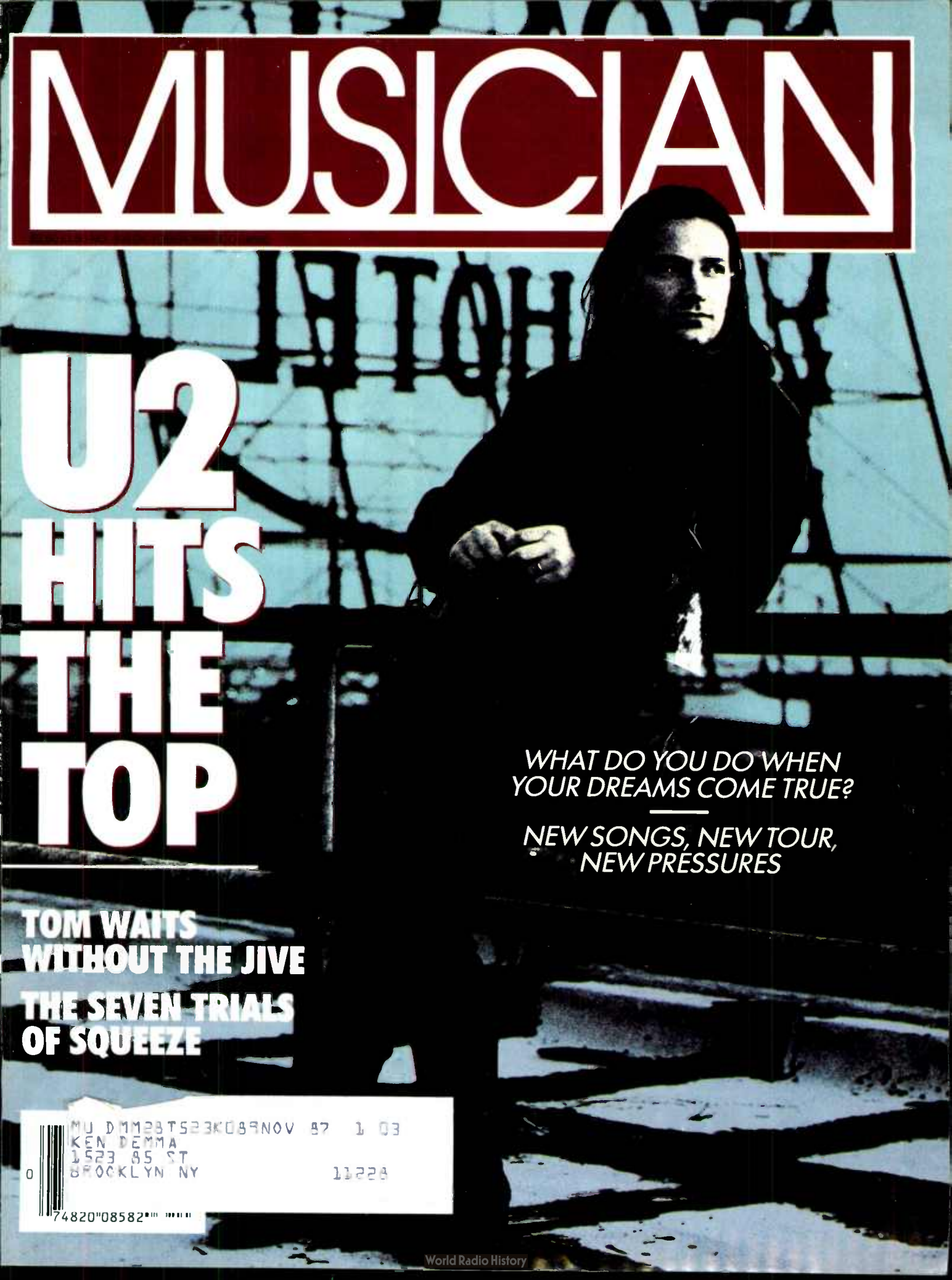
# MUSICIAN



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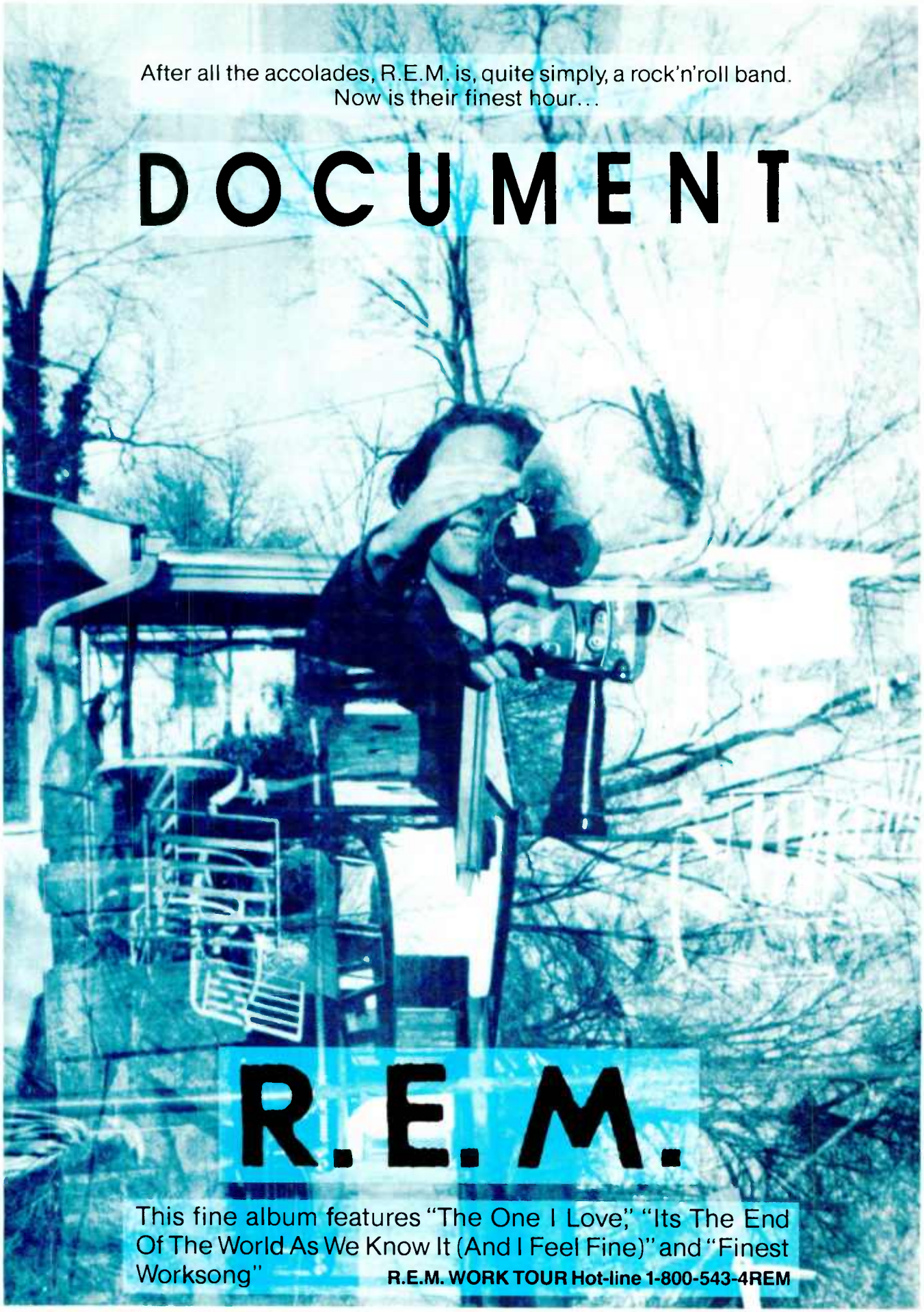




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# MUSICIAN

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# LETTERS

**Inner Mounting Trane**

It is supremely encouraging and inspiring to come home after a ten-week European tour and pick up a copy of *Musician* with John Coltrane on the cover (July '87). Congratulations to writer Peter Watrous. I commend you on an illumining and revealing article about the man who continues to uplift the consciousness of humanity with his music that breaks down the walls of ignorance.

*Carlos Santana*
*San Francisco, CA*


I was overwhelmed by your story on Trane. I've loved this man and his music since the Miles Davis years. But what I remember most is his album *Live At The Village Vanguard.* That album was mentioned in your brilliant story, along with Trane's spirituality, but no one mentioned the track that I consider to be one of his all-time greats: "The Spiritual." My mother hated jazz, until I woke up one Sunday morning to hear her playing that song while doing the laundry.

Thank you for a wonderful and moving story.

*Narvich Caldwell*
*Los Angeles, CA*

**Big Artists, Small Labels**

Congratulations to Rob Tannenbaum on an excellent piece of work: his "Is There Life After Majors?" article (July '87). I think the article was less about post-major-label careers than the economic realities of the record business. The article was well balanced and treated fairly a subject which many music fans (critics, record company employees and everyone else) misunderstand. It was a great job.

*Charlie D'Atri*
*Chrysalis Records*
*New York, NY*

I read Rob Tannenbaum's article with great interest. I suppose I am one of those unfortunate (?) record buyers who has been forced to spend a substantial amount of time and energy simply tracking down where all my favorite artists have gone. I spend as much money as ever on my twenty-five-year-old vinyl habit and, frankly, it's gratifying to give that money to independent labels and artists, as opposed to CBS, WEA, Capitol, etc., who long ago turned their backs on anything that wasn't aimed at top forty radio audiences.

*Robert Houser*
*Johnson City, TN*

I'm a full-time songwriter. Now that I've got your attention, let me tell you that it's not all that glamorous. I live in a trailer and drive a '79 Datsun, and sometimes things get a little scary between ASCAP checks. But I get by; at least for the time being, songwriting's paying the bills. With ninety-nine percent of all America's creators of music making less than $5,000 a year at their craft, I count myself very fortunate.

For some dumb reason, all my success, my nice little trailer and my nifty '79 Datsun couldn't keep me from getting a bit sick at Rob Tannenbaum describing the proposed home taping tax as part of the major labels' "search for optimum profits." Would you guys please take off your headphones for a minute and face reality? For songwriters like myself, for indie labels and for smaller publishers of music, slowing the pace of home taping is a matter of survival, not "luxury"!

Of course the majors aren't going to lose their shirts if home taping continues to run rampant, but individual creators of music like myself most definitely will. I would greatly appreciate it if your magazine would start living up to its name and support the cause of the American musician. We're not all millionaires, you know.

*Dwight Liles*
*Mt. Pleasant, TN*

*We lose money on illegal copying, too, but we don't support a tax on paper. – Ed.*

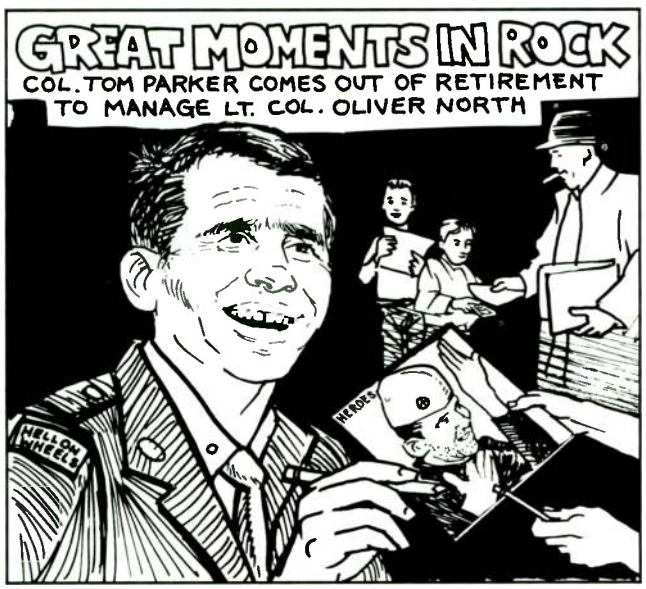
**ST Smarts**

I was pleased to see a favorable article on the Atari ST in a serious music magazine (July '87). I am a computer professional, a computer hobbyist and a professional musician. I bought my 1040 ST as the best machine for all of my interests for the price, despite the fact that at that time music software was nonexistent. The last six months have vindicated my choice.

One point made in the article needs clarification. Although the ST does not have a MIDI thru port, the MIDI thru has been implemented on pins one and three on the MIDI out port. I'm sure that Atari thought that this nonstandard implementation would not cause any problems for those using standard cables. However, I hear that some cable manufacturers are shorting the unused pins one and three to pins four and five. Such a cable will cause havoc on the Atari MIDI out port. Tom Jeffries in *STart* (Spring '87) points this out and shows a simple method by which a true MIDI thru port could be wired using the existing port.

It's good to see my 16-bit, 1M-byte computer manufactured by a "game machine" company beginning to be taken seriously. The next time someone insults my computer, I'll tell them to take their MacInsult or Inscrutable Business Machine and stuff it up their serial port.

*Roy Randall*
*Alexandria, VA*




ROMAN SZOLKOWSKI

# JOHN COUGAR MELLENCAMP

# THE LONESOME JUBILEE

PAPER IN FIRE
DOWN AND OUT IN PARADISE
CHECK IT OUT
THE REAL LIFE
CHERRY BOMB

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EMPTY HANDS
HARD TIMES FOR AN HONEST MAN
HOTDOGS AND HAMBURGERS
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PolyGram Records

# FACES

## NEWS STORIES BY SCOTT ISLER

DAVE DEXTER

## ALEXANDER O'NEAL

### *F Is For Faithful —To the Family*

Hey, have you heard the new Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis hit? Yeah, it's called *Fake*, and it's a monster. It's sung by some guy named Al...Al...Al *something.*"

Okay, so it isn't as bad as all that. But as producers, Jam and Lewis cast such a long shadow these days that it's easy to imagine the singers of their various songs as anonymous and interchangeable. Think about it: Would *Control* have been any less a hit if Jimmy and Terry had cast, say, Lisa Lisa instead of Janet Jackson?

Alexander O'Neal's response to all of the foregoing is...would you believe, calm acceptance? "It usually always is the producer's hit," he says. "I mean, hell, let's be realistic about it. To be honest with you, my ego doesn't span that far. I am a member of the Flyte Tyme [production] family. And I've accepted my position in the family at this stage of the game."

As O'Neal is quick to mention, he's been in this game long enough to learn patience; he was the lead singer in Flyte Tyme, an ancestor of the Time before Morris Day hit the scene. Even when Jam and Lewis resurrected the Flyte Tyme name for their production company, he wasn't the first singer they took into the studio under the new banner. The irony of this is that O'Neal, unlike Janet Jackson, is more than merely adequate as a singer, even though his growly intensity is often hidden behind the everything-but-the-kitchen-sink production values of Jam and Lewis.

There's a certain pragmatism behind O'Neal's equanimity at being upstaged by Jam and Lewis. A hit, after all, is still a hit. "I have no qualms at all about sharing the success of a hit song." He adds that "anybody with any common sense" would realize that Jam and Lewis are two of the hottest producers in the world—"obviously you're going to have to share the spotlight."

O'Neal's forbearance also seems to stem from a certain loyalty—a sense of shared experiences reminiscent of the early days of Motown. "We knew each other when none of us had anything," he says, "and for us to enjoy any amount of success is a hell of an accomplishment coming from the chitlin circuit that we came from. My philosophy is that there's a lot of room at the top—plenty enough to share. It's just the bottom that's so crowded."

*– Leonard Pitts, Jr.*

### John Fogerty's Creedence Revival

**Since his 1985 comeback, John Fogerty has made a cause célèbre of his refusal to perform the Creedence Clearwater Revival songs that made him famous. Fogerty, who gave up his artist royalties on Creedence recordings to get out of a Fantasy Records contract, has maintained a virtual boycott of CCR hits in live performance.**

**But on July 4 Fogerty declared his independence of the long-time grudge with a forty-minute live set of all Creedence classics. Appropriately, he was closing the Welcome Home benefit concert for Vietnam veterans at Capital Center in Landover, Maryland.**

**The symbolism wasn't lost on Fogerty. "I just want to tell you something real short and sweet," he addressed the crowd of 14,000 after performing "Born On The Bayou" and "Willie And The Poor Boys." "I'm talkin' to vets here. I myself have gone through about twenty years of pain. And I finally faced that pain. I looked it right in the face and said, 'Well, you got a choice. You can do it for twenty more years or you can just say, "That's what happened." You can't change it, that's just what happened.'**

**"So I'm telling you guys, that's what happened. You got the shaft. You know it, and we know it. It's reality. So drop it."**

**Fogerty further urged the vets to send him a letter: "You drop it in a box, and then you drop all that shit you've been carryin' around." He returned to the music with "Who'll Stop The Rain," "Up Around The Bend," "Midnight Special," "Bad Moon Rising" and "Fortunate Son." Other performers on the show then joined Fogerty for a finale of "Proud Mary."**

**"He was finally convinced they were his songs," says Bob Fogerty, John's brother and self-titled personal secretary. "There wasn't enough reason for him not to do them anymore." John Fogerty "probably will be" dipping into the Creedence songbook when he hits the concert road again, his brother says. Unfortunately, that won't be for a while; Fogerty's first priority is a new album. Can you wait until 1988?**

# SHELLEYAN ORPHAN

## *Highbrow? No, Raised Eyebrow*

Their name sounds fey. They write floaty melodies topped with poetic snippets. **Caroline Crawley** and **Jemaur Tayle** seem like they'd be quite happy as faeries in Titania's wood. But even though the songs on *Helleborine* are played by a string trio—with woodwind, acoustic guitar and harp flavorings—the pair insist there's nothing highbrow about their music.

"People associate classical instruments with something

ELIZABETH MCCOLLOUGH

that's above them," Crawley says. "That's a shame, because Mozart was writing pop music in his day on these instruments. We're just taking things that have been lifted to a supposedly higher level and trying to show they can appeal to everybody."

Shelleyan Orphan (the name romantically inspired by the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley) was born in Tayle and Crawley's hometown of Bournemouth, England, where the two crossed paths so often they decided they'd better speak to each other. The Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby" convinced them that classical instruments could be powerful in pop, but neither read nor wrote music. So they enlisted members of music colleges to perform their compositions, playing melody lines for each instrument on guitar so the musicians could transcribe them. Though the players were often shocked that Tayle and Crawley wrote for instruments they'd never touched, Crawley claims "it's not that hard; it just takes longer than if we could read or write it ourselves."

This method of composition may also account for the ethereal swirlings of their music—since their flights of fancy are not hampered by technicalities. "We don't want people to say, 'Well, *that* sounds like...,'" Tayle says. "If we think something sounds remotely like another melody we've heard, we don't use it." "We're not purposely trying to be obtuse," Crawley adds. "We'd like to think people could hum along—though I don't know if they can."– *Robin J. Schwartz*

# CHRIS HILLMAN

## *He* Doesn't *Want To Be a Rock 'n' Roll Star*

The chemicals and the alcohol got to the point where I thought I'd die—or kill someone. It was a real effort to play for people." But Chris Hillman was so much older then. After several self-described "lean" years, the former Byrd and Flying Burrito Brother can think of little he'd rather do than hit the stage with his new combo, the Desert Rose Band. "It's a supreme duty to entertain," Hillman states. "I consider myself fortunate just to be making records for a decent label."

The guitarist formed the nucleus of the Desert Rose Band (named after his 1984 solo LP) from among his fellow backup band musicians on a 1985 Dan Fogelberg tour. The group soon signed with MCA/Curb and released a self-titled album full of wistful, ringing-guitar melodies that would fit snugly onto any latter-day Byrds or Burrito Brothers record.

So far, though, the album has found only country acceptance. Hillman blames it on the radio. "So many country acts today are geared toward crossover. But with this current classic rock radio, I think it's either country or rock." And though he co-wrote the Byrds' famous musical treatise on how to become one, Hillman says he has no interest in being a rock 'n' roll star. "My contribution to all the bands I've been in is to bring a country base. I'm not a rock 'n' roller and I never really have been."

Hillman hasn't completely severed his ties to that world. He is writing songs with ex-Byrdmate David Crosby, who has asked him to play mandolin on his forthcoming album. In the meantime, the Desert Rose Band has taken its

ROBERT MATHEU/RETNA

sweet 'n' sweaty stage show—complete with natty sequined suits—on the road, opening for Emmylou Harris. The group is also "jumping out of the country circuit" to headline smaller venues.

"As bad as I might feel, I've got to make an audience walk out feeling great," Hillman says. "I don't take anything for granted anymore." – *Jean Rosenbluth*

## R.I.P. Alex Sadkin

**Producer Alex Sadkin, profiled in April's *Musician*, is dead at the age of thirty-eight. He had been in Nassau, the Bahamas, producing Jonathan Perkins. Late in the evening of July 17 Sadkin, Perkins, engineer Will Gosling and saxophonist David Winthrop drove away from Compass Point Studios in a jeep. On their way back they crashed into an embankment.**

**Perkins and Winthrop, riding in the back, suffered severe shock. In addition, Winthrop received a broken shoulder and extensive facial lacerations, Perkins some cuts and bruises. Sadkin and driver Gosling were airlifted to a Miami hospital. At press time Gosling was in stable condition and expected to recover. Sadkin, though, was declared brain-dead on arrival at the hospital. His family gave permission to disconnect life-support systems on July 23. It was a sudden end to a career that yielded much (Simply Red, Thompson Twins, Duran Duran, Grace Jones et al.) and promised more.**

KEES TABEK/RETNA

# KID CREOLE

## *At Home, No Respect*

Part of my design," Kid Creole sings on his new album, *I, Too, Have Seen The Woods*, "was giving the world alternatives."

There's no question he's succeeded admirably on that level. Since 1980 the New York–based Kid (a.k.a. August Darnell) has turned out distinctive and charming concept albums that chronicle his ongoing odysseys to places real and mythical. The music is a gliding tropical blend of everything from calypso and Latin rhythms to funk and 40s jazz.

These unusual pop pastiches have sometimes been uneven, but invariably make for magic onstage. Joined by singer/dancer/vibist extraordinaire Coati Mundi (Andy Hernandez), the Coconuts—three (now two) blondes who perform stunning choreography—and a large, well-drilled backing band, Kid Creole commands one of rock's most imaginative and dazzling live shows.

But this effort to give "the world alternatives" has been largely snubbed in America, though enthusiastically accepted in Europe, where the troupe scores hits and packs arenas. "In Europe, we're regarded as an exotic cult band and they love it, they respect it," Darnell says. "It's amazing because they appreciate the American influences of our music more than Americans do. We could always have a career in Europe, but I'm an American, so I won't really be happy until we have that American hit."

Yet he's not willing to continue beating his head against the wall of resistance. The new album, far more accessible than its predecessors, may be his best—and last—shot at that hit.

Darnell intended *I, Too, Have Seen The Woods* as a double album, with two concepts: "One concept was back to island-hopping—this time the island's called Buttermilk Channel—as another stop on the Kid Creole journey. The other part of the concept is that this would be the final [Kid Creole] album." Having to pare *I, Too* to a single disc altered the game plan, but the last cut is still entitled "Call It A Day."

"I'll be honest with you," Darnell states. "If this record doesn't sell, that'll be it for Kid Creole. If it does, there'll be a sequel. And *that* would probably be the final one."

Either way, all is not lost for Darnell fans. He'll simply switch gears and release a solo LP. "It would be very introspective, with more ballads. It'd show my softer side," he predicts, breaking into a wide grin. "It'd be more Barry Manilow-ish."

Don't bet on it.

– *Duncan Strauss*

# THAT PETROL EMOTION

## *Putting Out Fire With Gasoline*

**Damian O'Neill** of That Petrol Emotion is skeptical about the Irish music scene. "There's millions of bands out there," he says in an unmistakable Derry accent, "and they all sound like U2." Nudged into appraising the emerald isle's leading quartet, he allows that U2 are "nice people" but then, with a grin, dismisses them as a "dinosaur group."

ANDY LIGUZ/RETNA

That Petrol Emotion certainly doesn't sound like U2. In fact, the band's two hard-rocking political pop albums (the import-only *Manic Pop Thrill* and the recently released *Babble*) veer off in so many directions that comparison with anyone is impossible. Only a few tunes recall the Undertones, despite Petrol brothers Damian (Dee) and Sean (John) O'Neill's role as the creative spine of that much-missed outfit.

Sean O'Neill was fed up with the music-go-round after the Undertones and took a year off, vainly looking for regular employment. It took guitarist Reamann O'Gormain, an old Derry friend, to coax him into forming another group. The pair found drummer **Ciaran McLaughlin** and moved to London, where they converted guitarist Damian into the band's bassist.

McLaughlin picks up the story. "We put an ad in the *Melody Maker* for a singer and attracted a bunch of freaks who couldn't sing, so we decided to go as a four-piece." Prior to their first 45, issued by a small label in mid-'85, they added Steve Mack. The Seattle native was working (without papers) at a London pizza parlor.

Demon Records released the first LP. "We had all these songs written and nobody wanted to sign us," Damian O'Neill says. "We got Hugh Jones to produce us for no money because he liked the group." Success on the U.K. charts brought the Petrols a PolyGram deal. "Being on an independent is trendy and all," he observes, "but we want to sell records and make a living." – *Ira Robbins*

## PMRC on Beastie Boys: Yes and No

**"If you apply it to the laws and the Miller test for obscenity [judging material by community standards and socially redeeming value] and everything we have ever done as a society to define pornography, I don't think the Beastie Boys would fall into that category."**

***– Jennifer Norwood, executive director, Parents Music Resource Center***

**"[The Beastie Boys are] an X-rated act....We have to do something. I feel very strongly about this. Very strongly."**

***– Tipper Gore, second vice-president, PMRC***

***Compiled by Mark Sullivan***

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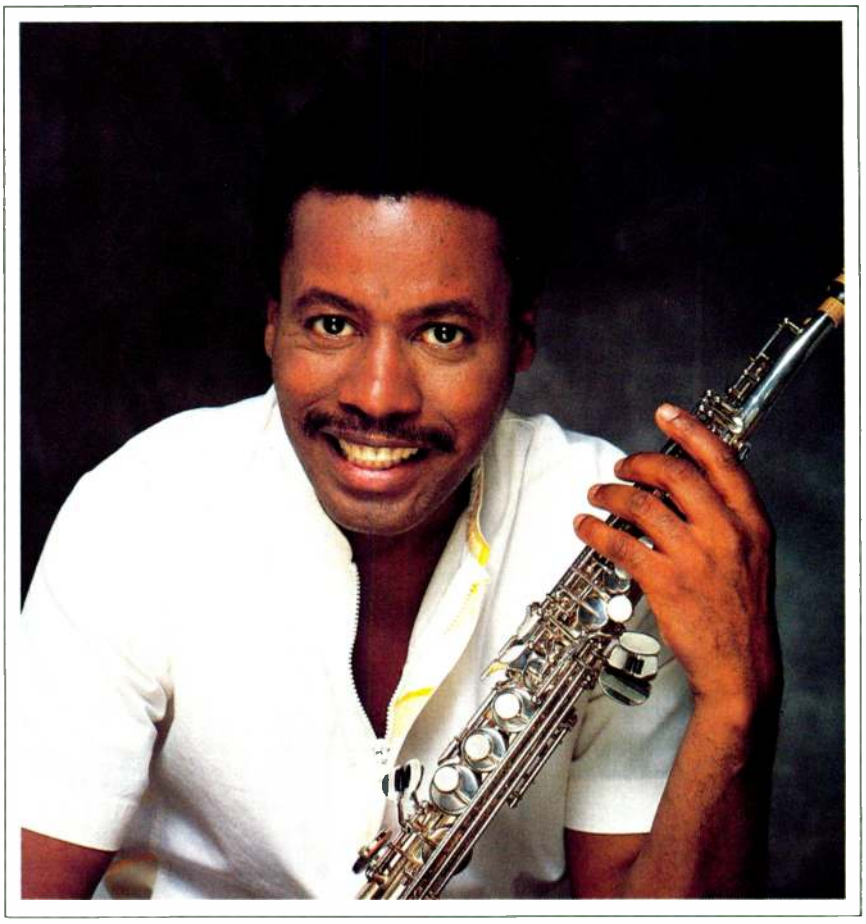
# WAYNE SHORTER

BY JOSEF WOODARD

## A SLIPPERY SAXOPHONIST SAILS AHEAD



**"The hardest thing is to give it a heartbeat."**

It's too early to be certain, but Wayne Shorter may be the most influential jazz saxophonist since John Coltrane. His trademark approach, in which emotional fury is bound by a cool, linear economy, can be heard in altered or diluted form everywhere from James Newton to Branford Marsalis to George Howard. And for some listeners, that's part of the problem. Despite, or perhaps because of, an impressive career that includes boppish excursions with Art Blakey in the 50s, intricate compositions with the classic Miles Davis quintet of the mid-60s and, with Joe Zawinul, leading Weather Report through its myriad incarnations through the 70s and mid-80s, Shorter's refusal to fit neatly into a musical sinecure makes a lot of "pure" jazz fans nervous.

Shorter can be just as slippery in person. He bucks the received myth that jazz artists are tortured souls on furlough from purgatory. He makes his happy home in a Studio City suburb quietly baking in sunsmog, not urban *zeitgeist*. He nibbles on chicken in the kitchen while his wife, Anna Maria (of ballad fame), gets ready for a Friday night out. It's a tintype of domestic bliss, jarred only by Shorter's tangential approach to conversation. Like his solos, he circles his ideas around a world of straight lines.

Getting a straight answer from Shorter on his split from Zawinul, for instance, is as easy as getting him to play a conventional bop solo. "Corporations change personnel," he says administratively. "Attachments lead to suffering," he adds philosophically. You suspect the truth lies somewhere between; Shorter's role always seemed a bit circumscribed in Weather Report, perhaps the by-product of Joe's more aggressive personality.

So in 1985 Shorter released *Atlantis*, picking up the thread of a promising solo career he'd abandoned since 1974's fine *Native Dancer*. And last year's follow-up LP *Phantom Navigator* solidified his reputation for unpredictability, virtually obliterating Shorter's saxophone and penchant for maze-like melodies in favor of multi-layered electronic textures and a thinking man's funk.

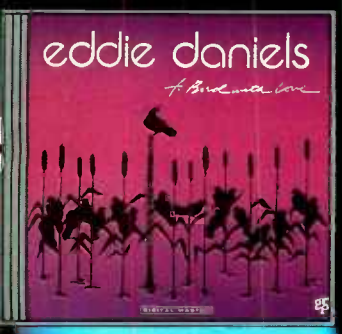
Other projects on the drawing board include a more traditional "jazz" record, contributing to Joni Mitchell's opus-in-progress and a long-standing ambition to compose in an orchestral context (for CBS Masterworks). "I might do a symphony based on the development of what you call tunes—develop a "Nefertiti" in a symphony. Turn the whole thing upside down, inside out, moving and breathing, children coming from it, stories..."

To Shorter, it's all part of a grand scheme to extend the meaning of what it means to be a jazz musician at this advanced phase of its history. While others retreat to the safety of neo-traditionalism or callow market-wisdom, Shorter is thinking broadly. Whether or not his recent solo stints reflect a true pioneer spirit (I tend to think they do, beneath the digitalia), he's always looking ahead.

"What I'm talking about is following through on wishes," he explains. "Charlie Parker, before he died, wanted to get involved with other forms of music. He got tired of playing 'Sunny Side Of The Street,' 'I Got Rhythm' and 'What Is This Thing Called Love?' Trane wanted to do that, too, because he started getting involved with bagpipes, this and that. He wanted to stretch out. If synthesizers were here then, Trane and Charlie Parker would have been involved with them—the Kurzweil, the Synclavier and all that. Stan Kenton would have been right in there with the Synclavier."

Shorter grew up in Newark, New Jersey, but jazz filtered into his consciousness only gradually. As might be deduced from the inclusion of his cartoons on the inner sleeve of *Phantom Navigator*, his memories of Newark are remarkably lucid. A family scrapbook includes a yellowing newspaper clipping declaring young Wayne the winner of an

CHRIS CUFFARO/VISAGES











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"all-city art contest."

"Then, on the radio I hear this music called bebop," he goes on. "I hear this," he mimics a fast, swinging line. "I saw *Fantasia*, and the clarinet caught my eye—how shiny the silver keys looked against the ebony and the gold sheen of saxophones and trumpets. At the same time, I was listening to a show every Saturday called 'New Ideas in Music.' One thing that helped get me into music a lot was horror pictures and science fiction—the chance-taking stuff. Drawing and painting and music—that's where I felt the most vibrant."

For young Shorter, though, the plastic arts lacked the pulse and human interaction of music. "They were very solitary things," he notes. "I would go nuts."

Shorter's apprenticeship with Art Blakey during the 50s was recently reprised, after a fashion, in the film *Round Midnight*, in which Wayne goes *tête-à-tête* with Dexter Gordon—saxists reliving the glories of post-bop in Parisian jazz temples. It was a time when the boundaries between live and recorded music were less formidable than today: "The nature of the Blue Note recordings was laid out so that there was no apparent regimentation before we went in there," Shorter recalls. "We made one record in six hours; it only cost $1500."

But a different operating procedure marked the cutting of the classic mid-60s Miles Davis quintet, for which Shorter was an undersung architect. Song structures were loosening; solos were wrestling free of the language of bop. The spirit of inspired experimentation hovered over those records, and lingers still; it certainly seems to be the basis of more than one Wynton Marsalis tune. The cryptic, circular structure of Shorter's composition "Nefertiti," for instance, is haunting and—not incidentally—never breaks into a solo section.

"That day," he recalls, "Miles was saying there was no solo that could do more for that melody, or no other story. He felt that anything else would dilute or take away; that melody had to be remembered. Someone said that *Nefertiti* was a seed planted for *Bitches Brew*. Miles started thinking, 'When you get an idea, don't start the idea at the beginning of the recording.'"

As much as he has forged a signature playing style, Shorter has also been a prolific and individual composer—a fact sometimes obscured by his relatively sparse output during the Weather Report years. Does he have a vault full of unfinished musical business? "In that room," he points to his workspace off of the kitchen area. "You might say that a lot of songs people have heard are like first themes. That's why I don't like to use the word 'song.' I'm thinking about getting some music together and using it for symphonic repertoire, where you have the exposition, main theme, second theme and the development of one of those, get on through the recapitulation and get that coda. Just write a letter, a sonata or allegro form, they call it."

Always the methodical analyst, Shorter likes to rework old ideas, creating the intricate contours that have marked his last two solo albums and given rise to the term *chamber jazz*. So his wont is to go back to the vault for material.

"That's what's happening right now," he admits. "I'm looking at something I wrote about four years ago and realizing this is a lump of clay. Now I've got to start molding it. Some people call it editing and shaving. Whatever the process is, it's still a lump of clay, and I have to find the eyes and nose and the mouth and find out what it is. The hardest thing is to give it a heartbeat.

"I'm methodical about where the essences of the tension or the 'live spots' are," he goes on. "There are a lot of dead

*continued next page*

spots in music and some people don't know where the dead spots are, and in the long run, a dead spot will hit an audience and they'll say, 'Well, that's nice.' That's why I say that writing music is the same as improvising, but composing is improvising slowed down. It's edited. There are a lot of dead spots when you just take a chunk of music and say, 'This is the music.' You write it by playing. When you play something and you don't write it down, you might find yourself constantly in a position of rooting for it or defending it, and watching over it as if it were a baby."

No doubt many people have their own versions of what Wayne Shorter *should* be doing: playing tenor, chasing the neo-hard-bop trail suddenly in renascence, leaving the synthetics at home. But, as with many Miles naysayers, these are unsolicited yearnings based on the Shorter of yore, rather than the navigator of now. Those nostalgic for the blowing Shorter did get a teasing taste on last year's *Power Of Three*, a trio session with pianist Michel Pettruciani and guitarist Jim Hall. Shorter downplays its significance. "We just went to Montreux, had a couple of rehearsals on the songs, went onstage and just did it, one take. The audience was there. We just had an evening of playing, of fun. They were saying, 'What should we call this album?' I said, 'How about *The Power Of Three*?' I had that science fiction book there on the wall."

Emboldened by three decades of music wisdom, Shorter seems very much in control of his destiny; he's fueled by a belief in the power of the muse and a resignation to her ornery temperament. Is creativity itself, then, the phantom navigator? "The forces of the phantom navigator, to me, are a part of every human life," Shorter answers. "Whether you're aware of it or not. It's a dormant part, but a very essential entity—the center of the entity of whatever life is. Whether we're alive or dead, there's this navigator which is not devoid of ourselves, but is actually us." M

## SHORTER'S SEXTANTS

Wayne Shorter's navigational tools include a mini-armada of synthesizers: a Kurzweil, an early Prophet 5 and a Korg DW 6000 driven by a Steiner-phone MIDI wind controller. A Macintosh computer puts the byte in his composing, and he plays Selmer tenor and Yamaha soprano saxes.

# ADVERTISING INDEX

# JOHN HAMMOND

BY DAVE MARSH

## REMEMBERING THE CONSCIENCE OF AMERICAN MUSIC

**Hammond lighting up in 1941, with Earl Hines, Charlie Christian, Helen Humes, Mike Levin, Dave Dexter, Count Basie and Benny Goodman**

John Hammond was much more than the greatest talent scout in the history of American music. He discovered Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Charlie Christian, Benny Goodman, Count Basie and a host of others, and nurtured talents from Bessie Smith to Stevie Ray Vaughan. But Hammond was also impresario of the legendary "From Spirituals to Swing" concerts, a record producer, a music critic and a lifelong fighter against racism. His death in July at age seventy-six removes from the music scene one of its indisputably great figures. As James Lincoln Collier wrote in *The Making Of Jazz*, "The importance of John Hammond to jazz history cannot be overestimated. No other nonmusician, and indeed only the major instrumentalists, has had as broad an effect on the music as he did." With little exaggeration, that judgment could be extended to all black-based American popular music.

In a sense, then, everyone who works with and cares about that spectrum of American music—whether jazz or rock or gospel or R&B or any of their offshoots—is an heir of John Hammond. And that's why it's worth telling a little bit about what it was like to spend some time with him.

I had the opportunity and used it often during the last few months of his life, because Hammond and I were neighbors on the East Side of New York. We'd known each other reasonably well for several years, initially because I'd written an enthusiastic review of his 1977 autobiography, *John Hammond On Record*, and then from Friday morning dalliances at the corner candy store, which at one point had a couple of worthwhile pinball machines. Venerable as Hammond may have been, patrician as his upbringing as an heir of the Vanderbilt and Sloane fortunes left him, he was never happier than when "bangin' on them pleasures machines," as one of his discoveries put it. His assistant, Mikey Harris, carried the number of the pinball arcade in Times Square, because it was the best place to find John when he couldn't be located anywhere else.

Hammond never wanted it known, but he'd been seriously ill for a couple of years as a result of a series of strokes and heart attacks. Late in 1986 his wife, Esme, died of AIDS and he was thereafter not only sick but heartbroken. Still, he carried on, and if he couldn't leave the house much anymore, his dozens of friends could come to him, and they did in droves. Between the visitors and the telephone, Hammond was never out of touch with a stream of relatives, friends, musicians, writers—the whole gamut of associates developed in half a century of enthusiasms and battles.

Visiting an invalid is nothing pleasant, but Hammond's apartment remained heavily trafficked because, even at his sickest, he was never less than an ardent conversationalist, and when you hit on one of his enthusiasms or stumbled across a *bête noire*, he sprang to life, eyes afire, voice firm and strong, ready as ever to articulate and defend his ideas. What I'm trying to say, I guess, is that even at a fraction of his former authority John Hammond remained a great man. And since the illness had quelled at least a fragment of his mercurial irascibility, a sweeter one than ever before.

There was one afternoon that I will never forget, not only because it taught me something about John's personality, but because it was one of the musical experiences of a lifetime. His nephew, David Oliphant, brought over some old blue-label Columbia 78s. John asked to hear one in particular, "Old-fashioned Love"/"I Surrender Dear" by a Red Norvo septet that he'd recorded in 1934. "Old-fashioned Love" turned out to be nothing special, but "I Surrender Dear" was a revelation. The tune was nothing but a corny Tin Pan Alley pop ballad, but out of the syrup arose, in the first few bars, an unbelievably beautiful ("Marvelous!" John would say, in his upper-class tones) trombone solo by Jack Jenney. By the time that ended, everybody in the room was on the verge of tears; by the time the needle was lifted off the disc, a couple of us had gone over the edge.

Hammond wiped his eyes with the sleeve of his robe. "I don't get sentimental often," he said (and it was true), "but that record always gets to me." I was sufficiently stunned to spend a lot of time over the next few months lurking in the Red Norvo section of America's best-stocked record stores. (No luck so far.)

Later that same day I showed John a copy of *Yankee Blues: Musical Culture and American Identity* by MacDonald Smith Moore. It's a study of New En-

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gland classical composers and their opposite numbers, the promoters and composers of jazz and modernist music. Hammond figures prominently in the book, and I wanted to ask him if he agreed with a passage: "Hammond yearned for an 'Ur-jazz,' elemental and earthy as Bessie Smith's blues. Yet Hammond was a moving force in the racial integration of jazz bands. He wanted to integrate people, but not music."

Where I got the nerve to read those sentences, I'll never know. John listened with composure, something that might not have been true when he was feeling better. When I finished, he made a sour face, not quite a sneer. He pointed at the turntable where lay the Red Norvo 78. "That's the answer," he said.

Which it was. The band Norvo led that day was integrated, at a time when almost no one else in the world—let alone Jim Crow America—was recording black and white musicians together. (It would be a year or two yet before anyone had the guts to bring together black and white players on a public bandstand—John Hammond, again.) But the song they were playing was smooth as Guy Lombardo; there was nothing self-consciously bluesy about the performance, its tempo was sedate. It was a perfect synthesis of the musical styles our culture encourages us to think of as "black" and "white." Indeed, a great deal of its beauty derived from the perfect balance the group achieved with those two modes of music-making.

Hammond was so little bothered by Moore's assessment, I think, because he knew just what he was not: a snob. That doesn't mean his tastes were anarchic, just that he determined what he loved and what he loathed on a more substantial basis than race or personal style. He was wide open, because he was rarely, if ever, concerned with defending turf. Instead, he listened and, because he wasn't a snob, he heard what others could not (or at least recognized it well before they understood what it was they were hearing). This accounts for Hammond's distaste for what he considered the excessive self-consciousness of Duke Ellington and the giants of bop, and for the seeming incongruity of discovering Springsteen *and* Holiday, Basie *and* Dylan. Such false distinctions never interested Hammond, any more than did the stricture against mingling art and politics. Nobody who went as a privileged white teenager to Harlem in the late 20s and later helped save the Scottsboro Boys, nobody who joined the board of directors of the NAACP, founded Cafe Society and initiated "From Spirituals to Swing," all as the means of expressing his outrage at the way his beloved artists were treated, could suffer under any such delusion.

We have lived through times when almost everyone has contended that the range of American music was narrow. John Hammond built his whole life on the belief that it was broad. With his passing, the myth of John Hammond will be built, and it should not be that he was unique, some sort of freak. Instead, we should remember those open ears. There is nobody reading this magazine who doesn't love at least some of the music he helped create. And there's nobody who won't benefit from following his example, expressed in the final words of his autobiography:

*I still would change the world if I could, convince a nonbeliever that my way is right, argue a cause and make friends out of enemies. I am still the reformer, the impatient protester, the sometimes-intolerant champion of tolerance. Best of all, I still expect to hear, if not today then tomorrow, a voice or a sound I have never heard before, with something to say which has never been said before. And when that happens I will know what to do.* M

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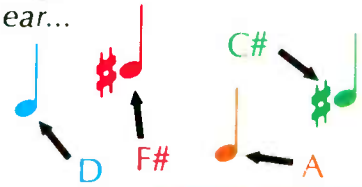


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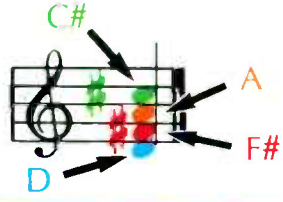


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# EUGENE CHADBOURNE

BY JIM MACNIE

## A RAKE WITH PERSONALITY WANTS TO SEE YOU SQUIRM

"Hi," says the pudgy-faced guy doing a decent imitation of Bugs Bunny. "Welcome to my world. I'm Joni Mitchell. For my first set tonight I'll be playing at Lupo's, then the next set at the Rat, then T.T. the Bear's, then Streets. Hope you can catch me; I'm great live."

This list of New England bars that the art/pop diva wouldn't be caught dead in is followed by an equally un-Joni-like noise somewhere between an explosion in a coat-hanger factory and a major screw-up on the launching pad at the J.F.K. Space Center: a life-rattling boom tailed by a screeching metal drone—obnoxious, deliberate, relentless. "Joni" is hitting a lap-steel guitar with a plastic baseball bat. At full volume.

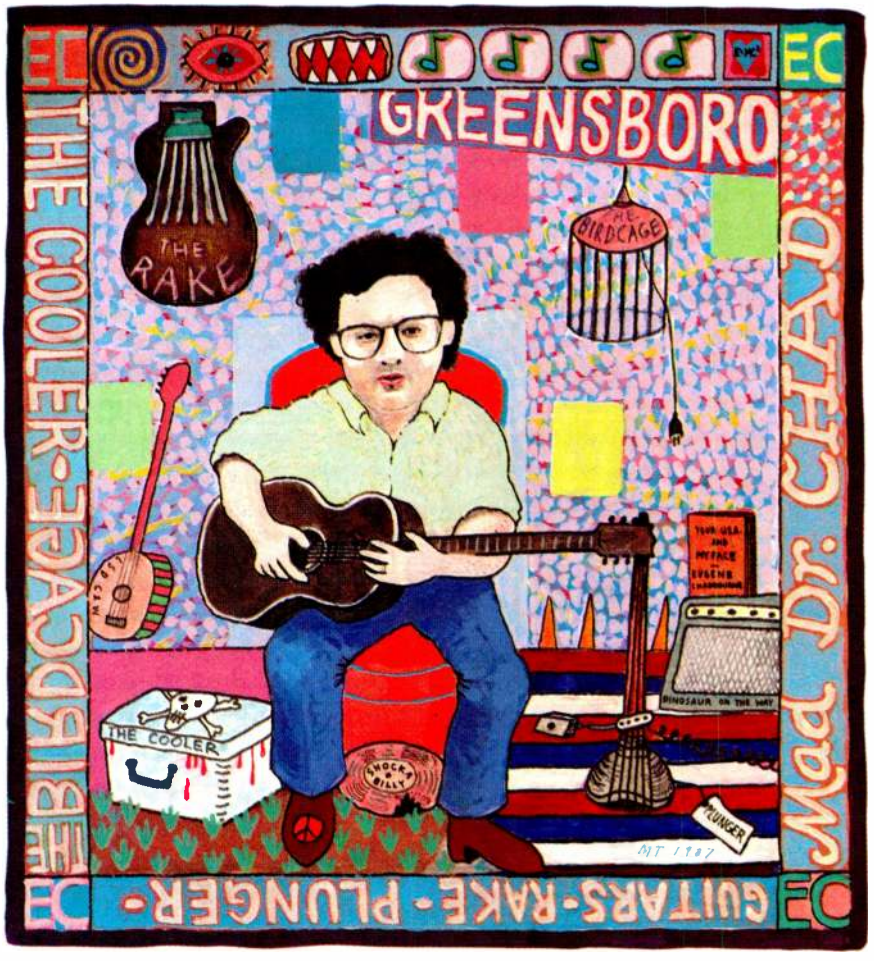
The response of the Boston crowd is immediate.

"YOU-GENE!!"

"YOU-STINK!!"

"Thank you," Eugene Chadbourne sings to his audience, maintaining his Bugs/Joni persona. "It's because I am on a lonely road and I'm traveling, traveling, traveling, looking for something, what can it be? Oh I hate you some, I hate you some, I love you some. I love you when I forget about me."

By the time he gets to the part about shampooing, the crowd is roaring again. Those who have seen Chadbourne before (maybe five out of the seventy in attendance at this Boston art-school gig) know he's busting some major *ballage*; the remainder are paying attention just because of the ridiculousness of the scene. But there are one or two who've stopped to listen; they're probably on the verge of figuring out that the man standing center stage among a score of debris (birdcage, toilet plunger, lap steel, bogus twelve-string guitar and the aforementioned bat—named the "mind crusher"—which boasts a monster face) is appropriating a one-time smarmy love song into a mid-80s anthem for himself.




**Dr. Chadbourne's operating room: "This proves I'm mentally ill."**

Chadbourne's a singer/songwriter too, but given his confessed wildness ("This proves I'm mentally ill" reads the label on one of his cassette-only releases), it's hard to see just what Mitchell and he could share. While the answer leans towards "nada," his version of "All I Want" turns out to be one of the most revealing lyrics all night. Why write your own diary when a page from someone else's fits the bill?

In the last couple of years—since the demise of Chadbourne's band Shockabilly—the thirty-three-year-old singer/guitarist *has* been on the road alone. He hits roadhouse, barroom, dump and dive, dishing out message and mayhem alike. Discerning the common thread that runs through the sprawl of his sets is a challenge. The word "eclectic" has been run into the ground of late, and the term "all-encompassing" reeks of hyperbole, but what else can you call someone who hinges together unadulterated noise, Hank Williams' "Roly Poly," an acoustic version of "Purple Haze," his own "Sex With The Sheriff," squeaky guitar abominations that are as flipped as they are fluent, and a bent yodel through Leon Thomas' "The Creator Has A Master Plan"?

This kind of mix is the norm. Along with Chadbourne's deliciously warped sense of humor (which often tests positive for high levels of sarcasm), it sends many first-timers to the door. But those that hang tough usually start guffawing before the fifth song. And those that put up with the full set always scope out some tender moments too. His barrage is worth the wait.

Chadbourne's a baby boomer—a member in good standing of that information-drenched demographic who have seen tidbits of pop culture turned into art as often as they've been lied to by their government. It's also a generation that recognizes the relevance of Saturday-morning cartoons. Sometimes all three get mixed together like one of those yuppie ice-cream treats; that's where his

MICHAEL THORESEN

music begins.

Scrambling contexts has long been a Chadbourne forte. He's a string player with an extensive, respected and infamous past in free improvisation; in the last ten years, however, he's come to embrace "tunes" as well. The shift doesn't signal the end of one style of playing. Chadbourne simply goes around collecting various musical data and figures out ways to incorporate it *all*. Of late, his songbook has been imbued with some of the most overt political ditties in "rock music" today. A throng of recent releases team him with the Red Clay Ramblers (*Country Protest*), the Violent Femmes rhythm section (*Corpses Of Foreign Wars*) and Evan Johns' H-Bombs (*Vermin Of The Blues*). Like his cassettes, they mix large doses of dada-meets-*Mad* levity, sharpened irony and daily headline verity to make their statements. One needn't look hard to find topics of political trouble; it seems to be Chadbourne's time.

"It's really been an interesting year for me, because of all the stuff that's happening right now: Reagan selling weapons to Iran, and Jim Bakker getting into a sex scandal. No way could you think of better stuff for songs."

Chadbourne seems to have a song for every moral and ethical atrocity these days, and he pulls no punches. He's got his own "Ten Most-Wanted List" that indicts not only contemporary politicos but dead prezzes like LBJ and JFK, and most of the citizenry as well ("every vote that was cast for Reagan is an accomplice in his crimes"). On "Breaking The Law Everyday" he picks a banjo and informs us that "Chief Justice Rehnquist is poppin' little pills so he won't feel the pain inside a Nazi brain/ He just can't wait to rule where it's legal to put your tool."

These contempo broadsides have garnered Chadbourne a whole new demographic. Not only is college radio becoming a dear friend, but his records are now situated in the indie rock racks rather than the jazz bins—still on the fringe, but a wider audience. Many new fans are actively searching out his earlier work, not only intrigued by the notion that he once billed himself as a "free improvised country and western bebopper" but interested in his early improvisational roots too.

"I learned to play traditionally, riffs and chords hooked up with some singing. I had a psychedelic band in seventh grade; we did hour-long songs and in a way we were improvising. Later, I got into a certain kind of music on guitar, and connected that with Anthony Braxton and Derek Bailey. I'd been playing about ten years, but I wasn't comfortable in one style. I found that there was nothing I could play that was an expression of myself except for improvisation: sort of pseudo-jazz, free jazz, noise, whatever. I'd gone through a lot of music and never gotten good at anything in particular." He would incorporate all those variants, plus more, in his approach. As a journalist in Calgary, Canada in the early 70s, Chadbourne had plenty of time to fine-tune his work. He'd play along with records, usually Miles Davis' 50s stuff.

Isolation yielded some musical self-questioning, but that dissipated in 1975 when Chadbourne hit New York. Almost instantly he fell in with the burgeoning downtown improvisers' scene. "Easy as it was to plug into, it was just as difficult to put up with. If you're into that music exclusively, there's often real heartbreak involved. Some players get elevated to a certain status, and others who are just as good are forgotten."

Chadbourne made a dent: *2000 Statues*, his piece for improvising "orchestra" (including scene mainstays Fred Frith, Polly Bradfield, Tom Cora and John Zorn), is still a sharp representation

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of that time. This group participation ethic helped hone his feelings towards experimental music, but he was growing frustrated. In the bastion of anything-goes land, he still found restrictions.

"I had questions from the beginning of my involvement with free music. If it was really free, why were so many participants saying, 'We play free music, but don't play bebop or swing'? I remember David Toop picking up the electric guitar in the middle of a flute piece, tearing into the Kinks' 'You Really Got Me.' I admired that. [Other people] acted disgusted and embarrassed.

"I wanted a band to do C&W improvisation; it would be 'new music' composing, but not on such a stuffy scale." The result was the waggish *There'll Be No Teardrops Tonight*, on which Zorn, Cora and percussionist David Licht inject controlled mayhem into tunes like Ernest Tubb's "Jealous Loving Heart" and Johnny Paycheck's "The Only Hell My Mama Ever Raised." The boss dubbed his crew the Chadbournes, and as they let the air out of the tires of Willie Nelson, Duke Ellington and the Beatles, they trashed and glorified sixteen genres at once: Spike Jones meets Webb Pierce (with a cellist). "I was into satire early on," Chadbourne says. "We got into quoting, which was natural; all this stuff was interconnected."

In the last few years Chadbourne's yen for both genre-stretching and a wider audience found him swimming in the insurrectionist waters of Shockabilly, a trio rife with B-movie sonic nonsense: feedback, grunge, hot air. After three murky records and a score of barroom gigs, they broke up. "It was okay, but I wanted it to be a more open-minded thing. When you're working with people in a group, by the time you've made all your compromises there's not much left. Alone you can do anything you want; there are no restrictions."

Now on his own, he's a veritable free-wheeling busker, a confessed protest singer with a bone to pick with just about everyone. Chadbourne not only ranks on Irangate ("Ollie's Playhouse") but turns ogres from his personal past into metaphors for American intervention everywhere ("The Bully Song"). His audience confrontations and interactions suggest the rigors of performance art.

"I'm aware of the similarities," he reflects. "I'm interested in the idea of making music visual as well as audible. Music's not only about sounds. You can have fun with symbolic actions."

The scad of recent Chadbourne releases are soaked with data of all types:

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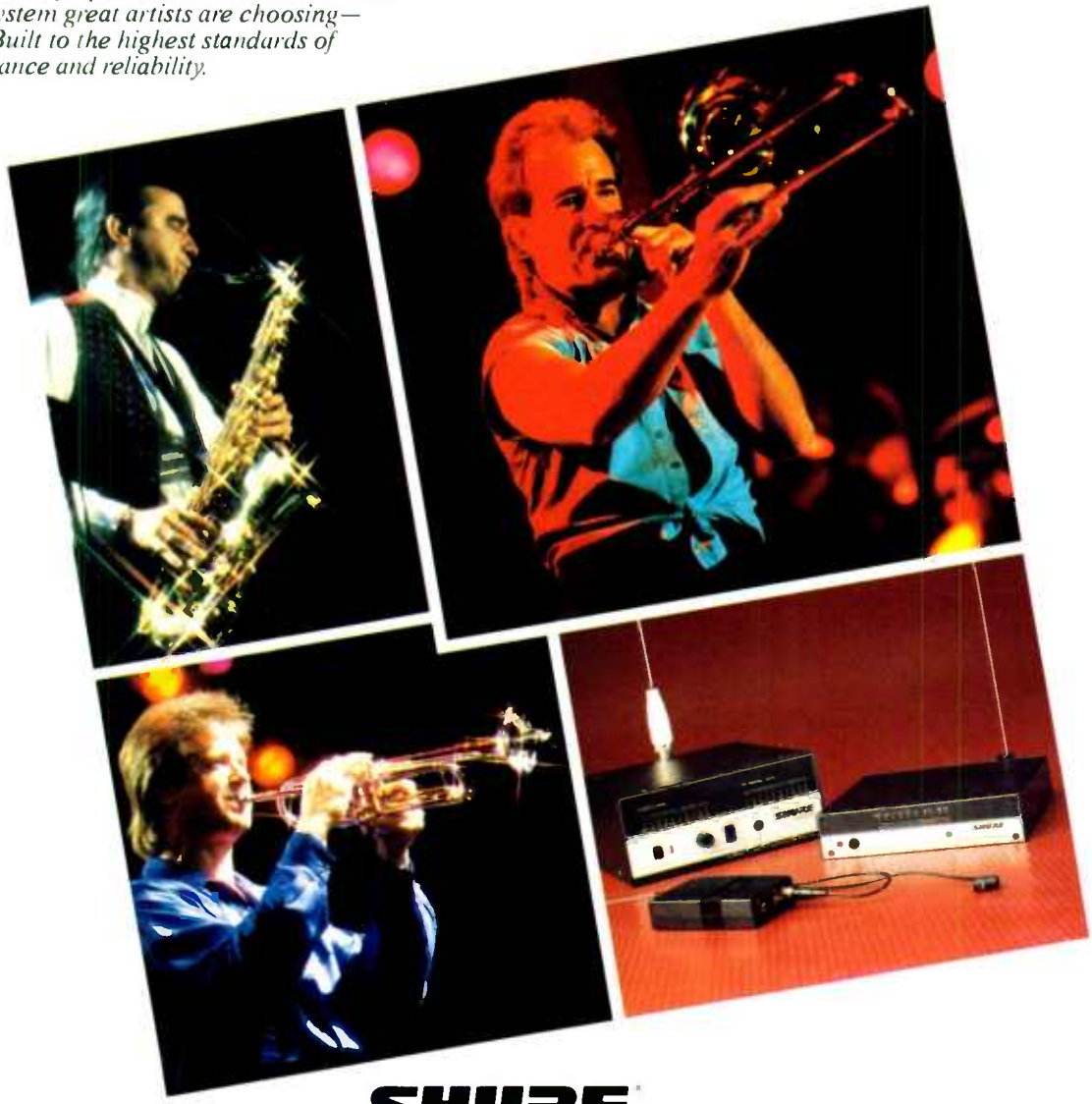

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snips of TV broadcasts, private phone calls, Monk and Ornette tunes, charred bits from his prepared-instrument cache. He literally plays the garden rake, toilet plunger and baby carriage, and the box turtle is due soon. ("I'll put contact mikes on anything, but the rake's got the best personality!") These pastiches are jammed with sound, yet the expanse of Chadbourne's scope prohibits them from feeling claustrophobic.

"Records like *Sgt. Pepper* and *We're Only In It For The Money* really appeal to me," he says. "When I sandwich stuff together, I like to make it flow, but I don't like to give people a chance to recover from one thing before they hear what's coming next." Much criticism has been leveled at Chadbourne's cassettes' sound quality (horrendous) and quantity (over thirty titles); he'll seemingly release anything. "People find it difficult to perceive that you can be prolific and yet retain control over your product," he counters. "The only thing I'll admit to is that if I hear something that's the worst, I will try to use part of it somewhere. I like awful things."

Onstage two nights later, Chadbourne is balancing the awful with the heartfelt. Talking on an unconnected phone receiver, he's telling the Mind Crusher's manager that they don't "get it" here in the sticks of central Massachusetts. "Yeah, Sid, let's save it for New York, baby, they'll love it." He hangs up, picks up an acoustic guitar and blurs his way through "Rhythm-A-Ning"; you needn't look any further than Blind Willie McTell for some of the "avant gardisms" he tears from his axe. He dons an electric twelve-string and cuts the bullshit. In a serious moment of understatement, he brings together tunes by two late, great protest singers, D. Boon and Phil Ochs.

Later, the audience paws through his briefcase full of wares, including a cassette called *Eugene Stinks*. "I often make more by selling tapes than from the gig itself," he admits. "There might be five people there, but at least one of them has come 200 miles to buy everything I've made."

In a few months that will include a record of standard love songs called *Kill Eugene*. Don't expect T-Bone Burnett to produce; don't look for a CD. M

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# JOE ELY'S EX-STATIC ELECTRICITY

## DOWN BUT NOT OUT, AN "UNRATIONAL" TEXAS TORNADO STORMS BACK.

BY DAN FORTE

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS CUFFARO

There's something about West Texas in the rhythms that I hear. There was always just an incessant wind that constantly blew through—this twenty-mile-an-hour wind. The back-door screen was always banging and trees were always scraping up against your house, trash can lids were kind of clanging. And there's kind of an energy in that wind, a maddening energy. Besides the wind, it picked up a lot of dust on the way from El Paso and the sand dunes out there. So by the time it got around Lubbock it was charged with static electricity, and your hair used to stand up when the dust would blow, and everything you touched you'd get shocked. Especially when the dust was blowing, people got nuts. I mean, there was really a funny look in their eyes—something wasn't right."

Whether he's flinging his compact but wiry frame headlong into a rocker like "Everybody Got Hammered" or just ordering an iced tea at Trudy's Oak Hill in South Austin, there's an intensity about Joe Ely that never quite subsides. Especially in his eyes, which obviously aren't telling all they've seen, but still seem to be searching for new stories. That intensity multiplies by powers of ten when the subject of his three-and-a-half-year break in recording is brought up. Because although no new Ely product hit the streets, the singer/songwriter was far from idle. Before signing with the independent HighTone label this year and releasing *Lord Of The Highway*, the Texan recorded seven albums in eight years for MCA.

Trouble is, only six were released.

The "mystery album," as he calls it, was tentatively titled *Dig All Night*. "It was recorded for MCA a little over a year and a half ago, and was supposed to have been released around April of '86. While I was recording it, the contract ran out, and the production company I was working with went under. Everything completely fell apart, after spending over a year writing and recording the songs. Then another year went to writing the new album's worth of songs. And there was actually a live album recorded somewhere in there, and I produced Will & the Kill's upcoming record [featuring Will Sexton, seventeen-year-old brother of Charlie]. It's probably been the busiest time of my life; we just haven't been out in public."

What makes Ely's situation particularly agonizing is that due to a contractual clause with MCA, he could not simply re-record new versions of the *Dig All Night* material for another label. "That really ripped me up. I found out, much to my chagrin, that I'm the only person in the world that couldn't record those songs. You could record them, but I can't. I can record them again, but I have to wait five years—unless I just become a renegade, which I'm not above. I don't care if I get sued; I really love the songs. I don't think it's really fair because it wasn't any of my doing that that record wasn't released. When I came to the realization that *Dig All Night* wasn't going to be released—instead of going in and fighting it with a lawsuit, which would take a bunch of time—I just kind of did what I always do. I shrugged it off and said, 'Oh, it's just an album. I'll go in and do another album.' Right now I'm glad that I did. Otherwise I'd be in a situation like a lot of bands who are in a war over getting an album out, and they forget that all the time in between they could be spending making tapes."

**Ely & Grissom grabbing songs from mid-air**

As frustrating as it must be to see a year's work collecting dust on the shelf, things have probably worked out for the best. *Dig All Night* had its share of gems—some of the Ely band's strongest stage material such as "Settle For Love," the title tune and "Driving To The Poorhouse Just As Fast As I Can," along with a duet with Linda Ronstadt entitled "Where Is My Love?" But it also had a few clinkers (including a sluggish version of John Fogerty's "Rockin' All Over The World"), suffered from rather fluffy production and didn't employ Ely's current road band. Joe did get to re-record a couple of the songs on his *Live In Texas* video with his present band, which plays with such ferocity that it's obvious that Joe wasn't the only one frustrated over having no product out. That same urgency burns through every track of *Lord Of The Highway*. In spite of a 1980 live effort, it is the first album to capture Joe's onstage energy, with a band worth capturing.

As acclaimed as Ely's MCA albums were, particularly 1978's classic *Honky Tonk Masquerade*, the leader always appeared saddled with a heavy-handed, one-dimensional unit. As Joe's style evolved from country to harder-edged rock 'n' roll, Lloyd Maines' pedal steel and Ponty Bone's accordion fit in less and less. For the past two years, however, his crack band has revolved around Bobby Keys' tenor sax and David Grissom's sustainy lead guitar—with West Texans Jimmy Pettit and Davis McLarty on bass and drums, respectively. "Oh, it's a kick-ass band," Joe smiles. "It's scary. The old band came out of West Texas and the honky-tonks; the new band plays more variety. I look back at the different groups, and each one fits its own environment, but this one is a lot stronger in the dynamics. Looking at the collection of songs on the new album—which I basically wrote in the last year—I can see how much the band influences my writing, the way I sing and phrase stuff."

Keys, of course, is a veteran of sessions ranging from the sax solo on Dion's original "The Wanderer" to Joe Cocker's Mad Dogs & Englishmen troupe and several tours of duty with the Rolling Stones. How did he end up playing Texas bars? "It was just out of coincidence," explains Ely. "See, I'd always thought Bobby Keys was an Englishman or Welshman or something. After we met at a jam, I got to talking to him, and it turns out we grew up ten miles away from each other in West Texas. Knew a lot of the same joints, same bands. He had left there when he was about sixteen or seventeen. He was kind of tired of sitting around waiting for the Stones to decide if they were going to tour or not. So I told him, 'Well, in the meantime, why don't you play with us?' He just kind of fell in."

Austin is a town filled with gifted and versatile guitar players. When Kentuckian David Grissom moved there a few years ago (by way of Indiana), he soon established himself as possibly the most well-rounded axeman on the scene—in no time juggling gigs with Ely, Dino Lee's apocalyptic White Trash Revue, blues screamer Lou Ann Barton, teen rocker Will Sexton and others. "I just heard him for the first time one night at the Continental Club," remembers Joe, "and I was blown away by how he played rhythm guitar. It wasn't his leads—although he plays phenomenal lead—but his rhythm was just bone crushing. That's what I always listen to first: the rhythm guitar. Somebody can noodle around all over the neck and it doesn't really impress me, but somebody who can really lay down a mean rhythm—I like that." Grissom crunches, wails and wah-wahs all over *Lord Of The Highway*, but also displays a degree of taste that belies his twenty-seven years (dig his acoustic

TRACY HART THE HEIGHTS GALLERY

solo on "Row Of Dominoes"). In fact, he is credited as assistant producer and for "additional arrangements" on the LP. Is the new album rock, then, or what? "I think so, just because the band is so full-tilt."

Anyone wondering how a Texan with a bolo tie and cowboy boots (complete with one spur) can be classified as rock 'n' roll has obviously not spent any time in Lone Star nightclubs. Recalling his first teenage rock bands, Joe points out, "We played Hank Williams songs, Jimmy Reed, early Rolling Stones stuff, maybe Jerry Lee Lewis, some classic Little Richard songs—all the three-chord country and blues stuff. I ran into Jimmie Gilmore, and he started showing me a lot of stuff from a whole different world than I'd grown up in—old country blues and really rootsy country stuff like Jimmie Rodgers."

Of course, Ely's hometown of Lubbock was also the birthplace of you-know-who, and although many see Joe as heir apparent to that throne, there are minimal similarities. "I don't think we're very similar at all," he says, shaking his head. "I mean, I admire Buddy Holly as a songwriter and as a performer—a singer, guitar player, the whole nine yards—but it's not like he was my main influence or anything. He was one of many. Growing up there, you were aware of Buddy's ghost around every corner, you know, but I think that's where the comparison stops."

As for the music he listened to growing up, he allows that "country just goes back further. As a kid growing up in Amarillo, I grew up between Route 66 and the Rock Island railroad tracks—a six-block area in there. To me, I look back at that time—from age zero to eight or nine—and remember all the honky-tonks up and down the street on Route 66. I'd go listen at the back door. I remember hearing Bob Wills. And right behind the house were the railroad tracks. There was just something in that that gave me a real sense of what country music was about. But it wasn't only country music; it was just what sincere stuff was about. The rock 'n' roll stuff touched the same nerve; they just played a different rhythm. In fact, I could really relate more to the rhythm of rock 'n' roll, I guess, because of those rhythms of the wind and the railroad tracks and the highway."

The forty-year-old started writing songs "when I got thrown in the Lubbock County Jail for vagrancy. I was about seventeen or eighteen. There was this cop in Lubbock who used to pick me up every time he'd see me—just walking down the street. He'd pull over and say, 'Ely, you got five bucks in your pocket?' And I knew when he'd say that—I'd just head to his back seat. 'No sir, Sergeant Aycock.' He'd throw me in every time he'd see me for 'no visible means of support.' I look back on it now and I'm kind of glad that he did because it gave me something to write about."

Though he writes virtually all of his tunes alone, his albums invariably amount to collaborations with other West Texas songwriters, such as Jimmie Gilmore ("Dallas"), David Halley ("Hard Livin'"), Eddie Beethoven ("Cool Rockin' Loretta") and especially Butch Hancock—who penned two tunes from the new LP (including the title track) and sixteen tunes spread over the previous six releases. "I didn't run into Butch until after I'd kind of left Lubbock a few times and come back. It's always been real hard for me and Butch or Jimmie to get together and write. Whenever we get together, we just tend to laugh at ridiculous things, you know. We never have collaborated on songs, really, because none of us ever set out to go into the music business. It's all a little more personal than that. So when we get together, we don't think about writing. That's more of a personal thing we each do when we're driving down a long stretch of highway—as opposed to, 'Hey, let's go over to your house and write some hits!' We just never did that; we can't even conceive of it."

Ely was easier to pigeonhole in the early days, when he was among the rootsiest of Austin's "outlaw country" crowd. "I hate the term country-rock," he cringes. "But the worst title ever laid on us was that 'progressive country.'"

The guy with the acoustic Gibson and cowboy hat definitely underwent a metamorphosis around the time of his *Live Shots* album, which was recorded in England. "I think it was just from being on the road," he muses. "If anything caused that it was probably getting tossed into the arena with the Clash in England in 1979, during that heyday of the English madness over there. It was real exciting times—over there; it wasn't so exciting here."

While some specific tunes and periods fall neatly into one camp or the other, the entire Ely catalog amounts to a marketing head's nightmare. "No record company ever really told me to do one or the other," he laughs, "but they always kind of asked me what I was doing. I'd say, 'I don't know. You'll find out when the record's done.' I haven't been easy to mold, because in order to write I always have to trick myself into throwing myself into another environment. What I really like to do is take a song from mid-air, write it, record it and put it out. It's not always what people expect. I don't really make the distinction anymore—I guess I really never have. I've never listened to the radio a lot and stuff like that, so I don't even know what the definitions are. When I do listen to the radio, then I'm more confused. You listen to country and it sounds like pop; listen to rock and it sounds like country."

**Bobby Keys blows another solo.**

As bewildered as promo staffs at MCA were, A&R folks were equally confused when Ely began shopping the *Lord Of The Highway* tapes, which he and the band recorded at his 8-track home studio. "Just the way we recorded, we didn't have the opportunity to go back and alter much. We had to get it all together on a take. Probably to anybody in a regular studio, it would have been an engineer's hell, but as it turned out, it gave it a sound that I've always been looking for—like a live sound in some basement. We didn't really plan on it coming out like that, but I've always wanted to capture the energy of the band on an album. When we started laying songs down, we didn't go in to really record an album; we were just rehearsing and getting ready to play some new stuff. After we had a bunch of stuff laid

TRACY HART THE HEIGHTS GALLERY

down and went back and listened to it, we said, 'Damn, that sounds pretty good. I wonder what it would sound like if it was really mixed.' So many times before doing an album I had recorded the stuff once in my studio, again in a little bigger studio—by the time it got to the main studio, it had been through the wringer. And this stuff, when I went back and listened to it, I thought, 'Damn, that has a spark to it. I don't want to go back and re-record.' Then I set out to find a record company who would release it just like it was. There was a handful of labels, including three major labels, that were really interested, but they all said, 'Well, who would you like to produce this, and what studio do you want to work in?' I said, 'No, you don't understand. We want to release these tapes.' That's just not done, you know. It could be that the first mixes, that I'd done myself, were a lot cruder than the final album, but I don't think they were listening to the essence of it."

Was it difficult being singer, songwriter, bandleader and producer? "I think it would be, but this stuff wasn't really produced, it was just recorded. I learned an elusive trick that I'd never known how to do. And that was not recording some thing thinking it was really going to become a record—just recording it as songs. Of course, it's hard to tell yourself that when somebody else is putting up the money for a recording and they start the old clock. This way we didn't have any pressure on us because the money was just buying rolls of tape."

Are there any outside producers he'd consider working with on a future project? "That's a good question; I've never really thought about it," he says. After a long pause he smiles and adds, "Maybe David Lynch would be a good producer, the guy who directed *Blue Velvet* and *Eraserhead*."

He may be joking, but Ely's writing influences are in fact as much cinematic and literary as musical. "When I first went up to New York City, I lived in a place across the street from the old Shakespeare Festival Theater," he reveals. "They had a little room in there, all black, where you could just see the

*continued on page 113*

## HARD PLAYIN'

The Fender Telecaster **Joe Ely** regularly pummels onstage is a 1966—with a Squier Strat at the ready. He also strums a Washburn thin-body acoustic with a cutaway and factory-installed pickup. His amp is a new Fender Concert with four 10s, and the strings he prefers to break are .011 D'Addarios.

**David Grissom**'s main guitars are his green Paul Reed Smith and a '57 Tele—which go through either a 1969 or '71 Marshall 100-watt head with one Marshall 4x12 cabinet housing 30-watt Vintage Celestions. Pedals include a Cry Baby wah-wah, TC booster and chorus, and a Boss DE-200 digital delay, along with a Yamaha SPX90 "just for reverb." Strings are Heart Of Texas .010s, manufactured by D'Addario.

**David McLarty** uses different drum kits for stage and studio. The former consists of Ludwig bass (24-inch) and toms; the latter is a smaller Gretsch kit. In both cases he uses a Slingerland snare, Zildjian high-hats and crashes, and Sabian ride cymbals. Sticks are Pro-Mark.

**Bobby Keys** blows a Selmer Mark 6 tenor sax with a Rico Royal 2½ reed, and **Jimmy Pettit** plays either a Peavey Dyna Bass or a new Fender with a P-J pickup configuration through an AMP head with a single cabinet containing two 15-inch JBLs.

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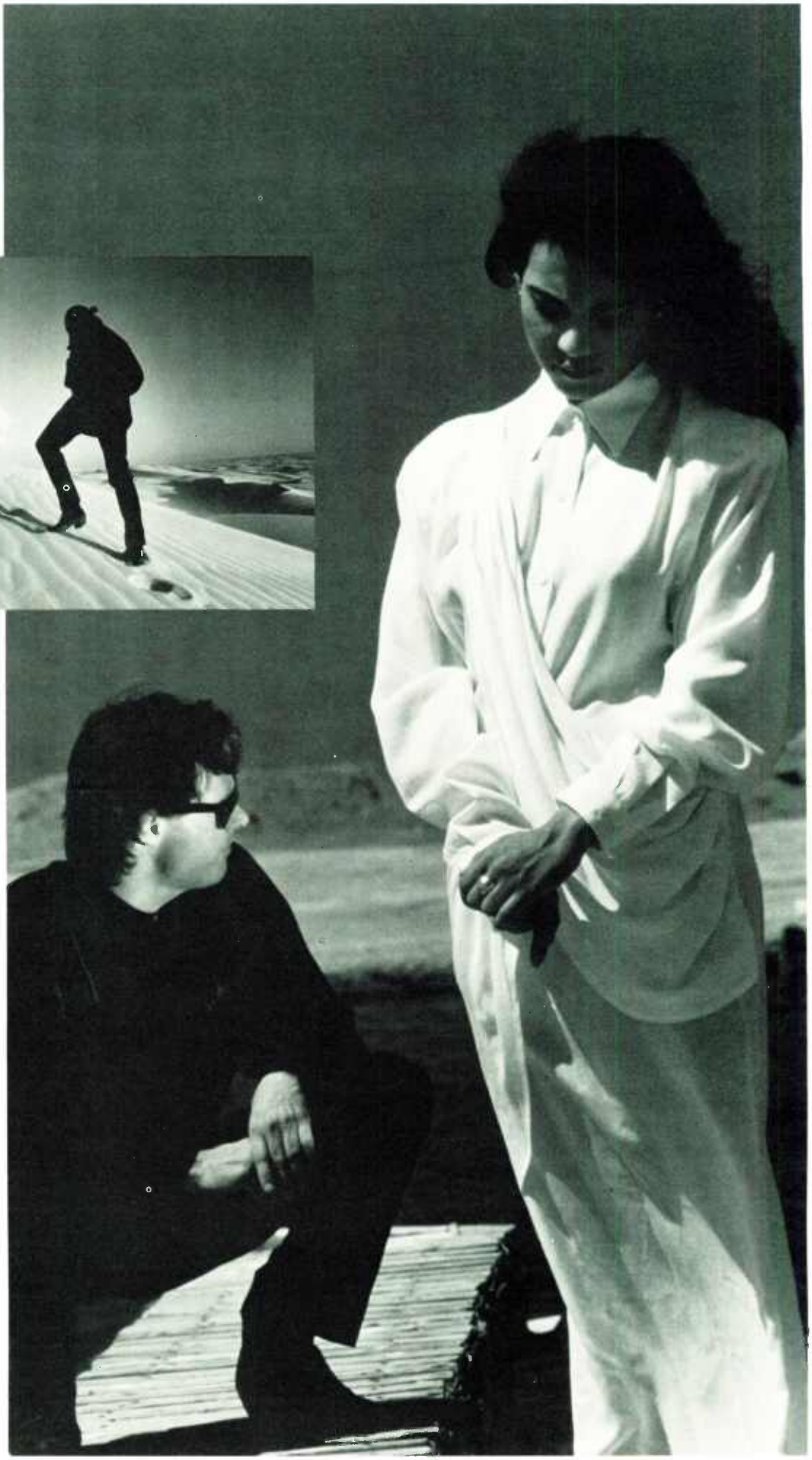

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# MIDI Weather Bulletin

## Even more new messages, specs and standards to learn, including MIDI Time Code

**By Alan di Perna**

Keeping up with MIDI is like living under a leaky roof. Just when you seal up all the gaping holes in your understanding, the MIDI spec sprouts a few more gushing complications. You thought you were finally a MIDI expert; now you're all wet again. They may be a drain on your peace of mind, but many of the most recent additions to the Specification 1.0 floor plan *do* make MIDI a sturdier edifice. A good number of them are aimed at giving MIDI an important role in the totally automated, virtual studio of the future. You know, that post-modern dream house in which every single piece of gear—tape machines, consoles, the lot—will be under central control by a single computer brain.


Let's start with the easy stuff. The MIDI Manufacturers Association (MMA) and Japanese MIDI Standards Committee (JMSC) have recently approved a number of minor additions to the MIDI spec that can best be thought of as "good housekeeping" details. They can help you keep things tidy in your MIDI setup.

First of all, there's the new **MIDI Inquiry Message**. Now, when two consenting adult MIDI devices hook up in a neon-lit bar or darkened studio, one can ask the other the eternal opening question: "Who *are* you?" (The Japanese, it's rumored, nixed a proposal to include "And where have you been all my life?") Anyway, the device thus queried can then give the MIDI equivalent of its address and phone number: namely, its manufacturer's System Exclusive code, Device ID code, Device Family codes and even software revision level. The Inquiry Message should come in handy in large systems—such as the previously mentioned virtual studios—where a central controlling device has to deal with a large number of very different slave devices. For the producer or musician bringing some of his/her MIDI gear into a large, outside MIDI studio, the message could be quite a time-saver.

The MMA and JMSC have also gotten together on two **Master Tuning Registered Parameter Numbers**. Like people and sandpaper, these RPNs come in coarse and fine varieties, and they can help get a whole system in tune in a hurry. And perhaps even more useful is the new **Reset All Controllers Message**. It will take any mod wheels, pitch wheels, etc., that were left hanging at the end of a song and reset them to "home" position. Looks like it's finally curtains for those sneaky surprise pitches and screaming modulations that have plagued synthesists ever since pitch and mod wheels were invented.

While you're hunting for messages in sampler MIDI implementation charts, you may also want to keep an eye out for the new **Multiple Loop Message**. This is an adjunct to the **MIDI Sample Dump Standard** that came into being a while back. That standard was adopted before the advent of samplers such as the Prophet 2000 and E-max, which let you set two pair of sample loop points (sustain and release), or the Casio FZ-1 which lets you set *eight* pair.

The Multiple Loop Message, then, enables you to transmit those multiple loop points from one sampler to another. It's not actually part of the Sample Dump Message. It will be transmitted separately; although it is expected that manufacturers will make the Multiple Loop Message part of a user-transparent routine and automatically transmit it in tandem with the Sample Dump Message. But one advantage of having a separate loop message is that it provides an easy way to bung new loop points onto samples stored in memory. And by the way, you won't have to worry about running out of loop point dump capabilities for some time to come. The Multiple Loop Message can transmit *16,000* different pairs of them.

Speaking of running out of numbers, programmers may want to note that the 01H-1FH range of **System Exclusive Manufacturer ID** numbers has been used up. This is the range of numbers

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that had been set aside for North American manufacturers. The MIDI marketplace is growing at a heady clip; so now the MMA will start doling out 3-byte ID codes, beginning with OOH OOH 01H, to all burgeoning new North American MIDI companies.

And speaking of dump standards (a term that *still* sounds to me like something the National Committee on Lavatory Fixtures might adopt), the much-anticipated **MIDI Sequencer File Dump Standard** is nearing final approval, according to the MMA's Chris Meyer. The standard will allow song files created on any sequencer to be transmitted to any other sequencer. It will not affect the internal data structures used by different sequencers to store songs. It's merely a generic file structure that can be used as a common medium of data exchange. Manufacturers can, of course, use the same structure for internal data storage as well. The MMA is a wee bit wary of disclosing details before final approval, but it is widely expected that the Opcode sequencer data format will be adopted for the File Dump Standard. It is further speculated that the File Dump Standard will also include a provision for dumping tempo maps, which keep track of tempo changes that take place during a sequenced song.

**MTC: Now, the Movie!**

We now come to a slightly older addition to the MIDI spec: **MIDI Time Code (MTC)**. You've probably heard of it by now. But you may still be a bit unclear as to what the damn thing's supposed to do. Of course, there's a simple—and only partial—answer to that. MTC takes SMPTE time code and translates it to the MIDI data format. As you're also probably sick of hearing by now, SMPTE/EBU time code (the initials stand for Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers/European Broadcast Union) is striped—or "written"—onto audio and video tape, and used to keep multiple tape machines in sync. It gives each successive, tiny sliver of tape a unique temporal "address" in hours, minutes, seconds and frames.

So when you have SMPTE time code on a piece of tape, a SMPTE reader can look at that tape and tell you exactly what's going on at any given instant of time. For example, "this door slam happens at the 14th frame of the 3rd second of the 53rd minute of the 2nd hour." Now, MIDI sequencers have long been able to sync to SMPTE without the aid of MTC, thanks to devices like the Roland SBX-80, Fostex 4050 and Friend-Chip SRC. At NAMM the price of no-frills SMPTE-to-MIDI reached new lows with hardware connectors from Yamaha, Sonus and Steinberg. These boxes read SMPTE and generate a series of MIDI Timing Clocks and MIDI Song Position Pointer messages.

But, unlike SMPTE time code, these MIDI timing clocks cannot identify events as unique "addresses" in time. They're just an evenly spaced series of "dumb blips." MIDI sequencers, however, have their own way of marking time: in the musical nomenclature of measures, beats and "ticks." And when you're just sequencing music, this system is more than adequate. You have no need to know the hour, minute, second and frame at which your SMPTE time code happens to be at that moment. Because in applications like this, SMPTE is just the "glue" that holds your tape and your sequencer in sync.

If you're scoring or creating sound effects for a film, on the other hand, it becomes very important to know those numbers are what tells you when the door slams. So if it's your job to make the sequencer fire a sampled door slam at

*continued on page 55*

## THE LAST DETAIL A MIDI PLEA

Now that the MIDI specification is undergoing its nth degree of standardization, it's time to address the last frontier: whether the semi-circle of pins inside the MIDI plug are up or down. I mean, don't you curse in amazement every time you plug a cable into a unit whose back you can't see and keep turning it up and down trying to get it aligned for the Big Insertion?

Obviously there's a great deal at stake here. Forget double-baud rates and MIDI Time Code, the last great bone of contention is whether a company is an Uppie or a Downie. Ensoniq, Yamaha and Casio seem to be Downies. Sequential is an Uppie. Roland and Korg seem to be covering each base, having both Uppies and Downies. Is there some logic to this we haven't grasped? Are all percussion-dedicated jacks Downies and all samplers Uppies?

Clearly the time has come for action. *Musician* calls for emergency meetings of the MMA and the JMSC to declare a new standard direction for all MIDI plugs. Then JL Cooper should be authorized to sell Official Uppie-to-Downie MIDI interfaces so that all obsolete MIDI jacks can be brought into the modern era. The future of the musical instrument industry could well depend on ending this deplorable confusion.

**– the Editors**


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# The Big Algorithm Hits NAMM

## Endless variations on existing MIDI themes infest Chicago trade show.

**By Alan di Perna**

I think I finally fried my brain for good at this year's Chicago NAMM show. No, it wasn't all the free booze and other gratuitous stimulants. As best as I can recall, it was the **Intelligent Music** booth that sent me over the edge. Have you noticed how everyone has been just buzz-buzz-buzzin' lately over this algorithmic composition software stuff? You know, those MIDI computer programs that take any riff you've played and work out a zillion mathematical variations?


So I repaired to said booth. And yes, they had three primo algorithmic Macintosh programs there: a rhythm programmer called "Upbeat," a composition package called "M" and another one called "Jam Factory," which lets you get four automaton "players" to crank out your own personal, 80s-style "In-a-Gadda-Da-Vida." I stood amazed as I was shown all the myriad mathematical variables that could be set against one another in the vast algo-cosmic dance. Brilliant programs all. But then a really *weird* thought entered my head. What kind of *musical* result was all this producing? I averted my gaze from the screen and listened....

Plink
Plink....Plink Plink
Plink Plink
Plink....Plink Plink

Not what you'd call your killer hooks. But anyway, I think all this plinking did something to my mind. Because all of a sudden, the demonstrator's face began to melt into a hideous mask. The carpet became a kaleidoscopic mire that wanted to absorb my feet. Omigod! The entire McCormick Place—site of the Chicago NAMM Show from times immemorial—had transformed into a giant, humming Apple Macintosh. And it seemed as though every high-tech company at every booth was churning out algorithmic variations on previous products. Everywhere I turned there were software updates, rack-mount versions of last month's keyboard....

Plink....Plink
Plink
Plink Plink Plink.

Now, just like algorithmic compositions, some of these product permutations turned out to be more musically useful than others. But I hadn't discovered that yet. Cotton-mouthed and terrified, I made my way to the relative tranquility of the **Yamaha** enclave. There, I felt like I was looking through a pair of prism shades. The DX/TX and QX lines had all bifurcated! Gingerly I approached the new TX802 tone rack. Here was one really useful permutation. A six-operator rack-mount tone generator, the TX802 is essentially a keyboardless version of the recently introduced DX7II instruments. So it's got the 16-bit resolution, microtuning, fractional-level scaling and all the other goodies of the new DX7IIs (only it uses RAM cartridges for storage, rather than floppy or hard discs). And it's *also* got something the DX7IIs *should* have had all along: MIDI multi-timbral voice assignment, plus eight individual outputs, to go with its eight-note polyphony, and a pair of stereo outputs. "This must be a dream," I intoned reverentially, "all the right FM features in one box...finally."

I was less turned on by the new DX7S. Like the old DX7, it has a single tone generator, as opposed to the dual tone generators of the DX7IIs. It does have all the aforementioned new DX goodies—the microtuning, dual continuous sliders and so forth—but I found myself wondering whether the world really needs another DX7. I also checked out the newest QX sequencer, the QX3. It's a 16-track device with 512K/48,000 notes worth of memory; but here, too, the memory is RAM-based rather than disc-based as on the QX1. I was sniffing around the new SPX90 II when all this double vision got to me. "Am I going screwy or what?" I screamed as I beat a hasty retreat to the "World of **Roland**," as Roland's display area was called.

There I found that the D-50 Linear Arithmetic synth, introduced at the

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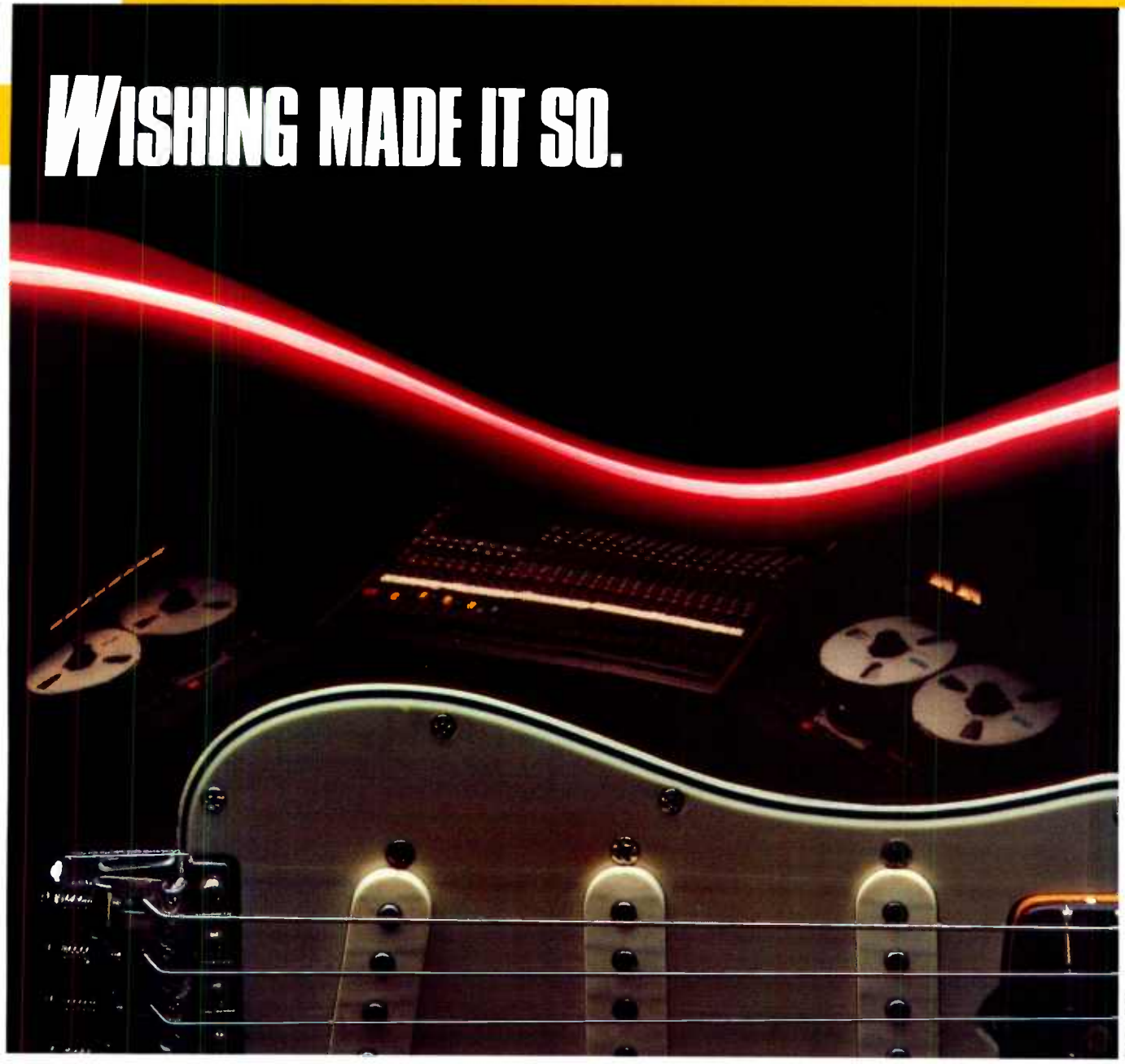
# WISHING MADE IT SO.



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January NAMM show, had mushroomed into a whole line of products. There was the D-550, a rack-mount version of the D-50, and the MT-32 sound module, which also incorporates the D-50 VLSI chip. The MT-32 looks like Roland's answer to the Yamaha FB-01. It's an affordable multi-timbral device that enables you to allocate preset voices to eight individual "parts" (plus a "rhythm part," which can be created out of thirty-two drum sounds), each of which can be assigned to a separate MIDI channel.

Looking around me, I discovered that Roland's new S-50 sampler had also expanded its consciousness. There was the S-550 rack-mount sampler (with twice the memory of its progenitor and eight audio outputs) and the new, affordable S-220 rack-mount sampler. There was also the 2.0 version of the S-50 software, which brings much-needed multi-timbral capabilities to that instrument. And a new MIDI sequencer program (SYS-503) that will run on the S-50 in place of its sample-editing functions. These editing functions, of course, can be kept on another disk and used interchangeably with the sequencer software. You can sequence the onboard voices and external instruments via MIDI. The sequencer's 400-pattern (16 measures per pattern) memory, event list-style editing facilities and real-time channel assignment capabilities put it in a different class than the jokey "sketchpad" sequencers you get onboard some other samplers and keyboards. "Between this and the S-50's built-in RGB interface, S-50 owners can really put off buying that personal computer," I marveled. "What a trip!"


**Next year's repeating algorithm? Yamaha WX7 wind controller.**

But still, my eerie hallucination just wouldn't abate. For what seemed like eons, I roamed NAMM's endless corridors, which had transformed into the internal circuits of the colossal McCormick Mac and appeared to be doubling back on themselves as in an M.C. Escher drawing. And everywhere I turned, another spinoff sampler materialized before my eyes. **Akai** was showing the S700, a rack-mount version of their X7000 keyboard sampler. They also had a 40 meg hard-disc/SCSI port memory expansion for their S900. **Korg** was touting the same combination of new products: a rack-mount sampler called the DSM1 and the DSS-MMRK SCSI retrofit for interfacing the DSS-1 keyboard sampler with a hard disk drive.

More booths, more variations on the "Theme From Sampleville." **Kurzweil** has taken the voice architecture of its high-end sampling system, the Model 250, and broken it down into the 1000 Series of affordable, playback-only MIDI expander modules. The 1000 PX offers a cross-section of popular Kurzweil sounds, including grand piano. There are dedicated horn, string and guitar expanders as well.

The **Fairlight** Series III has also splintered off into a whole line of designer systems that they'll cut to fit your size. The line now starts with a sporty eight-voice, keyboardless number that runs from two 20-meg Bernoulli floppy disc drives. Mind you, this "entry level" system is still far beyond the financial grasp of your average basement punter, but the Fairlight and Kurzweil booths both offered evidence that even the really high-end sampling technology is starting to trickle down to the more affordable regions of the market.


**Kurzweil 1000 series: K250 sounds for a fifth the price.**

The McCormick Mac's 1000-foot disc drive now began to whir and wheeze ominously. So far, it had been serving up variations on successful products. But with the ADR15—the new version of the Linn 9000 produced jointly by Akai and Roger Linn—we came to a different animal: a variation on a popular but ultimately *un*successful product, one which drove the company out of business, in fact. As compared with the Linn 9000, the ADR15 has more memory, a larger LCD screen and a more extensive array of help/convenience features. Its thirty-two onboard drum samples are different from those in the 9000, and were encoded using Mr. Linn's "enhanced 12-bit format." The user-sampling section offers a 40K sample rate/18K bandwidth, and the sequencer has a capacity of 60,000 notes. It looks great. But then, so did the Linn 9000. Only time will tell if all the 9000's bugs have been successfully exterminated.

Many of us came to NAMM expecting that the ADR15 would be the belle of the drum machine ball. But the little cutie that had everyone lining up for a dance was the **Alesis** HR-16, celebrated here last month. The machine really does sound like there should be another zero on its $500 price. Alesis also introduced an equally affordable 8-track sequencer, the MMT-8. Hot products both. It was rumored, incidentally, that people from rival companies were actually being barred from the HR-16 display area.

Though nothing made quite as big a splash as the Alesis, there were plenty of other attractive, affordable drum machine debutantes making a grand entrance. Among the most eye-catching were the Roland TR-626, Korg DDD-5 and Kawai R-50. The Korg has a lot of the power features of the DDD-1 in this $600 unit, but also has a new mode which runs nothing but preset rhythm patterns. Hey, some people hate to program anything. As for the $500 **Kawai** unit, it doesn't have quite as much memory or the pressure-sensitive pads of its older sister, the R-100. But it does have built-in digital effects processors and a more flexible system for assigning sampled drum timbres to the instrument's voices. While at the Kawai booth, I also had a go at the company's new additive synth, the K5, which allows you to control the level on 126 harmonic partials and route each partial to any of four different amplitude envelopes. The machine really is much more than a predictable permutation of the Kawai K3. And rather than wait until the next show to bring out the rack-mount sequel, the company had their K5m module sitting next to the K5.

When I returned the next day, McCormick Place had reassumed its normal proportions and didn't even look remotely like a giant Mac anymore. Resolving to be more careful, I reentered NAMM's "MIDI software ghetto." I was not surprised to find that the **Atari** ST had established itself as cock of the walk. Atari was the only computer company to have its own booth there; and at an

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**Jock Baird, Musician Magazine**

***"ADA's MP1 MIDI tube preamp . . . could be a big hit in the studio, as well as on the road."***

**Music Technology, March 1987**

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# P&O PARADIGM & THE WORKS-IN-A-BOX SYNDROME

While the M.I. sector of the music biz was busy bifurcating, a big rumble was being heard from the Piano and Organ (a.k.a. P&O) wing. Long the poor cousin in the NAMM sweepstakes, the P&O market has recently been reignited by that demographic powerhouse, the Yuppies. Today's target music hobbyist is no longer your Aunt Zelda, but is probably a blue-jeaned weekending professional reliving his or her college band days. And if you don't think this customer is worth serving, go talk to Korg, Roland, Casio, Kurzweil and Technics, all of whom are putting a lot of their high-tech moves into MIDI-compatible "home" units.

Consider that the metaphor for MIDI sequencing as a digital player piano has come full circle when there are now player pianos that will play off a MIDI sequencer. Now think about those units that have bass and chord auto-accompaniment sections, drum units and melody patches. What if you could access each section on a separate MIDI channel and play them with a sequencer? Suddenly, assuming the sounds are decent, you've got a bass and drum machine, plus two synth/samplers, perhaps with master keyboard, for quite a bit less than two grand. To me, this is value, especially for a start-up MIDI system.

Of course, the most important criteria in this new equation are the sounds themselves. Are they useful to you, especially because in many cases they aren't programmable? Personally I find that it's silly to work so hard getting yer basic acoustic grand, string, brass, harpsichord, etc. samples on a near-$3000 unit when the ones on a Technics sound nearly as good. Use the sampler for something more exciting!

So what units are we talking about here? The two most potent entries are ones that embody the multi-timbral scheme mentioned above: the **Technics** SX-K500 and 700 and the **Casio** HT series. Casio has been the principal innovator in the home tech sweepstakes for years, and the HT series goes halfway to the pro division. The two first entries are based on a new, more simplified, analog-like version of phase distortion digital synthesis. Best bet would be the $1100 HT-6000, as it's touch-sensitive and has four oscillators for each voice, unlike the $700 HT-3000. The Technics units use PCM samples, which were the heart of its high-ticket SX-PR60 and new SX-PR80 digital ensembles, and while the M.I. press corps is not unanimous on this, I thought they were more than up to mix. The SXs run in the $1500-1700 range, and are fully velocity sensitive. Both Casio and Technics have intricate onboard sequencers for drum-bass-chord-solo sections and the preset sounds can be altered. If you can look behind the rinky-dink panel layouts or built-in speakers, there may be gold in them there chips.

Another worthy home-market fallout from a pro product is the **Roland** MT-32, a plain-brown-wrapper version of the D-50 for a scant $700. It has full multi-timbral capability for its eight voices and separate rhythm section, voice programmability, and even a goddamn digital delay. No one in their right mind would snob out on this one. Speaking of the D-50, I'm ready right now to call it the Synth of the Year, especially after hearing a programmer's workshop given by veteran Roland hand **Eric Persing**. Note that Roland is trying to jump-start the same programmer's industry that took years to grow up around the DX7, and early indications are they're succeeding.

Not all the new P&O prodigies are programmable. The **Kurzweil** 1000 Series is a play-only system, with the samples divided into four specialized units, any one of which can stand alone. There's a piano module which is most all-purpose, with grand, strings, organ, bass, horns and even eleven digital waveforms, and then horn, string and guitar expander units. The most impressive thing about the 1000s, aside from their wonderful sound quality and well-under-$3000 price, is their multi-timbral implementation. Not only are there twenty-four voices in each unit, but a new system keeps notes ringing even when all twenty-four are exhausted. And there is a substantial amount of sound-editing capability on board as well. Interestingly, the pro and P&O versions are virtually the same.

This is only one manifestation of what I considered the Big Breakthrough at NAMM: the Works-In-a-Box Syndrome.

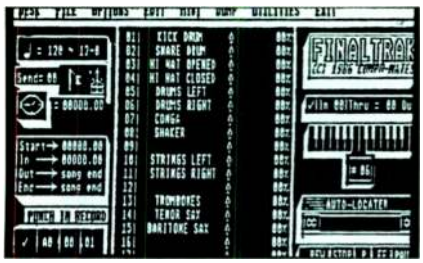
The paradigm of this is the **Korg** DSM-1, which looks at first like a mere rack-mount DSS-1, but is in fact a lot hipper. Packed with a mega-word of memory, it holds four times as many samples as the DSS-1, accessed through four separate MIDI channels. This is a pro unit, Jack, as the DSM-1 samples at 48kHz and has sixteen individual output jacks for each of its voices. Just in case anyone missed the point, the demo had one DSM-1 play all the parts in an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink sequence. For $2900, you can cover any and all MIDI studio basics.

The **Roland** S-550 has the same kind of improvements over its S-50 ancestor, including 1.5 MByte of memory, eight separate outs and 8-channel multi-timbral capability. Its $3300 tag also includes the external video monitor jack and open-ended software from the S-50. All well and good, but now look at a $1400 version that also has sixteen voices, 4-channel multi-timbral smarts and a 16-bit analog-to-digital converter. Some would call this a rack-mount S-10. I call it Naked Opportunity.

**– Jock Baird**

afterhours party an Atari exec told me the company regards the glittering, glamorous world of music as the *principal* market for the ST. So you see, it really *is* the rock 'n' roll computer.

Clustered around the Atari booth, like so many loyal fiefdoms, were a number of music software developers for the ST. Among these stout vassals was Hybrid Arts, whose booth held a fully operational model of the long-awaited ADAP 16-bit sampling system for the ST. Sonus had three new jousters ready to enter the lists: their Masterpiece ST sequencer, Superscore ST program and Ensoniq Mirage ST editor. Among the marvels at the Russ Jones Marketing booth was an update to the Steinberg Pro-24 ST sequencer that allows you to do event editing on a music staff as well as on the Steinberg grid editor.




At the **Compu-Mates** booth there were several potential ST champions, including a controller mapping hardware/software package called GenPedals which allows you to take any eight MIDI control devices (pedals, wheels, etc.) and assign them to any MIDI control parameter. I checked out an ST scoring program called Final Score, written by classical guitarist Frederick Noad and designed to be interactive with Compu-Mates' **Final Trak** ST sequencer. Compu-Mates' chief wizard Charles Faris is also at work on a Kawai K5 editor for the ST which will perform spectrum analysis on any sampled waveform and convert it to the K5's 126-harmonic voice architecture format. Quite a stunt. Elsewhere, it was interesting to see that two prominent Mac programs—the Digidesign Softsynth and Passport Master Tracks—have been ported over for ST use. [And check out Flight Simulator II on a color ST! – Ed.]

But loyal subjects of MacIntosh and IBM PC needn't feel left out. There was plenty of action in those thriving kingdoms as well, although neither Apple nor IBM were there in person. Along with the Intelligent Music MacIntosh programs that touched off this whole peripatetic pilgrimage, there was Digidesign's Q-Sheet, a MIDI automation package for the Mac. Although it's

primarily aimed at the audio-for-video industry, it should come in handy for automating music mixes as well, particularly on the Yamaha DMP7 digital console. And speaking of Yamaha, there were also two Mac-based editing programs for the brand-new TX802. One is from Digital Music Services and the other from Bacchus.

All around the MIDI software ghetto, developers for the IBM PC were exhibiting all-in-one music software/interface packages, which seem to have become a trend for that computer. Among these was Performance Computer Concepts' MIDI-Manager 7, which was being shown in its latest revision. It combines a sequencer, generic librarian, master switcher, remote patch changer, master timing program and interface in a single hardware/software package. In a similar vein, Promidi was demonstrating a sequencer/scoring/generic librarian/interface package which enables you to record MIDI data directly to any disk format—hard or floppy.

Of course, there were countless patch editors, librarians and sequencers on hand for every computer you could imagine (and a few you couldn't). And plenty of your Version 1.9999999 kind of updates. But after checking out a few zillion of these, they all began to meld together in my mind and I distinctly felt an algorithmic flashback coming on. I decided it was time to leave the ghetto behind and move uptown to investigate the fashion craze that every well-dressed MIDIphile will be wearing next season. You got it, kids...MIDI wind controllers! Back up at the Yamaha exhibit, I found the WX7 Wind MIDI controller duly enshrined in a plexiglass case. This prototype instrument could be heard at regularly scheduled performances/demonstrations. But there was no opportunity to get personal with it in a hands-on, lips-on type of situation. The instrument, at any rate, has fourteen saxophone-like keys, arranged in the standard Boehm system and augmented by a mini pitch wheel, a Hold key and several Transpose keys. Breath and lip pressure can be assigned to a variety of MIDI controller parameters.

Unlike Yamaha, Akai had both the EWI 1000 (sax-based Electronic Wind Instrument) and EVI 1000 (trumpet-based Electronic Valve Instrument) on the floor and ready to play. But since I can play neither sax nor trumpet, and wasn't even remotely tempted to try a mouthpiece that Lord-Knows-Who had come along and blown into, I passed on the opportunity. The wind controller hurricane is by no means confined to major manufacturers; also at NAMM were two devices from smaller companies: the Sting from **Music Industries Corp.** and the SX-01 from **Artisyn.** The latter is the only wind controller I've seen that does not attempt to reduplicate the standard saxophone key system. Instead, there's an abbreviated set of keys, two thumb wheels, a number of assignable breath-control functions, and the ability to store groups of patch changes in memory and control them from the instrument itself.

Hmmm...wind controllers. Could this be the next big turn-on? The new thrill that the MIDI sybarites seem to need every six months? Well, a sax or a trumpet isn't as instantly playable as a keyboard or a guitar and the player pool is relatively small. But I still wouldn't be surprised to find quite a few new MIDI wind controllers at the next NAMM. After all, once you get a good idea, it's a simple matter to pop it into the random variable generator, select a probability curve and.... Oh no.... Excuse me.... My eyelids seem to have become.... Are the walls melting or is it only....

Plink
Plink Plink Plink
Plink.... Plink.

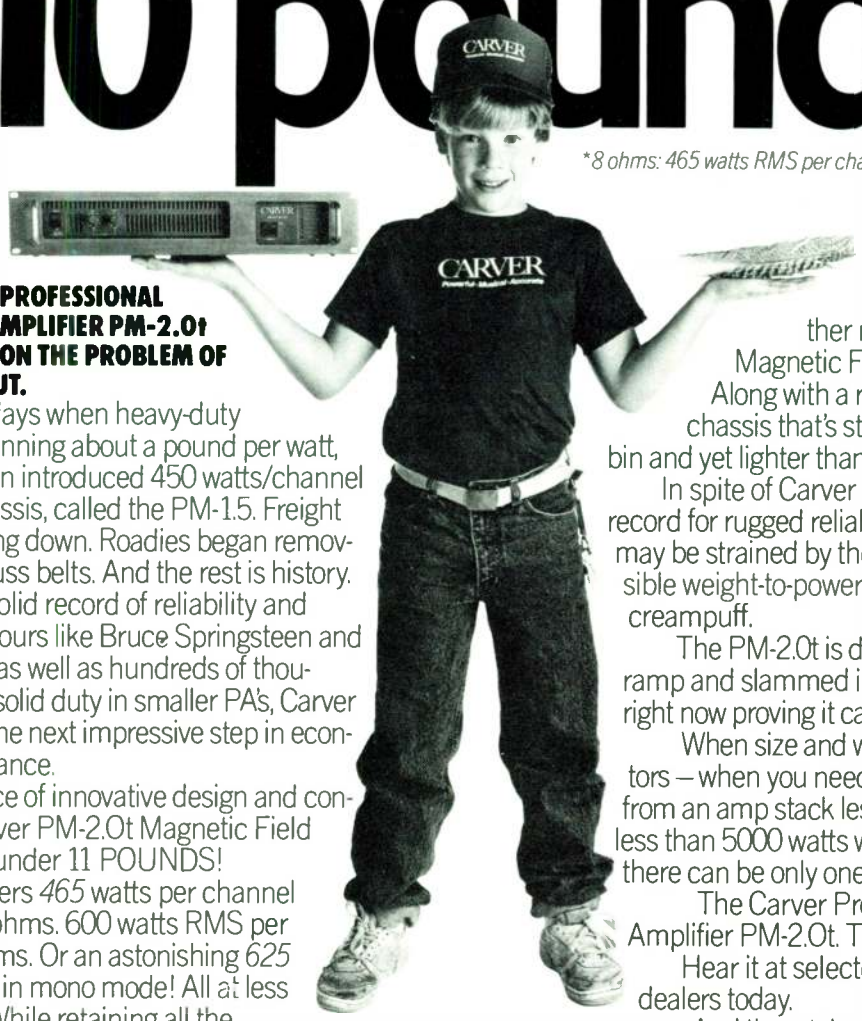
## 16-BIT INFIGHTING

Sonic winetasting was one of the most rewarding diversions at NAMM, with 16-bit the specialty of the Mac. Having loaded you down with specs about the vaunted **E-mu** Emulator III two months back, all that remains is to report how it sounds. Whew. There was the usual complement of string and piano samples, all with gorgeous tone and noticeably absent noise floor, but all agreed the Stapleton Airport jet arrival sample stole the show. Elsewhere, the **Forat** F-16 also lived up to its advance notices, taking on a CD player and playing to a no-decision.

In a move of questionable taste, non-exhibitor **Sequential Circuits** dropped a copy of their house organ, *Vectors*, into every show hotel room. Included was a detailed attack on the **Casio** FZ-1 by Dave Smith that included the charge that the FZ-1 was not truly 16-bit. Smith's intention was to keep players off the FZ-1 express long enough to show them SCI's own 16-bit wonder, the Prophet 3000, but his execution was tacky indeed. Casio shrugged off that charge and other rumors to the same effect, and did a brisk business with the FZ-1, showing off hot-shot sampler **Arne Schulze**'s new sound library for the instrument. While the FZ-1 may not beat the $10,000 Emulator III head-to-head, it still sounds awfully good to these ears. – **Jock Baird**

# 465 watts 10 pounds.*

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

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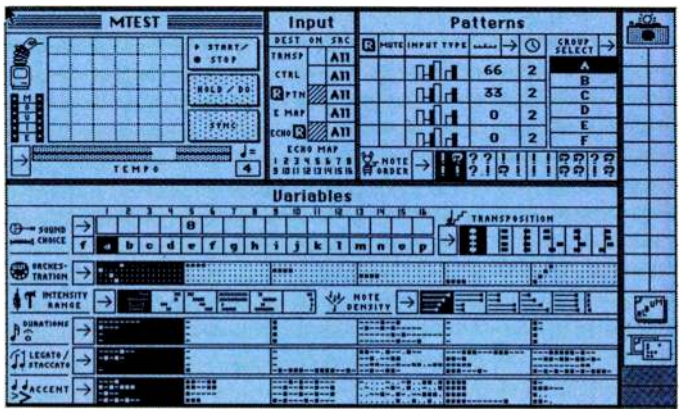
# Software City

## Better composing through artificial intelligence? A closer look at M and Jam Factory.

**By David N. Barnett**

Imlilug sctteienn...melt-secuinil ting...tisuclin lemgient...intelligent music...Look at those words for a moment. Nonsense, right? Wait, it slowly comes into focus...

M and Jam Factory are programs for the Apple Macintosh computer from Intelligent Music. Like the above sequence of letters, they take a while to bring into focus. Both are challenging programs which demand a great deal of attention in grasping their intent and promise, yet can yield musical results that range from confusing to stunning. Their practical use as musical tools is sure to be debated hotly. Musicians deeply into free modal improvisation will love them, while most others will find them intriguing but of limited use. As can be said about all music, it really is a matter of taste.




**Valley Girl syntax: M's main screen**

M is billed as an "intelligent" musical instrument, Jam Factory as an "improvisation and live performance processor." Using the terms "instrument" and "processor" is confusing since they don't make sounds by themselves. "Intelligent MIDI controllers" might be better descriptions. They are, each in their own way, the natural extensions of arpeggiators that have been built into synthesizers for years.

Traditional arpeggiators store a small set of notes played on a synth, and play them back usually in a steady rhythm and mostly in the order they were entered in. As arpeggiators got more sophisticated, they would slightly change the ordering of the notes. Typical order choices would be top to bottom, bottom to top, reverse order, play over two octaves, over four octaves, and even a ramdom ordering. Usually effective, but mostly predictable.

M and Jam Factory take these basic functions and put them under full computer control, with the added capabilities that large amounts of processing power, RAM and storage of settings can provide. Instead of storing and reordering only note pitches, just about any performance parameter, be it tempo, length of notes, loudness, accents or many more, can be controlled. In a nutshell, you give the programs a set of notes to chew on, and they will generate permutations of those notes based on differing views of the notes. M generates random permutations based on the *frequency* of particular notes. Jam Factory generates permutations based on particular *orderings* of notes. It is a subtle distinction but, infers very different results.

The main operating screen of M is initially one of the most confusing screens I have ever seen on the Mac. There are more screen buttons and active areas than I could begin to describe in this review.

Tempo is a variable. As you click on points on the Tempo bar, the tempo changes. That's an easy one. Orchestration is a variable. It is the set of MIDI channels the pattern will play back on. Intensity Range controls the range of MIDI velocity data that the synth receives. Notice that I said "Range." Note velocity will randomly occur within the selected range. The range can be as narrow or wide as you want. Note density sets what percentage of the time notes are actually playing. Set it at one hundred percent and notes are always playing. Set it at fifty percent and rests replace notes half the time. Note Order controls just that. You can select the type of reordering of notes that takes place. If you want, the notes can play back in the exact order they were entered in. Or you can set M to randomize the order a certain percentage of the time, or all the time.

Three important variables, Durations, Legato/Staccato and Accent, are set in the "Cyclic Editor." You set the length of the cycle in notes and the strength of the variation each note is supposed to get. The accent or duration pattern will constantly loop, and each step will impose itself on the current pitch being played. The length of the variation cycle can be different from the note cycle. This will produce a constantly shifting musical line as note durations, accents and slurs constantly appear, disappear and reappear as the notes randomly replay.

The note groups and variable panel settings are separate entities. You change between note groups without affecting the current variable settings. Selecting a different panel for a variable will alter the performance of the current note group. The panels and group buttons are all active areas on the Mac screen, so clicking any of them with the mouse will select a new setting during

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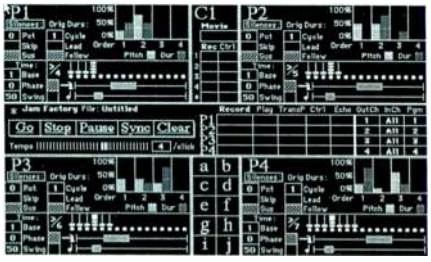
playback. The result of the selection happens in real time as the notes are playing. Things change on the fly. In addition, you can group sets of panels to change together. It makes more sense when you listen to it happen.

The other pattern entry methods allow stepping in notes and chords, and recording 'real time' segments which will not be affected by variables. At this point we have talked about only one note pattern in one group, and one setting of the variables. Now imagine four note patterns playing simultaneously, each pattern with its own unique setting of all variables. Add to that the ability to instantly shift to completely new variable




**Jam Factory main screen**

settings and you can get a glimpse of what M can do.

Jam Factory is a kissing cousin of M. The basic shell performs functions similar to M. The performance of a sequence of notes is controlled by a set of rules. On-screen buttons and active areas respond to mouse clicks and movements to interactively alter settings to affect the current performance. The main screen is set up differently from M. Instead of clicking on panels which trigger a set of predefined ranges, Jam Factory allows access to the ranges directly on screen.

Where M randomizes playback based on the frequency of a particular note occuring in a phrase, Jam Factory randomizes playback based on the frequency of particular notes following other notes. In other words, Jam Factory spits out a note which is determined by the previous note or two. Instead of using frequency distributions to control note ordering, transition tables are used.

Transition tables are set up by analyzing a sequence and charting how often a note follows any other particular note. Consider this sequence of letters: ABGAFABE. "A" is followed by "B" two out of the three times an "A" occurs. "A" is followed by "F" the third time it occurs. So if an "A" event happens, there is a sixty-seven percent chance that Jam Factory would play a "B" and only a thirty-three percent chance it would play an "F." That is known as a first order transition since only one note in a row was calculated. A second order transition table would consider a note occuring after a particular two note sequence. In the above sequence, "AB" appears twice, once followed by "G" and once followed by "E." So if an "AB" sequence occurs, there is a fifty percent chance for a "G" or an "E" to happen next. Jam Factory actually can calculate a fourth order transition table, which will be based on notes occuring after a particular sequence of four notes in a model melody. The higher the order table used, the closer the output will be to the original. The original tune "influences" the result more strongly. In addition, Jam Factory will construct a table for durations.

Affecting all these ordering tables is the amount of memory in the Mac. An extremely complex source melody may produce a huge transition table, especially if you want a fourth order table. To control this, a Memory Configuration screen lets a portion of memory be used for a particular order of the transition table (see screen).

Another interesting way Jam Factory affects the notes it plays is by following


**Jam Factory's Scale Distortion table**

"Scale Distortion" tables the user can set up. These tables dictate how certain chromatic steps will be remapped to other notes when transposing the overall tune. The most obvious examples of how to use this feature would be setting up a minor scale remapping to lower major threes and sevens a half step, or set up your favorite "Jazz" scale with whatever series of flatted threes, fives and sevens you like. This allows you to start in C major and transpose to a true A minor with the appropriate remapping of the threes and sevens. Pretty nifty stuff.

So how do they sound? That is up to you. It is easy to put a few notes in and then let M vary them forever. It might sound wonderful, but probably won't. Extraordinary care must go into setting up the numerous variables to achieve a

useful result. M will give you a million permutations. On the other hand, Jam Factory will start you out fairly close to your source material, and then you work on altering it to the extent you want.

If the programs worked on the English language, M would sound kind of like Valley Girl talk, with wonderfully random juxtapositions of images. Jam Factory would generate a type of urban street jive, with its formulaic method of repeating an existing phrase, challenging and changing it, and finally "topping it."

There's plenty of tiger to tame in both programs, and M in particular demands a good deal of user work. It's also easy to generate patterns that won't sound like music to most ears. Still, both are great programming achievements. M

*We received some mail lately about the title of this column. It turns out that the name "Software City" is not merely immortalized in these pages, but is also the name of a computer software retail operation, and that a trademark for that purpose is owned by a company called "America's # 1 Software Dealer, Inc." Software City (the store) has graciously agreed not to object to our use of the name (for the column) so long as it is clear that we are not they and they are not we. What's more, our opinions are not theirs, and* vice versa. *And if you were thinking of naming your business after us (or them)—don't. – Ed.*

## MIDI from page 42

just the right moment on film, you're stuck juggling two sets of numbers: SMPTE addresses and bars/beats/ticks. And every time the film editor recuts the film, the door slam moves to a new SMPTE address, which must once again be translated into bars, beats and ticks. It's a very tedious process.

And that's where MTC comes in. (At last.) It sends a series of MIDI messages which directly translate the SMPTE time code into MIDI. (It is never necessary, incidentally, to go the other way and convert MTC-to-SMPTE. SMPTE on tape is always the Ultimate Master.) Two MIDI messages send the frame number, two send the minutes, two send the seconds and two send the hours. Add that up, and you'll see it takes a total of eight MIDI messages to send a complete SMPTE time message. Once that is done, though, it's a simple matter to update the time by sending new frame messages at regular intervals. In other words, it isn't necessary to send new hour, minute and second messages

every time a new frame ticks by.

This translation, incidentally, is accomplished by a SMPTE-to-MTC conversion device such as the forthcoming $250 Opcode Time Code Machine and the J.L. Cooper PPS-1 (standing for Poor People's SMPTE), which can be modified internally to make the conversion. So now, instead of working with a music sequencer that counts bars, beats and ticks, the high-tech Nino Rota can work with a cue list manager program, such as Opcode's Cue or Digidesign's Q-Sheet, which deals directly in SMPTE hours, minutes, seconds and frames.

But what about those of us who aren't in the film biz? (Audio cue: Angry crowd murmur. Indignant cries of "yeah," "What about us, bub?") Is there anything in this MTC stuff for us? Well, in time the answer may turn out to be yes. Along with transmitting SMPTE timing data, MTC can also transmit a series of what are called Set-Up messages. And these messages are what may well make the totally automated, virtual studio an everyday reality.

The Set-Up messages relay commands to what are called intelligent peripherals. These would include tape machines with transports that could respond to MTC commands and effects devices similarly responsive to MTC. The "MIDI Time Code and Cueing Detailed Specification (Supplement to MIDI 1.0)" details a number of Set-Up messages to be sent to these devices, including Punch In, Punch Out, Event Start, Event Stop, Cue Point and Delete messages for each of the previously listed commands. Intelligent peripherals are pre-loaded with these commands before the cue list sequence begins. Then, when the appropriate time code address comes up, the peripheral in question performs the designated task—whether it be a tape machine dropping into record mode for a punch in, a digital reverb switching to an inverse room program, or whatever.

To sum it all up, the chain of command goes something like this: The SMPTE-to-MTC converter reads SMPTE from tape and sends MTC timing data to a cue list manager. The cue list manager, for its part, does two things. It sends MTC Set-Up messages and timing data to the intelligent peripherals. And it can also act as a master controller for a MIDI music sequencer, which, in turn, drives a battery of conventional (non-MTC) synths, drum machines, etc.

If you sensed a tentative tone in the last few paragraphs, you've picked up on a very important Author Message. At the time of this writing, a rig like the one just described remains a fairly Utopian proposition. It will take a healthy market-load of intelligent peripherals to make the whole thing really fly. As we've seen, SMPTE-to-MTC converters and cue list managers are starting to appear. And there are already a few devices on the market that can respond to MTC Set-Up commands and cues. These include the Akai/Linn ADR15 and Sequential Studio 440. The initial release version of the Prophet 3000 will not support MTC, but Sequential is planning to make MTC capabilities available as a subsequent software update, according to the company's Dave Smith. Also, ADA is planning a "level 3" software update to their MQ-1 MIDI Equalizer, which will allow the device to pre-load a list of cues and then execute the appropriate Set-Up commands at the pre-specified time code addresses.

So it looks like MTC peripherals are already starting to cluster on the horizon. You never know when the storm will break and that poor embattled roof will start leaking again. So keep your eyes glued to *Musician* for the next MIDI Weather Bulletin. M

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# WE DON'T HAVE TO PRAISE THE D-50.

**Dan Goldstein,** International Associate Editor, *Music Technology*: The D-50 was the single most exciting instrument at the 1987 Winter NAMM show. It's something that's genuinely new and that's why it will have an impact. For players on stage, it has more power sonically than any comparable digital synthesizer. The sound has got the sort of punch that will take it through a mix in a way that's not possible with most digital synths. Studio players will like the D-50 for its versatility. And I think hard-core synthesizer programmers will be attracted by the breadth of its sound structure.

**Dominic Milano,** Editor, *Keyboard*: The D-50 has a wonderful sound. At its price point, it should appeal to just about everybody. The D-50's approach to synthesis—which lets you take PCM samples and combine them with digitally synthesized portions—makes more sense than just about anything I've seen in the last couple of years. It takes the best aspects of what MIDI allows you to do with layering sounds from different instruments and puts it all together in one machine. It's intelligent and very powerful, and I think it will have a musical impact that will show up in what people hear on record.

**David Pratt,** Associate Editor, *Upbeat*: I think the D-50 sounds very good. It's very user friendly—it's not intimidating. Musicians are always looking for new sounds, they're always searching for something different—sounds they haven't heard before. I think they'll definitely be looking at the D-50.

**Bob O'Donnell,** Associate Editor, *Music Technology*: I think the D-50 is an incredible value for the price—you've got real high quality sound and all the signal processing built in. I think the fact that digital signal processing is incorporated into it is going to be the start of a very interesting trend in which all the elements for creating a complete sound will be contained in a single instrument.

# THE EXPERTS ARE DOING IT FOR US.

**Ted Greenwald,** Assistant Editor, *Keyboard* (NAMM Winter Market Wrap-Up): The Indefatigable Roland led the way with the D-50 Digital Synthesizer, the obvious highlight of their prolific new offerings and possibly of the entire show.

**Bill Lewis,** Senior Editor, *Music, Computers & Software*: Roland has managed to meld the complexities of computer controlled synthesis with an ease of programming. This, along with the combination of sampled with synthesized waveforms points the way to the future of sound creation.

**Jock Baird,** Editor, *Musician*: Five months after its Anaheim introduction, the D-50 has no challengers as 'Best New Synth of the Year.' What's also interesting is that with programs like its Developer's Workshop, Roland is trying to jump-start the same support web of sound and computer-editor programmers that took a couple of years to grow up around other synthesizers.

**Craig Anderton,** Editor, *Electronic Musician*: As Editor of Electronic Musician magazine it's easy to gauge a product's impact by the degree of reader interest. Based on what I've been hearing, Roland has a real hit on their hands with the D-50.

**Simon Trask,** *Music Technology*: Whichever way you look at it, the D-50 is one hell of a good instrument and one that has already booked itself a place in the synthesizer's hall of fame.

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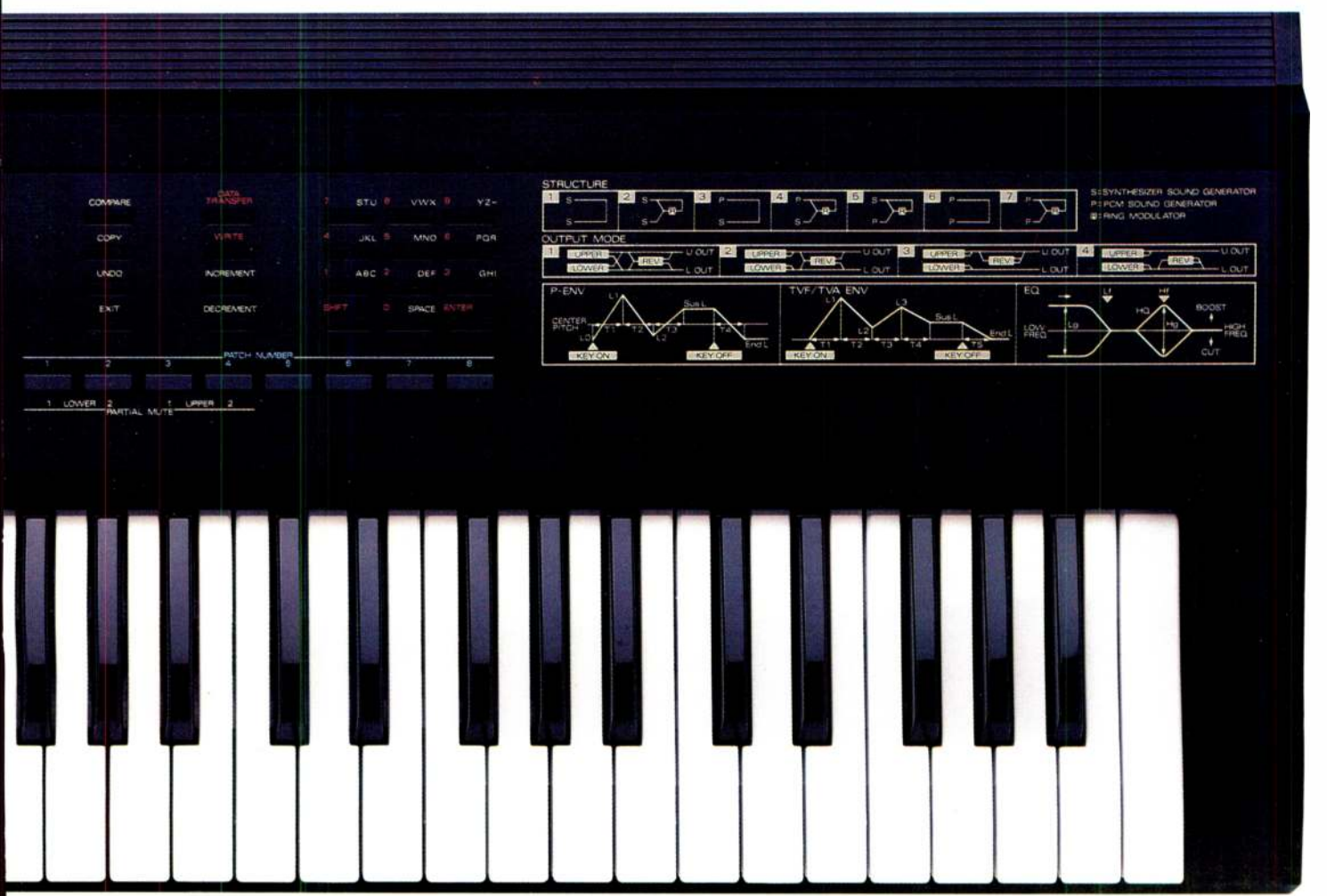


# THE SEVEN TRIALS OF SQUEEZE

## HOW EVERYTHING THAT COULD GO WRONG DID AND WHY YOU SHOULD STILL CARE.

BY BILL FLANAGAN

We might have a problem with this article. A lot of readers are going to look at this and say, "Squeeze? They're still around, huh? What's on the next page?" Very few bands have blown their momentum as completely as Squeeze did when, from late 1982 to early 85, they did the full Spinal Tap circle in record time: After years of cult-dom they finally hit it big, sold out Madison Square Garden and did the *Celebratory Breakthrough Arena Tour*, followed immediately by the *Farewell Break-up Tour*, followed by the two leaders' *Difford & Tilbrook Band Tour*, followed by a *Squeeze Reunion*

*Tour*. It seemed silly: a real case of "How can I miss you if you won't go away?" A lot of people who had liked Squeeze lost track or stopped caring.

The confusion was compounded by a string of albums that found Squeeze thinking too much. Nineteen-eighty-two's farewell effort *Sweets From A Stranger* was weighed down with lugubrious white soul; 1984's Chris Difford & Glenn Tilbrook album was desperately clever: It felt like a day with the class science whiz. And on 1985's reunion LP, *Cosi Fan Tutti Frutti*, Squeeze worked so hard at being technically adept that they polished their humanity right out of the grooves. Which is why it's great that their new album, *Babylon & On*, finds Squeeze back to their strength—good-natured, melodic pop 'n' roll. But if all we had to talk about was a fine new LP by a once proud band, we would be sitting in the record review section right now. Instead

DAVID STEWART

**Difford & Tilbrook**
**Lavis, Holland, Metcalfe, Wilkinson**

we are sitting backstage with Squeeze at Giants Stadium in New Jersey, where they are about to open for David Bowie. We are here to unravel the story behind the band's strange leaps and shifts.

Squeeze fell victim to all the plagues that hit musicians perched constantly on the edge of great success. The Lord looked down on Squeeze and dropped the Seven Deadly Trials of Rock 'n' Roll: *Artistic Ambition, Ego Expansion, Substance Abuse, Concern for Image, Lawsuits with Managers, Shattered Friendships*, and the most dreaded of all—*Input From the Wives*. Somehow Squeeze came through all seven and, though a little worn for wear, are today back on track.

"It's very hard to keep your head together in this business," says drummer Gilson Lavis. "The first time Squeeze went round this roundabout we got a bit caught up in all the criticisms and compliments: 'the new Beatles,' 'the new 10cc,' 'the thinking man's rock band!' You tend to try a bit too hard. You want to keep pushing out the musical boundaries, but I think we were sort of trying to push them out in the wrong way. We might have been getting a bit too clever for our own good."

Gilson has pulled up a stool at an empty lunch table. He is healthy, young-looking and articulate. Five years ago he was none of those. "I don't think we have anything to prove as musicians, now," he continues. "On *Cosi Fan Tutti Frutti* we were getting a bit too arty." Gilson says "arty" in a posh, upper-class voice. Then he switches to a California accent for, "Now we're discovering our roots, man." He switches back to Gilson: "Everything's been pared down to a minimum. There's no uncalled-for drum fills, no extended chords, no repetition. Chris and Glenn have come up with a batch of *blazing* songs, killer songs. And we structured the arrangements of them in a sympathetic way, so as not to crowd the songs but to give the band a chance to play and do what I think we do best—rock out. This is a meat-and-potatoes album. The other one was all french dressing."

Which is part of the story, but not the whole story. The problems Squeeze has overcome were more than musical. For one thing, when Difford and Tilbrook broke up Squeeze in 1982, Gilson was overweight, alcoholic and could not play the drums half as well as he plays today. Emotionally, Chris and Glenn may have found it easier to disband Squeeze than to just fire Gilson, who was by then the only other original member. Certainly business advisers felt strongly that they should have kept the Squeeze name on the Difford & Tilbrook Band. "We were under quite a lot of pressure, originally, to do that," Tilbrook admits later. "But that wouldn't have been fair, because we'd all worked to build that. Gil has always been a part of the band and the band sound. If it'd been just Chris and me with different people, it wouldn't have been Squeeze. And certainly there wouldn't be any Squeeze today."

But if Chris and Glenn were trying to be decent to Gilson, he sure didn't see it that way. When *Musician* spoke to Difford and Tilbrook in 1984, Chris admitted that Gilson was bitter about the break-up, and refused to have anything to do with his old friends. He wasn't even making a living as a musician anymore—he was driving a London taxi. Today Gilson shifts the blame to himself. "I wasn't the person then that you see before you today," the drummer smiles. "I had a serious drinking habit. It wasn't good for my body and it certainly wasn't good for my mind. I was caught in a nightmare situation where I didn't know what else I could do. I had to keep going, I couldn't stop drinking. Drinking was the be-all and end-all of my existence by the end of Squeeze. The band breaking up, in a way, was a relief. The animosity I felt was a sort of animal instinct that was left because I had to blame somebody, and I wasn't in an intellectual position to blame myself."

Gilson's descent into the bottle was the straw that broke Squeeze's back five years ago, and his rebirth is the most obvious sign of their renewed vitality. But it was only one of the seven plagues that befell them. Let's tear through the Squeeze history so you'll understand the context in which these trials came down.

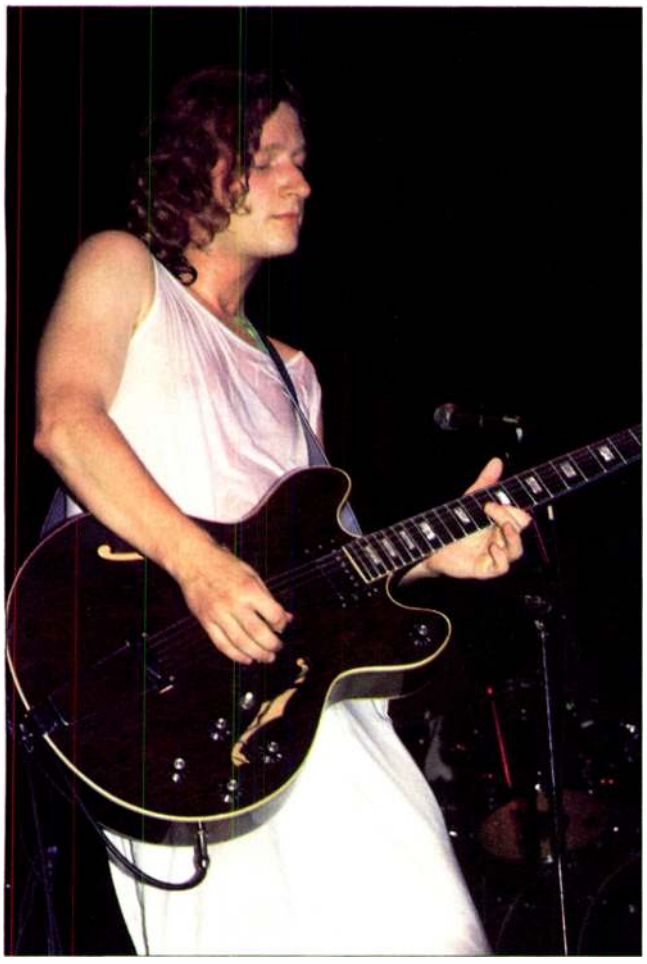
Singer/guitarist/composer Glenn Tilbrook and singer/guitarist/lyricist Chris Difford played together in pubs as teenagers with their pianist pal Jools Holland. The three formed Squeeze in the mid-70s, with Gilson and a bassist named Harry Kakoulli (later replaced by John Bentley). They built their following on the clever, hooky, Beatles-like pop they perfected with 1980's *Argy Bargy* and the semi-hit "Pulling Mussels (From The Shell)." But put this in your memory bank for later reference—after *Argy Bargy* Squeeze split from their manager, Miles Copeland, who they felt was devoting too much energy to the Police and not enough to them. The split led to a lawsuit with Copeland, and it also led to the first serious rupture within the band: Jools Holland elected to quit Squeeze and stay with Miles. Jools became host of the MTV import *The Tube* and released his own albums.

Glenn Tilbrook was hurt by Jools' desertion. "It was tremendously upsetting to me," Glenn says, "because we'd been friends for such a long time and to me it came out of the blue. Looking back on it I can see there were all sorts of things that should have been pretty obvious to me that I was oblivious to. He needed to establish himself. It's a pretty traditional thing in bands—everyone has a time at which they have to go and do things on their own."

Squeeze reached their peak with the next album, *East Side Story*, and hit single "Tempted" in 1981. But that's when the worms started eating the apple, too. Jools was gone, Miles was in court, Gilson was drinking. And Squeeze began getting self-conscious. Glenn decided he wanted to be a soul man. Not a Motown soul man (given Squeeze's extreme whiteness, Atlantic and Stax were not really options), but a mid-70s Philly International "One Of A Kind Love Affair"/ "Could It Be I'm Falling In Love" sort of soul man. Now, that music was okay, but nobody was clamoring to hear it in the 80s, least of all as interpreted by new wave kids from South London. But Glenn pushed it through and Squeeze's first last album was *Sweets From A Stranger*, which included the very long hit "Black Coffee In Bed." It did not bode well that two members of the group—bassist John Bentley and pianist Don Snow—lobbied to keep that song off the album. Never mind put it out as a 45.

At the time such dissent only made Glenn resent that, while he and Chris wrote and sang the songs, they were stuck in a democracy with two latecomers. What's ironic is that in retrospect John and Don's instincts seem right. Glenn now admits that the tempo of "Black Coffee In Bed" was deadly: "We now play 'Black Coffee' at twice the speed we recorded it," he sighs. "I can't bear to listen to the record. It goes on and on and on and on. I don't like *Sweets From A Stranger* much. It sounds very tired and apathetic. Maybe that's clouded with my memories of what it was like to be in the band at the time. It was not a joyful record by any stretch of the imagination."

It was the end of Squeeze. No more democracy, no more Gilson, no more great expectations to live up to. Chris and Glenn were like new divorcees giddy with freedom after a long stretch chained to the stove. This liberation manifested itself in odd ways. First, Chris got the idea that they should form a new band with the Sugar Hill rhythm section. Glenn leaned more toward a state-of-the-art double-synthed Euro-pop MTV-era star vehicle. At this time Glenn also married Pam



ANDREA LAUBAUCH RETNA

**Glenn in his muu-muu period**

Baker, a designer, who had plenty of ideas about how to spruce up the new band's image. When the Difford & Tilbrook band debuted in 1984, Glenn Tilbrook no longer looked like the bloke next door. He had long, golden curls falling to his shoulders and dressed in flowing robes. The back-up group sported similar sartorial splendor.

But not Chris Difford. The quiet, boxy lyricist was damned if he was going to dress up in a drape. Amid all the Mahavishnu muu-muus, Difford wore the clothes of a traveling salesman.

"The original idea," Glenn explains, "was that Pam being a designer could help the band get an image. But everyone would have had to be agreeable to whatever sort of style came up. And whatever it was that Pam came up with certainly wasn't right for Chris."

Difford recalls the Clothes War this way: "We had very different ideas and I wasn't prepared to compensate and wear things that I didn't want to wear. I didn't expect Glenn to want to do that either. But there was no compromise reached, so it always looked awkward. That was one of the big downfalls of that particular band." Well, wait a minute, Chris. Surely it was not raiment alone that sank the Difford & Tilbrook band? "Also the musicianship in the band was sort of fair English standard," Chris admits. "It wasn't what I would call anything more than just good. Whereas Squeeze, to me, is great. Squeeze is a band. So there was a lot learned from that. I guess everybody goes through weird periods and that was ours."

"There's a few songs on the Difford & Tilbrook record that I really like," Glenn says. "But we didn't record them the right way. 'Hope Fell Down,' 'The Apple Tree' and 'On My Mind Tonight' are all songs I'm really proud of. But the album sounds like coffee-table music. It's all a bit polite."

"I was looking more towards poetry and trying to be a bit more clever," Chris adds. "Trying to be like Noel Coward or get some kind of theatrical language into the lyrics, which doesn't always work."

"I thought the Difford & Tilbrook band live was better than the record," Glenn says, "but my overriding impression of it was that it was all a bit too precise, which was exactly what I was looking for after playing with Squeeze. Because Squeeze, until the point we broke up, was the sort of band that could be really awful one night and great the next. We weren't terribly consistent. I was after a sort of consistency and I got it, but I found that while we could always play a really good show with Difford & Tilbrook, I'd wind up feeling not that inspired by it, either. Having all that *competence* around wasn't exciting or moving. It didn't change, it was always the same."

Meanwhile Jools Holland was still buzzing around London, playing one-man shows and being a wiseguy on TV. Jools decided to try to pry Gilson out of his taxicab and back behind a drum kit. Having hit bottom, Gilson had begun to reconstruct his life without alcohol or music. Jools convinced him there was no harm in having a go at the latter.

"Gilson and I did some gigs together," Jools explains. "I said, 'Why don't we just go out and play for fun, just the two of us, piano and drums? And it went really well."

Gilson says, "Jools and I had remained close, I think, because he left the band before it broke up, so there wasn't that feeling of animosity, deserved or undeserved. I played some odd gigs with him and then one day Glenn came by and jammed. That was a weird experience. I hadn't seen him for such a long time. First song I was going, 'Come on, ya bastard, impress me now!' But by the second song that was all gone and I was having a great time."

"The thing with Gilson was the most difficult to broach," Tilbrook says. "But I was totally knocked out with the way he was playing. I hadn't heard him play like that in years and I went up and said so to him. He'd improved so much. Communicating with him was a bit difficult at first 'cause he had a little resentment toward Chris and me for breaking up the band."

Now, Glenn Tilbrook does not sit on his hands when he's off the road. One year he assembled the world's largest country and western band, a twenty-piece aggregation that played "Wichita Lineman" and "Leaving On A Jet Plane" to confused Squeeze fans. When he ran into Gilson and Jools, Glenn had agreed to play at a local charity show under his own name. So for the sake of mending old feuds, he figured it would be a good excuse for a one-time-only reunion between Difford & Tilbrook and Holland & Lavis.

"A couple of days after we played together, Glenn phoned me up, much to my surprise," Gilson says. "He said, 'I'm doing a benefit show. Would you like to come down?'"

Glenn was delighted when Gilson said okay. Chris Difford was not so enthusiastic. "I was very reserved about the whole idea," Chris admits. "I didn't really want to do it, to be honest. But that was a stupid attitude—to know somebody for a long time and not to see them ever again. A lot of marriages end the same way. We just went down and played the gig and it turned my mind around. Because I realized how important a friend—more than anything else—Gilson is to me."

"When we met for sound check," Glenn recalls, "it was like meeting an old girlfriend—a tremendous amount of familiarity,

yet it was also like we didn't quite know each other. It was sort of strange, but by the end of the set we got over that and had a good time. I hadn't even been thinking of re-forming the band. But the gig was fiery and exciting and it suddenly felt right."

"It all made sense then," Gilson says, "because everybody had gone out into the wide world and touched and fondled reality a bit and then come back and said, 'Come on chaps, this is what we do. So let's do it.'"

Glenn was determined to have the Difford & Tilbrook band's Keith Wilkinson aboard as bassist, which broke the heart of John Bentley, who had been part of the one-shot reunion gig. "I'd never met Jools and Gilson," Keith explains. "I had to meet them and see if we got on, because that is the whole essence of a band. It took me a little while to get over having replaced John. It felt strange to be onstage, having taken somebody else's role. I wasn't sure how the fans would react, but two albums later I think all is forgiven."

Another impediment was removed when Difford and Tilbrook won their three-year legal battle with their ex-manager, Miles Copeland. Eventually Chris and Glenn accepted Miles again, completing the reunion. Jools figures he could not have reunited with the others if they had not accepted Miles. "It would have been very difficult," Jools says. "Miles was very responsible for getting us back together, as well. After the one gig Miles was the one who stepped forward and said, 'Come on, I think you should do a record and a tour and I can arrange it.'"

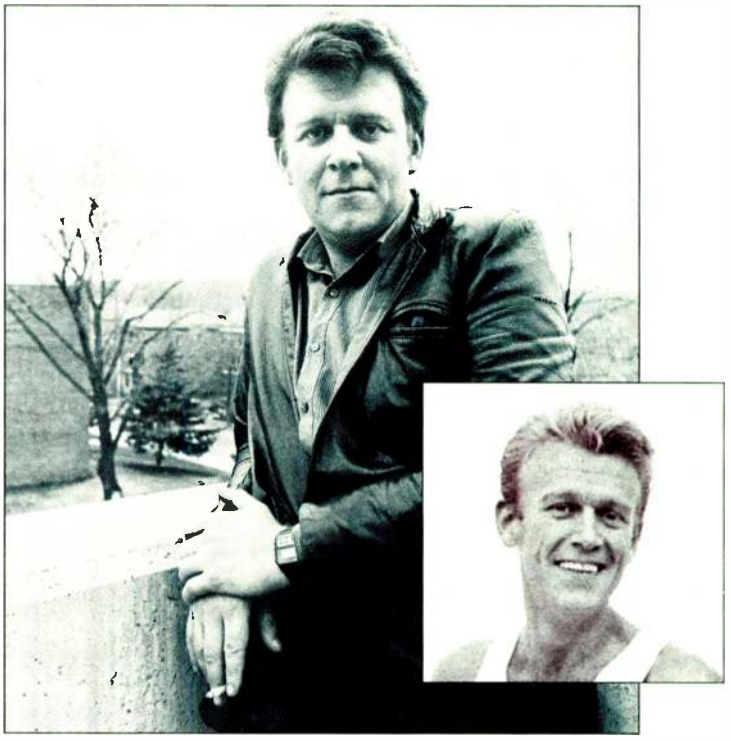
"We'd been in court with Miles for three years and we'd won," Chris says. "We came to an agreement. Miles is extremely powerful within the record company, and you couldn't ask for more than that, really." "We'd all done another little bit of growing up," Glenn adds. "I wasn't happy with the way our management was handled with Miles in the old days. Now I've got a bit more perspective on the reasons why. If you're managing the most successful band in the world, it's hard to find time to concentrate on other things, and we were one of the other things."

So bring on the Squeeze reunion album, *Cosi Fan Tutti Frutti*. The trouble was, for all their good intentions Chris and Glenn were still trembling under the weight of artistic ambition. Many battered Squeeze fans dismissed *Cosi* as more over-thinking from a once-fun band now sadly hung up on trying to be clever. Over the next couple of years the album earned some very devoted fans, people who swore that once you got by the self-conscious keyboard sounds and odd rhythms, the songs on that album would weasel into your heart and stand with Squeeze's very best. But not many people worked that hard at it. Most old Squeeze fans just said, "Three strikes, boys, bring on Crowded House."

"*Cosi Fan Tutti Frutti* was the band all getting together and tremendously pleased to be working together again," Glenn explains. "But we never played any instrument on the album together with another person playing at the same time! It was all overdubbed. So the band was a bit squashed on that—it was not like a real band. It was only when we toured that we discovered our mistake in making the record. But that's what led to this record, which is the proper reunion album to me."

That's for sure. The rhythm tracks for *Babylon & On* (the title a last-minute substitution for *Life In The Bus Lane*) were laid down live in the studio—a result of the band confidence that came out of the *Cosi* tour. That tour saw Squeeze kicking with a power they had not displayed in years. Gilson not only played like a new man—he was so physically revitalized that some fans literally did not recognize him.

*Cosi* had been so heavy with Emulators and synths that a second keyboard player was added. Andy Metcalfe, best known as Robyn Hitchcock's bassist, quickly settled into Squeeze. "They sent me a set of their albums three days before the first rehearsal," Andy laughs. "I had ten days to learn all of the songs; it was absolutely mad."



**Gilson before & after de-tox**

By the end of the *Cosi* tour, Squeeze had figured out what their long-suffering fans knew all along: that they were at their best when they didn't get carried away, when they just executed Difford and Tilbrook's melodic tunes in a straightforward rock 'n' roll manner. But if that were as easy to do as it is to say, rock critics would be rock stars. Squeeze still had to translate what they'd learned into *Babylon & On*.

"We spent a long time writing the album," Chris says. "Consciously or semi-consciously, Glenn and I had both been thinking, 'It's about time we wrote with a little less pretension.' When I was writing the lyrics I thought, 'I must try to simplify things a little bit. We're not talking to professors here.'"

Tilbrook: "After listening to *Cosi* I said to myself, 'I really do want to keep things simple and short. There were stray minutes in almost every song on that album that shouldn't have been there. This time my approach was to come up with a chord sheet that would consist of as few chords as possible for it to still be interesting. If we had a fade, fade as quickly as possible; if there's a middle eight, keep it short. Something we've been quite bad at before is finding the right tempo. When we play these songs live the tempos don't speed up—which is a sign we got it right."

A silver lining appeared when Squeeze ran out of money last spring and had to hit the road for a month to replenish the album budget. Playing the songs live, they discovered which sections were awkward, and which keyboard parts were extraneous. They returned to the studio even more anxious to pare things down. They were encouraged in all this by producer Eric Thorngren (Peter Wolf, Talking Heads), who was merciless in

B C KAGEN DAVID STEWART

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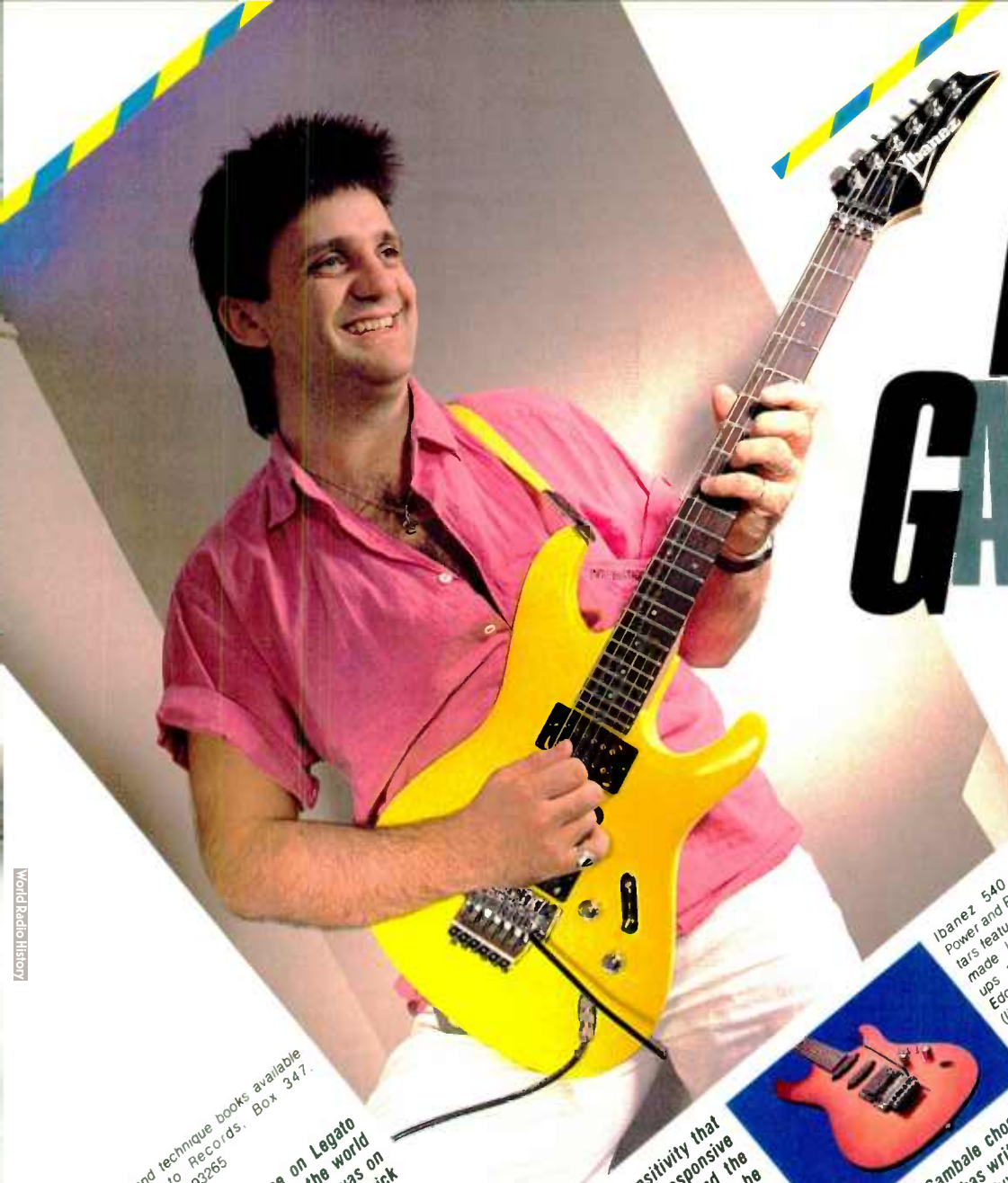

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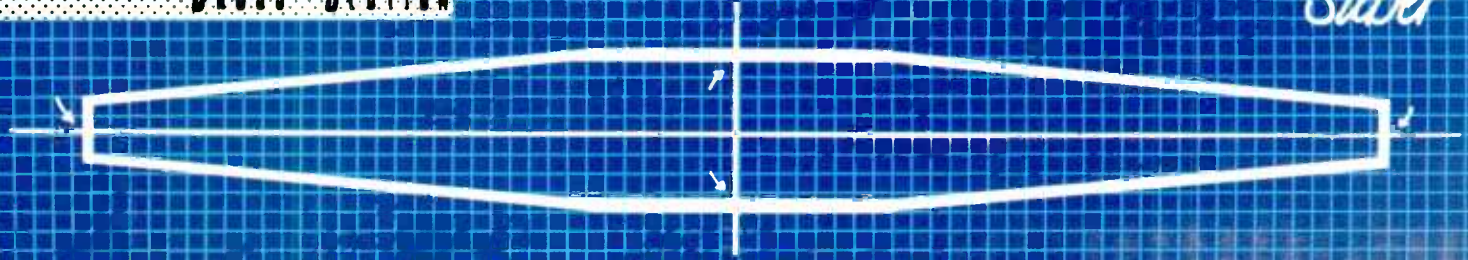

his hunger for musical straightforwardness. Chris recalls Eric as "the guy who would say, 'Hey, wait a minute. Why do you need to go down that road when this road is much easier?'"

Thorngren says of Squeeze's new album, "All it was was getting them to go back to where they came from—reality. They got influenced by drum machines and that whole thing that everybody was doing at the time. Now they're playing like a band, like they should. The album has its clever moments, but it doesn't get obtuse, it doesn't get distracting. I have a little editor in my mind.

"When I sit down to mix I don't care how long it took to add all the parts; I turn on the drums and the voice. Then I find out if it needs the bass and go from there. The least amount of things you can do with a song and still get the song across is the secret. Everything else is gravy and—goddamn—I don't like gravy on the steak *and* on the salad. On "Prisoner" the piano played through the whole song but we only turned it on for one eight-bar piece at the end. I don't care if you spent a month putting a part on; if you can get away without it, forget it."

So seven years after splitting from Jools and Miles, six years after their last solid album, five years after they disbanded, and two years after they reunited, Squeeze are finally back where they should be. The Beatles went from "Love Me Do" to "Let It Be" in the amount of time Squeeze has wasted. But here at Giants Stadium, dressing to impress the tens of thousands of people waiting outside, Squeeze act like they never made any wrong turns at all. Jools enters the room in a three-piece banker's suit and a plug hat. "It's interesting when you get the feeling of *a band*," he says. "There's a certain sympathy between all the members. Yesterday Glenn started playing 'Return To Sender.' Other days I'll start playing something and we can all play it in a way that's not like a wanky club band—but that sounds really good. We immediately pick up on what everyone else is going to do. We've all come from the same musical background. I think that's the strength. Though we've gone our separate ways, when we play together we still sound like one big lump, one big blob."

Glenn figures the wrong turns have taught him a little humility. "I used to be a lot more inadvertently dictatorial," he admits. It's two days after Squeeze won the hearts of the Bowie crowd, and Glenn's having lunch at his New York hotel before catching a plane back to London. "On *Argy Bargy* and *Cool For Cats* a lot of stuff was directed the way I wanted it, and to an extent that steamrolled over Jools' style of piano playing. I had the idea that I wrote the song and it must be this way and if Jools didn't fit in with that way, then I'd do it myself. I've realized since then that the band is made up of a bunch of people who play in different ways, and what comes out *is* the band. The thing is to tailor things so everyone is comfortable."

"There's a lot more give and take," Gilson observes. "Now everybody's willing to listen to everybody else and nobody's jumping on anybody else's back. And we're all good friends. It's relaxed, wives come on the road, we try to be adults about this now. We realize it's not the be-all and end-all if we have a hit record. It's about playing music and enjoying it. Because if you don't enjoy it, you're starting on a slippery road down to not only obscurity, but to a miserable lifestyle. If you're a musician and the music's good, your life's good." Gilson Lavis is hardly the first musician to learn that lesson the hard way—but he's one of the few who has come all the way back.

When Gilson's not around, Glenn says, "I have such a tremendous admiration for what he did. The whole thing about the band becoming more and more successful is that we were more and more protected. In that sort of environment it must have been difficult for Gil to come to terms with what was happening to him." Glenn agrees that a new peace has settled over Squeeze since the rebirth. "I think *relaxed* is the key word," he says. "I would look forward to and hope for a lot of success for what we've done now, because I can honestly say—hand on heart—that it's the first thing we've done in a long while that I can honestly believe in. But I'm not going to tear my hair out worrying about it. I feel a lot more secure in myself than I used to. I used to worry about what would happen if we got big or if the band broke up, but it just doesn't worry me now." Of course not—both those things happened, and a whole lot of other things, too.

But for all the obvious joy and comfort in reuniting with old pals and righting old wrongs, there must be a flip side—a creepy *déjà vu*. You wonder if Glenn and Chris ever wake up in the night and say, *Gee—I went through losing Jools, fighting Miles, splitting the band, and feuding with Gilson, finally got free, and now I'm all tangled up again!*

Glenn, the optimist, says no no, it's all great. But Chris Difford, quiet man with dark moods, says, "I never thought that, no. It did happen to me though. Sometimes when emotions or stress build up inside you and you don't release it in the right manner, it can make you depressed or ill. So now I have to watch out. I get really tensed up for these gigs. The last couple of tours I've made myself ill worrying. I'm trying to learn not to."

Chris is a hard guy to figure. His lyrics are filled with double entendres and he's written more odes to drinking than George

*continued on page 114*

## SQUEEZE PLAYS

**Glenn Tilbrook** "got a hold of a Telecaster with a Parsons/White String Bender—named after the two guys from the Byrds. They only made about a thousand. What it is is, if you pull up the strap attached to the left-hand side of the guitar, there's a control that determines the amount you can bend the B string. I have it set on a whole tone so I can go, for instance, from C to D. It's particularly handy for playing country things—it simulates pedal steel. It's a brilliant guitar. I've been using the same MESA/Boogie amp for about seven years. I really like the sound and it's real versatile. For the album I alternated between a Boogie and a Roland Jazz Chorus."

"I'm playing a 1966 paisley Telecaster," **Chris Difford** says, "with '63 pickups. My second guitar is a violin-shaped model made by Danny Ferrington. It has 1962 Stratocaster pickups. For amps I'm using two Vox AC30s linked through an SPX90."

**Keith Wilkinson** uses two Fender fretless Jazz basses with EMG pickups. Keith's amps are Peavey.

Onstage **Jools Holland**'s got a CP-80, "I've been using a Korg CS-6 as an organ, through a Leslie cabinet. I concentrate more on speaking through piano and organ rather than those other things," Jools says. "Piano really cuts through quite well, and you could take a lifetime and never quite master it."

That's a far cry from **Andy Metcalfe**'s philosophy. "I use a Korg CX3 through a Leslie cabinet. For the synthesizer stuff I'm using DX7s. I recently got hold of a Yamaha MEP 4, which is a MIDI-event processor. I have an Oberheim Matrix 6 for nice analog sounds, a Roland MX100 for sampling strings and brass sounds, and an SPX90 for effects, which I mostly use as a delay. It all goes through a Simmons mixer, which is MIDI-programmable."

And the drums? "I got an endorsement deal with Tama," **Gilson Lavis** says, "and I'm really thrilled with their stuff, it's great. I'm using the Grandstand kit and their new rack-mounting system." Gilson is also an endorsee of and enthusiast for Zildjian cymbals. His sticks? "I use Pro-Mark 4-B's. 4-B's are hard sticks but they're very light. They're nice and consistent as well. You can grab a Pro-Mark stick out of your bag and know they're going to be good."

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# LUMINOUS TIMES

## U2 WRESTLE WITH THEIR MOMENT OF GLORY

A lot can happen in half a year. In the last six months U2 have gone from being a beloved, middle-level rock group to The Biggest Band in the World. Almost alone among their generation of groups they have upheld rock's best values while also winning a stadium-size audience. Which is not the motivation for creating music, but which is surely a heck of a trick. This year almost every popular musician ends up talking about U2. Sting, finishing up his new album in New York, recalls the farewell appearance of the Police on the final night of the 1986 Amnesty International tour: "The last song we played, we handed our instruments over to U2. Every band has its day. In '84 we were the biggest band in the world, and I figured it was U2's turn next. And I was right. They are the biggest band in the world. A year from now it'll be their turn to hand over their instruments to someone else."

We've got to be careful here not to measure success just by seats sold or dollars generated. The Bee Gees were once the Biggest Band in the World. So were Fleetwood Mac and the Monkees. If you just count cash receipts, the B.B.I.T.W. right now is probably Bon Jovi. And in 1965 Herman's Hermits outsold the Beatles. No, if we're going to bestow such grand and stupid mantles, we must be clear: U2 are—right now—the band that best combines great talent with mass appeal, who capture and set to music

BY JOHN HUTCHINSON

PHOTOS BY JEFFREY CROFT/OUTLINE, MIKE FULLER/OUTLINE, ADRIAN BOOT/RETNA

this moment better than anyone else with a prayer of reaching so wide an audience.

In the six months since the release of *The Joshua Tree*, the entire climate around U2 has changed. This Irish quartet who had never had a record in the top ten scored two number one singles and a number one LP right out of the box. Their spring tour of the U.S. was a triumph, and their autumn return promises to bring down the stadiums. Perhaps more important, they have continued to quietly release new songs—by now almost another album's worth. The flip sides of U2's singles "With Or Without You" and "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" gave buyers four new songs—"Luminous Times," "Walk To The Water," "Spanish Eyes" and "Deep In The Heart." In August they upped the ante by packaging "Where The Streets Have No Name" with *three* new tracks: "Race Against Time," "Silver And Gold" and "Sweetest Thing." Add in their two new collaborations with Robbie Robertson ("Testimony," "Sweet Fire Of Love") and Bono's contribution to the new T-Bone Burnett album ("Purple Heart") and you have an idea of U2's creative energy in 1987.

Sitting in their manager's Dublin office above Windmill Lane, the studio where their albums are recorded, Adam Clayton and Bono listen to acetates of the three newest songs. "Race Against Time" opens with a low drone, moves into a heavy bass riff—played by Edge, and sounding as though it has been inspired by a rhythm on the Irish hand-drum, the bodhrán—and then is augmented by "treated" guitar. Bono, dressed in black, his hair swept back into a pony-tail, taps his feet, swaying slightly from side to side; Adam smiles and beats time with his hand. Then a distant voice rises: Bono sings in an Ethiopian language, and follows it up with the phrase, "race against time." It is an infectious groove ("Larry did this in one take," says Adam with a grin) and has an African flavor. It is vaguely reminiscent of Peter Gabriel. Bono tells me that the song was inspired by his visit to Ethiopia, and refers to the famine there. "It reminds me of the desert," he says. "The desert is so empty, but it aches with a strange kind of fullness."

Next up is "Silver And Gold," a version of the song Bono wrote at the Sun City Sessions. It's tough and raw, with Bono in husky and confident voice, underpinned by a sinuous bass line, and with Edge demonstrating his newfound prowess in blues-based guitar. "Sweetest Thing" opens with a piano, picks up tempo and moves along with tight, fast-moving percussion and fluid bass. Bono dips in and out of a falsetto, singing "I'm losing you" in a way that recalls John Lennon.

Three new tracks, all of them memorable, and they're hidden away on the back of the third single off *Joshua Tree*. Just what are these guys doing? Riding the crest of a wave, U2 are brimful of confidence and have a rock-steady belief in the power of their music. They're willing—indeed, determined—to stretch their talents to the limit. Bono says, before the interview begins, "We're nowhere near our peak yet. We're only just beginning to tap a completely new set of ideas."

It is the day after U2's gig in the vast NEC arena in Birmingham, England, which, with the exception of an outdoor concert in Cork on the following Saturday, brings the first leg of their world tour to a close. The Dublin evening papers announce that Bono has been listed in the top ten of "The World's Sexiest Men." At this moment, though, Bono doesn't look too sexy. He's tired, unshaven and his voice is a mite hoarse. On the way into Windmill Lane, where the outside walls are covered with U2 graffiti, he was encircled by a small crowd of fans, mainly female, who asked for autographs, shook his hand and shrieked with excitement. He said a few words and was escorted, almost at a run, to the doors of the studio.

While he waits for the other members of the band, Bono chats quietly. "It's strange coming home like this," he murmurs. "You come back to Dublin, to your family and all the familiar places, and it seems like another world."

If Dublin looks a little different to Bono, U2 looks different to Dublin. Earlier in the summer, when the band played two nights at the Gaelic soccer stadium Croke Park, the newspapers were filled with stories about the local boys making good in the U.S.A. The predictable backlash quickly came from Irish journalists who questioned the efficacy, if not the good intentions, of U2's concern for the world's underprivileged. Those shots have rankled the band, but not as much as the fact that critics have spent more time analyzing the U2 phenomenon than U2's music. Being without honor in your home is a traditional burden of being The Biggest.

Edge arrives at the office looking like a hippie. He is still the diplomat who smoothes over rough patches. Larry Mullen, newly vocal after years of refusing interviews, is the most down-to-earth in his comments, which are generally wry and good-humored. Because Larry kept his silence for so long—and maybe also because he looks like James Dean—he got an image as reserved and serious. So journalists have recently been delighted to find out what a funny guy the drummer is. At a New York press conference last spring a reporter asked the band if Larry's status as a sex symbol in Japan had spread elsewhere. Mullen, who had not spoken a word the whole time, raised his head, leaned forward and said, "Not yet, but we're hopeful."

As our conversation begins, Adam considers his replies carefully and at times gets a little acerbic. Bono, as ever, is the most vociferous. He restrains himself at first, but gradually becomes more involved, at times becoming quite agitated. Some of his pronouncements, read in print, may seem overly earnest and perhaps a bit pompous, but in person his fiery character is charming. If he sometimes talks faster than he thinks, you nonetheless feel that his sincerity is genuine and that his comments are always heartfelt; his integrity burns right through any scepticism.

In a few years somebody else will be the Biggest Band in the World. But Bono, Adam, Larry and Edge will still be making music from their hearts, and lots of us will still be listening. In fact, when all this current hubbub dies down, the music will probably be easier to hear. Then we can forget about charts and political litmus tests and get back to the real soul of U2. "Isn't it incredible," Larry Mullen smiles, "that when you reach a certain stage everything suddenly becomes *important*. Everyone has been talking about the U2 phenomenon and not so much about the music. That's the bottom line, after all."

**MUSICIAN:** *Let's get this out of the way first: How seriously do you take the Irish criticism that you're only playing liberal songs for white middle-class audiences in America, and that U2 is ineffectual as a force for change?*

**BONO:** That assessment is wrong; it's actually inaccurate.

**EDGE:** Our perspective is Irish. Sure, that isn't as relevant to a black kid in New York as to someone in Dublin, but there's a spirit in what we do that I believe can transcend cultural barriers. The success of U2 is based on the fact that it does that. We find in our European shows that we have a language barrier, yet some of the audiences seem to understand what we're getting at better than our English or Irish audiences.

**BONO:** It's fair to say that we don't have a big black audience in the United States, and we really regret this, but it has nothing to do with the color of their skin. It's cultural. Black music has a different sensibility in American urban areas; at least it's

different from an Irish urban situation. We have a large Latin audience in the Southwest and in Florida, and to say that it's primarily middle-class means nothing in America. Working-class in America is middle-class by Irish standards. I think that that critic's description of the audience at the Amnesty International concert at the Giants Stadium as "mainly white, middle-class and content as a field of flowers" is misleading. I've never met a man whose contentment derived from his class—*never!* Why should a person who is middle-class be necessarily more content than a working-class person? This is a completely empty-headed argument intellectually, and that critic ought to have been more rigorous.

**ADAM:** It's irrelevant. Why is he trying to impose class structures on music? Is Frank Sinatra any less of an artist because you have to pay a small fortune to see his concerts?

**MUSICIAN:** *But do your socially conscious songs actually achieve anything in terms of change, or are they simply a handy release valve for the consciences of thousands of young people?*

**BONO:** I don't think that it is an artist's duty to provide answers, and the idea that a rock 'n' roll band is going to change the political infrastructure of a country is, I think, just naive. We, as a group, don't have to justify *any* reaction to our music. Literally, if people went home and battered their wives after a U2 concert, or stuck syringes into their arms, or even committed mass suicide [*laughs*]—we can't be responsible for the exact response to our music. *But*, as it happens, the Conspiracy of Hope Tour *doubled* Amnesty International's membership in the United States. Significant?

**MUSICIAN:** *Yet it was reported that Amnesty International said that the number of young new members was more of a burden than anything else.*

**EDGE:** Not true. That was a spokesman who didn't know what he was talking about. We contacted Amnesty when we heard about that, and they said that, on the contrary, the young people who joined Amnesty International because of U2's interest and the Conspiracy of Hope Tour are greatly valued and are greatly effective.

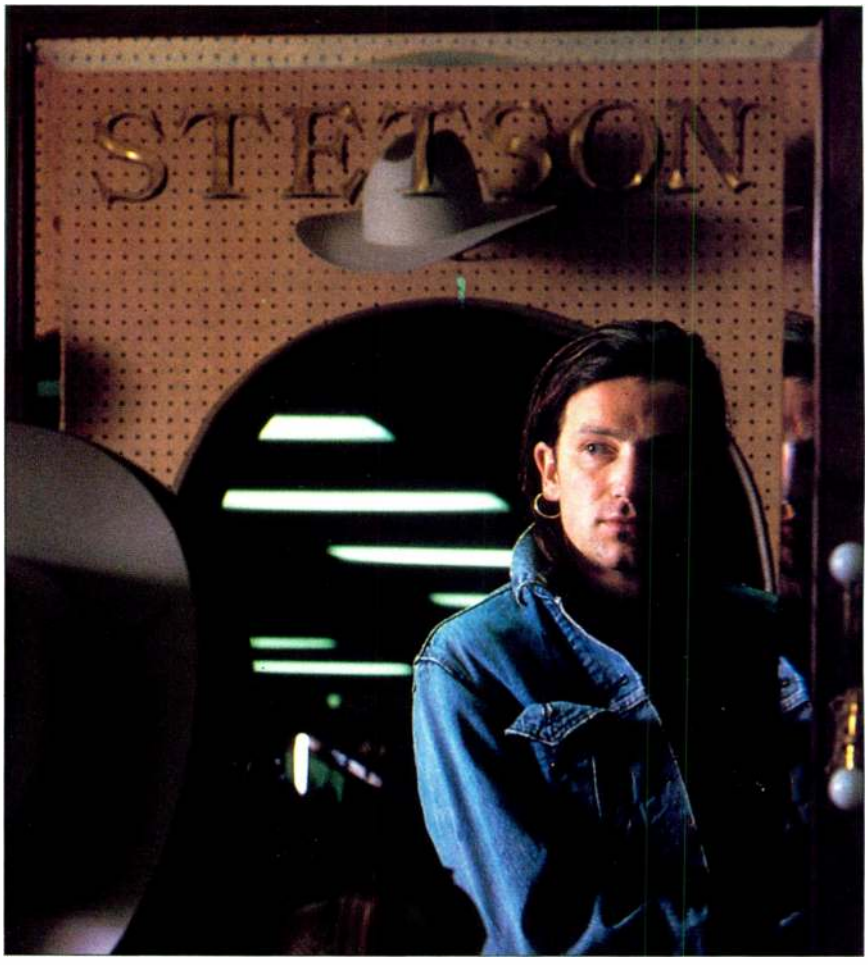
**BONO:** There are people who have been working for twenty years for that to happen! I read the article where that point was made, and not only was it bogus, but it was dangerous. It actually *encouraged* apathy, and that, I'm afraid, is the great middle-class disease. And I'll bet you one thing—that the guy who wrote that article isn't from Cedarwood Road [one of the less privileged areas of Dublin]. In my experience, the only people who talk about class structures are middle-class. As it happens, I *really* respect the U2 audience. I think they're extraordinary and, indeed, a kind of phenomenon in their own right. They come from different backgrounds, and it seems that, more than any other audience in rock 'n' roll, they have found a way of channeling their energy into hope.

**MUSICIAN:** *To an extent. At your homecoming concert at Croke Park there seemed to be an incredible feeling of solidarity between the band and the audience that I've never seen at an outdoor gig of that size. But Bob Geldof, in the British TV documentary on the show, said that the audience's new-found optimism would probably only last as long as the bus-ride home. There were a large number of drunk, semi-hysterical kids in the crowd.*

**BONO:** [*angrily*] How many? *All* of them?

**MUSICIAN:** *No, but a significant proportion, I'd say.*

**BONO:** A small minority of a rock 'n' roll audience of 50,000 is a lot of people. If even ten percent of them are assholes, it's a crowd, a frightening mob. But have you ever tuned into the police radio at midnight on Christmas Eve? It's unbelievable—you'll hear things like "They have a priest up against the wall." There are more people hurt at Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve in Dublin than at a U2 concert! Some people obviously drink too much. I've drunk too much; I've fallen over; I've called the fellow in front of me names and then put up my fists when he turned round. But a lot of the U2 audience are working men with wives and kids—a guy might work overtime so he can get to the concert. And why should we put the responsibility on him to sign up with Amnesty—the guy probably hasn't got the time to have his kid baptized by the local priest! You can't make these grand assessments of the whole audience. Go home with them; get on the bus with them! When was the last time Bob Geldof got on the bus to go home to Finglas? And who knows—maybe next time the kid will think twice about




**"Now the man in black will respect me."**

NEAL PRESTON CAMERA 5

## "In Ireland, a whole generation is on the slippery slope and they're holding on to us, trying to turn us into some kind of icon."

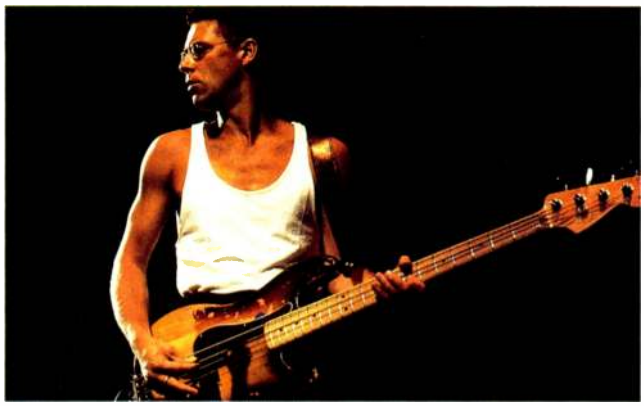
who he votes for, instead of only once.

**ADAM:** I just don't think it's true that people forget everything on the bus home—not at all.

**BONO:** Even if it *is* true, it doesn't detract from what U2 does.

**LARRY:** U2's music has many different elements. If someone comes along to a concert and is inspired to join Amnesty that's one part of it, but someone else may feel emotionally overwhelmed by the music, and someone else again may just come along to jump up and down and bop. They're all relevant; they're all important. They're intertwined, and to put emphasis on one element is wrong.

**BONO:** And that's the story of U2's relationship with the press. They put emphasis on one thing or another, instead of taking



**"Anybody can look like James Dean, but only I look like Sam Beckett."**

the situation as a whole. The press like grand statements, but not necessarily statements about truth. That's where we sometimes differ.

**EDGE:** They can simplify the message to a point where what's really being said by the band is no longer evident. What we're about is possibly too complicated to be explained in a few lines in a review, and even to attempt to explain it like that is wrong. I think a review can give an impression, but it can't sum up U2 in total, or give all the story.

**MUSICIAN:** *Where are journalists getting it wrong?*

**ADAM:** We can't tell you, man. Just listen to the records!

**BONO:** The most serious misconception is in oversimplification. It's easy to mock us because we have belief in, and respect for, our audience—in a way that is unusual for a rock 'n' roll band. It's easy to paint it as a populist ploy, or as stupidity and naiveté. But we came out of that audience, and we're now onstage, playing to it. Whether the U2 audience will be any more significant than the audiences of the 60s or 70s remains to be seen.

**EDGE:** We're just trying to figure out how to live in this world. That's what it's all about.

**BONO:** I'm sorry. I apologize if I got carried away with myself. This is an issue that riles me a little bit. I probably haven't expressed myself that well, because I'm still thinking the matter out—I haven't really thought it through enough to give an accurate response. But it worries me that people judge us by their own assumptions regarding what the band is about. When *The Unforgettable Fire* came out there was a negative reaction to it in the United States—it wasn't a straight rock 'n' roll album. At that point we *could* have made a rock 'n' roll album, but we started to experiment, and experimentation is almost not allowed, because pop is the dominant force in music in the 80s. People are impressed by record sales. Why? I also think that a great deal of rock criticism is at an all-time low at the moment. It's got to the stage in Ireland where journalists have decided to criticize U2 just for the hell of it! That's not a good enough reason. What rock 'n' roll criticism has to do is own up to its own limitations and uncertainties. And then there is the problem of being an Irish band in Ireland, where a whole generation is on the slippery slope, and they're holding on to us, trying to turn us into some kind of icon.

**MUSICIAN:** *How do you rid yourselves of that burden? And how can you keep in touch with that generation?*

**BONO:** I don't know. I don't know how we're going to do it. I'd say the odds are against us doing it. All this responsibility has been thrown upon us, just because we're a rock 'n' roll band.

**MUSICIAN:** *But you've taken a lot of it upon yourselves—it's a brave thing to have done.*

**BONO:** I suppose we make music that we want to hear. That's all. But I'll tell you what I think. I see something changing—I think people are looking for art that doesn't just reflect the chaos, but *challenges* it. And that's why I believe there will be a re-examination of soul music, country music, gospel and folk—music made by *people*. As one French writer said about us, what's so extraordinary about being *human*? To a lot of the intelligentsia, the most offensive aspect of U2 is our lack of self-consciousness. But rock 'n' roll is not an intellectual art form; it's much more to do with instinct. With U2 I'd like to achieve a balance between the head and the heart, and I'm not sure that we've got it yet. But at least that's what we're aiming for. I'd like to make a rock 'n' roll album now that has at its core a sense of abandonment—there are so few artists owning up to what it's like to have both fears *and* faith.

**ADAM:** Our music is about *humanity*; it doesn't create fantasies.

**BONO:** A filmmaker like Francis Ford Coppola doesn't have to justify *Apocalypse Now* in the way that we have had to justify songs like "Sunday Bloody Sunday" or "Bullet The Blue Sky." He sees things in a particular way, and expresses them in a movie. We accept it, look at it, and examine the *film*. With U2 that doesn't seem to be the case. This word "responsibility" crops up all the time in assessments of U2, but do critics judge Coppola by the reaction of cinema-goers to *Apocalypse Now*? Shouldn't we ask that question about rock criticism? People said, "How can you write a song like 'Sunday Bloody Sunday' when you don't live in Derry?" But they didn't ask Coppola if he was on the river being smuggled into Cambodia. Of course he wasn't—he's a *writer*! I think that rock 'n' roll criticism itself has to be reappraised—it has to be more intellectually rigorous. It's turning in on itself, and the same standards should apply to rock as apply to other art forms.

**MUSICIAN:** *Tell me about the three songs on the B-side of your new single, "Where The Streets Have No Name."*

**EDGE:** They're different. They're three extremes of what U2

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can do. The first one is a version of "Silver And Gold," where you'll find some of the rawest rock 'n' roll that you can hear. We've got a beautiful song called "Sweetest Thing," which is pop as it should be—not produced out of existence, but pop produced with a real intimacy and purity. It's very new for us.

The last one is called "Race Against Time," which is a study in rhythm. It's like taking some of the rhythms of traditional Irish music, where there is no emphasis on the two or the four—a strange, twisting, rhythmic experiment. I actually played bass on the track, but it was inspired by Adam. He has the knack of playing parts that no one else would ever think of. My bass-playing is very predictable, but this is one of my more unusual parts.

**BONO:** On the "With Or Without You" EP there are three songs that all deal with obsession, with that kind of sexuality. I'd like to have done a whole side, a whole record, blue. That EP is something close.

**MUSICIAN:** *"Luminous Times" is very somber—it's almost like a track from* Low *or* "Heroes."

**EDGE:** It's a great track. Some of those songs would definitely

**"Boy, it's tough coming up with photo captions."**

have been contenders for the album, but what happened was—and it is a classically "U2" thing to do—we had quite a lot of time to work on the record, but right in the middle the Amnesty tour came up. That took us out of circulation for about two months, because of the dates, recovering, getting the gear back, and getting back into the studio. We ran out of time. There could have been two records, depending on which songs we decided to finish. There was this one album, the "blues" album that Bono was talking about, and another, much more "European," which is kind of the way I was led. "Luminous Times" would have been on it, as would "Walk To The Water." In a funny way you aim somewhere, but the album itself makes up its own mind. We hustled to try to finish it, and to get our own views across, but it is a democratic band, and neither my nor Bono's feelings came through completely. What we ended up with was *The Joshua Tree.*

**MUSICIAN:** *Why didn't "Spanish Eyes" make it onto the album?*

**EDGE:** It wasn't ready. That's the only reason. I discovered this cassette of something that Adam, Larry and I were playing around with, and it evolved in the course of an afternoon's recording in Adam's house. It was forgotten, and months later I dug it up and played it to the group. We then realized it was great, but it had got lost in the confusion.

**BONO:** Marc Coleman, our assistant, has been through my cassette collection, and he found about a hundred songs that I've collected over the last five years. There are acoustic bits and pieces, bits of the band at sound-checks—and he reckons that at least half of them are goers.

**MUSICIAN:** *The song that Marc engineered—"Deep In The Heart"—is very free-form. It's unusual for U2.*

**EDGE:** That's exactly what it is. It's a bit like the "4th Of July" of this record. With "4th Of July" Adam and I were in this room playing and we didn't even know we were being recorded. It was the same with "Deep In The Heart."

**ADAM:** It was actually recorded on a 4-track cassette machine. It was the only recorder set up.

**BONO:** "Deep In The Heart" was a simple three-chord song idea that I'd written on the piano, about the last day I spent in Cedarwood Road, in my family house. After I left and went out on my own my father was living there by himself, and there were a lot of break-ins. Heroin addiction in the area was up and kids needed the money. Anyway, my father decided to sell the little house, and before he moved out I went back there and thought about the place, which I'd known since I was small. I remembered a sexual encounter I'd had there—"Thirteen years old, sweet as a rose, every petal of her paper-thin... Love will make you blind, creeping from behind, gets you jumping out of your skin. Deep in the heart of this place..." The simple piano piece that I had was *nothing* like what these guys turned it into, which was an almost jazz-like improvisation on three chords. The rhythm section turned it into a very special piece of music.

**LARRY:** Yeah, like Edge says, these moments just come along when you're not expecting them. The great thing about U2, and probably about Adam and myself more than anyone else, is that we *struggle* with our musicianship all the time. We don't know what to do. We don't know what the format is, we don't know what a great rhythm section is supposed to do; we're still discovering. Even now—and I hope that this is something that doesn't disappear—it's the struggle, the fight to get it right, that makes U2 what it is. The day that U2 stops fighting is the day that U2 will not be the band that it is now.

**MUSICIAN:** *Do you listen to other drummers, Larry?*

**LARRY:** I'm very rarely inspired by them. I get more inspiration listening to Christy Moore playing the bodhran than listening to Steve Gadd. But I *look* at drummers. When we did the Amnesty tour, I asked Manu Katche if I could sit down behind him and watch. He was freaked and didn't know what I was doing, but I just wanted to see what *real* drummers get up to! I like to watch, as opposed to listening. It's just jealousy, I suppose, based on the realization that a good drummer can do things that I can't. There are two angles to drumming, which you can see by comparing Manu Katche with, say, Omar Hakim, who's an incredible technician. They both sit at the kit in the same way; they both have similar attitudes and the same flair, but Manu has a *feel* that I really admire. On the Peter Gabriel tour he was offered work on four albums, I think, and I got anxious for him, because I saw the risk of him becoming a session-head. Another drummer I really like is Andy Newmark, for his precision. He never put in any frills. I remember meeting him in a hotel a long time ago, and I said, "Look, I'm having a problem with tempo, and I'm a bit embarrassed about using a click." He said, "I use a click all the time in the studio." He talked to me for maybe an hour, and he explained to me how to work with a click, how to rehearse—all those sorts of things.

**MUSICIAN:** *You have control of your studio drum sound?*

**LARRY:** Yes, complete. But Edge or Bono might suggest something—we work together on it. Nothing that I do is really my own; everything is influenced by the others.

**MUSICIAN:** *Do you and Adam work together in the early stages of*

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## "To a lot of the intelligentsia the most offensive aspect of U2 is our lack of self-consciousness."

*laying down the backing tracks?*

**LARRY:** We've found it very difficult working together, because neither one of us knew how to play in a band. I'd say, "What are we meant to do here? The bass line goes like that, and I want to play it *this* way!" An awful lot is battling through it. It was only on *The Joshua Tree*, and now live, that Adam and I are complementing each other. We've never done that before. It's not through our own fault—we never learned how to do it.

**ADAM:** I take my cue from Larry's drumming, to be honest. Once Larry has decided on a beat for a song, I try to emphasize it with the bass. We'll rehearse the bass and drums sometimes if we're having a problem with a song.

**LARRY:** But that's only a new development. At the beginning it was much more difficult, because Adam wasn't playing what a normal bass-player would, and I wasn't always doing what a normal drummer would do. So there was conflict, not in terms of personality, but as far as the playing was concerned. Things weren't sounding right, and so we worked really hard, listening to dance-music, trying to find out how a dance record is made.

**ADAM:** On the recording of the first three albums we didn't do the backing tracks as a band. The backing tracks were usually guitar and drums, and I'd put down the bass later. I had the luxury, once the song was there, of being able to figure out a bass part. I hated using cans in the studio, because you can't hear anything, so I would do the bass in the control-room, where I could hear the bass and drums. Now we don't bother with cans at all; we use stage monitors.

**MUSICIAN:** *You worked on two songs on Robbie Robertson's new album. I can see some similarities between you and the early Band—a kind of pioneering spirit and a visionary quality. And like the Band, you've looked closely at America from an outsider's perspective.*

**EDGE:** We spring from the same source, perhaps. That comparison is an interesting one, because, as Robbie said—what was his turn of phrase?

**BONO:** "I was fifteen, and I guess I had the *fever!*" Robbie puts on sunglasses before he plays up the neck of his guitar. There was messing about and there was playing for real. When he played for real he looked the part—he was incredible to watch. He had the Hawaiian shirt on, and the shades, and he was belting it out. As a singer he's totally underestimated, and, indeed, he underestimates himself. He has an extraordinary voice.

**EDGE:** What we're doing now, and what we were interested in doing then, was finding out about the original blues music—not the rehashed white blues, which was so awful—which has the spirit of what we've been trying to express since the beginning: the feeling of alienation and loss, the feeling of not being at one with your circumstances. Their music has pain in it, depth and a sense of personal commitment.

**MUSICIAN:** *You don't think that white guys can sing the blues? When I bought the John Mayall and Eric Clapton* Bluesbreakers *album in 1966 it sounded pretty authentic to me, as I imagine your music sounds emotionally authentic to your fans.*

**EDGE:** By the time we had arrived that whole scene had gone.

**BONO:** Clapton is a true bluesman, there's no question about that. The blues doesn't belong to any color.

**EDGE:** Yeah, it's all about feeling. I'm sure that Eric Clapton is more of a bluesman than, say, Robert Cray—but I'm judging purely on instinct. There must have been blacks who felt the blues more than whites, but at the same time I think it's possible for white guys to feel the same emotions—like Keith Richards or Eric Clapton. Those feelings make the blues.

**BONO:** I think it is inverted racism to believe that the color of your skin prevents you from being a soul singer or blues player.

**ADAM:** What we're discovering now is that pop music, or commercial music that you hear on the radio, is just not for us. It doesn't fit in with what we're trying to do. We understood Irish traditional music first, realized that it had a long history, and with that kind of understanding we were able to go through to country music and appreciate its depths, and eventually end up somewhere in the Delta. That's what we're focusing our atttention on now, rather than on studio techniques.

**LARRY:** But it would be wrong to suppose that when one of us gets into the blues suddenly everyone says, "Wow! Let's go for it!" We all have different tastes. My interest in blues music is from Bono's perspective, which is that of soul singers. That's what attracts me, as opposed to the actual history of the blues, of which my knowledge is obviously very limited, because I grew up in the 70s.

**MUSICIAN:** *I hear you want to record a country album, Larry.*

**LARRY:** I've had it planned for a long time, but I still haven't got around to doing anything about it. When this tour's finished, I'll get down to it seriously.

**MUSICIAN:** *I'm told that you have a great voice—that's what Maria McKee says, anyway!*

**LARRY:** Well, this is true. [*Guffaws from the band*] You think Robbie Robertson is underestimated!

**BONO:** Go on, give us an aul' song!

**LARRY:** I did say to Maria that if I did get this country record together, I'd like her to come and help me sing, and maybe write a few songs. Unfortunately, I can't play guitar, and when I did start to learn, I did something to my hand and I couldn't get it round the neck. These guys think that I didn't bother to try [*laughter*], but it's completely untrue, and I *will* learn how to play. My initial interest started when I got into Johnny Cash through Bono here—he was always talking about the *At Folsom Prison* album—and then I became friendly with a guy who loaned me all his country records. I've always known Patsy Cline songs, although I never really understood them, but now I listen to Johnny Cash, to younger people like Steve

### TRIP THROUGH THEIR WIRES

U2's touring gear is best divided into categories. Electric guitars include a Gibson Explorer and Les Paul, two Fender Strats and Teles, a Modulus Graphite and a Squier Strat. Acoustics are an Ibanez M-4321 V and Yamaha FG 365II and 1.20A guitars. Adam's basses include Fender P- and J-Basses, a Zon Legacy with Bartolini pickups and an Ibanez Musician. All strings are Superwound and Rotosounds.

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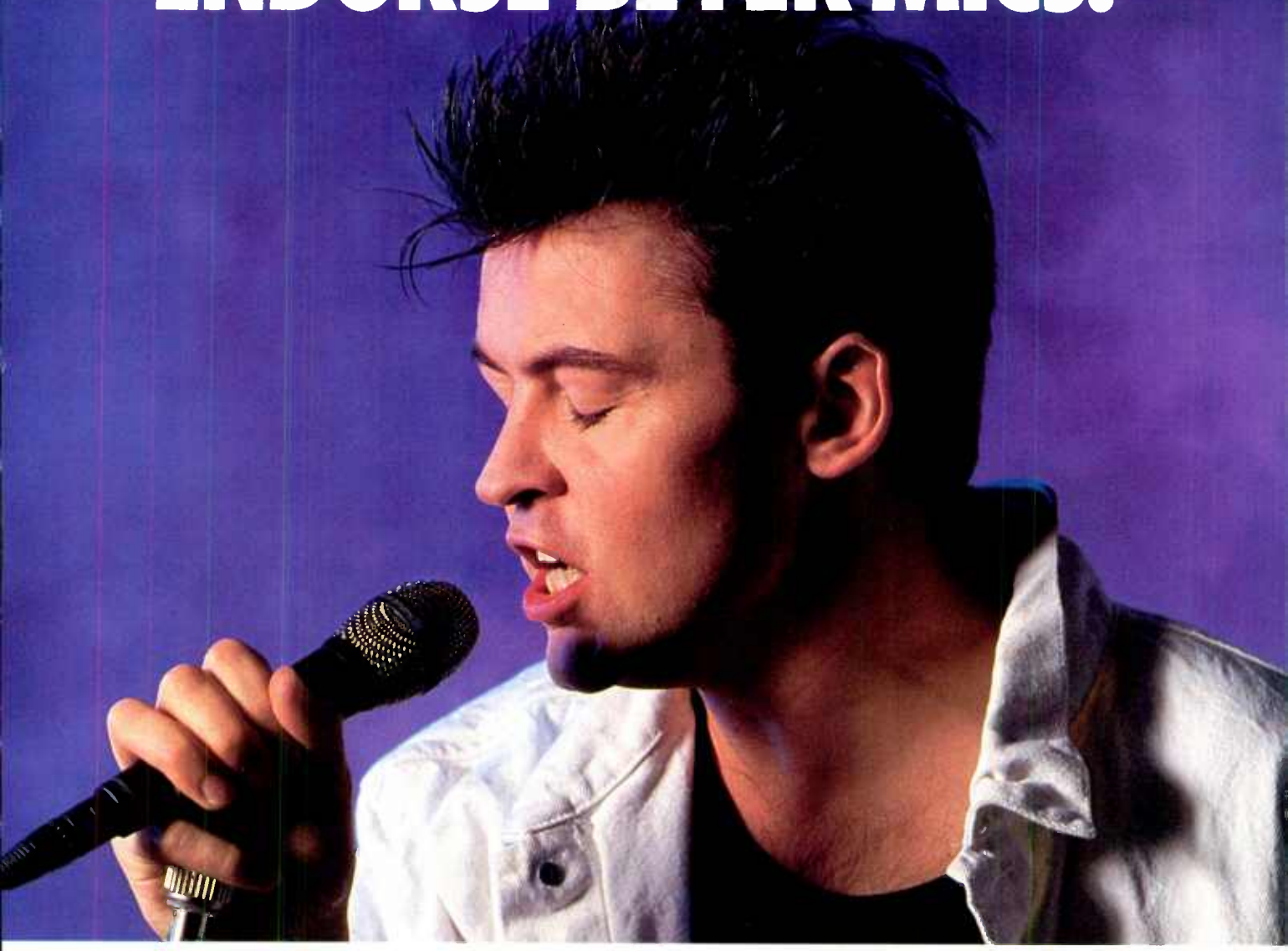

*Paul Young shown using the Beyer MCE 81 Tourgroup Series mic.*

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Earle and Dwight Yoakam, and to the Judds especially.

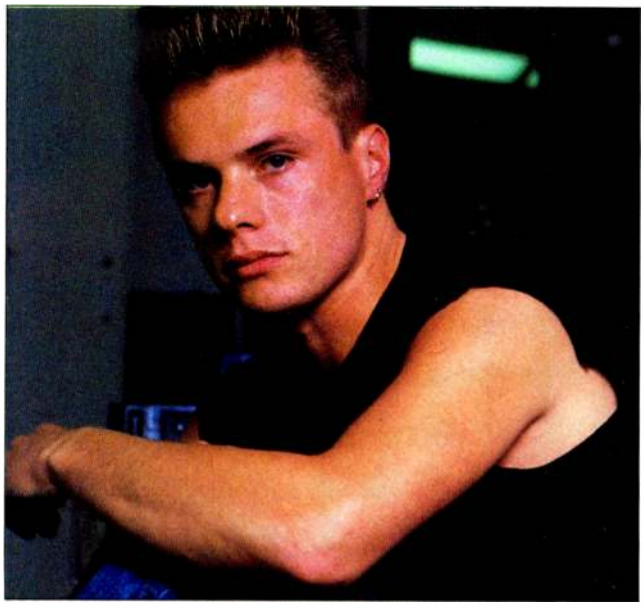
**BONO:** Larry gets love letters from the Judds!

**MUSICIAN:** *You've been writing country and blues songs, Bono?*

**BONO:** I wrote one for Roy Orbison called "She's a Mystery To Me." "When Love Comes To Town" is the one I wrote for B.B. King. I haven't sent them out yet—I write them, then I lose them. Anyway, they're not fully demoed yet...

**EDGE:** The best story is about the time that Bono, T-Bone Burnett, Bob Dylan, and I were up one night writing a song, and Bono lost the lyrics! So I hope Bob has them...

**BONO:** There's another song I wrote about B.B.'s guitar, called "Lucille," but that's a country song. "When Love Comes To Town" goes like this: [*sings softly*] "I was a sailor lost at sea; I was under the waves before love rescued me; I was a fighter, I could turn on a thread, but I stand accused of the things that I've said—when love comes to town I'm gonna catch that plane. Baby, I was wrong to ever let you down, but I did what I did before love came to town!" The last verse is a gospel verse: [*changing tempo*] "I was there when they crucified the Lord; I held the scabbard when the soldiers drew the sword. I threw the dice when they pierced his side, but I've seen love conquer the great divide!"



**"To my dearest Wynona—luv, L.M. Jr."**

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**MUSICIAN:** *Robertson said that when you're writing lyrics for a band you've got to write on the group's behalf, not just for yourself. Would you agree?*

**BONO:** No.

**EDGE:** Not actually true, but accidentally true. There's such a strength of commitment within the group that ninety-eight percent of Bono's lyrics could have been written as if they were for the band.

**BONO:** But a writer has to be selfish.

**EDGE:** It's not that Bono would ever be precious about his lyrics—he always comes to us and discusses them. We may only be his first critics, but in that sense there is an input, and occasionally someone from the band will contribute.

**BONO:** Edge will sometimes walk up to me and say something like, "I still haven't found what I'm looking for," and I'll turn it into a song. The original statement came from Edge, and it occasionally happens that a song will work out that way. But I think that the group would support me if I went out on a limb, even if it's something that they don't fully believe in.

**MUSICIAN:** *T-Bone Burnett said that Bono is an inheritor of John Lennon's gift for making grand statements, and that U2, with its capacity for musical expansiveness, is one of the few bands able to "fill" a stadium.*

**BONO:** Well, John Lennon was an artist of *performance*, in a way, and U2, onstage, is the same—there is a *performance* of music that has previously been made. We work with what we have before us. If it's a small club, like in the early days, I might get off the stage. We once played to seventeen people in Birmingham and I would sit down with them in the middle of songs. I'd drink from their glasses, and pour the rest over their heads. If we're playing in arenas, we'll adapt accordingly. U2 music tends to float a bit, and it suits not being hemmed in by a small room. When we're recording we use the studio as an instrument, and we work with the stage as an artist might work with a canvas. We make big music that isn't easily contained.

**ADAM:** You see, our love of music is not just for the sound, but for the fact that you can communicate with people through it. That's what I believe U2 is all about. It's an ability to reach people, to touch them, to have a relationship with someone through your music. There are no physical limitations to that. You try to provide the biggest platform on which you can get through to people—and for them to get through to you. It's a two-way process.

**EDGE:** But we never sit down to write a "big" song or a "big" lyric. We write songs because we want to express something.

**BONO:** I find that people make assumptions about U2 based on the singles, or on the *Under a Blood Red Sky* film. They accept the rhetoric that *War* is a very brash record, but on that LP is a song called "Drowning Man," which is the most intimate musical piece. *The Unforgettable Fire* is a very intimate album, and a very personal one. "Pride" was the odd song out, and if someone judges the album by that one single, then he's missing out. I take it as a compliment if someone says that we're making grand statements, but I'm not just interested in that. As a writer I'm now more concerned with complexities and gray areas than I ever was. We made black and white statements in a particular period in the group's history, when we kind of went through the John Lennon Handbook; Lennon wrote a song called "Sunday Bloody Sunday."

**MUSICIAN:** *There are plenty of comparisons between the Beatles and U2 these days.*

**EDGE:** I don't know if there really are any significant comparisons to be made, beyond the fact that, like the Beatles, U2 is a *band*. Otherwise, I don't know... There's a guy who argues that there is a twenty-year cycle to everything, and that *The Joshua Tree* and *Sergeant Pepper* are exactly twenty years apart! [*laughs*]

**BONO:** When we were kids, everyone wanted to be in the Beatles. Now we are! [*laughs*] I'm only kidding! THAT'S A JOKE! In the 80s, which is a barren era, we look back at the 60s as a great reservoir of talent, of high ideals, and of the will and desire to change things. We're turning the 60s into the twentieth-century Renaissance, and trying to relive the period. Therefore people want to turn U2 into the Beatles.

**LARRY:** The only good thing about the references, for me, is that the Beatles, like us, didn't take themselves too seriously. They had a laugh, made music seriously, and that was it. We're not spokesmen for a generation.

**MUSICIAN:** *So let's talk about the music. "Where The Streets Have No Name" is a classic introductory album track. It really sets the pace and the context for the rest of the album.*

*continued on page 114*

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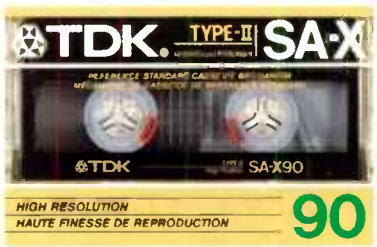


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# TOM WAITS IS FLYING UPSIDE DOWN (ON PURPOSE)

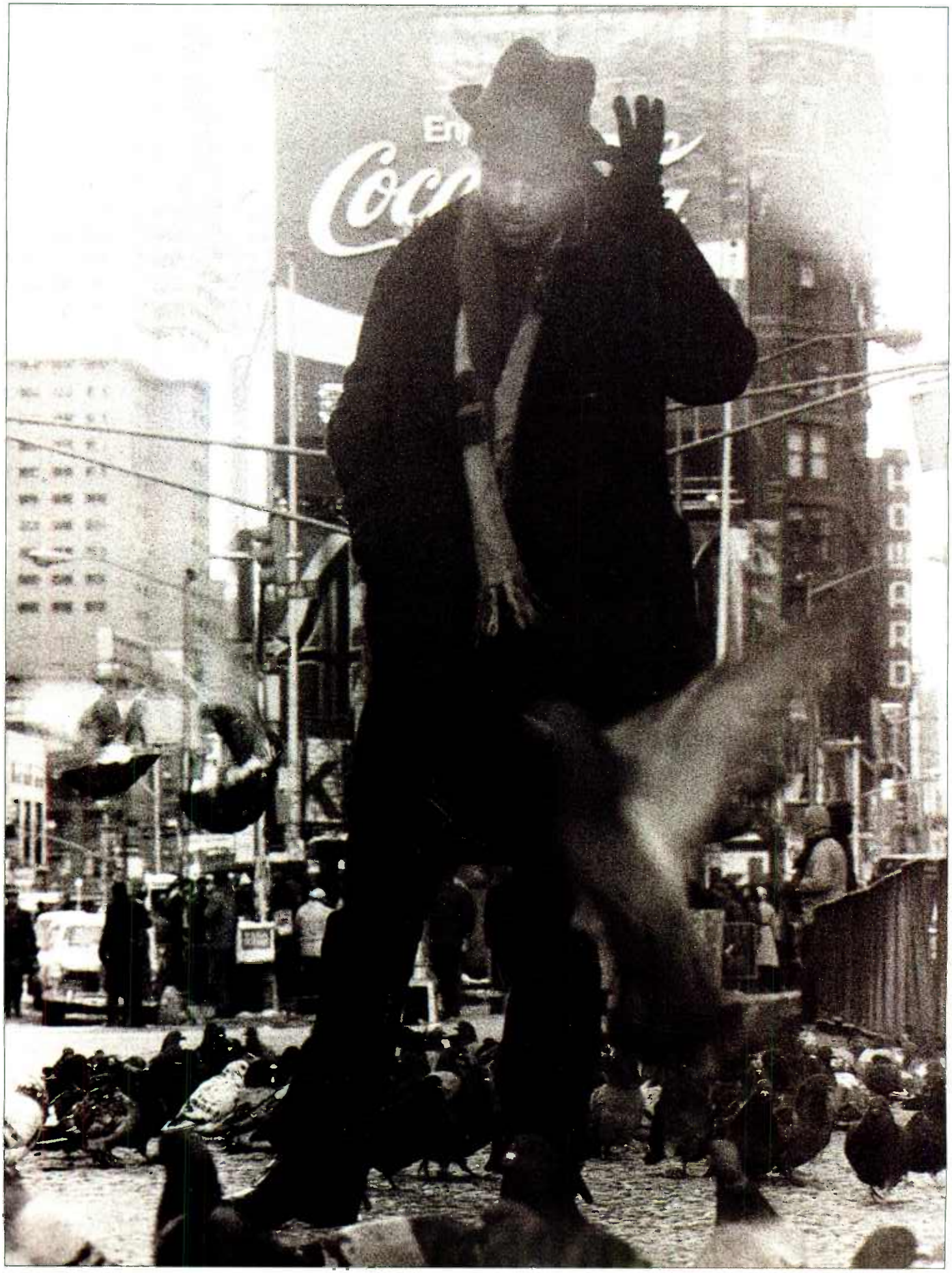
"It's always the mistakes," Tom Waits is saying. "Most things begin as a mistake. Most breakthroughs in music come out of a revolution of the form. Someone revolted, and was probably not well-liked. But he ultimately started his own country."

A few years ago, Tom Waits started his own country. Quite literally the born traveler (he debuted in this life from the back seat of a taxi), he proceeded to stockpile the place with the exotic goods of a worldly imagination. A wheezing accordion from a seedy tango palace, blues licks honed on a razor strap. A marimba highjacked to the South Seas during a performance of the *Nutcracker Suite*. A crusty doughnut from an abandoned flophouse, sloshed down with a German drinking song, or something like that. A thousand and one nocturnal images to make your heart race and your head itch, conjured by a rasping voice on the lam from the Surgeon General. Waits planted one flag called *Swordfishtrombones* (demarcating latitude and longitude), then another titled *Rain Dogs*. And while neither has exactly jammed the Voice of America, they're the kind of signposts you like to have around when someone—maybe yourself—starts to wonder if popular music still has the originality or vitality to really matter.

Waits' latest chapter, *Frank's Wild Years*, first appeared in somewhat altered costume last summer as a one-man opera for the Steppenwolf Theater Company in Chicago. Waits sees it as the end of a trilogy (the album title and central character are taken from a song on *Swordfishtrombones*), and, like its predecessors, it's an unusually large collection of tunes (seventeen) that invites neither easy assimilation nor casual dismissal. This is music designed to insinuate itself into your consciousness (the context of a play might quicken the process), but, also like *Rain Dogs*, the various puzzle parts eventually align themselves into a theme.

To summarize, *Frank's Wild Years* takes the form of a reminiscence, the story of a guy who decided to let fantasy navigate his life's course (in the original song, he escapes middle-class bondage by torching his house). It's a kind of American Dream. Several songs set the tone for fabulous exploits: the murky excitement of a getaway in "Hang On St. Christopher," a tribal rhumba called "Straight To The Top," a siren song about "Temptation." But Frank's fantasy life turns out to be just that; the presence of a more jarring reality occurs during a reprise of "Straight To The Top" as a pathetic lounge number (it's the twisted Vegas parody Waits fans have long fantasized about) and a truly nightmarish "I'll Take New York," which begins as an unwieldy siege and ends with what's left of Frank's hopes careening down an elevator shaft. By journey's end he's become mournful, drowning his sorrows in weepers like "Cold Cold Ground" and the "Train Song," the latter a minor masterpiece that's as timeless as great gospel. The album's coda, "Innocent When You Dream," sounds like a whisper from the hollows of a broken man's memory. It's a strange, funny and soulful saga, spiced with a cauldron of musical surprises Waits stirs together with

BY MARK ROWLAND




GEORGE DUBOSE

shamanistic skill.

He has help. Much of what separates Waits' past three albums from his early career, after all, is the way he's expanded his musical palette, from solo piano man to chief alchemist for a gang of complementary dispositions. Those cohorts include guitarist Marc Ribot, percussionist Michael Blair, bassist and horn arranger Greg Cohen, Ralph Carney on saxophone and William Schimmel on a variety of equipment, from accordion to Leslie bass pedals. Waits' instruments include pump organ, guitar, mellotron, even something called the optigon, but nothing so astonishing as that voice—here marinating a tender ballad, there howling through a circle of hell, finally settling into a familiarly phlegmatic, lung-crunching groove. He'll never have Whitney Houston's pipes, but he's the better singer.

Of all the pop songwriters who have followed in Bob Dylan's footsteps (that is, everyone), few suggest superficial comparison less than Waits. And yet, more than anyone else, he has done the one deed crucial to Dylan's entire mythology: shattered his chosen form despite deep feeling for its traditions, then found his voice by reconstructing shards from the rubble into a new kind of pop musical language. Dylan's "mistakes" set off an instant revolution; that won't happen with Waits, but it's a good bet he's already planted the seeds for future subversions.

Ironically, part of the tradition Waits deep-sixed includes his first seven albums, from 1973's *Closing Time* through 1980's *Heartattack And Vine*. It's a period of his career he now seems to view as germinal as best, though it produced a wealth of fine songs, some popularized in versions by more conventional singers (Springsteen's "Jersey Girl," the Eagles' "Ol' 55"), lyrics and melodies spun into webs of deceptively sturdy construction. His former persona—a combination thread of 50s beatnik, 40s vaudevillian, 30s melodist, and so on into the nineteenth century—may seem dated, but that was always deliberate. Along with Waits' deprecating humor and the prevailing wisdom that his face-on-the-barroom-floor theatricality accurately reflected a chosen lifestyle, it had earned him a cult following for life, or at least what was likely to remain of it.

But Waits has always shunned clichés, even tragic ones. Subtly at first, he found escape hatches from encroaching stereotypes. His work began to include movie scores (such as the underrated *One From The Heart*, which included duets with Crystal Gayle, of all people) and film appearances—*Rumblefish*, *Cotton Club* and most notably Jim Jarmusch's *Down By Law*. He has a role opposite Jack Nicholson in the forthcoming film adaptation of William Kennedy's Pulitzer-winning novel *Ironweed*. In 1980 he married Kathleen Brennan; they've since become songwriting partners. (She co-wrote the libretto for *Frank's Wild Years* and collaborated on several of the songs.) They have two children.

Tom Waits recently sat down for talk and a few beers in one of his favorite joints, the Traveler's Cafe. A Filipino coffee shop and bar not far from downtown Los Angeles, it's the kind of place that looks closed even after you walk inside. We settled into a weathered booth, as far from the light of afternoon as the middle of a Trader Vic's, though these surroundings emanated considerably more warmth and raffish charm.

The same could be said for Waits. Attired in a black leather jacket, nondescript gray shirt and day-old stubble, he looked and occasionally played the role of house raconteur; as anyone who's followed his career knows, he's a fine storyteller and a funny guy. But he also leavened the humor with insightful observations that, beneath the wisecracking surface, suggested a core of emotional vulnerability and generosity of spirit. He's not the sort you'd presume to "know" after one or two encounters, but it's clear the music of Tom Waits has acquired its special character in large part because he *has* character. The best mistakes require no less.

**MUSICIAN:** *Your approach to music has changed dramatically over your last three albums, beginning with* Swordfishtrombones. *Can you reconstruct that transitional period?*

**WAITS:** I don't know if I can reconstruct it really—it wasn't religious or anything. You get to an impasse creatively at some point, and you can either ignore it or deal with it. And it's like anything, you go down a road and...hopefully, there's a series of tunnels. I'd started feeling like my music was very separate from myself. My life had changed and my music had stayed pretty much its own thing. I thought I had to find a way to bring it closer. Not so much with my life as with my imagination.

**MUSICIAN:** *Was it also a matter of getting more confident?*

**WAITS:** Not so much [with] subject matter. I mean, my voice is still a barking dog at best. You get a little taller, you see a little further; you grow up. Hopefully we all keep growing. That sounds a little corny but...you have to decide whether you're going to give this up and start working in the salt mines, or take chances. I never take the chances that I would really like to, if I had more courage. But it's a beginning.

**MUSICIAN:** *Have the results surprised you?*

**WAITS:** No, I knew who I was working with. You surround yourself with people who can know when you're trying to discover something, and they're part of the process. Keith Richards had an expression for it that's very apropos: He called it "the hair in the gate." You know when you go to the movies and you watch an old film, and a piece of hair catches in the gate? It's quivering there and then it flies away. That's what I was trying to do—put the hair in the gate.

**MUSICIAN:** *You've said that when you're writing you'll sometimes put together words by feeling, and later understand why they fit. Do you put together your music that way, or are you following through a fairly concrete plan?*

**WAITS:** It's like when you're in a film and you see where the camera is, and then invariably one will look to the left out of the frame and see something infinitely more interesting. That's what I try to look out for. It's not a science. It's like when you hear music "wrong" or when you hear it coming through a wall and it mixes in—I pay attention to those things. That's the hair in the gate. You can't always do it, and sometimes it's just distraction. Other times it's imperative that you follow the rabbit, and roll.

**MUSICIAN:** *Do you feel by now you've got control of your voice? I don't mean literally your voice, but your ability to communicate.*

**WAITS:** You always work on your voice. Once you feel as though you have one, whatever you tackle will come under the spell of what you're trying to do. You want to be able to make turns and fly upside down—but not by mistake. You want it to be a conscious decision, and to do it well. You don't want somebody to say, "Well, he went for the bank there and lost control and he went right into the mountain and thirty-seven people died." You want 'em to say, "Well, he decided to take his hands off the controls and sacrifice the entire plane and its passengers. And I must say it was a spectacular flight. The explosion set off sparks that could be seen all the way to Oxnard. Remarkable."

I think you have to work on yourself more than you work on the music. Then whatever you're aiming at you'll be able to hit between the eyes.

**MUSICIAN:** *You did wait a long time before taking your musical leap. So maybe that was a crucial part of the process.*

**WAITS:** It's strange. It's all a journey. You don't know where it's going to take you, the people that you meet and the changes your life will bring. I can say I wished I'd jumped off earlier, but I don't know if I actually jumped off anything or else, you know, just redecorated.

But I know that the last three records are a departure from what I was doing; I'm very aware of that. I don't write the same way. I used to sit in a room with a piano, the Tin Pan Alley approach. I thought that's how songs were written.

**MUSICIAN:** *That's how songs* were *written.*

**WAITS:** Yeah, you go to work and write songs. I still do that, but now sometimes I break everything I've found. It's like you give a kid a toy and they play with the wrapping. I do that now.

**MUSICIAN:** *Forty years ago the kind of music you played might be more or less dictated by where you grew up.*

**WAITS:** You think you're a victim of your musical environment. To a degree you are.

**MUSICIAN:** *But now it's different. You have access to everything, and what you lose are your roots.*

**WAITS:** Your world is only as large as you make it. What you decide to include and to affect you is very much up to you. What you ultimately do with it is something else. It's like the blind men describing the elephant, you know? "It's a small apartment, it's a trailer, it's a large billfold."

As far as influences, it takes a long time for something to find its way into what you do. You have to plant it, water it, let it grow. You know where they say in Genesis that man was made from clay? Now they're saying that clay, genetically, contains all the information of every life form. It's all in the clay. You hit it with a hammer, a light comes from it. They've done experiments with Egyptian pottery made on a wheel thousands of years ago—they play the plates backwards and receive a recording, a very primitive recording of what took place in the room. Your ghosts. So, I'll buy that.

**MUSICIAN:** *So you have to search for your roots, in the right places.*

**WAITS:** The first stroke is always the most important. Kids do that. I watch kids draw and go, Jesus, I wish I could do that. I wish I could get back there. I wish I could go through the keyhole. You become very self-conscious as you get older, and less spontaneous, and you feel very victimized by your creative world, your creative person.

**MUSICIAN:** *What can you do about it?*

**WAITS:** You try and work on it. With music, I mean, some people believe you're cutting off a piece of something that's alive. It's like the guy who had a prize pig with all these bandages over it. And his neighbor asks, "What happened to the pig?" The first guy says, "I use it for bacon. I can't kill such a beautiful pig, I just take a slice off him now and then." So, you don't want to kill the pig.

**MUSICIAN:** *The way you describe it, it seems the process of growing as a musician—or anything—is about finding the doors that let you out of the boxes you put yourself in. And inevitably you're dissatisfied in retrospect no matter what you do.*

**WAITS:** That's just human nature. Somebody has to take it from you, just to allow it to dry. The process of "mixing" makes me insane. I feel like I'm underwater without scuba gear.

**MUSICIAN:** *So who finally puts the cork in the bottle?*

**WAITS:** I do. Or my wife hits me with a frying pan.

**MUSICIAN:** *On* Frank's Wild Years *you two collaborate on several songs. Did that require much adjustment on your part?*

**WAITS:** It's good. She's very unself-conscious, like the way kids will sing things just as they occur to them. It was chemistry. I mean, we've got kids. Once you do that together, the other stuff is simple.

**MUSICIAN:** *Has family life changed your outlook?*

**WAITS:** No, but if you don't get that bug off the back of your seat he's gonna go right down into your pocket. [*smiles*] That's what I like about this place.

**MUSICIAN:** *It's been a favorite of yours for a while. But you moved to New York while making* Rain Dogs. *Where are you settled now?*

**WAITS:** I don't know where I'm living. Citizen of the world. I live for adventure and to hear the lamentations of the women...I've uprooted a lot. It's like being a traveling salesman. People sit at a desk all day—that's a rough place, you know? I've lived in a lot of different towns. There's a

**T.W.'s warm-up exercises**

JEFFREY NEWBURY

certain gypsy quality, and I'm used to it. I find it easy to write under difficult circumstances and I can capture what's going on. I'm moving towards needing a compound, though. An estate. But in the meantime I'm operating out of a storefront here in the Los Angeles area.

**MUSICIAN:** *It seemed you were living on the edge more during the early 70s, in a physical sense. That you've become more settled. Do you worry how that might affect your inspirations?*

**WAITS:** It's never been settled—my life is not what I would call normal or predictable. But yeah, you think about it because what's going on becomes the reservoir for your stuff. You want details? When I was living in New York it was a very insane time. But these songs [*Frank's Wild Years*] were written to be part of a story.

> "If John Lennon had any idea that someday Michael Jackson would be deciding the future of his material, he'd come back from the grave and kick his ass, and kick it real good, in a way that we would enjoy."

**MUSICIAN:** *Did you sense certain parallels between Frank's life story and your own?*

**WAITS:** No, it's just indicative. A drawing that maybe a couple of people would know where those things match up. Your friends and family know, it's a record of something, but not a photograph.

**MUSICIAN:** *Your father's name is Frank. Is that a coincidence?*

**WAITS:** My dad asked me the same thing. Well, Frank did have his wild years. But this is not verbatim. My dad's from Texas. His name is actually Jesse Frank, he's named after Jesse and Frank James. When you came to California in the 40s it was a lot hipper to be named Frankie, after Frank Sinatra, than to go with Jesse—they think you're from the dust bowl. "What did you get here in, a Model A?" But no, Dad, it's not about you.

**MUSICIAN:** *Frank lets fantasies rule his life, but without any direction or sense of reality his life becomes very self-destructive.*

**WAITS:** The laws that govern your private madness when applied to the daily routine of living your life can coagulate into a collision.

**MUSICIAN:** *His "Train Song" is like a mourn of regret, it says, "I ruined my life." And then "Innocent When You Dream" is there to soothe the pain.*

**WAITS:** Well, that's where it starts. When you're young you think everything is possible and that you're in the sun and all that. I always liked that Bob Dylan song, "I was young when I left home and I rambled around and I never wrote a letter to my home, to my home. Never wrote a letter to my home."

You don't always know where you're going till you get there. That's the thing about train travel, at least when you say goodbye they get gradually smaller. Airplanes, people go through a door and they're gone. Very strange. They say now that jet lag is really your spirit catching up to your body.

**MUSICIAN:** *So much of the record deals with dreams; they're mentioned in the songs, and the music itself has a dream-like quality. Is that where some of the album came from?*

**WAITS:** Real life, you know, it's very difficult. These are actually more like daydreams. And sometimes a song may find you and then you find it.

**MUSICIAN:** *"Innocent When You Dream" is a centerpiece of the record and suggests that dreams are a source of rebirth.*

**WAITS:** Sure to be a Christmas favorite. Wait'll you get the promotion guys out on the road with that one.

**MUSICIAN:** *Well, it does have a religious quality. And a love of mystery. The music brings that together: The search for mystery is implicit in the sound of the music, and it takes on the aura of a spiritual quest. Not to solve the mystery, but to find it.*

**WAITS:** Let's face it, all of what we know to be religious holidays fall on what were pagan ritual celebrations. I don't want to get out of my area here, but Christianity clearly is like Budweiser: They came in, saw what the natives were doing, and said, "We're gonna let you guys do the little thing with the drums every year at the same time. You're working for Bud now. Don't change a thing. The words are gonna be a little different, but you'll get used to that. We're gonna have to get you some kind of slacks though, and a sports jacket. Can't wear the loincloths anymore. These are fine, they're more comfortable." I don't want to oversimplify. I do believe very much in Billy Graham and all the real giants—

**MUSICIAN:** *Of the industry—*

**WAITS:** They're like bankers. They understand the demographics, and they feel the country like a giant grid, or a video game. Same way politicians do. But even magic tricks were originally designed to get people to understand the magic of the spirit. Turning wine into water: It's the old shell game.

**MUSICIAN:** *And that aspect is a wonderful thing, I think; it puts you in touch with the idea of mystery, the unknowable.*

**WAITS:** In this country we're all very afraid of anything that isn't shrink-wrapped with a price on it, that you can take back to the store if you don't like it. So we've pretty much killed the animal in capture.

**MUSICIAN:** *But your music tries to convey that mystery, as voodoo did, or still does, I suppose, in certain places.*

**WAITS:** Yeah. My dad wanted to have a chicken ranch when I was a kid. He's always been very close to chickens. Never happened, you know, but he has twenty-five chickens in the back yard. And my dad was saying there are still places, down around Tweedy Boulevard in south-central L.A., where you can buy live chickens, and most of the business there is not for dinner. It's for ritual. Hanging them upside down in the doorway for, uh...I don't know a lot about it, but at a certain level you get music—the Stones know all about that. You know that tune on *Exile On Main Street*, "I Just Want To See His Face." [*laughs*] That will put you in a spell.

**MUSICIAN:** *You seem attracted to that side of life, though; the seediness of "9th & Hennepin," or the world of* Nighthawks At The Diner, *or Western Avenue the way Charles Bukowski describes it.*

**WAITS:** I haven't been around 9th and Hennepin in a while, and I only know these things from my own experience. Though I think there must be a place where it all connects. I like where Bukowski says—I'm not quoting exactly—"It's not the big things that drive men mad. It's the little things. The shoelace that breaks when there's no time left." It makes it very difficult for me to drive, you know. 'Cause I'm always looking around. It makes for a very dangerous ride with the family.

**MUSICIAN:** *Do you feel you can impart lessons from your life's*

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# TASCAM

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*experience in a song?*
**WAITS:** You can learn from songs. If you hear it at the right time; like everything else, you have to be ready or it won't mean much. Like going through someone else's photo album.
**MUSICIAN:** *Or if you're in a bad love affair, all the songs on the radio suddenly achieve profundity.*
**WAITS:** Sometimes when I'm really angry at somebody or if I'm in line at the Department of Motor Vehicles, I try to imagine people that I want to strangle; I imagine them at Christmas in a big photograph with their families, and it helps. It's kept me from homicide.
**MUSICIAN:** *You've called this record the end of a trilogy, which suggests you're preparing to move in another direction.*

**The monkey approaches the blowtorch.**

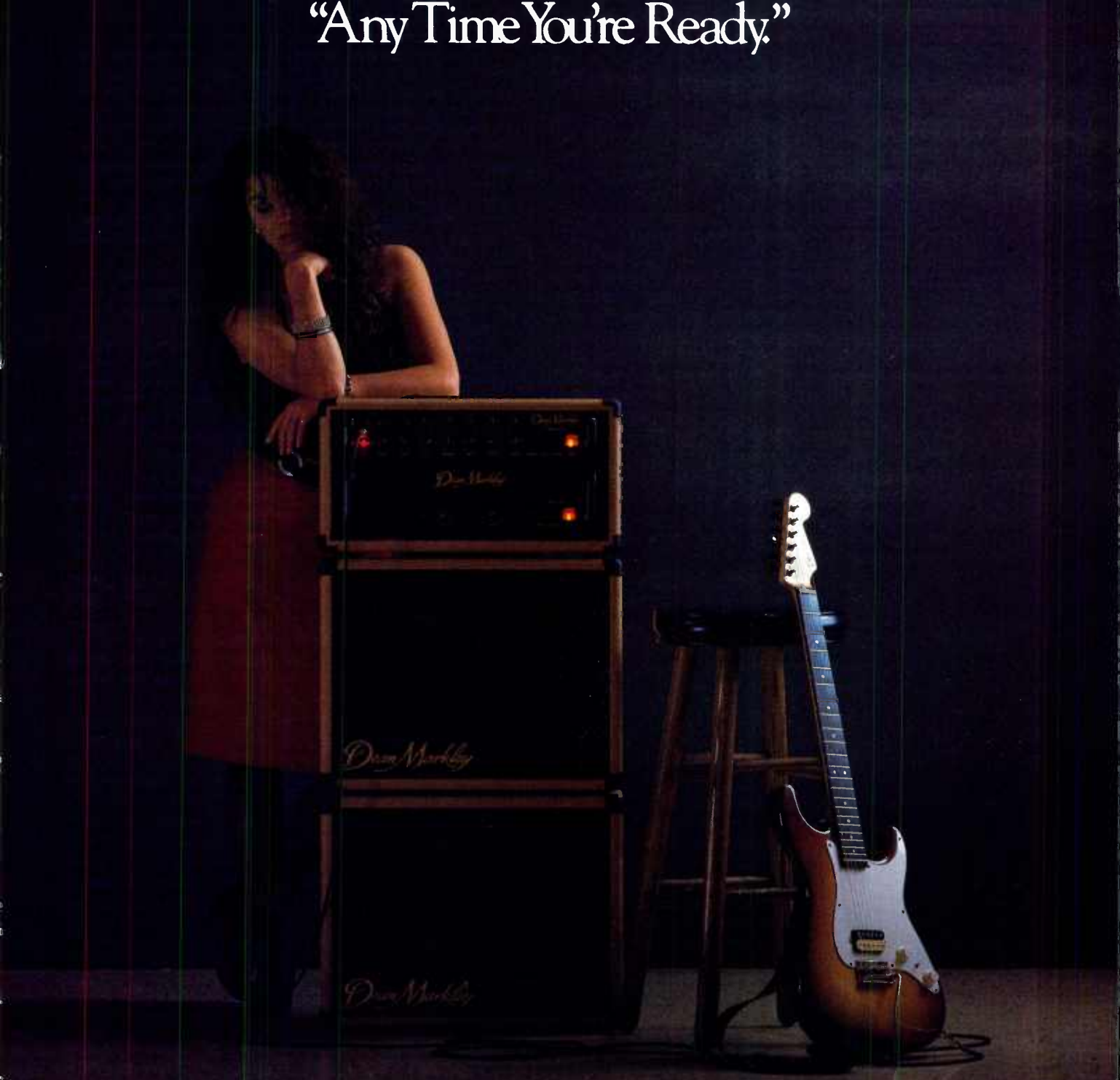
**WAITS:** I don't know, maybe the next one will be a little more...hermaphroditic. But I'm a real procrastinator. I wait till something is impossible to ignore before I act on it.
**MUSICIAN:** *That's surprising, there's enough songs on your last three albums to make about six normal-sized records.*
**WAITS:** More for your entertainment dollar! That's what we say down at Waits & Associates. Go ahead, shop around, compare our prices. Come back on down.
**MUSICIAN:** *Well, you have written a lot of songs here.*
**WAITS:** And none of them will be used for beer commercials. It's amazing, when I look at these artists. I find it unbelievable that they finally broke into the fascinating and lucrative world of advertising after years on the road, making albums and living in crummy apartments; finally advertising opened up and gave them a chance for what they really wanted to do, which was salute and support a major American product, and have that name blinking over their head as they sing. I think it's wonderful what advertising has done, giving them these opportunities to be spokesmen for Chevrolet, Pepsi, etc.
**MUSICIAN:** *Do you ever get approached by major advertisers?*
**WAITS:** I get it all the time, and they offer people a whole lot of money. Unfortunately I don't want to get on the bandwagon. You know, when a guy is singing to me about toilet paper—you may need the money but, I mean, rob a 7-11! Do something with dignity and save us all the trouble of peeing on your grave.

I don't want to rail at length here, but it's like a fistula for me. If you subscribe to your personal mythology, to the point where you do your own work, and then somebody puts decals over it, it no longer carries the same weight. I have been offered money and all that, and then there's the people that imitate me too. I really am against people who allow their music to be nothing more than a jingle for jeans or Bud. But I say, "Good, okay, now I know who you are." 'Cause it's always money. There have been tours endorsed, encouraged and financed by Miller, and I say, "Why don't you just get an office at Miller? Start really workin' for the guy." I just hate it.
**MUSICIAN:** *It's especially offensive if, as you say, you see music as something organic.*
**WAITS:** The advertisers are banking on your credibility, but the problem is it's no longer yours. Videos did a lot of that because they created pictures and that style was immediately adopted, or aborted, by advertising. They didn't even wait for it to grow up. And it's funny, but they're banking on the fact that people won't really notice. So they should be exposed. They should be fined! [*bangs his fist on the table*] I hate all of the people that do it! All of you guys! You're sissies!
**MUSICIAN:** *I think a lot of people notice, but the resistance isn't organized. Nike claims they only got thirty letters about using the Beatles to sell sneakers.*
**WAITS:** I must admit when I was a kid I made a lot of mistakes in terms of my songs; a lot of people don't own their songs. Not your property. If John Lennon had any idea that someday Michael Jackson would be deciding the future of his material, if he could I think he'd come back from the grave and kick his ass, and kick it real good, in a way that we would enjoy. Now I have songs that belong to two guys named Cohen from the South Bronx. Part of what I like about the last three albums is that they're mine. To that point I didn't own my copyrights. But to consciously sell them to get the down payment on a house, I think that's wrong. They should be embarrassed. And I rest my case.
**MUSICIAN:** *When you began was there concern that your voice lacked the qualities of a classic singer?*
**WAITS:** In terms of what was going on at the time? "Are you gonna fit in? Are you gonna be the only guy at the party with your shirt on inside out?" I was never embarrassed, but I'm liking it more now. Learning how to make it do different things.
**MUSICIAN:** *I like your falsetto on "Temptation."*
**WAITS:** Oh yes, a little *Pagliacci.*
**MUSICIAN:** *It's true you sang several of the new tunes through a police bullhorn?*
**WAITS:** I've tried to simulate that sound in a variety of ways—singing into trumpet mutes, jars, my hands, pipes, different environments. But the bullhorn put me in the driver's seat.

There's so much you can do to manipulate the image, so much technology at your beck and call. But still you gotta make choices. A lot of this stuff is 24-track; I finally allowed that and joined the twentieth century, at least in that regard.
**MUSICIAN:** *Certainly not in the sense of giving the music an aural sheen.*
**WAITS:** I don't *want* the sheen. I don't know, I'm neurotic about it, and yet Prince is really state-of-the-art and he still kicks my

JEFFREY NEWBURY

# "Any Time You're Ready."

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ass. So it depends who's holding the rifle.

**MUSICIAN:** *Prince has complained about not hearing enough "colors" on the radio, that too many talented people deliberately seek to emulate a formula instead of finding their own voice. Do you agree?*

**WAITS:** To an extent. The business machinery has gotten so sophisticated, people want their head on his body. It's a melting pot, and the nutrition gets boiled out. Prince is rare, a rare exotic bird! There's only a few others. To be that popular and that uncompromising, it's like Superman walking through the wall. I don't think we can do it, you know. But this record goes into a lot of different musical worlds. "I'll Take New York" was a nightmare—Jerry Lewis going down on the Titanic.

**MUSICIAN:** *I like the North African horn parts on "Hang On St. Christopher," which give it a vaguely menacing quality.*

**WAITS:** [*hums a snatch*] That just happened in the studio...I think in music the intelligence is in the hands. The way your hands rub up along the ends of a table. You begin to go with your instincts. And it's only dangerous to the degree that you only let yourself discover the things that are right there. You'll be uncomfortable and so you'll keep returning to where your hands are comfortable. That's what happened to me on the piano. I rarely play the piano because I find I only play three or four things. I go right to F# and play "Auld Lang Syne." I can't teach them, so I make them do something else.

**MUSICIAN:** *Are you more free on guitar?*

**WAITS:** Not necessarily. I like picking up instruments I don't understand. And doing things that may sound foolish at first. It's like giving a blow torch to a monkey. That's what I'm trying to do. Always trying to break something, break something, break *through* to something.

**MUSICIAN:** *You use a lot of "found" items in the music.*

> "You have to work on yourself more than you work on the music. Then whatever you're aiming at, you'll be able to hit between the eyes."

**WAITS:** That's a trap too. Though there's something in the fact of a studio with instruments you've spent thousands of dollars renting, to walk over to the bathroom and the sound of the lid coming down on the toilet is more appealing than that seven-thousand-dollar bass drum. And you use it. You have to be aware of that. And it makes you crazy. When the intervals and the textures begin to disturb you more than the newspaper, or your rocking chair or the comfort of your mattress, then I guess you're in for the long haul.

**MUSICIAN:** *Well, you still have a few possibilities left.*

**WAITS:** Which is fine if it hasn't been done. You have to feel it hasn't been done until *you* do it. Tape a bottle of Scotch to the tape recorder. Give a Telecaster to Lawrence Welk. We'd all like to hear what that's like. They're very conscious decisions. You have to believe it's unique to your experience.

**MUSICIAN:** *I think it's encouraging that you're getting more successful as you explore these musical boundaries.*

**WAITS:** What do you mean by success? My record sales have dropped off considerably in the United States. I do sell a lot of records in Europe. It's hard to gauge something you don't have real contact with. We have no real spiritual leadership, so we look to merchandising. The most deprived, underprivileged neighborhoods in the world understand business. Guns, ammo, narcotics...But yes, SALES HAVE DROPPED OFF CONSIDERABLY IN THE LAST FEW YEARS...and I want to talk to somebody about it. I used to play Iowa. I haven't been to Iowa in some time.

**MUSICIAN:** *Have you considered moving there?*

**WAITS:** Ah, I could never live in Iowa. No offense to people who do. When I tour it's like, people want to see you in one way, and they want to get familiar with you. When I find someone I like, I don't buy every record they ever made. Rarely. But I'm like, "Oh yeah, I know that guy." We all do that. And then it's—"Oh, you're still around, huh?" It's like birdwatching. "The oriole is back at the birdbath, no crows this year." What does that mean? We watch it like weather. We actually think that the media is like cloud formations. And we'll make judgments—"I heard he was up at the Betty Ford Center." And I like folk tales, and the way stories and jokes travel. But the media understands it as well. Fashion operates in that world. The top designers for the biggest companies go down into bad neighborhoods to find out how people are rolling their pants. It's all now, NOW. Which gets me railing again.

**MUSICIAN:** *But there's still a funny parallel there with what you do, because even your description of "junkyard orchestration" implies the gathering of random elements—*

**WAITS:** My personal version of that. The thing is, when you hit a vein, you make a breakthrough, there are a lot of people who want to go through that door. Whether you made it with a screwdriver or an M-16, there'll be a lot of traffic. So I don't tap into a national highway. I really think you have to be careful. Everybody looks at the country as this big girl they want to kiss. Like they're courting this big broad, you know? Gonna take the baby out, yeah, show her a good time. Does this sound silly? I'm just talking off the top of my head.

**MUSICIAN:** *Is it upsetting that by taking chances you seem to lessen the likelihood of reaching a wider audience?*

## SWORDFISHMEGAPHONES

Tom Waits contends that most of what's played on his records can be found in a local pawn shop; locating some of them in a music store might prove more difficult. The current apple of his musical arsenal, for instance, is a police bullhorn, through which Waits fashioned many of the vocals you hear on *Frank's Wild Years*. Not just any horn, of course, but an MP5 Fanon transistorized megaphone (with public address loudspeaker). "It's made in Taiwan," Waits adds proudly.

Waits also plays a variety of keyboards, including a Brunello de Montelchino pump organ, a Farfisa organ and the famous Optigon, a keyboard made between 1968 and 1972 and marketed by Penney's stores. The Optigon plays pre-recorded sounds, which can be selected from its library; Tom particularly likes "Polynesian village" and "romantic strings." Not too surprisingly, Waits prefers "mostly tube stuff" to digital equipment.

Microphones of choice include a Ribbon ("Dave Garroway") and RCA high-impedance mikes; Waits usually sings through a Shure Green Bullet (used mostly by harmonica players). Also an Altec 21D vocal mike—"because Sinatra used it."

On guitar, Waits likes his Gretsch New Yorker "with old strings" played through an old Fender tweed basement amp. When recording, he says he uses a lot of heavy compression with room sound; to do that he'll sometimes push the track into the room through Auratone speakers, and then mike *that*. It's not his only technique, "but I don't want to give away all my secrets."

# SDS1000M

## Simmons Design Brief

To develop a five piece electronic drum set with a wide variety of killer sounds, and access to a whole lot more from samplers and drum machines via MIDI.
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# SDS9

## Simmons Design Brief

Give drummers an instrument that satisfies the basic requirements for an electronic drum set—great sounds, a high degree of sensitivity, subtle dynamic control, playable rim-shot—and then pack it full with unique features, to create an instrument capable of taking the percussive arts to new levels of innovation.

BILL BRUFORD

### *BILL BRUFORD ON THE SDS9*

"I've been using a MIDI system with Earthworks for some time. Based around MTM and SDS9, I can trigger percussion and tuned sounds from pads. The SDS9 offers the drummer both digital and analog sounds along with the most comprehensive MIDI specification I have yet to find on a drum kit.
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# MTX9

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### *SLY DUNBAR ON THE MTX9*

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**WAITS:** Music is social, but I'm not making music to be accepted. I think everyone has to go out on their own journey.
**MUSICIAN:** *Is it helpful to have developed a separate vocation as an actor?*
**WAITS:** [*takes mock offense*] What, you don't think I can make a living just playing my music, is that what you're insinuating? But it helps with the groceries?
**MUSICIAN:** *No, I mean does one complement the other? Your acting helps enlighten your music, or vice-versa?*
**WAITS:** Like Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis. I don't know; you hope to see things. I think it's part of the same thing. Actors see what they do as conceptually [as musicians], they regard the same by-laws. I can't honestly say I'm accomplished as an actor. I have a lot of respect for those that are.
**MUSICIAN:** *You just worked with Jack Nicholson in* Ironweed—
**WAITS:** That was great for me. He's a badass. He lives in the ether, he walks like a spider. Got great taste. He knows about everything from beauty parlors to train guards. He'll kick your ass, he's a giant. He's got himself a place on the board of directors historically, and he does it with his feet. You see him and you know it's not like watching a wild horse. He knows what he's doing. He's like a centaur.
**MUSICIAN:** *You appreciate people that can combine that animal instinct with intellectual control. Keith Richards seems like that.*
**WAITS:** He is, he's the best. He's like a tree frog, an orangutan. When he plays he looks like he's been dangled from a wire that comes up through the back of his neck, and he can lean at a forty-five-degree angle and not fall over. You think he has special shoes. But maybe it's the music that's keeping him up.
**MUSICIAN:** *Reading* Ironweed, *in the first scene when your character and Nicholson's are on your way to work in the cemetery, reminded me of your song "Cemetery Polka."*
**WAITS:** Did it? Every time I buy a pair of shoes I get nervous. Wondering how long these shoes are going to be with me. Every time I see photographs of dead people, I always look at their shoes. It looks like they only got them a couple of weeks ago, they were the last pair [*laughs*], "All out of brown, all we have are black Oxford." But that "Cemetery Polka" was ah, discussing my family in a way that's difficult for me to be honest. The way we talk behind each other's backs: "You know what happened to Uncle Vernon." The kind of wickedness that nobody outside your family could say. That kind of stuff.
**MUSICIAN:** *Do you ever feel your songs should be more personal?*
**WAITS:** I don't like songs that are like some kind of psychiatry. I don't even want to know, in most cases, what the original idea was. Usually I hate pictures of the family and that kind of stuff. Sometimes it catches you in an odd moment you like. But with songs you have to make decisions about what it turns into, and I don't like it too close to what really happened. Occasionally truth is stranger than fiction, but not always.
**MUSICIAN:** *Do you feel part of a fraternity with certain artists?*
**WAITS:** You mean rate my fellow performers? I know the magazine is big on this.
**MUSICIAN:** *Yeah, it's a tic.*
**WAITS:** If you talk too much about people it kind of demystifies them, you know. And it's like watching things that are moving; you may like them today and not tomorrow. People who have careers are moving targets. Who would have known some guy you liked would go and do commercials for Honda? And then you're embarrassed to dig him, 'cause they tampered with their mythology. The guy was doing a beautiful tailspin, he went into a double flip with a camel-hair thing and then—right

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into the crapper.

I like the Replacements, I like their stance. They're question marks. I saw them at the Variety Arts Center downtown; I liked their show. I particularly liked the insect ritual going on at the foot of the stage. There was this guy trying to climb up, and they kept throwing him back, like a carp. No, you can't get in the boat! It was like something out of *Mondo Cane*. [*laughter*] And it was really great to watch. And I liked the fact that one of the kids—Tommy?—had dropped out of high school. Being on the road with this band, the idea of all his schoolmates stuck there with the fucking history of Minnesota, and he's on a bus somewhere sipping out of a brandy bottle, going down the road of life.

**MUSICIAN:** *Do you know why you became a musician?*

**WAITS:** I don't know. I knew what I didn't want to do. I thought I'd try some of what was left over.

**MUSICIAN:** *Were you from a musical family?*

**WAITS:** Not like Liza Minelli, alright? Contrary to popular belief, we don't have the same mother. I took her out a couple of times: Nothing ever happened!

**MUSICIAN:** *Were your folks encouraging?*

**WAITS:** I think when children choose something other than a life of crime, most parents are encouraging. Music was always around when I was a kid, but there wasn't a lot of "encouragement"—which allowed me to carve my own niche.

When you're young you're also very insecure, though. You don't know if you can lean on that window, if it'll break. It goes back to what I was saying about flying upside down by choice. There's a time when you don't understand, when you're not focused, not like the sun through a magnifying glass burning a hole in the paper. I used to do that every day when I was a kid. And when the glass broke I'd get another. It was no big deal.

I didn't really know what I was doing when I started. I have a better idea now. In a way, I'd like to start now. A lot of great guys, only one third of them is visible, the rest is beneath the ground. Took them ten years just to break the surface.

But when I started I thought, "Ah, I'd better get something going here." I still have nightmares about the stage where everything goes wrong. The piano catches fire. The lighting comes crashing to the stage, the curtain tears. The audience throws tomatoes and overripe fruit. They make their way to the front of the stage, and my shoes can't move. And I always play that in my head when I'm planning a tour. The nightmare that you will completely come unraveled.

**MUSICIAN:** *You've suggested taking* Frank's Wild Years *on the road with a "Cuban Dream Orchestra." What does that mean?*

**WAITS:** What will I take on the road? The thing is, in the studio everyone can change instruments, you have cross-pollination. On the road you have to just get up and do it. It makes me nervous. You know those things you play at a carnival, the little steamshovel that always misses the watch? I never get what I really want on the road. It's always vaudeville.

**MUSICIAN:** *So you're more comfortable in a studio?*

**WAITS:** Well, I don't want to do things in there that make it impossible to reproduce onstage. Basically I work with instruments that can be found in any pawn shop, so it's just nuance. I have a band that I trust. They're like having a staff of people that can rob a bank, or they can wear women's clothing if necessary. Be interior designers, or restaurant workers. They're everything. And that's different. I can't do this by myself. But I just hate the way most equipment and instruments look on a stage.

**MUSICIAN:** *The way they look?*

**WAITS:** The wires and all that. These necessary, utility items make me feel like I'm in an emergency ward. I want to take the Leslie bass pedals and raise them up to a kitchen table so you can play them with your fists. Which is what we did in the studio on "Hang On St. Christopher." I'm trying to put together the right way of seeing the music. I worry about these things. If I didn't, it would be easier.

**MUSICIAN:** *Do you have any idea what motivates you?*

**WAITS:** I've said for a long time I've been motivated by fear. But I don't really know. And if I ever knew what it was, I don't know if I'd want to tell *Musician* magazine, no offense. If I knew it would probably make me very nervous.

**MUSICIAN:** *Maybe if you knew it wouldn't motivate you anymore.*

**WAITS:** This is really getting metaphysical. Is this for *Omni* magazine? Yeah, I do believe in the mysteries of things, about myself and the things I see. I enjoy being puzzled and arriving at my own incorrect conclusions.

**MUSICIAN:** *Any advice for younger musicians?*

**WAITS:** Break windows, smoke cigars and stay up late. Tell 'em to do that, they'll find a little pot of gold. M

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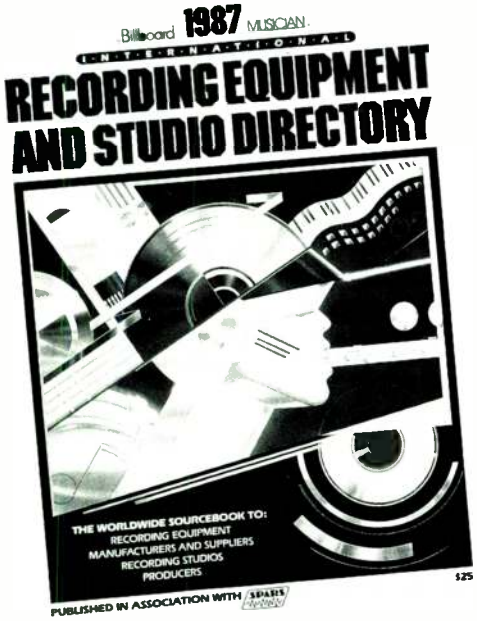


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# EVERYONE NEEDS A HAND TO HOLD ON TO

## JOHN COUGAR MELLENCAMP

*The Lonesome Jubilee*
(PolyGram)


JIM HOPKINS

In a *Musician* interview a few years back, Brian Eno described how he'd once come to a grove of seemingly randomly placed trees, and how by simply moving a few feet and obtaining a new perspective he'd been surprised to discover that the trees were actually in very orderly rows. Shift your perspective and things begin to make sense. John Cougar Mellencamp, rock's Prodigal Son, was a guy whose first hit celebrated the joys of telling one's love to "Hey, hit the highway," whose second album's title, *Nothing Matters And What If It Did*, nicely summed up his musical philosophy, and who played the American Fool (third album title) by posing with his head in a garbage can and dunking his publicist in a cake. Then came "Jack And Diane," a tune he at first considered a throw-away, but whose bit about how "life goes on, long after the thrill of living is gone" struck a common chord—an honest and direct self-confrontation, not the usual smirking wisecrack. It was also a confession of fear and frustration, and an opening of the heart to the possibility of a kind of redemption.

From that point, JCM began to make lemonade out of the lemons life had dealt him. Something woke up in the guy, and with "Pink Houses" and "The Authority Song" he began to mine the strengths, values and transcendence that he now realized had always been hidden beneath his small-town angst. He radiated such joy and wonder in his discovery that, hey, maybe "It's A Wonderful Life" after all, that his records became an aural contact high. '85's *Scarecrow* was such a vital statement and so balanced between hope, humor and heartache that it was hard to see how he was going to progress without screwing things up.

But with *The Lonesome Jubilee* Mellencamp has managed the not inconsiderable feat of both broadening his sound and deepening his impact without straying out of the light. Musically, *Jubilee* is, if anything, even tighter, flintier and more passionate than *Scarecrow*. Last time, Mellencamp prepped his band by having them learn over a hundred 60s soul and pop classics. This time he expands their musical parameters by having each band member learn a new instrument or two (as in pedal steel, autoharp, banjo, dobro, dulcimer, pennywhistle, accordion, claves, melodica and fiddle). They're all integrated seamlessly into the mix on tunes such as "Down And Out In Paradise," an unlikely but successful hybrid wherein Richard Thompson meets James Brown in Bobby Fuller's basement (where they proceed to compose a singing telegram to the President). And yes, you can dance to it thanks to Kenny Aronoff, who combines Stewart Copeland's kinetic drive with Charlie Watts' intensity.

The danger with this kind of political and social commentary, of course, is that a "Look, Ma, I'm significant!" self-consciousness can take over. The artist's ego and intellect try to usurp the process and "make" everything significant, rather than letting intuition and inspiration do their job. But Mellencamp has the common sense and taste to realize that simplicity often resonates more deeply than complexity. On songs like "Check It Out" and "Hard Times" his lengthy nar-

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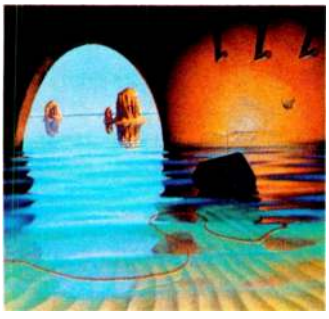

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ratives and well-drawn characterizations are always anchored by simple musical and lyrical riffs. And he refuses to mythologize the folks that populate his tunes, or turn them into abstract symbols. Mellencamp's emotional aim is so true that when a divorcee struggling through mid-life crisis yearns for the "Real Life" you not only sympathize, you feel her mini-rebirth in your own gut. No matter how tight his headband and leopard-skin pants get, Little Steven will never come up with a title as egregiously dumb as "We Are The People." Yet even that corker is redeemed by the tenderness with which Mellencamp delivers the refrain of "May our thoughts be with you" after each recitation of injustice.

This is pop as prayer, pop that disarms you and shatters false polarizations as it reaches out across that aching gulf to take your hand—rather than just pointing a finger at "them." Criticisms? Okay, it's too bad there's a lack of the impish humor which usually leavens his work. But if Mellencamp can stay true to the immediacy of his vision, future musical and lyrical challenges should take care of themselves. Go, Johnny, go.

**– Vic Garbarini**

## ORNETTE COLEMAN
*In All Languages*
(Caravan of Dreams)

With sisyphean persistence Ornette Coleman has stubbornly, heroically, set forth his philosophical-cum-musical vision for three decades. Under the all-encompassing banner of harmolodics, Ornette has embraced the classical American, European and pan-ethnic languages of the world and transmuted them into his own aesthetic—animated by the beatific, yearning Southwestern cry of his alto saxophone.

Now in the autumn of his creativity, Coleman's musical banners are still waving furiously in the winds of change he helped whip up, and the grand blue guru of the perpetual avant-garde is toying with the idea of becoming an institution. Codifying established ideas and searching for new windmills to joust following his triumphant tour with Pat Metheny and his canonization in *People*, Ornette has hit upon the notion of celebrating thirty years of harmolodic music by contrasting the approaches of his classic 1957 quartet (Don Cherry, Billy Higgins, Charlie Haden) with that of his fulminating 1987 outfit—Prime Time. The result, *In All Languages*, suggests that "plus Ornette change plus Ornette reste la même chose."

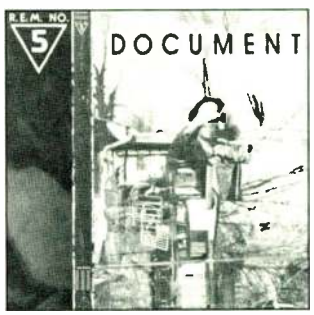
There is a childlike grace to Ornette's melodies that belies his reputation for obliquity; in their treatment and orchestration the tensions between Ornette '57 and '87 become more manifest. On the *In All Languages* compact disc, six compositions contrast the idealized clarity and lyricism of the quartet with the existential tag team wrestling of Prime Time. On the quartet's "Feet Music," for instance, Ornette's husky, bar-walking tenor spearheads the bluesy groove, while Prime Time's version vivisects a multi-tiered, polyrhythmic shuffle. One treatment of "Latin Genetics" is a whimsical Tex-Mex hat dance, the other progresses from Kinshasa-like Afroisms to a spiraling dervish dance. The title tune features a dirge over Haden's earthy bowing and Higgins' tintinnabulous cymbal fanfares, while Prime Time's vision is more lighthearted and resigned.

With Ornette's telepathic variations in pitch and emphasis, and poignant unisons with Cherry, the quartet's group improvisation is a communal art; amid Prime Time's dense, shifting canvas, Ornette sounds like the one voice of reason within a towering babble of mother and other tongues. That the quartet's music should sound so comforting and Prime Time's so familiar-yet-mysterious is a testament to Ornette's virtues. Existing not in time but in his own space, he is a universe of sound unto himself. **– Chip Stern**

## R.E.M.
*Document*
(I.R.S.)

R.E.M.: sublime, enigmatic artistes, or airheads? Each release from Georgia's celebrated Athenians raises this pertinent question anew. Nothing's changed on the lovely yet unsurprising *Document*, another rich tapestry of sound that hints at matters of epic import and never quite gets to the point.

And just what is the point? From the very beginning, R.E.M.'s enthralling aura of otherness has been both their strength and Achilles heel, with Michael Stipe's twangy mumbling and Peter Buck's chiming guitars beckoning us into the ozone. If Stipe's belated interest in clear diction has failed to shed new light on what they're all about, perhaps it's 'cause there aren't many secrets to reveal. Graceful folk-rockers like "Disturbance At The Heron House" and "Welcome To The Occupation" may be gorgeous, but don't go anywhere. No big crime there, although they border on cliché, fostering the illusion that all R.E.M. records sound the same.




That's simply not the case, however. *Lifes Rich Pageant* and the recent odds 'n' sods compilation *Dead Letter Office* proved the guys can handle fifty-seven varieties of material. Here they stretch out, more or less, with "Exhuming McCarthy," a perky swipe at Yuppies, and "It's The End Of The World As We Know It (And I Feel Fine)," a careening, breathless litany of cultural buzzspeak recalling "Highway 61 Revisited." Those eager to extract heavy meaning from the LP will seize on Stipe's recurring expressions of bemusement at the state of the world. (For extra credit, they can discuss the murky fire images running through side two.) Others may call such efforts grasping at straws.

No matter what the style, R.E.M. are destined (doomed?) to sound like R.E.M.—that is, well-mannered boys who can't help playing pretty. Just as the Aerosmith and Velvets covers on *Dead Letter Office* emerged with edges smoothed, the nastiest moments of *Document* won't create a stir in polite company. The grinding, guttural "Lightnin' Hopkins" is more self-absorbed than threatening, while even hacking "Sister Ray"–style guitars don't push the cover of Wire's "Strange" into wild abandon.

Apparently incapable of making either a bad or a raunchy disc, R.E.M. again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**Ringo Starr**
Drummers, Devo, Rossington-Collins


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**Miles**,
Genesis, Lowell George


77
**John Fogerty**
Marsalis/Hancock, Los Lobos


84
**John Cougar Mellencamp**
Bryan Ferry, Maurice White


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**Bob Seger**,
Todd Rungren, Missing Persons


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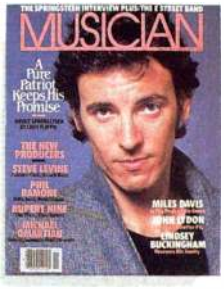
**Michael Jackson**
R.E.M., Charlie Watts

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**Springsteen**,
Miles Davis, PiL, Producer Special


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**Heavy Metal**
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**Sting**,
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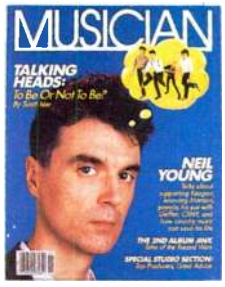


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**Talking Heads**,
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86
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INXS, Bangles

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prove themselves to be a fine little pop band on *Document*, no more and no less. Does that sound like an insult? Then you're expecting too much—again. Kinda frustrating, ain't it? – **Jon Young**


## 10,000 MANIACS
*In My Tribe*
(Elektra)

I don't believe Cat Stevens is off being an Islamic religious dude or whatever it is he's allegedly up to. I think he's still in the music biz, performing as female vocalist Natalie Merchant with New York band 10,000 Maniacs. Not only do the Maniacs include a cover of Stevens' pacifist anthem "Peace Train" on their new LP, but Cat and Nat share identical artistic sensibilities. Both are finger-wagging moralists so puffed up with a self-righteous love of humanity they leave you longing to hear the Sex Pistols.

Like Suzanne Vega and R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe (who contributes a guest vocal on this LP), Merchant is one of the new breed of waif. But whereas Vega comes on like an urban gamine, Merchant is a rural lass in a lacy dress spinning out gossamer threads of homespun wisdom. Essentially a reconstituted hippie, she offers Hansel & Gretel homilies about child abuse (she doesn't approve), her brother's enlistment in the Army (she doesn't approve), the Beat Generation (verdict not in yet), her sister's wedding (she was destined to take the veil) and stealing teacakes while on holiday by the sea. Each song invites a tweak on the cheek and a pat on the head.

Articulating her ponderous words in that weirdly affected way peculiar to actresses of the 40s, Merchant evidences not a trace of the wit that enables similar vignettes by the Roche Sisters—who compose in roughly the same manner as Merchant—to rise above the mundane. A textbook study of the tremulously sensitive aesthete who considers *The Little Prince* the ultimate literary achievement, she presents each modest perception as a semi-precious stone to be polished and shared with a grateful world. Nor does the instrumental backing by the Maniacs lighten the mood. A swirl of pastoral bliss, their sound as a whole reminds me of "White Bird" by It's A Beautiful Day. Produced by Peter Asher, *In My Tribe* is embellished with imaginative touches—cellos, violas and so forth—but somehow Merchant, Maniacs and Asher produce nothing more than post-modern folk music that's as cute as a puppy in a little red wagon. – **Kristine McKenna**


## MARIANNE FAITHFULL
*Strange Weather*
(Island)

*Strange Weather* blows like the mistral—that cold, dry wind that unsettles even the most secure emotions. In blues ballads and gospels by Jerome Kern, Tom Waits, ex-lover Mick Jagger and others, Faithfull sings with the voice of one who's ingested everything under the sun, but adds something almost unheard of in rock: She's accepted her anger and gone beyond it. Recording after a recent breakdown where she overdosed (then cracked her jaw), Marianne Faithfull might owe her post-rock (pre-rock?) vision to producer Hal Wilner, who first recorded her in his Kurt Weill sampler. But no producer can create an elemental force alone, and on *Strange Weather*, the slouched-off soul, the overwhelming sorrow, the indomitable light at the end of the tunnel is all Faithfull's.

There's a Southern belle Eurotrash decadence here—like William Faulkner shmoozing with Jean Genet and Bertolt Brecht. Few singers today can squeeze the gutter out of Tin Pan Alley tunes like the Jason-Burton ballad "Penthouse Serenade" or Harry Warren's "Boulevard Of Broken Dreams." In one song she's a New Orleans whore, in another, a Salvation Army spinster. For Leadbelly's 1936 spiritual "I Ain't Goin' Down To The Well No More," Faithfull sings unaccompanied like a born-again sharecropper exhausted by vicissitude. Her first hit, the Jagger-Richards-Oldham tune "As Tears Go By," may have been recast for nostalgia buffs, but in Jerome Kern's "Yesterdays" her cracked and crimpled vocals conjure up a longing for lost youth that is simply devastating.

In a brilliant move, Wilner set Faithfull against chamber-style accompaniment, sometimes as spare as Bill Frisell's solo guitar or Dr. John's stride piano, or as rich as jazz quartets or gypsy violins. The queasy accordion changes on Tom Waits' "Strange Weather" evoke the waves of a Parisian dockside at midnight, but the superb lyrics ("strange a woman tries to save what a man will try to drown") would be nothing without Faithfull's dangerous rubato, which at any moment threatens to lay down and expire.

By digging this honestly into herself, Faithfull, like Billie Holiday before her, raises her art to archetype. But to tour with this material would be disastrous. These takes, done fast and with limited rehearsal, shine with a first-shot best-shot vulnerability that shouldn't be allowed to solidify. As it is, you feel honored—even humbled—to be privy to a moment when the veil covering a human soul is being temporarily lifted. *Strange Weather* is destined to be a classic for nursing—and maybe even curing—the blues. – **Pamela Bloom**

## ALEXANDER O'NEAL
*Hearsay*
(Tabu)

## WENDY AND LISA
*Wendy And Lisa*
(Columbia)

Time was when any R&B act of consequence bore the imprimatur of Prince or one of his aliases. These days, the big buzz is from his disciples, whether former protégées like Wendy and Lisa or eager competitors like Alexander O'Neal and his producers, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. Regardless of loyalties or lineage, though, Prince still throws an awfully long shadow across the Minneapolis scene.

For O'Neal, Prince's influence was almost fatal. Originally the voice behind Flyte Tyme, he saw his band snatched out from under him as Prince recruited

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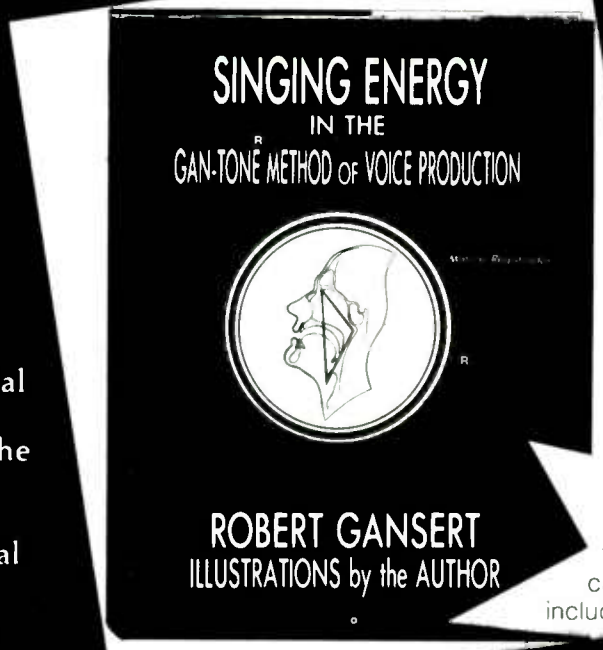


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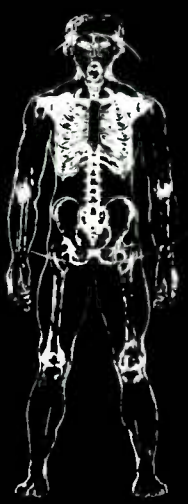

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Robert Gansert has been a performing vocalist for over twenty years, and has been featured in numerous concerts and recordings. His work has been internationally acclaimed. He is currently a noted instructor at the Carnegie Hall studios.



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the core of Flyte Tyme to back Morris Day as the Time. A bad break, to be sure, but one which has not gone unavenged; as Jam has said elsewhere, part of his and Lewis' intent with *Hearsay* was finally to give Alexander his due.


And frankly, the album does a pretty convincing job of it. Granted, it doesn't hurt that it's outfitted with all the bells and whistles of the hottest production in R&B today, from the "nasty bass" of "Fake" to the shimmering synths of "Never Knew Love Like This." Still, what ultimately convinces isn't the backing tracks, but the way O'Neal's voice conveys both musical content and individual personality. Presented as a sort of album-within-a-party, *Hearsay* uses slivers of aural theater to set each song up. But rather than lean on the gimmick, O'Neal enlivens it, building off of the bite to add emotional context to his performance. It's not a new trick, but it works wonderfully well, whether he's crooning "When The Party's Over" or scolding his way through the title tune.

Wendy and Lisa, by contrast, offer little in the way of context; their lyrics are alternately coy and opaque, offering less sense than sensibility. If that sounds a bit like the Prince approach, well, yeah. It should.

As instrumentalists, Wendy and Lisa aren't exactly show-offs, but they tend to prefer the sprawling clutter of recent Prince to the lean efficiency of Jam & Lewis' funk. That doesn't bog the beat down, as producer Bobby Z. does an admirable job of traffic control. Hence, "Sideshow" emerges as a perky funk number whose charms have as much to do with the melody as the beat, while "Another Song" seems warm and wistful in spite of the instrumental bombast swirling around its waltz-like pulse.

Ultimately, though, what keeps *Wendy And Lisa* from becoming as likeable as it ought is the duo's insistence on indulgence. Again like Prince, they too often succumb to the misapprehension that they should pursue every stylistic whim simply because it enters their heads. That can lead to some delightful surprises—the effervescent sparkle of "Honeymoon Express," for example—but more readily disappoints.

– **J.D. Considine**

## TOM VERLAINE

*Flash Light*
(I.R.S.)

As a sonic surrealist and oblique lyricist, Tom Verlaine inhabits an otherworldly place that most of us can only visit. On *Flash Light* (his first LP in three years, previously available as an import), the voyage is a bit more bracing than usual. "Dreamy," an adjective invariably applied to Verlaine's music, doesn't really hold up here, as most of the material hits with the visceral force of a nightmare.

He telegraphs his intention to rock harder on the first cut, "Cry Mercy, Judge," as the rhythm section careens fast and furious beneath his sinister guitar leads. Even on the many tunes in which drummer Allen Schwartzberg and bassist Fred Smith set up the familiar lockstep rhythm, it's to buttress Verlaine's fiery fretboard excursions. Spurred on by guitar foil Jimmy Ripp, the ex-Television star operates at the height of his powers, issuing long, deft, melodious guitar lines. His playing throughout serves as a potent reminder that for all the Verlaine imitators that've cropped up over the years, there's still no one who sounds quite like him.

Nor, for that matter, are there too many lyricists who write like him. While he's keeping the dreamy music to a minimum on this LP, he certainly hasn't become adverse to dream-like imagery. His Reed-y delivery is deadpan and conversational—albeit the kind of conversation laced with phrases like "It's these disintegrations I'm looking forward to" or "You're squirrel food, baby."

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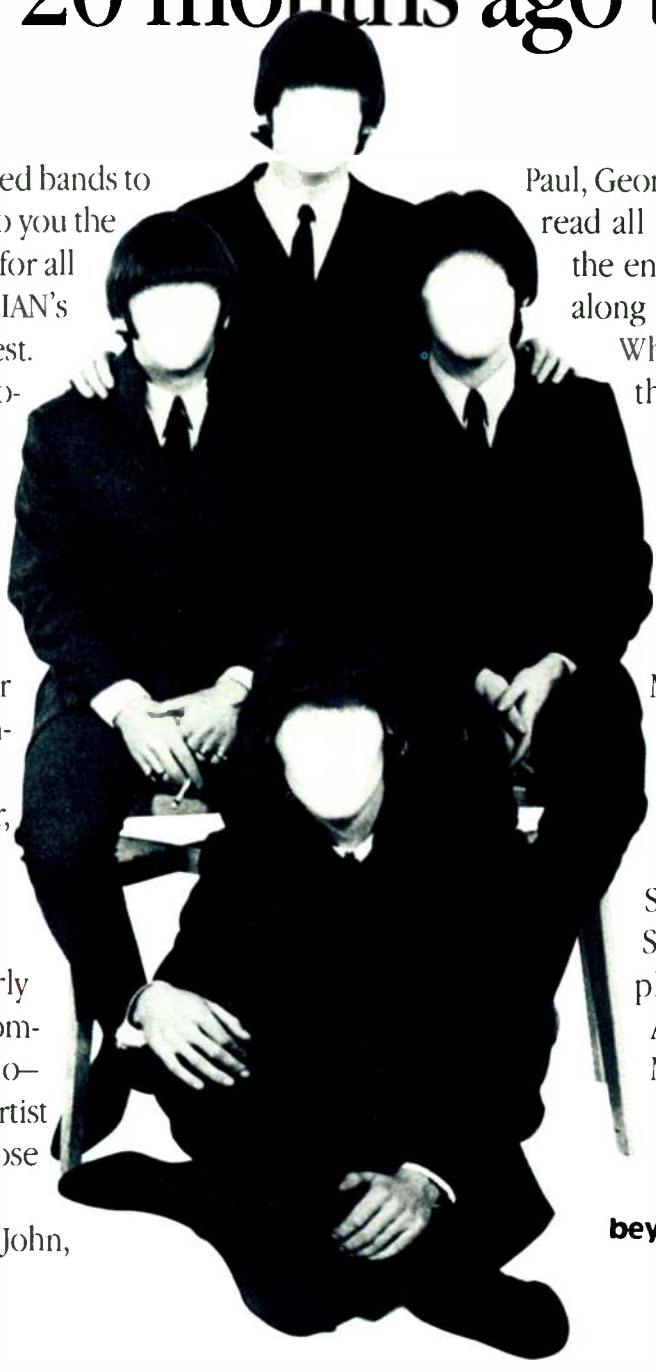

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Even at his most abstract, however, Verlaine remains a sharp-eyed storyteller, employing snippets of dialogue, bizarro observations and quirky details to help shape his unusual tales.

But Verlaine's elusive and allusive lyrics aren't just off for off's sake. Anyone who pays close attention and connects the verbal dots will find it adds up.

– **Duncan Strauss**

## VARIOUS ARTISTS
*The Readers Digest History Of Rock & Roll*
(Readers Digest)

Leave it to America's most popular monthly magazine to package this anthology of America's most loved music. If you grew up in the 50s your copies of these great sides by Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Fats Domino and other negro greats will surely be scratched. If you grew up in the 60s, 70s and 80s their names may escape you. Well, this is a starting point at which to begin the joyous journey of discovery of what rock 'n' roll music was like before the British groups got hold of it, like the Beatles. On some of these cuts the groups were so poor they could not even afford musical instruments. However their great love for music comes through.

For me, the high point of this eclectic collection of great obscurities is a little-known gem called "Earth Angel," originally recorded to commemorate the launch of Sputnik and the birth of "the space age." Listening to it tonight, I am swept back to a time when pop music was simple and happy, and you could talk about it without a dictionary in one hand


and a pitch pipe in your mouth. I have been reviewing music for some time now, and more and more the criticisms I receive make me wonder if it's worth the time I put into it. This record reminds me of a time when the music was simple and life was care-free.

I wonder about the readers who have written nasty letters attacking my taste and questioning my journalistic skills. Are they really as concerned as they say with the quality of this magazine's criticism, or are they just jealous of me? Awkward and affected my syntax is accused of being, yet nothing but praise greets the latest archaic genealogical survey of Timothy White. My biting insights are called cruel and callous, while Charles M. Young turns his gonzo hatchet jobs into lucrative book deals. Why should I want to stay here anyway—so I can graduate to the big bucks and backstage passes of Vic Garbarini? And hey, who cares about John Coltrane? I heard one of his records. To me it sounds like a lot of noise and I am one music critic who has the nerve to say so. Give me "Blueberry Hill" and a fine lady and I am satisfied.

Which I guess is why you won't be seeing me in *Musician* again. The Ivy League boys who call the shots around here cringe when I say the emperors are unclad. I dare them to run this review uncensored! Let me speak my mind just this once and then I'll go away. And you readers, think of all the fun you'll miss. You won't have me to kick around anymore. – **Jann Guccione**

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# SHORT JAZZ TAKES

Fantasy, ever out-smarting other labels, has released Original Jazz Classic CDs, the budget-priced parallel to their successful album reissue series. Two obscure, great dates stand out: *Lucky Strikes* by Lucky Thompson, and Paul Gonsalves' *Gettin' Together! Lucky Strikes*, one of the finest records to be made in the 60s, works because the arrangements—stop-time breaks, leaps from 2/4 into 4/4, bass ostinatos—sharpen Thompson's wistful, unique compositions into masterpieces, setting up his measured, original improvisational style. Like Thompson, Gonsalves walked the stylistic borders separating swing and bebop, and though *Lucky Strikes* is permeated with a melancholy, condensed passion, *Gettin' Together* is more of a kill-the-sucker blowing date, with Gonsalves' slippery tenor squeezing its way through cracks in the tunes' harmonies. If you don't collect Ellington, Gonsalves is a rare item; in any event, this allays the drought.

**Lester Young**
*The President Plays* (Verve CD)

By '52, when this session was recorded, Young was deep into his middle period, playing tenor like a tenor. But on this date, at least on the uptempo tunes, his sound harks back to the light, crisp alto float of his first tenure with Basie in the 30s. More proof why CDs are great: five unreleased cuts, including Young singing a porno version of "Two To Tango." If that doesn't kill you, then Young's two solos on "Ad Lib Blues," vivid and articulate, will permanently insinuate their way into your memory.

**Steve Coleman & Five Elements**
*World Expansion (By The M-Base Neophyte)* (JMT/PSI)

If Coleman's first album presented the first original—and well-conceived—saxophone conception since who knows who, his second, a blow-out electric album, presented someone stiffly looking for a way out of the nine-to-five jazz routine. On *World Expansion* he's found some answers; its authority is like a manifesto. An amalgam of hip-hop rhythms, James Brown and his own cool-headed saxophone virtuosity, it's a tough, brash, self-assured record that subverts judgment, making genre labeling seem the simple, reductionist thing it is. It's also addictive; his saxophone sound, dry yet emotional, is shoved along by the distinct rhythms of the Brooklyn school he's part of. The writing, a sci-fi compilation of crunching rhythms, words, chilly voicings and spiraling solos, sounds fresh. Once you come to grips with what he's doing, on his terms, it hits you: This is something without precedent.

**Geri Allen**
*Open In The Middle* (Minor Music/PSI)

Allen's the most exciting pianist since Herbie Hancock, an original who has the ruggedness and space consciousness of an Earl Hines and the linear virtuosity of a Bud Powell. *Middle* has jack to do with her piano virtuosity; it's about writing and her varied experiences as a musician. Allen has constructed an album full of Latin, funk and other rhythms; a tap dancer makes an appearance, as do wild solos by trombonist Robin Eubanks, Steve Coleman and a Detroit posse that includes soprano saxophonist David McMurray. Loaded with detail, full of melodic and textural twists and turns, the record constantly surprises. Though it has the veneer of fusion—electric instruments, an occasional Latin tinge, touchy-feelie harmonies—it swings and its aim isn't lowest-common-denominator pleasure.

**Duke Ellington**
*Anatomy Of A Murder* (Rykodisc CD)

The film-score masterpiece, full of huge Ellingtonian dynamic sweeps, unforgettable melodies and dense harmonies, all transferred beautifully from the original master. Pray 1000 times that Rykodisc starts releasing more of Columbia's 50s and 60s Ellington material; much overlooked, the majority of it could, if needed, cement Ellington's rep as the Greatest American Composer, etc....If Rykodisc doesn't release more, we'll only know, given the sonic quality of Columbia's reissues, exactly how great the sound of Ellington's band—the blend of the reeds, the brass punctuations—in the 50s really was from *Anatomy*.

**Bobby Hutcherson**
*In The Vanguard* (Landmark)

It's a simple idea: Get Bobby Hutcherson, Kenny Barron, Buster Williams and Al Foster in the Village Vanguard, keep the arrangements budget-sized and let the musicians blow. Which they know how to do. The record catches them in muscular, almost overbearing form. By having the players just blow and not cash in on the individual clichés of the instruments (chiming vibes, percussive piano), Hutcherson and the group avoid the piano/vibes contrast John Lewis so painstakingly sets up in the MJQ. The record moves fast, and it's a good example of what regularly goes on in New York's clubs.

**Jimmy Heath**
*Peer Pleasure* (Landmark)

A set of tributes to Coltrane, Webster, Hodges, Rollins and Gillespie, *Peer Pleasure* works from a series of different perspectives. Heath is quietly everywhere on the record, his sparkling, relaxed bebop lines a reminder of how complex a combination of rhythm and harmony the bebop language really is. As tributes, his writing and arranging convey a musical personality—check out the rambunctiousness of "Forever Sonny" or the deep passion of "Song For Ben Webster"—without using the twitches and shakes from the original sources; it's all pure abstraction. Heath is perennially overlooked, a master. Discover him now and you'll be stuck searching used record stores for his classic Riverside recordings forever.

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# SHORT Rock TAKES

**Otis Redding**
*The Otis Redding Story* (Atlantic)

It doesn't take much critical insight to know that Redding was one of the most moving and influential soul singers of the 60s, but it does take a collection like this to realize just how mighty his achievements were. Spreading sixty songs across eight sides, *The Otis Redding Story* follows the singer from "These Arms Of Mine" right down to "(Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay," offering not only his best work, but some of his most revealing. A detailed booklet spells out the facts, the music provides the details: his grunting, groove-ridden exhortations, his soulful stutter, his ability to bend a note till it hurt. Together, they gave Redding an authority which makes it difficult, even now, to remember he was only twenty-six when he died.

**Original Motion Picture Soundtrack**
*Who's That Girl* (Sire)

Although the music from the new Madonna flick includes some pretty impressive cameos, from Club Nouveau's bouncy "Step By Step" to Coati Mundi's campy "El Coco Loco (So So Bad)," it's Our Lady of Peroxide who steals the show. Not that anyone should be surprised; thanks to the insinuating sizzle of the title tune and the carefully controlled passion of "The Look Of Love," Madonna proves once again that she may well be the savviest woman—singer and producer—in pop.

**Hooters**
*One Way Home* (Columbia)

As with *Nervous Night*, a large part of the Hooters' appeal is purely sonic: the wheezing accordions, the fluttering mandolins, the martial guitars. What makes this album an impressive step forward, though, is that the sound isn't just played for effect; from the Copland-esque hellfire of "Satellite" to the Celtic exoticisms of "Karla With a K," the arrangements comprise a context that makes the songs comprehensible. Consequently, even tuneful trifles like "Hard Rockin' Summer" come off sounding like songs of substance.

**That Petrol Emotion**
*Babble* (Polydor)

Though this Northern Irish quintet relies on lyrics more allusive than agitative, its radicalism comes through loud and clear in music that's as blunt and forceful as any rabble-rouser's rhetoric. But what really makes this disc a manic pop thrill is that the Petrols are tuneful to boot, carving catchy hooks out of the energetic clangor of their guitars. This is the way political rock ought to work.

**Starship**
*No Protection* (RCA)

As if eager to prove just how upbeat and professional the group has become, Starship litters this album with such sports-minded titles as "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now" and "It's Not Over ('Til It's Over)." What next—"The Fat Lady Sings"?

**The dB's**
*The Sound Of Music* (I.R.S.)

Nobody's ever doubted the dB's pop potential, but there's always been something about their sound that seemed to fall short—until now, that is. Sure, the songs are quirkily complex, and the odd-ball twang of "Bonneville" or "Working For Somebody Else" paints the dB's as gifted eccentrics. But when the band backs its pop instincts with an aggressive, assured instrumental attack, as on "Never Say When" and "Change With The Changing Times," the result is utterly exhilarating.

**Echo & the Bunnymen**
*Echo & The Bunnymen* (Sire)

There's something suspicious about the Bunnymen's new-found jollity, though it's hard to say just what. It could be the grimness with which Ian McCulloch delivers the seemingly upbeat sentiments of "Over You," or perhaps it's the way Ray Manzarek's Doorsy keyboards shore up the nonsense lyrics of "Bedbugs And Ballyhoo" with the same solemnity they lent Jim Morrison's semi-poetic rants. Or maybe it's just that calculated commerciality doesn't become the band.

**Trouble Funk**
*Trouble Over Here, Trouble Over There* (Island)

The go-go beat hasn't entirely go-gone, but it's pretty clear this is where Trouble Funk leaves its hometown sound behind. Which is fine, so long as Bootsy Collins is around to turn up the P-Funk. Put Kurtis Blow behind the board, though, and it just doesn't sound like Trouble.

**Def Leppard**
*Hysteria* (Mercury)

Four years is a long time to spend on an album, even if you are working with Mutt Lange. But the surprising thing about *Hysteria* is that it doesn't come across as overwrought or belabored. Even though the Leppards pound out the power chords with earnest of old, the group has learned to leaven its bombast with a pop sense that verges on the winsome. "Love Bites" is almost tender in its melodicism, while "Armageddon It" is, amazingly, fairly funky. Now, what was that line about changing spots?

**Wetton/Manzanera**
*Wetton/Manzanera* (Geffen)

Asia Minor.

**Relativity**
*Gathering Pace* (Green Linnet)

Irish and Scottish folk music have traditionally made a virtue of unison playing, while Anglo-American pop tends to emphasize interplay. What makes Relativity so special is that this four-piece family affair blends both traditions almost effortlessly, so that the rock edge underpinning "Rosc Catha Na Mumhan" sounds as natural as its Gaelic lyrics, while the melancholy balladry of "Siun Ni Dhuibhir" seems tailor-made for Relativity's lush harmonies. (70 Turner Hill Rd., New Canaan, CT 06840)

**BY J.D. CONSIDINE**


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# SHORT Indie TAKES

**Hubert Sumlin**
*Hubert Sumlin's Blues Party* (Black Top)

Rock 'n' rollers enshrine pyrotechnical blues guitar greats (B.B. King, Albert King, Buddy Guy et al). But there's another kind of bluesmaster: the unsung ensemble player who solos subtly between the cracks of the groove, cutting in and out like a jujitsu master. The patron saint of subversive soloing is Hubert Sumlin, whose brilliant contributions to Howlin' Wolf's music made him indispensable to that most demanding bandleader for twenty-three years. Sumlin's self-effacing style made him a hero only to cognoscenti, but that should change with Sumlin's first U.S. solo release. Behind excellent Bobby Bland-style vocals from New Orleanian Sam McClain and over solid backing courtesy of Roomful Of Blues personnel, Sumlin's darting, stinging lines surprise and satisfy on a varied, first-rate selection of shuffles, ballads, jump tunes and soulful romps. (Rounder, 1 Camp St., Cambridge, MA 02140) – *Randall Grass*

**Binky Philips**
*Binky Philips* (Caroline)

Talk about cautious: After fifteen years of playing around New York, this singer/guitarist's first record is a five-song EP. It sure doesn't sound like a debut either. Philips still believes in unhyphenated rock: His spiraling solos and aggressive harmonies underscore turmoil-laden lyrics. Ably abetted by bassist Sara Lee and drummer Mick Leyland, he carries on in the best tradition of the Who—and shows why it's worth carrying on. (5 Crosby St., New York, NY 10013)
– *Scott Isler*

**Dean Stefan**
*Trial And Error* (Rubber Tree)

Stefan was chief songwriter for the Spoilers, late-70s punk-popsters who worked the Santa Barbara, then L.A. club circuits. Now he operates alone (writing, producing, and—with a few exceptions—playing and singing all of *Trial And Error* himself) and favors more reflective, eloquent music. His influences are fairly apparent—and on "Wounded," a Lou Reed knockoff, a little *too* apparent. But Stefan establishes his own voice with literate, bittersweet observations of romantic anguish and longing, immersed in a variety of lean, melodic styles. On *Trial And Error*, Stefan has filtered classic singer/songwriter elements through an 80s sensibility, yielding warm, stirring, splendid results. (200 Hudson St., New York, NY 10013) – *Duncan Strauss*

**Nathan Abshire**
*A Cajun Legend...The Best Of Nathan Abshire* (Swallow)

Cajun accordionists nearly went extinct during the fiddle-and-steel guitar days of Western swing. But after World War II the squeeze-box was brought back by great players like the late Nathan Abshire. These raw, soulful Abshire originals—which soon became dance-hall standards—show why he is still revered in Cajun music. A booklet of French lyrics is included, along with intriguing English translations. (P.O. Drawer 10, Ville Platte, LA 70586) – *Ben Sandmel*

**Buddy Tate**
*The Texas Twister* (New World)

*Twister*'s the type of record that you play over and over. Tate and a quintet—including Cliff Smalls, an early rock 'n' roll pianist as well as a jazzman, Major Holley and Paul Quinichette—slink through a couple of standards and some blues. The intense yet effortless communication speaks a lot about the value of a common language, where musicians can get together for an afternoon and lay down perfect performances. The record's also a reminder of how potent Buddy Tate is as a soloist: robust, imaginative and, yup, still alive and playing better than ever. (701 7th Ave., New York, NY 10036) – *Peter Watrous*

**Uakti**
*Uakti* (Verve)

Walter Smetak, a Swiss-Brazilian version of Harry Partch, invented strange new musical instruments and edified students at the University of Bahia like Marco Antonio Guimarães, the leader of the Brazilian quartet Uakti. The band builds instruments like the "trilobite" out of PVC pipe and calfskin (among other things), and constructs exotic, richly rhythmic music out of elements from India, Bali, Brazil, Peru and American minimalism with seamless originality.
– *Chris McGowan*

**Sonic Youth**
*Sister* (SST)

The Sonics' lyrical concerns are as pathological as ever: Their songs still hinge on such themes as schizophrenia, Catholic damage, violence and generalized aberration. But *Sister* develops the New York quartet's audio onslaught of bizarre tunings, feedback, distortion and autodestruction with a new control and finesse. One step beyond last year's *Evol*, this latest opus shows a mature band of experimentalists carefully battering down rock's aesthetic walls. It's a righteous kill. (P.O. Box 1, Lawndale, CA 90260) – *Chris Morris*

**Sleepy LaBeef**
*Nothin' But The Truth* (Rounder)

What Texas rockabilly veteran LaBeef lacks in vocal expressiveness he makes up for in sheer lung power; his booming bass could nearly balance the budget. Unlike some of his previous albums, the live *Nothin' But The Truth* features tight and tightly recorded backing, LaBeef's own fine guitar solos and an almost nonstop manic pace throughout. The material isn't new—unless you consider Rockin' Sidney's "My Toot Toot" 80s pop—but LaBeef and band whomp it all into overdrive as if it were still under warranty. He'll have to change his name after this. – *Scott Isler*

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## ELY from page 38

screen, and they'd show all these classic movies. I lived in that room for about six months. I'd take every bit of the money I'd make sweeping the theater, being a janitor, and go to the movies and get lost. So I always look at things visually as well as musically. It's hard to put a visual thing in a form of about three or four minutes, but that's kind of a challenge, too. Of course, somebody like Butch, the time thing doesn't bother him; he'll just make thirty-minute-long songs."

Three- and four-minute vignettes don't constitute Ely's only writing medium. "I've got a bunch of short kind of road stories that I've completed," he states. "They're like songs that just never made it to music, or that I just didn't even try to make into music. And then some stuff I've written that I figure would look good on a wall or on a sidewalk," he laughs. "I've thought of getting musicians together and kind of narrating a novel. That's some project for down the road somewhere. I just have to do all these things one at a time."

Occasionally Ely's visual approach suggests Dylan's early electric period. Joe nods: "I always liked his writing, yeah. He's one of the best songwriters who ever lived—in there with all of the greats. There's something in a song. You have to conjure up your own image and then get it across in a short period of time, to where the song makes its own setting, tells a story, and then maybe leaves you wanting to know more. I think Dylan is great at that—especially bringing up sights and smells and sounds. Of course albums that are really meant for video play, like MTV, they don't really have to do that. They can basically be the soundtrack to their own video. It's two ways of looking at it. They both work."

One would think that an imagist such as Ely would see videos as undermining the integrity of his songs. "Yes and no," he allows. "What it does is it brings in a collaboration where the guy behind the camera is just as important as the guy behind the guitar. So if one doesn't work, it's all bad. But, yeah, I've had people ask me, 'What about this Loretta?' And I can make up any lies I want to. There's something about not really knowing, something about the mystery of it, that makes it a little more intriguing than seeing it in black and white on the screen. I think there's definitely a place for the art of video, because in the past few years there have been pieces made in that medium that will survive just like great paintings will, but it does take a real collaboration or maybe a good accident—something has to happen."

Jiggling the ice cubes in his tea and staring out the window, it's obvious that the *Dig All Night* debacle is still a thorn in Ely's side. His eyes open wider. "It didn't bother me so much while I was busy making *Lord Of The Highway*, but every time I think about the fact that I'm the only person who can't record those songs—which I'm doing in my set and are part of me and the band—it's really maddening."

A mischievous grin creeps over his face. "I think maybe I'm going to have to do something unrational, you know—just do it anyway." M

# SQUEEZE from page 66

Jones, yet he appears to be the most sensitive member of Squeeze, a fellow who can be brought to tears by the sight of lonely farms glimpsed through a bus window. His wife Cindy, an American, seems as friendly and boisterous as Chris is reserved. Asked if Cindy ever offers advice on his lyrics, Chris says, "No, she doesn't hear the songs until they're on the album, then she threatens divorce. We had a bit of a rough time at one particular point and she was going to use the lyrics from the *Cosi Fan Tutti Frutti* album against me in court.

"Gilson inspired such a lot of things on the album for me," Chris says softly. "He inspired the lyrics of 'Tough Love.' I still drink, sometimes heavily. When I see him on the bus first thing in the morning, I think, 'Shit, this guy's got it sussed out.' I wish I did. But maybe one of these days that'll all change."

Let's give Gilson the last word. "I used to have ludicrously high standards that I tried to maintain," he says. "Which was madness. Now I take the show as it comes. If I screw up a song I don't let it spoil the rest of the show. I just wait for the next song and play that. That's another thing that's fresh about the band. This is going to sound a bit hard—but we don't really care so much now if a song doesn't work. Because maybe we used to try a bit *too* hard.

"You have to balance the energy against control, and it's very hard to do. A few nights ago we played RFK Stadium in Philadelphia and for some reason my brain had gone and I was convinced that I had to play really loud to get the people in the back to hear me! But of course we've got a 25,000-watt PA here! In the old days—and I don't want to keep talking about it because I consider that to be another person—I never knew how to pull back. 'It isn't going well, so try harder! Come on! Try harder! Harder! It's *still* not going well, do something, make your hands bleed!' Now it's not that desperate. If this song doesn't work I'll take a deep breath and we'll go on to the next one. And that one'll work. That's what it's about. That's the way we do it now. There's a nice relaxed atmosphere in the band.

"It's all a matter of balance and control. I'm convinced—this is Gilson Lavis' theory of life, now—life is a balancing act and all the way along you have to weigh up the pros and cons of every situation—emotionally and physically. That's what I'm trying to do now. And if a day doesn't go that well, there's always tomorrow." M

# U2 from page 78

**BONO:** I thought that the intro sounded like an orchestra tuning up. It was a treatment of an Edge keyboard line.

**EDGE:** Yeah, Brian [Eno] did one of his Russian things on it. It was a natural choice for the beginning of an album, and we actually tailored the intro for that position. Had we put it elsewhere on the record we would probably have shortened it, because a lot of U2 songs start out longer than they finally end up. But we loved the way it evolved, so we left it as it was. To be honest, though, when you're making a record the running order just develops, as the songs tend to give us clues when we're working on them.

**MUSICIAN:** *But there does seem to be some kind of a structure to* The Joshua Tree, *although perhaps it's a rationalization after the fact. The first two tracks are "transcendant" songs, and they're followed by love songs and more socially oriented material.*

**BONO:** There is a beginning, middle and end to the LP. I actually object to the fact that we had to put it on two sides—I'd have liked it all on side one, and nothing on side two.

**EDGE:** This side one/side two business isn't something we subscribe to, although we used to take advice like "Stick anything that's going to keep radio happy on side one, and put all the experimental, interesting stuff on side two."

**BONO:** "Running To Stand Still" was always meant to be followed by "Red Hill Mining Town" and that's one reason for having the CD—although I'm not a big CD person myself. I like the crackles.

**MUSICIAN:** *What do you consider the highlights of* The Joshua Tree, *with the benefit of hindsight?*

**LARRY:** The inner sleeve, basically!

**ADAM:** I think the power of "Bullet The Blue Sky" is something we never conjured up before. That's what I like.

**EDGE:** But whenever I hear that track I think about how far it *could* have gone. As a guitar-player I'm only barely getting into that style. The guitar-playing is much better live than on record, where I was only exploring the possibilities.

**MUSICIAN:** *Was the guitar multi-tracked?*

**EDGE:** It was a live take. The guitar break towards the end has an overdub on it, but the basic track is live. We should get into this now, because it's a classic example of this kind of recording. When we were planning this record, one thing we wanted to do was to take up where we left off with *The Unforgettable Fire* in terms of recording techniques—getting the sound of a live performance. There is no way that recording each instrument in a separate acoustic environment, and trying to blend them back together again, from tape, is going to get the same result as musicians playing together. You don't get the sound of the room, you don't get the chemistry. So we did *The Joshua Tree* in Adam's house, in my house, and also in the "live" room here in Windmill Lane. Everybody was in the same space, playing with eye contact and a great deal of feeling. The *sound* of "Bullet" is the sound of U2 playing in a room. It is essential for that song that we have that feeling. It's the same for a lot of the other tracks too, like "Running To Stand Still."

**BONO:** I tend, as a word-writer, to think in terms of a running-order. It would be on my mind a lot. The whole process of U2 involves four people, and we all have different opinions. Side two would have been different if I'd had my way. I wanted it to go further into the swamp. There was a very different piece before "Exit," and a gospel song to go before that. I had this idea that we should start with U2—with "Where The Streets Have No Name"—and then dismantle U2 during the record, and be left with nothing recognizable as us. This didn't completely come to be, because in the end we took decisions on the strength of the *songs*. I would battle more for the big idea, for the structure of the whole record, but in the end what we went for—dare I say it—was the Beatles' idea that each song has its own identity.

**EDGE:** The music is so different from anything we did before, in terms of where the music sprung from. If we'd taken that notion to its extreme people wouldn't have known what was going on. It would have been quite good to see people totally floored by it, but we also wanted to present what we felt was the strongest material.

**MUSICIAN:** *Do you consider your music primarily as art, entertainment or a vehicle for meaningful messages—be they spiritual or social?*

**EDGE:** I don't think we ever consider anything other than "This is a song we want to write." No one ever says "This is great entertainment!"

**ADAM:** You're talking about all the things that make up a song—you can't separate them.

**BONO:** The people who try to do that are those who are on the outside looking in. We're on the inside, and we can't see in front of our noses. To try to turn us into prophets—or for that matter wanting to put us on in Las Vegas—is missing the point. M

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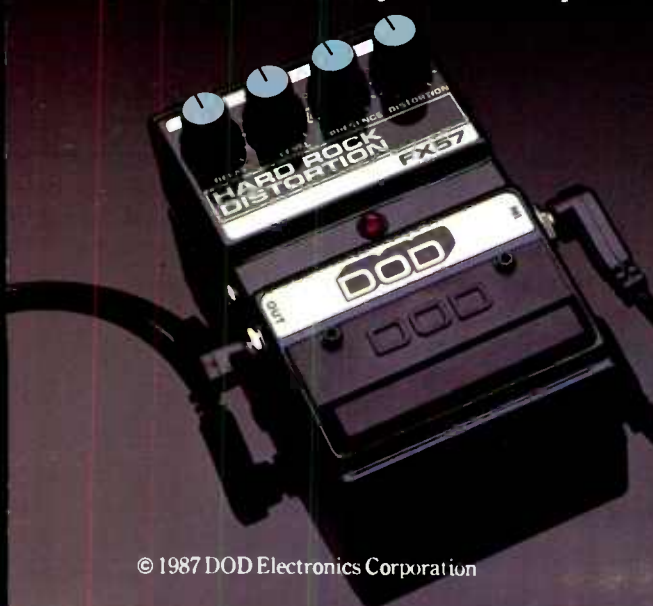


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