playing," says Sonny Rollins. "[But] it may be relevant to somebody that grew up in the 60s and heard Coltrane in the 60s, and was into whatever movements were going on at the time. To me it was just a natural evolution in his own playing."

Rashied Ali, who worked with Coltrane from 1965 to the end, sees it differently. "The younger people embraced the music; the older Coltrane fans, the people who dug the Coltrane from Miles Davis and the Coltrane from the early 60s, they sort of stepped back because they couldn't get with the change. But the connection was there. He wrote songs like 'Reverend King' and 'Alabama'; that whole movement affected everybody. It affected his thinking and his thoughts about what was happening, and the music started getting rougher and tougher. Coltrane wasn't into politics; he wasn't the type of person to speak out about it. But he was playing and writing music about it. And he admired people like King and Malcolm X. He kept up with things."

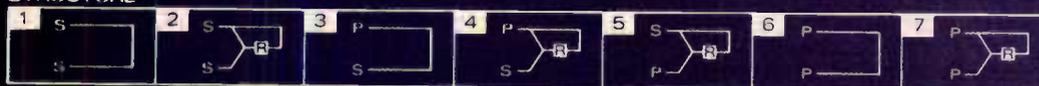
In an interview with writer Frank Kofsky, Coltrane put it like this: "In my opinion, I would say yes [jazz is opposed to the United States involvement in Vietnam] because jazz to me... is an expression of higher ideals. So therefore brotherhood is there; and I believe with brotherhood, there would be no poverty. And also, with brotherhood, there would be no war."

The issues that Malcolm X talked about "are definitely important," he went on. "And as I said, the issues are part of what is at the time. So naturally, as musicians, we express whatever is. Well, I tell you for myself, I make a conscious attempt; I think I can truthfully say that in music I make or I have tried to make a conscious attempt to change what I've found, in music. In other words, I've tried to say, 'Well, this could be better, in my opinion, so I will try to do this to make it better.' We must make an effort. It's the same socially,

continued on page 136

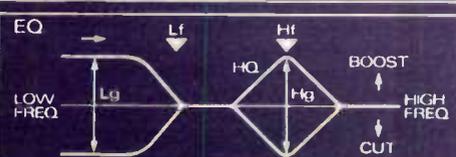
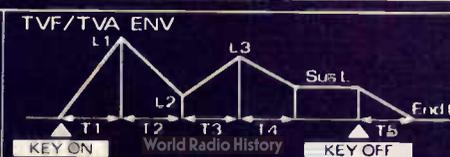
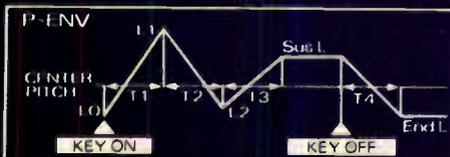
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STRUCTURE



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P=PCM SOUND GENERATOR
◻=RING MODULATOR

OUTPUT MODE

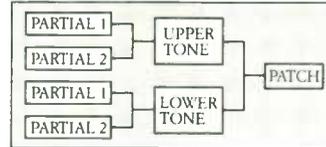


INTRODUCING THE D-50

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To the Player It's a Dream, To the Programmer It's a Miracle/Imagine a new technology that is so sophisticated that it offers totally new and unparalleled sound creation possibilities, combined with a programming method so logical that it actually builds upon the knowledge you currently have of sound synthesis. That is the essence of the D-50 Linear Synthesizer, a completely new, fully-digital synthesizer realized by Roland's Proprietary LA Synthesis Technology. The sounds created by the D-50 are simply breathtaking, resonating with character, depth and complexity, but with a warmth and completeness digital synthesis has never had before. The reason is that no sound has ever before been created in a manner so complex and rich with possibilities, and yet ultimately so very logical. Linear Arithmetic (LA) is normally used for computing complex mathematical problems in the field of science. In the area of sound synthesis it is an ideal creative method, offering superb

FIGURE 1 PATCH CREATION



predictions, analysis and control capabilities. Roland engineers have spent years developing a new highly sophisticated LSI chip, code-named the "LA Chip," that utilizes a linear arithmetic technique to digitally synthesize sounds. The "LA Chip" is the heart of the D-50.

LA Synthesis Explained/LA Synthesis is component synthesis on the highest order. To create complex sounds, the D-50 starts with a very simple premise—build sounds from the ground up by combining different types of sounds together, and then experience the interaction of these sounds on each other. We start with individual elements of sound called Partials. Two Partials are combined to create a Tone, and two Tones are combined to create the Patch. (Figure 1) The D-50 can hold 64 Patches and 128 Tones. Each of the two Tones can be processed individually by on-board signal processing that is sophisticated enough to rival a rack-full of equipment, and includes digital reverb, digital parametric eq,



LINEAR SYNTHESIZER

SOUND SYNTHESIS TECHNOLOGY

digital chorus, digital delay and more. But before we go too far, let's get down to the basics, the building blocks of LA Synthesis—Partials.

Synthesizer Partials/What is a Partial? A Partial can be either a digitally synthesized waveform, or a PCM sample. Each of the thirty-two Synth Partials contains all the components usually found in the hardware of an analog synthesizer, presented here as digital

software. This includes the Wave Generator (to create a sawtooth or square waveform), the Time Variant Filter, the Time Variant Amplifier, three five-stage Envelope Generators and three digital LFOs.

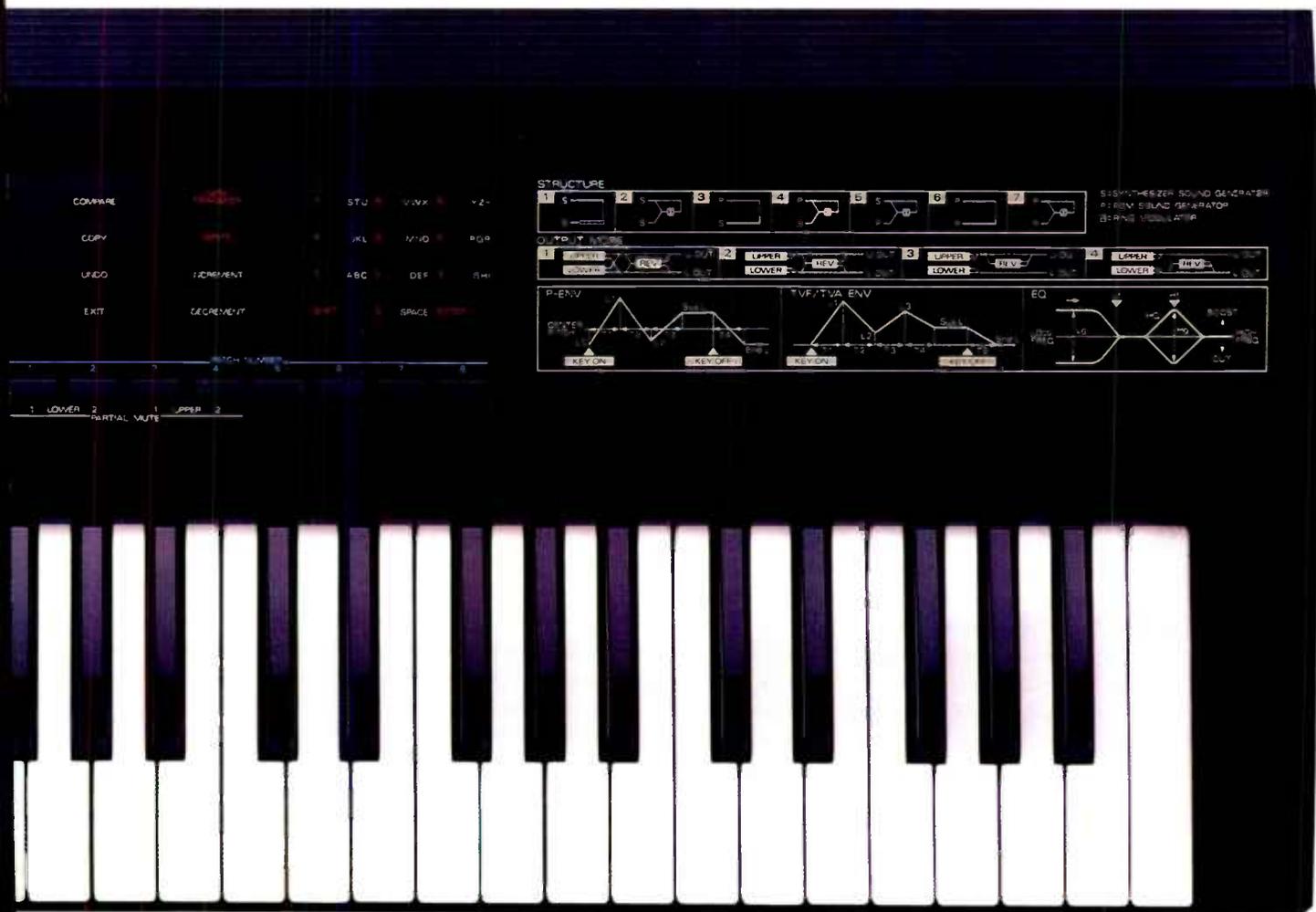
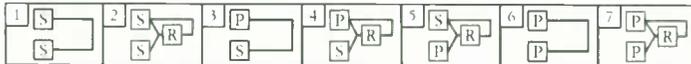
In this way, even though the D-50 is a digital signal, programming the Synth Partial is very similar to programming on an analog synthesizer, (as these components react in the same way as VCO's, VCF's and VCA's on analog synthesizers) while offering sound synthesis capability beyond the most advanced digital synthesizer.

PCM Sampled Partials/A Partial can also be more than a digitally synthesized signal, it can also be a PCM sample. Resident in the memory (ROM) of the D-50 are over 100 carefully selected 16 bit PCM Sampled Wave Tables which can be used by themselves, combined with Synth Partials or combined with each other. The PCM Partials

are carefully selected, and digitally processed so that they combine well with other Partials. Some of the

sounds include a wide variety of the attack portions of percussive sounds: marimba, vibes, xylophone, ethnic instruments, grand piano hammer attack (with the fundamental removed), a variety of flute and horn breaths, a range of different string plucks and bows, nail files, guitars, and many more. The Wave Table library also includes Loop sounds and long samples, such as: Male and female voices, organs, pianos, wind and brass instruments, and also Harmonic Spectrum sounds, which are created by removing all of the fundamentals of a sound, isolating its harmonic components.

FIGURE 2 STRUCTURES



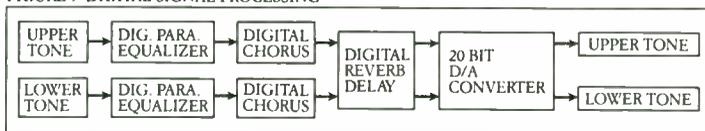
The sounds created by the D-50's PCM Waveform Generator are far superior to wave table samples found in other synthesizers, which are usually only one looped cycle in duration, and are usually no more than 5 milliseconds. In contrast, many of the PCM Partials on the D-50 are up to 256 milliseconds.

Structures/The combination of the Partials' operation modes can be set by selecting one of the seven Structures. (Figure 2) By choosing one of these Structures it is possible to combine two Synth Partials, or two PCM Partials, or a combination of the two in several different relationships. In addition, the Partials can be cross-modulated by the digitally-controlled Ring Modulator, which helps to create the complex harmonic environment for the resulting Tone.

Unlike ring modulators of the past (which tended to be interesting yet unpredictable), the Ring Modulator in the D-50 is designed to track with the keyboard, ensuring the proper harmonic relationships as you go up and down the keyboard.

Built-In Digital Effects/The final routing of the signal before it reaches the output is through the digital effects circuitry. (Figure 3) But, far from being merely an add-on, the D-50's effects are as carefully thought-out as the rest of the instrument, and likewise just as integral to the creation of new and unique sounds. The first effect is the digital Parametric Equalizer, used to contour the equalization curve for the tone before it passes into the digital Chorus, or we should say Choruses, as the D-50 fields an arsenal of eight chorus circuits — all available simultaneously, configured in any of 16 modifiable presets such as panning chorus, tremolo, flanging and much more. Within each chorus there are parameters set up as to how these chorus interact for maximum effectiveness. Lastly, the signal passes through the digital Reverb, which can also function as a digital Delay, offering various room and

FIGURE 3 DIGITAL SIGNAL PROCESSING



PG-1000 PROGRAMMER



hall sizes, gated (non-linear) reverb, reverse, stereo panning effects that can be routed to either or both of the stereo outputs. The awesome power of these built-in effects means that the D-50 requires literally no outboard effects processing. And just as important, because all the D-50's effects are processed in the digital realm, they are completely noise free.

A Mother of a MIDI Keyboard/The D-50 is also an excellent mother keyboard for your MIDI system, as it is totally dynamic, offering 61 keys in four different key modes (Whole, Split, Dual and Separate). In the Whole mode the D-50 is 16 voice polyphonic, while in the other modes it functions as two 8 voice synths, one for each Tone. All mother keyboard functions

are programmable per patch including a separate transmit channel and a separate program change transmit. As the D-50 is

truly bi-timbral it can function as two MIDI sound modules as each tone can receive on its own MIDI channel. All D-50 parameters and programs can be saved on Roland's new M-256D memory card which

M-256D MEMORY CARD



offers 32K bytes of storage in the size of a credit card. All of the D-50 functions can be programmed internally, or externally with the use of the optional PG-1000 programmer, which combines visual clarity and speed for

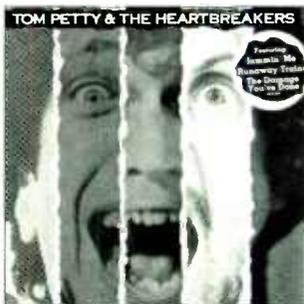
the programming professional.

Put It All Together/Taken as a whole, the D-50 represents more sound creation potential than most of the leading synthesizers combined. And just as important, it comes at a price that you can afford — \$1895.00.* Of course, the only real way to find out for yourself is to play the instrument, but we'd like to suggest you do a little more. Go to your dealer, but before you try the D-50, try three or four other synthesizers first — really give them a good going-over. Then spend some time on the D-50. We think you'll find that the world of sounds you knew before, now seems to be black and white — while the D-50 has just exploded you into a universe of color. The new force has taken you by storm. RolandCorp US, 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90040 (213) 685 5141.

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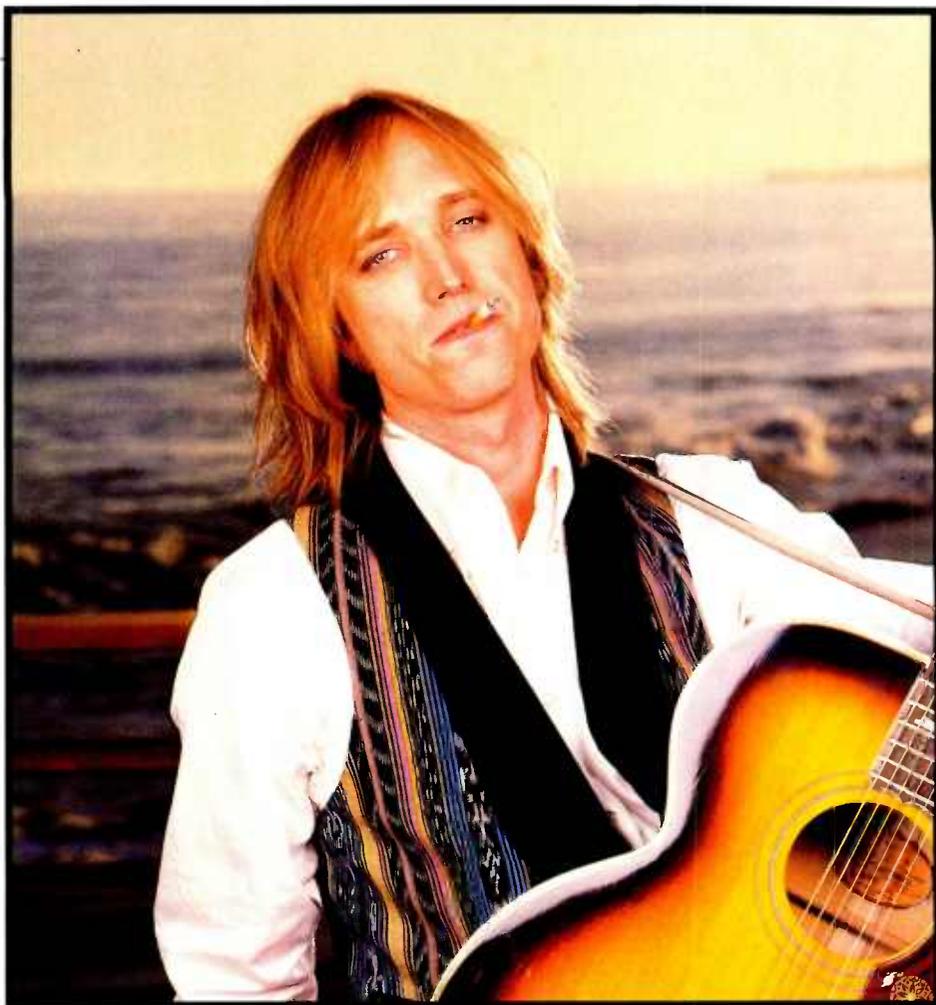


TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS

Let Me Up I've Had Enough
(MCA)

When Bob Dylan teamed up with Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers early last year, many observers said, "What a good move—those Heartbreakers will impose some much-needed discipline on Big Bob." Then came the Dylan/Petty tour, Petty's solo turn at Neil Young's Bridge Benefit, and this album. Guess what? The association with Dylan has imposed some much-needed sloppiness on Petty and the boys.

And that has a lot to do with why this is the best Tom Petty album in years. Maybe the best Tom Petty album ever. Recorded quickly, with a tipsy live feeling, *Let Me Up...* makes it clear that the Heartbreakers are one of the best rock 'n' roll bands going, and that few of Petty's peers can match his gift for hooks and melodies. Petty's earlier albums sometimes sounded so slaved over that



these virtues were polished away. (After all, Hall & Oates and the Eurythmics come up with catchy melodies, but without any spontaneity their records sound more crafted than inspired.) Now comes a Petty album that sounds as loose and immediate as Dylan or Young, and yet keeps hitting hook after hook with the effortless, grinning grace of a great high school basketball team. The nonchalance of the execution makes the accomplishment that much more impressive.

"Think About Me" kicks off with two raunchy electric guitars, picking up honky-tonk piano, bass and drums, tambourine, and finally organ as it chugs along. The listener gets the impression that each player waited till he found a place to put down his drink before he picked up the song. The obvious musical reference points are "From A Buick 6" and "Get Off My Cloud," but spiritually the Heartbreakers recall the sloppy self-confidence of the Faces. When the group gets focused for the lovely "Runaway Trains" they sound graceful and elegant. More often they just sound like they're having a ball. "All Mixed Up" is joyfully

trivial top forty rock 'n' roll, defying exegesis but destined to keep the girls at the beach line-dancing all summer.

Even the slow numbers have a lovable nonchalance. "It'll All Work Out" is a pretty waltz with Chinese scales in the background and words that sound spontaneously composed ("She had eyes so blue they looked like weather"). Rarely has an artist accomplished so much by not trying so hard.

Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers have never been quite given their due by the rock establishment. Maybe because they pay more attention to music than lyrics. Maybe because they avoid Big Statements. Maybe because they have lots of hit singles and little girls scream at them. But in the 60s the rock establishment paid a lot more respect to Donovan and B,S&T than to Marvin Gaye and the Animals, and whose songs have held up better? Twenty years from now, when some of today's most honored bands are cartoons, juke boxes and cover bands will still be playing Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers.

— Bill Flanagan



X

See How We Are
(Elektra)

An ill-advised cover of "Wild Thing" and the enlisting of heavy metallor Michael Wagener to produce *Ain't Love Grand* smacked of desperation, but X is feeling better now. The spiffy *See How We Are*, a perceptive treatise on contemporary angst, holds no real surprises, apart from the fact that it sounds so darn good. John Doe and Exene Cervenka still unspool those jagged harmonies, imitating urban hillbillies, and D.J. Bonebrake's cracking drums make the gentlest tracks kick harder. And though Billy Zoom may be gone, succeeded first by ex-Blaster Dave Alvin (called an alumnus here) and now by former Lone Justice hand Tony Gilkyson, the guitars remain tough and economical, melding rockabilly and nastier stuff. Apart from a few anguished solos, the axe work often seems intended to keep the songs moving until John and Exene can catch their breath and launch into another fevered verse.

But as X's bone-crunching power makes you want to jump up and down in delight, the sheer forlornness of the material can make you cry. At its most incisive, *See How We Are* is haunted and desperate, conjuring visions of sunken eyes and weary voices. The breakneck "I'm Lost" kicks off the LP on a typically downbeat note, relaying the plaints of a homeless man "sleeping in the alley," who once "had some family." Less severe songs, including "Surprise Surprise," a sardonic overview at rock life, and "In The Time It Takes," a flippant look at stress, retain the underlying sensibility that things may be worse than they seem. Although the title track suffers from trying to provide the definitive word on our modern condition, its depiction of specifics—men in jail, hungry children, etc.—is affecting.

Doe and Cervenka respond to all this unhappiness with talk, talk and more

talk. Attempting to keep the darkness at bay through articulate babble, their chattering voices fill every nook and cranny of the record. "You" and "Cyrano de Berger's Back" both counsel words to smooth romance's bumpy course, and "Anyone Can Fill Your Shoes" finds Cervenka flinging insults at macho men like she's tossing rocks.

It's a shame Dave Alvin didn't hang around longer, 'cause his one composition is a gem. "4th Of July" closes the album with a moving snapshot of a relationship gone dead, man on the landing smoking a cigarette, woman left in the dark, crying. Despite a soaring momentum reminiscent of "Born To Run," "4th Of July" holds only faint hope of reconciliation, seeming resigned to its circumstances. Here and throughout the LP, X portrays love lost as the ultimate, inescapable tragedy. That's why *See How We Are* is such a heartbreaker.

— Jon Young



THE LOUNGE LIZARDS

No Pain For Cakes
(Island)

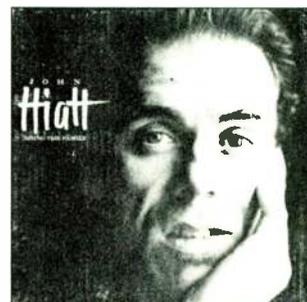
No more fake jazz for the Lounge Lizards. No more jazz of any type, judging from *No Pain For Cakes*. Saxophonist/leader John Lurie wasn't kidding when he said there wasn't a jazz tune on the record, the band's first studio effort since their 1981 debut album.

Whether the Lounge Lizards ever played jazz (fake or otherwise) is one of the great quodlibets of our time. They look like an art director's idea of jazz musicians; purists charge that's the same relationship they have with their music. But *No Pain For Cakes* owes no more to the jazz tradition than it does to any other twentieth-century musical development.

Lurie's compositions feature unsettling and/or dissonant ostinati underpinning his languorous alto. His brother,

pianist Evan Lurie, evidently writes the same way. Both favor a severe formalism whose usually ternary symmetry seems opposed to the free expression most people associate with jazz. That the Lounge Lizards are such a fine-sounding bunch—including trombonist Curtis Fowlkes and reedman Roy Nathanson in the front line—adds to the tension between what they're playing and what you think they should be playing.

So much you knew already. *No Pain For Cakes* tips its beret to Erik Satie ("Cue For Passion"), Kurt Weill ("Bob And Nico") and Virgil Thomson ("Tango #3, Determination"), among others. The big breakthrough is the use of voices in the formerly instrumentals-only group: a wordless vocal chorus on "My Trip To Ireland," John Lurie's gravelly tones on "Bob And Nico" and "Where Were You." The last-named finale is a Ken Nordinesque tale that makes clear—if the preceding album hasn't—that the Lounge Lizards are a humorous attitude as much as a serious band. Shifting instrumentation and arguments (and a lively acoustic) insure that *No Pain For Cakes* may raise critical hackles, but always remains sonically appealing. And you can't fake *that*. — Scott Isler



JOHN HIATT

Bring The Family
(A&M)

This breezy, brilliant LP makes a compelling case for "less-is-more." John Hiatt's backing band—guitarist Ry Cooder, drummer Jim Keltner, bassist Nick Lowe—first heard these songs only forty-eight hours before entering the studio. Four days later the record was done. This purposefully loose, ragged approach has yielded a variety of sinewy musical settings complementing Hiatt's lyrically dense compositions. They're kinda esoteric, though; unless you've ever felt lonely, experienced a failed

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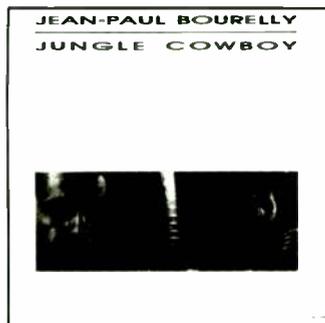
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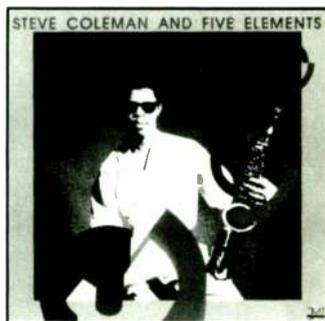


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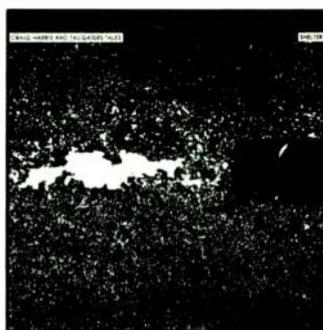
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romance, been part of a family or fallen deeply in love, *Bring The Family* probably won't zap your heart or funny bone.

Seriously, Hiatt is one of the finest singer/songwriters around, and this may well be his best batch of songs. Although capable of writing with great levity and wit, he specializes in sadness, usually the sadness of a shattered romance. He doesn't merely describe the sorrow, but uses achingly poetic images and details to immerse you in it. Against a reflective musical backdrop, "Tip Of My Tongue" spins a heartwrenching tale of how firing a verbal salvo in anger destroyed an important relationship—and the person on the receiving end.

Though Hiatt addresses the brittle emotions of unraveled romance from a variety of angles—often underlined musically by Cooder's moaning slide guitar—he hardly confines himself to bleak ruminations on the downside of love: More buoyant pieces surround the darker material, which keeps things from getting too heavy and increases the record's tension and depth. "Tongue" is followed by "Your Dad Did," for instance, a wry portrait of an average guy whose love for his family helps him cope with everything from losing his job to his two-year-old's saying grace ("She says, 'Help the starving children to get well/ But let my brother's hamster burn in hell'"). This being a John Hiatt song, the details also footnote the idea that a man becomes his father.

A special hats-off to producer John Chelew, who books concerts at an L.A. club where Hiatt regularly plays solo acoustic, and who cooked up the project's calculated spontaneity, partly to better represent the emotional edge and purity of a Hiatt performance. The ploy was a stunning success. So is this album. — **Duncan Strauss**

DAVID VAN TIEGHEM

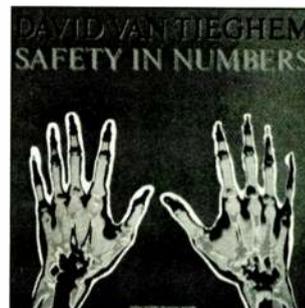
Safety In Numbers
(Private Music)

Drummers are seldom the subtlest of musicians. Maybe it's the temptation of so much bashable hardware at hand. Oh, sure, the music might be cerebral, witty, even elegant; nonetheless, we're left with music built around the idea of people hitting things.

David Van Tieghem isn't an exception to this rule, he's an aberration. His music may be rhythmically insistent, but he never hits the listener over the head with

his drums. Instead, he quietly subverts the traditional relationship between rhythmic and melodic instruments.

Structuring a piece of music on the basis of rhythmic (as opposed to harmonic) development is hardly a new idea; Philip Glass has been employing the strategy for two decades now. But Van Tieghem develops his rhythmic ideas with a percussionist's vocabulary, and keeps his drumming from seeming so overt that you notice the compositional mechanics.



If that seems abstract, cue up "A Wing And A Prayer" and observe how, on first hearing, all that stands out is the circular, Eno-esque melody and its dreamily synthesized chordal backing. Play it again with an ear to the drumming and a new musical drama emerges, one which plays off the stasis of the "melodic" elements and invigorates them.

It's a trick Van Tieghem pulls throughout the album and never makes tiresome. You may credit his stellar supporting cast—Ryuichi Sakamoto, "Blue" Gene Tyranny, Tony Levin—for some of that, but it's the leader's ingenuity and invention that carry the day, from the simple constructs of "Galaxy" and "Future" to the more ambitious "Skeleton Key" and "Night Of The Cold Noses."

Listen up: You may never feel the same way about drummers again.

— **J.D. Considine**

PETER WOLF

Come As You Are
(EMI America)

This can't be the easiest time to be Peter Wolf. As lead singer of the J. Geils Band, the Wolf was an entertaining ringmaster from the old school. Now, if he recycles the same R&B jive, he risks becoming a dinosaur, destined for the tar pits. On the other hand, learning new tricks can be risky business, as Mick Jagger's

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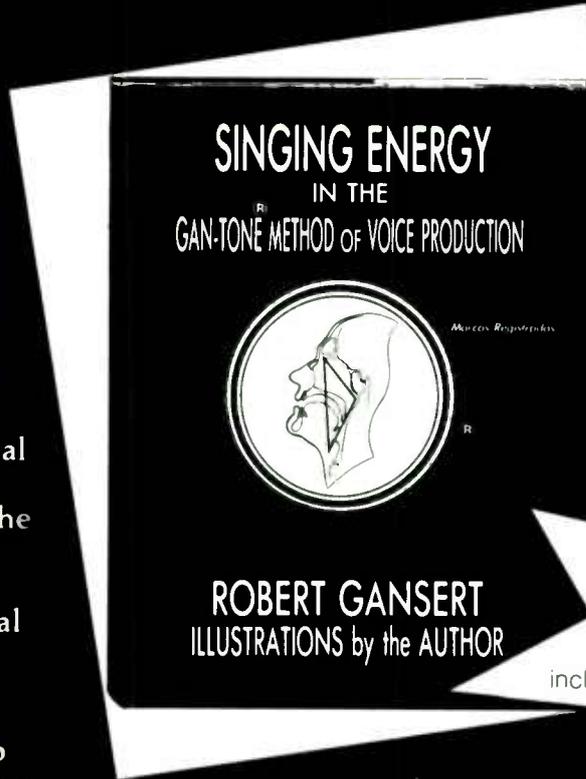
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About the Author:
Robert Gansert has been a performing vocalist for over twenty years, and has been featured in numerous concerts and recordings. His work has been internationally acclaimed. He is currently a noted instructor at the Carnegie Hall studios.

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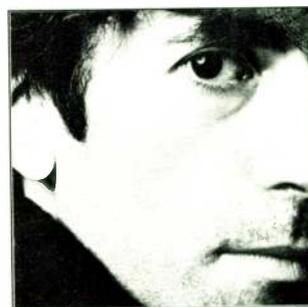
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World Radio History

dreary *She's The Boss* proved.

Wolf fared better than the big Stone on his own solo debut, recruiting funkster Michael Jonzun for *Lights Out* to achieve a decent hipness quotient. But staying cooler than the pack is a young man's game, and he's no kid anymore. Occasionally inspired and never dull, *Come As You Are* confronts this dilemma with varying degrees of success. If it doesn't answer any big questions about Wolf's artistic future or place in the grand scheme, at least he appears to be enjoying himself.

Produced by our man and the trusty Eric "E.T." Thorngren, the record is an energetic hodgepodge. Of course, there's a healthy dose of Wolf the trash-talkin' smartass, heard to rousing effect in frantic rockers like "Thick As Thieves" and "2 Lane." On the soul side, "Can't Get Started" (an allusion to advancing age?) and the title track mine a foot-stomping party groove. It's only when you notice how the handclaps, whoops and other good-time effects are too carefully arranged that the celebration rings a tad false.



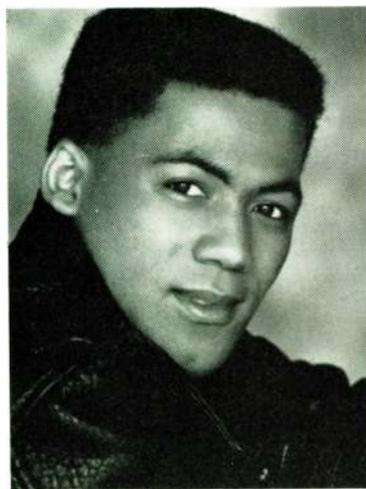
However, Wolf excels on a pair of stirring ballads he might have sneered at in younger days: "Blue Avenue," a misty-eyed lament punctuated by twangy Duane Eddy-styled guitar, and the luminous "Magic Moon," where he nearly follows Van Morrison into the mystic. Never mind the labored melodrama of "Run Silent, Run Deep," which bids to close the LP on a slam-bang note and fails to detonate.

No, Wolf's not ready to join Barry Manilow in the ranks of middle-aged croonerdom: The standout tracks are provocative efforts defying easy categorization. Propelled by an understated yet insistent pulse, the spooky "Mama Said" flirts with the "just say no" camp via a tale of innocence defiled. Best of all, the spellbinding "Love On Ice" allows Wolf to play off a leisurely, almost plodding tempo as he deftly wrings the bitter emotion from simple lost-love lyrics. Striking a determined note that echoes the later Dylan (minus the surliness), he sounds more like a real singer—instead of a performer—than ever before.

Hmmmm. Maybe *Come As You Are* offers a peek at Wolf's future after all. Without pointing in any particular direction, it suggests he'll grow up gracefully and still knock 'em dead, albeit in new, subtle ways. Good singers do that, y'know. — **Jon Young**

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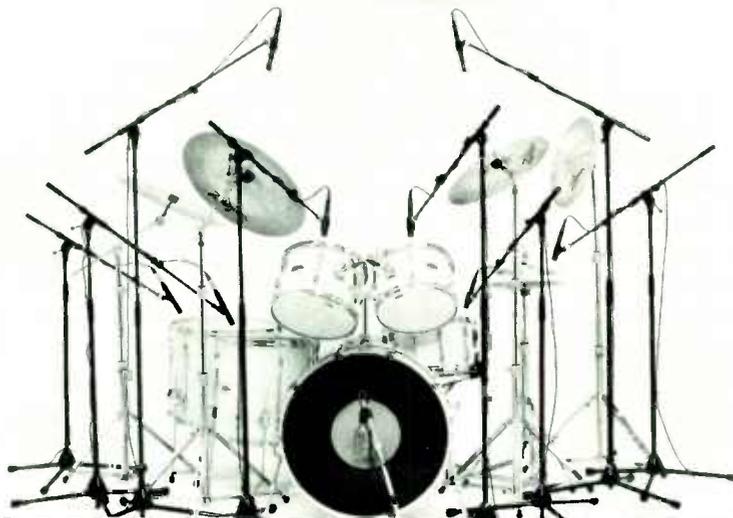


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SUZANNE VEGA

Solitude Standing
(A&M)

Anyone who didn't buy into the much-raved-about 1985 debut of New York singer/songwriter Suzanne Vega should be pleasantly surprised by her follow-up. Though there's no marked change in Vega's vocal presentation—she still sings in a parched, uninflected voice that sounds like whispering leaves—*Solitude Stand-*



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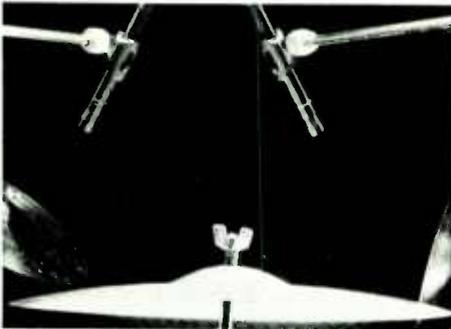
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ing is made of steelier stuff than its predecessor. The singer's four-piece back-up band has at least taught her how to rock politely, without sacrificing the introspective detail which remains a hallmark of her songs.

Vega also shows less tendency to ice her emotions with bohemian postures and arty distancing (pitfalls she fell into regularly on her self-titled bow). The best example of her new resolve may be "Luka," a portrait of a battered neighbor sung in the first person. Vega manages to get under the skin of this frightened,

abused character by revealing the story through the cracks in her defensive monologue; it's a storytelling stroke.

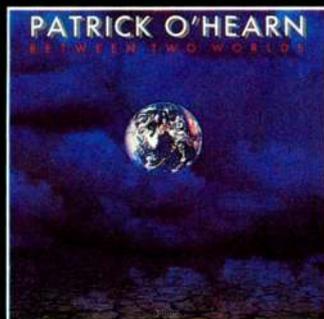
Other songs which could have devolved into literary gambits prove equally evocative: "Calypso," about the sea nymph who sheltered the globe-trotting Odysseus, only to be left behind, plays as a universal observation. Likewise, "Wooden Horse (Caspar Hauser's Song)," sung from the perspective of the enigmatic nineteenth-century boy-man (cf. Werner Herzog's film *The Mystery Of Kaspar Hauser*)



takes a curiosity of history and spins it into an elegant reflection on Hauser's bizarre solitude.

Add to these finely crafted songs such slices of street life as "Ironbound/Fancy Poultry" (in which a woman's loneliness is reflected in a corner vendor's advertisement for his wares) and the ripe ballad "Gypsy" (very ripe—it was written almost a decade ago), and the result is an album poised in mood and musically assured. With *Solitude Standing*, Suzanne Vega serves notice that those lavish comparisons to such major songwriters as Lou Reed, Joni Mitchell and Paul Simon could be worthy of their weight. — Chris Morris

SOME MUSIC IS PRIVATE MUSIC



PATRICK O'HEARN

Bassist, synthesist and composer Patrick O'Hearn continues the musical journey he began with his highly acclaimed first release, *ANCIENT DREAMS*. With a subtle yet dynamic stroke, O'Hearn traverses several categories of music, painting textured melodies that relax yet heighten the senses. Outstanding tracks include "Forever the Optimist" and "Skyjuice."

CARLOS ALOMAR

Long time David Bowie guitarist / musical director Carlos Alomar steps into the spotlight with his debut solo album *DREAM GENERATOR*. Through a multitude



of highly sophisticated recording equipment, Alomar has created an orchestrally rich set of elaborate yet subtle compositions with references ranging from classical to traditional rock sounds. Watch for Carlos on tour this summer with David Bowie.

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Jefferson Airplane loves you" was their slogan, and like many slogans, it was catchy and largely baseless. Onstage the 60s San Francisco band was less likely to exude naive bliss than an edgy aloofness. On record, they soon gravitated from folkie idealism—their "Let's Get Together" was one of the best versions of the flower-power generation's national anthem—to a jaded contempt for anyone who strayed into their line of sight.

That timeless quality, coupled with

continued on page 133



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Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam*Spanish Fly* (Columbia)

Most hip-hop records are about the beat and the way the artists/producers manipulate it. This one is about singing. Sure, "Head To Toe" is a nice piece of revisionist Motown, but the key to its success isn't the way Cult Jam and cohorts Full Force rewrite the rhythm, but the way Lisa Lisa latches onto the innocence of the Motown vocal style (the bridge cops its phrasing from "Back In My Arms Again"). The vocals just get better as the album rolls along, from the slick, sophisticated singing on "Lost In Emotion" to the rich, gospel-style harmonies of "Someone To Love Me."

Sly & Robbie*Rhythm Killers* (Island)

As the drive train behind two full sides of relentless groove, Sly & Robbie more than live up to the title. But it's the sonic collage producer Bill Laswell layers over their funk-fueled juggernaut that carries the day. Contrasting sonic novelty against rhythmic regularity, it conjures a combination of movement and stasis which seems paradoxical until you hit the dance floor.

Hoodoo Gurus*Blow Your Cool* (Elektra)

Like its predecessor, *Blow Your Cool* is full of feisty garage-rock riffs, shout-along choruses and rowdy rock 'n' roll charm. But where once those characteristics were mere features of the songs, now they've become the album's formula. And while that's not enough to sink songs like "Good Times" or "Out That Door," neither does it revive the sagging spirit of some others.

Wipers*Follow Blind* (Restless)

Between Greg Sage's dark, brooding vocals and his band's moody, droning pulse, the Wipers could be taken for morose cousins of R.E.M. Except that where the lads from Athens go for that

fashionably distanced aura of irony, the Wipers attack their topics—and emotions—head on. That's what makes the odd modulations in "Coming Down" or the bits of blues behind "Someplace Else" so affecting: This band not only understands what makes a song feel right, but how to get the listener to feel it. (El Segundo, CA 90245-2428)

The Mekons*Honky Tonkin'* (Twin/Tone)

Their affection for C&W colored by almost compulsive desire for class analysis, the Mekons come across as some sort of post-graduate Fairport Convention (minus the virtuosity). Though it's true few other pop albums include bibliographies on the lyric sheet, it's also worth noting that the likes of "I Can't Find My Money" or "If They Hang You" boast melodic charm no amount of exegesis can explain away. (2541 Nicollet Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55404)

The Cult*Electric* (Sire)

Their claims to Zeppelinhood owe far more to Rick Rubin's studio acumen than to any inherent musical muscle; Ian Astbury, after all, ranks below Weird Al Yankovic as a Robert Plant sound-alike. But even if the Cult picked up its metal moves second-hand, the group deploys them with the fervor of true believers. Abetted by some sure-fire headbanging hooks, that's what makes this album more than the sum of its parts.

Wire*The Ideal Copy* (Enigma)

Epigrammatic and austere, these English art punks said more with less than almost any band on the scene between '77 and '80. Now, thanks to the wonders of electronics, Wire's sound is busier and more detailed, but no less efficient: which adds an unexpected pop sheen to everything from the electrobeat chorus of "Ahead" to the subversive metaphysics of "Ambitious."

R.E.M.*Dead Letter Office* (IRS)

Though this collection of out-takes and B-sides seems more a sop to completists than a real album, it highlights R.E.M.'s least appreciated virtue—its sense of humor—which is reason enough to play it. The CD ups the ante by including all of *Chronic Town*.

Nick Kamen*Nick Kamen* (Sire)

Proof that bimbo rock isn't gender-specific.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo*Shaka Zulu* (Warner Bros.)

It may be the careful eclecticism of the song selection, or perhaps the pristine detail of Roy Halee's engineering, but somehow this otherwise admirable effort lacks the spirit and bite of its predecessors. If that means this will take four or five plays to sink in while *Induku Zethu* took only two, the subtle pleasures of "How Long" or "Golgotha" more than make up for it.

Various Artists*Soul Shots* (Rhino)

R&B collections are so commonplace that it takes a lot for any one set to stand out. Rhino's Soul Shots series is an exception. It isn't simply that these five albums draw from material other anthologists ignore; they also place their picks in illuminating contexts. *Vol. 1: Dance Party* not only digs up the original "Harlem Shuffle," but places it alongside Dyke & the Blazers' rough-hewn "Funky Broadway" for optimum effect. Similarly, *Vol. 4: Screamin' Soul Sisters* squares off the stone funk of Ike & Tina's "Bold Soul Sister" against the salacious sass of Aretha Franklin's "Lee Cross." But *Vol. 3: Instrumentals* ought to be required listening for every pop fan, from James Brown's "Night Train" to the Viscounts' "Harlem Nocturne." (1201 Olympic Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90404)

BY J.D. CONSIDINE



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But there's one color you won't need a lot of to get your hands on an ESQ-1—long green. The ESQ-1 retails for just \$1395US.

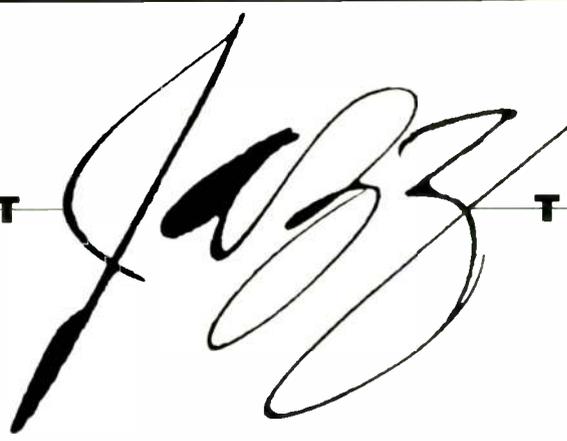
There are sound librarian programs for the ESQ and most personal computers, so you can save and sort your creations quickly and easily. If you'd rather just plug it in and play, there are hundreds of ESQ sounds on ROM cartridges, cassettes and disks available from Ensoniq and a host of others.

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Spring saw the passing of Freddie Greene and Eddie Durham (within a week), and the final bow of Buddy Rich. For fifty years Freddie Greene defined unamplified rhythm guitar with the Count Basie Orchestra, while Eddie Durham was not only *the* pioneer of electric guitar, but developed the core of the Basie book in the 30s and codified the swing style on paper as chief arranger for Benny Moten, Jimmy Lunceford, Basie and Glenn Miller, among others (not to mention penning such standards as "Moten Swing," "I Don't Want To Set The World On Fire" and "Topsy"). And Buddy Rich was blessed with such extraordinary natural gifts on the drums, it's unlikely any of his pretenders will ever grasp the depth of his heart and commitment to the big band tradition (specifically Basie) and to hard, nasty swing. Thanks to all...and good night.

Various Artists

The Complete Recordings Of The Port Of Harlem Jazzmen (Mosaic)

Alfred Lion's seminal 1939 recording sessions, linking blues, boogie woogie and New Orleans styles, are herein rescued from fading 78s on a typically brilliant Mosaic limited edition. There's Sidney Bechet's original Blue Note hit, "Summertime," and warm, timeless contributions from Big Sid Catlett, Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis and Teddy Bunn; and lest anybody wants to know what a *real* jazz brass sound is all about, there's the legendary trumpeter Frankie Newton and trombonist J.C. Higginbotham. (Available mail order *only* for \$9, from Mosaic Records, 197 Strawberry Hill Ave., Stamford, CT 06092-2510)

The Mel Lewis Orchestra

20 Years At The Village Vanguard (Atlantic)

A classic big band in this day and age? Yes, thanks to the persistence of drummer Mel Lewis and the benign patronage of Village Vanguard patriarch Max Gordon. MIDI is swell, but hell, how about

the rich massed sonority of ten brass and five reeds, breathing together in harmonic splendor, searching for subtle inner voices and contrasts no synth can mimic, punctuated by a subtle rhythm section and a hand-hammered drummer who has the substance and the style to play nothing but the music? Uncut swing.

Eric Dolphy

Vintage Dolphy (GM)
Other Aspects (Blue Note)

Lost in the historical resonance surrounding Ornette Coleman's folkish melodic freedom and John Coltrane's pogo-sticking rhythmic rituals, Eric Dolphy's persona has often gone unnoticed or simply been misunderstood. To this day supposedly hip young musicians still speak confidently of his "not knowing the changes." But the Iron Man's sound-on-sound sense of harmony, his jubilant boppish propulsion, restless curiosity and uncanny vocal emotiveness ring through loud and clear in these wonderful finds from concerts and Dolphy's own archives. *Vintage Dolphy* includes his 1963 working group (J.C. Moses, Richard Davis and trumpeter Edward Armour) and collaborations with Gunther Schuller's chamber ensembles, while the Blue Note features some unbelievable solo flute, a duet with Ron Carter, his own cubist classical composition ("Jim Crow") and a practice session on raga-ish material that hinted at Dolphy's future ideas. Rarely have intellect and raw emotion been so spiritually unified in one artist. His influence continues to grow. (New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012)

Bill Lee

She's Gotta Have It/Original Motion Picture Soundtrack (Island)

The gifts of the father are visited upon the son. The younger Spike, an acclaimed film-maker esteemed for his wry wit and ironic, bemused compassion, is the eldest child of bassist/composer Bill

Lee, long an unsung stalwart of the New York scene. His soundtrack LP coaxes, comments, nurtures and parallels the film's directions, as stylish, romantic and bittersweet as the Brooklyn streets which spawned them. Ronnie Dyson kicks in with a fine vocal on Lee's charming, off-center waltz "Nola," which has the feel of a genuine jazz standard, and the talents of Lee, Virgil Jones, Harold Vick, Stanley Cowell and Joe Chambers glow with a fine, swinging intimacy.

Eddie Gomez

Discovery (Columbia)

A surprisingly tasteful variation on the contemporary fusion formulas of sentiment, outreach, high-tech trimmings and earnest blowing (the bassist and Steve Gadd really tee off on "Puccini's Walk" and "Caribbean Morning"). Gomez's dancing, romantic harmonies on upright benefit from a remarkable studio sound (and that he takes his fluent chops out of cello range more often than in his counter-melodic days with Bill Evans). The studio reverb that bathes his solo and classical fantasies in digital bliss is pleasingly surreal, and while the synthesizer work breaks no new ground (not even via Mike Brecker's curious Steinerphone), it is light, low-sucrose and digestible.

Ray Anderson

Old Bottles-New Wine (ENJA)

Few instrumentalists can convey the trombone's gruff, impolite grandiloquence without sounding a tad campy. Ray Anderson captures the essence of the trombone's jazz essence and extends the tradition with daredevilish melodic wit. And when Anderson set out to apply all his sonic breakthroughs to bebop and standards, it didn't hurt to have Kenny Barron, Cecil McBee and Dannie Richmond along as co-conspirators. It's a liquid, grooving delight (particularly a bust-ass version of Gillespie's "Ow!"), culminating in a bodacious, tripping vocal on "Wine." One soulful guy.

BY CHIP STERN

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William Burroughs*Break Through In The Grey Room*
(Sub Rosa)

In which Lawrence, Kansas' most sterling citizen blabbers and smokes between snips of Ornette's 1973 outdoor hoedown in Jajouka, Morocco. Topics? Social politics among junkies, the arrival of "Mr. Martin" (an extraterrestrial who found himself calling Earth home after his wrecked spaceship "came apart like a rotten undervest") and commonplace atrocities from the daily papers. Operating on an idea by Brion Gysin, Burroughs plays tape manipulation games which might've sounded new when they went down in the 60s, but are little more than a stoned parlor game now. Still, his cranky voice, dry delivery and random musings ("Heaven looks like a Chinese laundry") make the verbal juxtapositions fun most of the time. (Box 808 CM 1000, Brussels, Belgium) – *Jim Macnie*

Various Artists*Trans-World Punk Rave-Up!* (Crawdad)

We're used to thinking of garage-punk as an American phenomenon—heck, do they *have* garages in Europe? But this two-volume collection of mid-60s "wild rocking beat 'n' R&B from all over!" (including New Zealand) will be a revelation to stateside chauve-rockers. Forget about Bo or Chuck, or even the Stones; most of these thirty sub-obscure acts aspired to the Pretty Things and still were guilty of over-reach. The most glorious cuts find the Phantoms, Pleazers or whoever vomiting all over some cherished staple of the repertoire. A useful antidote the next time you turn on the radio by mistake. – *Scott Isler*

Ted Hawkins*On The Boardwalk On Venice Beach*

The voice of this soul and country veteran is an overlooked national treasure—so overlooked Hawkins finally moved to England last year, where he's become a star. You can't go wrong hearing his original songs on *Happy Hour* (a recent Rounder records release). But the real gold is on this twenty-seven-song cassette of

croonable classics; accompanied only by his acoustic guitar, Hawkins lets loose his full emotional expression. His gritty baritone bears eerie suggestions of hero Sam Cooke, not only on "Chain Gang" (where ex-con Hawkins does his mentor one better), but on aching, bittersweet renditions of "Just My Imagination," "Got What I Wanted" and even "The Green Green Grass Of Home." Not to be missed. (Available for \$12 from: H. Thorp Minister, 1419 10th St., #4, Santa Monica, CA 90401) – *Mark Rowland*

Dos*Dos* (New Alliance)

Two of rock's feistier bottom persons (ex-Black Flag thumper Kira, and Firehose's Mike Watt) dangle subsonic particles, build mini-mountains and throw lassos around each other, using basses only. Though there's lots of riffing, this team sidesteps the tedium of mere exercise by reveling in the simplicity of the "tunes." Such skeletal structures may be little more than floor plans for more elaborate pieces, but they stick; this isn't post-Jaco jacking off, just a couple pals dealing in linear structure with their 10½'s for an afternoon. Not for Watt-ofile only. (Box 21, San Pedro, CA 90733) – *Jim Macnie*

Various Artists*The Guitar And The Gun: A Collection of Ghanaian Highlife Dance Music, Vol. 1 and 2* (Africagram/Tower)

A killer collection of highlife, which can sound a bit like reggae, heavy on sharp melodies and nimble-fingered guitar parts. Recorded in the countryside, some of the rhythms have resisted internationalism, meaning they sound distinct; the records feature the Genesis Gospel Singers for a spiritual version of highlife, an all-blind group, and Salam's Cultural Imani Group, who've reacted to modernity by chucking electric instruments. Typically, the records have almost no notes, meaning, as usual, that we're left to guess at what this all means. Though it's obvious it means a lot. (800-648-4844) – *Peter Watrous*

Beausoleil*Bayou Boogie* (Rounder)

Like Los Lobos, community still fuels Beausoleil's ideas, and their yen for a wider audience has elicited a reliance on bolstered rhythms (not that they were ever lacking in that dept.). With the addition of electric guitar, organ and synthesizers, Michael Doucet is nudging his band into the 80s. But if these guys are in flux, they don't sound uncertain. The pop subtleties they inject into their Cajun base are slick enough to be effective but remain slightly masked, which allows them to sound rowdier and still keep the cringes off the purists' faces. Neat trick. (1 Camp St., Cambridge, MA 02140)

– *Jim Macnie***Carmen Lundy***Good Morning Kiss*
(Blackhawk)

Carmen Lundy has little in common with the TV-dinner formulas of most current jazz vocals. The alternately boomy and sultry alto songstress contributes compositions that probe the tension of modal pedal-points ("Quiet Times"), or use her voice as a reinforcement for rhythm section lock-ups (the title track and a sensibly hip arrangement of "Love For Sale"). This terrain is enhanced by the aggressively swinging rhythm section—and hurt by too-busy horns, which appear on three tracks. The highlight is a near-definitive treatment of Jobim's misty-eyed "Dindi" played to its dramatic denouement by Lundy, who suggests she just might be the singer to break the melody-scat-melody mold. (Aspen Record Group, 525 Brannan St., San Francisco, CA 94107) – *Tom Moon*

Mofungo*End Of The World Part 2*
(Lost/Twin Tone)

Political passion, which they've always had, meets head-on with powerful song-making, i.e. hooks. The coarseness of the music makes the slickness of groups like U2 sound like the reactionary statement that it is. Their best record yet.

– *Peter Watrous*

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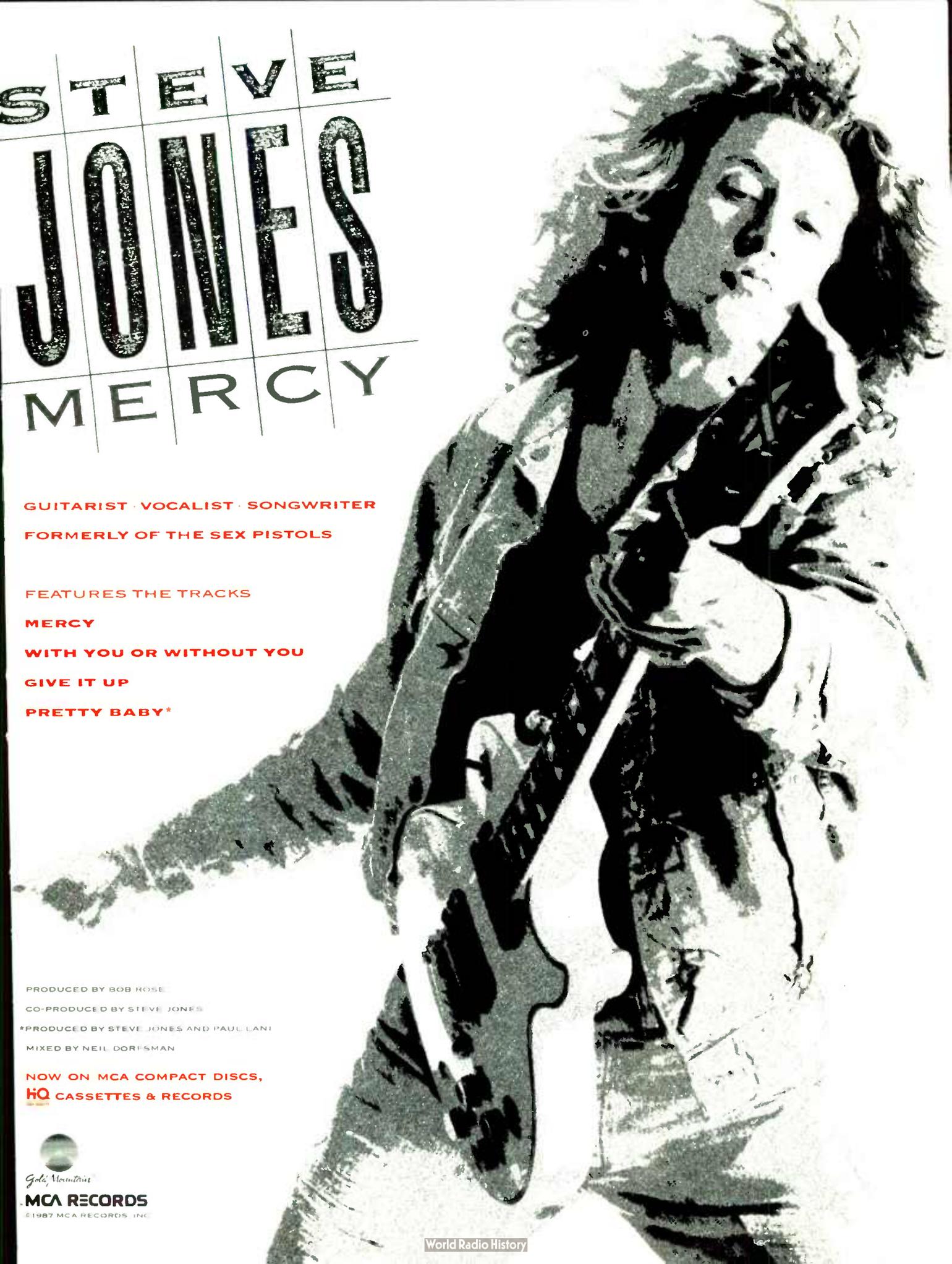
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MAJORS from page 34

heart from that, on behalf of other artists who might not fit into those designated AOR/CHR/AC formats." But he cautions that the label's ability to repeat this success with a Captain Beefheart or a Hüsker Dü depends on the type of album the artist delivers.

Finally, questions about the feasibility and desirability of a low-scale scheme are superseded by the capitalist logic that will prevent it from happening. No entrepreneurial record company would want to invest in a low-yield commodity like John Prine when they could be speculating in the Madonna-clone gold

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rush. A record company has to sell volume to balance their huge annual overhead, which is why they would rather apply their limited resources to an untested young band with hit potential, or a reissue of an old album which was recorded (and, consequently, paid for) years ago, than on a life-sentence semi-popular musician. And it will be this way, despite the contrary wishes of music fans, until that revolution the Jefferson Airplane predicted in 1969.

Which means that after stints at Mercury, Arista and Elektra, Graham Parker may not last long at Atlantic. What then?

"I must have a talk with Arlo Guthrie," Parker replies. ❏

CHASTAIN from page 52

majors, as labels such as Elektra and Capitol-distributed Enigma have begun taking hard looks at the guitarist's various projects.

But for now, Chastain prefers his independence. "They'd have to sell three times as many records for us to make the same amount of money. Plus, when you sign with a bigger label they've got fifty bands and if you don't make it, no sweat, they've got forty-nine others."

Should Chastain sign with a major it would probably mean he'd have to take his act on the road, a thought he doesn't relish, especially in the usual opening role new acts are forced into. He's been there with Spike.

"I've had such bad experiences with opening-act situations that we actually turn those down right now," he complains. "The road crew is so paranoid that you're going to do something good and show up their band that they go out of their way to make it really difficult for you. They give you, out of, like, 500 lights, about 20 of them. They limit your P.A. And you have to pay the people off just to get what they give you."

"Touring to me, although it may be necessary, is very time consuming and draining. You're traveling all day long to your next concert. And, unless I've got somebody totally taking care of my business, it would be difficult for me to do, especially tied up with so many different projects."

As it is, handling his own business affairs and a hectic recording schedule leaves Chastain with little time for anything else.

"There's no way I could have a wife or anything because, from the time I get up to the time I get to bed, everything I do has to do with career advancement," he

insists. "I'm pretty dedicated to what I'm doing. I've never missed practicing at least one hour a day for seventeen straight years." ❏

RECORDS from page 124

equally astringent music-making, keeps Jefferson Airplane recordings fresh—pickled in their own brine, so to speak. RCA Records must hope the film *Platoon* (which uses "White Rabbit") will do for the band what *Apocalypse Now* did for the Doors, so here comes *2400 Fulton Street*, a two-record compilation. What you get is almost all of *Surrealistic Pillow*, most of *After Bathing At Baxter's*, and a smattering of other album tracks—a generous twenty-five in all. The double compact-disc version adds another eleven selections, including two bizarre radio commercials the band did for Levi jeans. (Unfortunately Ben Fong-Torres' extensive liner notes make no mention of this rapprochement with the business world.)

Old-timers will gripe that *2400 Fulton Street* contains the much-anthologized "White Rabbit" and "Somebody To Love" while skipping "Young Girl Sunday Blues," "Bear Melt" and even "3/5 Of A Mile In Ten Seconds." But they already knew that stuff. Beginners will find an embarrassment of musical riches: off-kilter harmonies and structures, baroque arrangements, steely lyrics. They'll also find an occasional embarrassment, mostly from the later years when the Airplane was losing altitude with one or more of its creative motors gone. Twenty years later, the sounds on *2400 Fulton Street* remain bracing and innovative. You're not likely to hear this on radio. — **Scott Isler**

DEVELOPMENTS from page 66

Since some readers of this column have accused me of being too hung up on MIDI, we'll close this edition with some presumably non-wimpy guitar news. A conventional body shape for a **Steinberger**? Yes, it's true. Seems Genesis' Mike Rutherford cooked up the look with British designer Roger Giffin, whose other customers include Clapton, Summers and Gilmour. Giffin came up with the body, EMG the active electronics, and Steinberger did the neck (headless, natch) and their much-applauded Trans-Trem whammy bar/transposer. Not exactly a steal at \$1375, but a nice, nice instrument. The name, GMITA, is kind of sleepy though. How about Mr. Gorgeous Guitar? ❏

SPRINGSTEEN from page 86

his sense of what to do with Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*—the entire film leads up to James Stewart stepping out onto a ledge, a shot that lasts less than ten seconds and is almost immediately followed by the picture's end. Springsteen calls what he learned from watching this "the integrity of the moment," which, he adds, "is a lesson I can use, because I'll be excessive. I've got the energy and I'll crank on forever. But you get to a point, you gotta have the confidence not to do that. You need confidence to do less and let it be more."

At the end of the album version of "War," the cheers are quickly faded out, and the record moves with barely a pause into "Darlington County" and "Working On The Highway," the most modest of the *Born In The U.S.A.* songs and the most embedded in the workaday world. But as life goes on, what might be missed is that it doesn't end with the "Born In The U.S.A." to "War" sequence. It carries the story onward, forward, and since that means eschewing melodrama, what's left is a finish that's as oddly muted as the start.

Yet it would be a mistake to think the story's over. It couldn't be, as long as Springsteen's juices still flow. Even when anthems like "The Promised Land" and "No Surrender" crop up in the aftermath of "War," they are cooled down, taken in stride, without a hint of finality.

Ending the album proved one of the most difficult aspects of making it. Bruce knew that he didn't want to finish with the rock 'n' roll medleys that always concluded his shows. But knowing what he didn't want only emphasized the magnitude of the question: So how do you end the record?

"The first time we played it through the way it was, I wasn't sure. Then we played it again and it started to really sync in—'cause 'Born To Run' tops the tenth side and you go all the way back to 'Thunder Road.' And it restates the central question.

"And the central question of 'Born To Run' is really 'I wanna know if love is real.' That's the question of that song. We go from there; we go to 'No Surrender,' a modern-day reaffirmation and restatement of all those things in the present tense. Then we get to 'Tenth Avenue'; believe it or not, that kinda connects back up to 'Spirit In The Night.' That's the cast of characters and friends; it's the band. And hey, that's what we did, you know."

At one point the plan was to end the album right there. The song told the band's story and it was modest. "We didn't want to end it with something big," Bruce said. It was Jon Landau—arguing for the softer noise for once—who suggested that a love song would be more appropriate. And although "Jersey Girl" had already been issued (as the B side of the "Cover Me" single in 1984), although it was one of only three songs in the set that Bruce didn't write, although it was obscure and quiet and ended the record somewhat mysteriously, it still felt like the right ending.

"That's the same guy that's on the boardwalk in 'Sandy,' back in the same place," Bruce said. "The same guy in 'Rosalita'—you know, he got that Jersey girl. I guess I wanted the record to feel like the middle of summer—real soft moonlight, you're takin' a real slow ride in that convertible, and you're back in that place where you began. You got somebody beside you and you feel good, and you've been through all those things.

"When I listened to that song, I'd always see myself ridin' through Asbury. There'd be people I know a little bit on the corner, and we'd just drive by. I guess that you feel in some way you're changed forever. But you also have all those connections, so you feel really at home.

"The most important thing, though, is that the question gets thrown back at 'Born To Run.' 'I wanna know if love is real.' And the answer is yes." ▀

ROLAND from page 66

nal version lacked. Its 16 voices can now be assigned to 4 different MIDI channels. And where Version 1.0 let you store 16 samples (or tones) per disc (assignable to the 16 voices), Version 2.0 lets you store 32 tones (still assignable to 16 voices).

For Beckmen, the ability to offer updates like this is an advantage that has made the custom VLSI chip well worth the wait. And during the waiting period, he adds, Roland was able to scope out features—like the digitizing pad and video monitor jacks—that the competition doesn't have on deck. There's some of the same thinking behind Roland's late entry into the digital synth market: the D-50. It's no secret that the advent of FM left Roland somewhat out at sea. So it's no big surprise that the D-50 was designed to outrun FM in two of its notoriously weak areas: the byzantinely difficult FM programming system and its oft-bemoaned "thin" sound. The pre-

release version D-50 I was shown at Roland did a credible job at both.

The D-50 uses digitally-generated synthesizer waveforms (sawtooth, square, etc.) and segments of PCM sampled waveforms as its basic building blocks. These building blocks are called partials, and also include a number of digital EGs, amplifiers and LFOs. Any two of these partials can be combined in a number of ways to form what's called a tone. Now, the ways in which partials can be combined are called structures. And some structures allow you to cross-modulate two partials via a ring modulator. The results of this cross-modulation, according to Roland, are more predictable than those of FM cross-modulation and therefore easier to navigate—even for a landlubber.

In the next stage of the D-50's sound-generating process, two of these dual-partial tones are combined. The process involves assigning one tone to be the upper tone and the other the lower tone. At this point, onboard, programmable digital reverb, digital chorus and/or digital parametric eq can be applied to the upper and lower tones—either individually or collectively.

So now that you've finally mastered the heady parlance of FM algorithms, operators and such, you may find everybody's talking this new Linear lingo. (Arithmetic, that is.) Better start learning to tell your structure from your lower tone. Which brings us to another big plunge Roland has taken this year. Recognizing that it's rarely smooth sailing when you're marketing unfamiliar new technologies, the company has opened up a Learning Center at its Los Angeles complex. At the moment, the center is only open to Roland dealers, but that's a situation which could change in the future. There's a full-time teaching crew aboard to conduct courses, which are held several times a month on the average. One course covers Roland's pro products, taking in generic MIDI basics along the way; and the other is devoted to the company's Contemporary Keyboard home entertainment line. Learning Center cadets are quartered at the local Hyatt; but the center is "no country club," as Beckmen points out. Each course is taught in three intensive twelve- to fourteen-hour days.

"You go into a music store today," Beckmen observes, "and the consumer buying usually knows more than the salesman selling, which is dangerous. We hope to bring that salesman at least up to the same level."

— Alan Di Perna



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COLTRANE from page 112

musically, politically, and in any department of our lives.”

Coltrane's main extramusical stimulation came not from politics, but from religion. Deeply influenced by his family background, he maintained an interest in God all his life, exploring different religions, though never settling down and becoming part of one denomination. He was interested in astrology as well and the titles of his compositions—“Psalm,” “Song Of Praise,” “Ascension,” “Dear Lord,” “Dearly Beloved,” “Amen,” “Attaining,” “Ascent,” “Cosmos,” “Om,” “The Father And The Son And The Holy Ghost,” “Compassion,” “Love Consequences,” “Serenity,” “Meditations,” “Leo,” “Mars,” “Venus,” “Jupiter,” “Saturn”—tell the story.

By 1963, Coltrane was becoming involved with younger musicians, who saw him as a father figure of the “New Thing”—Archie Shepp (who was to play on a lost version of *A Love Supreme* a year later), George Braith, Albert and Don Ayler, Bill Dixon and others. He'd separated from Niama and taken up with Alice McLeod, who he'd later marry. But his interest in the spiritual realm had hardly abated; the release of *A Love Supreme* in December of 1964 included liner notes describing his religious awakening. *A Love Supreme* was awarded *downbeat's* record of the year, while Coltrane was “Jazzman of the Year,” elected to the Hall of Fame, and voted first place on tenor saxophone. The hagiography was well under way.

For many, Coltrane was the mirror reflecting their dreams or virtues. Withdrawn, quiet, he exuded an air of serenity. His religious song titles and the ascetic quality of his music fit an

image many people were eager to impose on him. His personal habits—rigorous practice, vegetarianism, dabbling in odd religions—fit the times, suggesting a sort of monk looking for salvation in art. He was completely honest in his dealings with people. And his music captured the revolutionary spirit of the 60s, epitomizing uncommon ideals.

“I liked him because he was a musician and a serious person,” says Sonny Rollins, “almost a religious person. He had a nice unassuming quality to him. This to me was about as good as you can get in this life. As far as his personality goes, he had everything that I think was the best. He was looking for dignity. And respect as a human being. He didn't seem to be interested in self-aggrandizement. He was very young and he was just trying to get out all that music.”

For young musicians, his effect was more direct. “To be honest,” remembers Rashied Ali, “Coltrane changed my whole concept of playing music. It made me want to play a freer, more searching type of music. I started broadening my scope of listening; it was like a refreshing breeze.”

“He was kinda cool because he would be so shy,” says Ali, who got to know the less formidable Coltrane. “Because he was such a great artist, people never really found out how the man was. They would say to me, ‘Should I speak to him?’ and they'd stand there dumbfounded, not knowing what to say. They'd ask me, ‘Will you say something to him?’ and I'd say, ‘Why don't you go over there yourself?’ All they had to do was say ‘hello,’ because the guy was ready to talk, he was just a real down-home, country-type guy. Loved to laugh, loved sweet potato pie, collard greens, stuff like that. He was really what you would call a soul brother, he didn't have any weird

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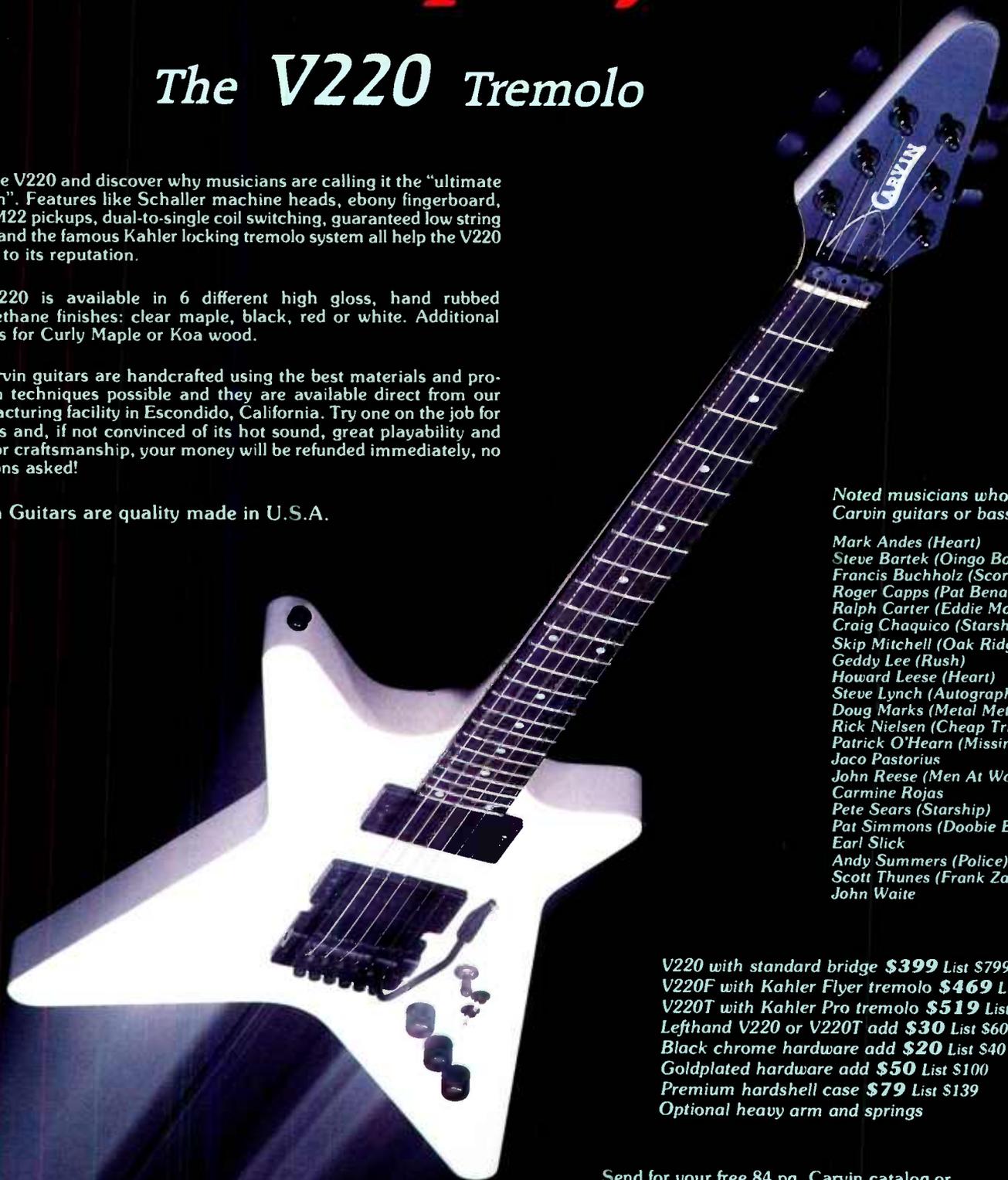
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DAVID BOWIE (alto sax):

I think he undoubtedly was an influence on my wanting to play music, not ever considering that I could ever approach that kind of playing. Just for perversity's sake, I particularly used to like Eric Dolphy and Roland Kirk. When you're young, it's like one-upmanship. So many kids really liked John Coltrane, of the guys I knew who liked jazz, that I had to push myself into [laughs], well, who else is around that I can identify with? [laughs] I guess Kirk really ran away with it in the end, especially during that period when he was with Mingus. But obviously Coltrane was absolutely superlative. I can't say anything of any weight about him that I'm sure half a dozen other people wouldn't say better."

— Compiled by Jim Macnie



Torrents of notes that obliterate the changes

stuff about him. He was an alright cat, the type of a person you can really call a friend.

"He would do things for people. So many musicians were damn near living off of Trane. Guys would just call him up and say, 'I'm not working,' or 'I'm broke,' or 'I need this, I need that,' and he'd send them a money order. He paid people's rent for them, anything he could do. He wasn't stupid, but he was definitely there if you needed him. He was just like a regular person who liked to laugh a lot."

Coltrane broke through to another level with *Ascension*, a large group date recorded in 1965 that essentially did away with regular pulsed meter and signaled Coltrane's interest in both density and musical simplicity. Unlike *Giant Steps*, the people on the date knew it was a momentous musical occasion. "When he said that it was very important," remembers Art Davis, "I didn't doubt him. I didn't know what direction he was going. When I saw these people—I knew some of them, and others I didn't know—I knew...something's important here. When I heard it, that was convincing."

A month later, in September, Coltrane added Pharoah Sanders to his group, and along with Donald Garrett, he

recorded *Om* under the influence of LSD. Two weeks later came *Kulu Se Mama*, and on the next date *Meditations*. With the addition of Rashied Ali on drums, Coltrane continued the forward motion he'd begun with *Ascension*. (That record also received the double treatment in *downbeat*). This ever-ballooning ensemble caused problems however; conflicts between Rashied Ali and Elvin Jones pushed the volume up and up. Then Elvin Jones and McCoy Tyner left and were replaced by pianist Alice Coltrane (who also played harp).

"At the beginning we were doing the tunes Trane was famous for, 'My Favorite Things,' 'Impressions,'" says Ali. "After a while he started writing new music for the band, and that's when I started playing drums in the band alone. It was a whole different change in the music; very spiritual, and sometimes very harsh on the listeners who had been into Trane previously. Because his whole style changed."

"I really thought it was a bit too much sometimes," remembers McCoy Tyner. "I really did. I couldn't hear what I was doing. I'd look around and about five saxes would be onstage. Where did these guys come from? Norman Simmons, who was working opposite us with Carmen McRae, said to me, 'Man, that F# is the sharpest note up there, really out of tune, horrible.' And I said 'Really? I can't hear it.' I could not hear my instrument. So I said, 'Well, it's time for me to exit.'"

In February and March 1967, Coltrane went into the studio for the last times. The result was *Expression*, yet another new direction. Spare, mostly calm and rhythmless, it sounds as if Coltrane had reached a level of contentment. The music has neither the exploratory fervor of his earlier 60s works, nor the technique obvious from his music of the late 50s. With *Expression* and *Interstellar Space* (a duet with Ali), Coltrane had reached, through enormous self-discipline and dedication, his last plateau. In July 1967 he died of liver cancer.

It's extraordinary for anybody to have attempted this kind of odyssey, from junky be-bopper to 60s experimentalist and cultural icon. It's also extraordinary that he even mattered: A less musical person would have been bogged down by the programmatic of his art. But he did matter and the question remains, what does he mean to us now?

One of the unfortunate things that happened to John Coltrane's music in the 70s was the assimilation of his style into the mainstream. All pianists played like McCoy Tyner, all saxophonists worked Coltrane's pentatonic flurries, and they all helped reduce his music's potency. The effects he'd used to elicit certain emotional responses were out of place; the moment had passed, and in the America of Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, where complacency was the rule, his sounds were out of context. But his time is coming around again; in the era of Contragate and Bakkergate and Boeskygate, and a renewed awareness toward the outrage of apartheid, John Coltrane's music sounds real, functional again. The beautiful fury has walls to crush.

What we can glean from Coltrane is his steadfast dedication to learning and personal dignity. He absorbed knowledge so he could change, to eradicate the clichéd and stale. His honesty lets us know it's possible to keep going; his music can be heard as inspiration. In his dedication to ideals we can imagine our own capacities. It's an old jazz virtue, but it applies.

"When there's something you don't understand, you have to go humbly to it," John Coltrane once observed. "You don't go to school and sit down and say, 'I know what you're getting ready to teach me.' You sit there and you learn. You open your mind. You absorb. But you have to be quiet, you have to be still to do all of this." ▣

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5. Strings	5. Piano 4	5. Trombon	5. Syn Harm	5. Organ 5
6. Piano	6. Piano 5	6. Trumpet 2	6. Syn Clar	6. Organ 6
7. New EP	7. Ph Grand	7. Brass 2	7. Syn Lead	7. Organ 7
8. EGrand	8. Grand	8. Brass 3	8. Huff Tak	8. Organ 8
9. Jazz Gt	9. Dp Grand	9. Hard Br 1	9. So Heavy	9. Organ 9
10. EBass	10. LPiano 1	10. Hard Br 2	10. Hollow	10. Organ 10
11. Wod Bass	11. LPiano 2	11. Hard Br 3	11. Schrnwh	11. Snd Pipe
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13. EOrgan 2	13. Honkey 1	13. Huff Brs	13. Checky	13. Big Pipe
14. POrgan 1	14. Honkey 2	14. Perc Br 1	14. Syn Bell	14. Sft Pipe
15. POrgan 2	15. Pf Bell	15. Perc Br 2	15. Syn Pluk	15. Organ
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17. Picciao	17. New EP 2	17. String 2	17. Rub Bass	17. Rnk Gt
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21. Vibes	21. EPiano 1	21. Rich St 1	21. Fretles	21. Zither 2
22. Xylophn	22. EPiano 2	22. Rich St 2	22. Flap Bas	22. Lute
23. Koto	23. EPiano 3	23. Rich St 3	23. Mono Bas	23. Banjo
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25. Clav	25. EPiano 5	25. Cello 1	25. Syn Bas 2	25. Harp 2
26. Harpsic	26. High Tin	26. Cello 2	26. Syn Bas 3	26. Harp 3
27. Bells	27. Hart Tin	27. Lo Strg 3	27. Syn Bas 4	27. Sft Koto
28. Harp	28. Perc Pf	28. Lo Strg 4	28. Syn Bas 5	28. Hit Koto
29. SmadSyn	29. Wood Pf	29. Lo Strg 5	29. Syn Bas 6	29. Sitar 1
30. Harmoni	30. EP String	30. Orchest	30. Syn Bas 7	30. Sitar 2
31. Steel Dr	31. EP Brass	31. 5th Str	31. Marimb	31. Huff Syn
32. Timpani	32. Clav 2	32. Pzic 1	32. Marimb	32. Fantasy
33. Lo Strg 2	33. Clav 3	33. Pzic 2	33. Xyloph	33. Symwice
34. Horn Lo	34. Clav 4	34. Flute 2	34. Vibe 2	34. M. Voice
35. Whistle	35. Jazz Clv	35. Flute 3	35. Vibe 3	35. VSAR
36. Zng Ptp	36. Mute Clv	36. Flute 4	36. Glockn	36. Racin
37. Metal	37. Mute Cl 2	37. Pan Flt	37. Tube Be	37. Water
38. Heavy	38. Syn Clv 1	38. Slow Flt	38. Tube Be	38. Wid War
39. Funk Syn	39. Syn Clv 2	39. 5th Flt	39. Bells 2	39. Ghostie
40. Voices	40. Syn Clv 3	40. Oboe 2	40. Temple G	40. Wave
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43. Snare Dr	43. Harps 3	43. Harmon 2	43. Hand Dr	43. Sp Talk
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45. Tom Tom	45. Harps 5	45. Harmon 4	45. Clock	45. Smash
46. Mars to	46. Circust	46. Mono Sax	46. Heifer	46. Alarm
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