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LETTERS

IRREPLACEABLE

THANKS FOR THE EXCELLENT article about the remarkable Replacements (Feb. '89)! Paul Westerberg may feel he has "nothing to say," but to his many fans, he does. Their music has given me support through the difficult years of early adulthood, and, most of all, great fun! I'm glad Paul has now "grown up" enough to admit to himself he's an "artist"; I had no doubt of it!

Linda Stevens
W. Brookfield, MA

THANKS FOR PUTTING THE Replacements on the cover. At first I thought I was on "Candid Camera"; "It must be a joke." Then I realized that, even on *this* planet, things occasionally happen as they should.

Big Bucks Burnett
Denton, TX

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR the fabulous article about the Replacements. Since they made your cover my new dream is that more people begin to listen to the band that has the potential of being to the U.S. what the Stones were to the U.K.

Richard Holtzman
Boston, MA

I CRINGED AT PAUL WESTERberg's story of the Minneapolis punkers who laughed at the sight of him. I grew up in Minneapolis and saw the 'Mats in their wild and drunken state as well as in their cleaned-up let's-play-some-music state. The latter was the best live show I have ever witnessed—a packed house at London's Mean Fiddler on May 31, 1987. I never did get the courage to go up to Paul as he sat by himself off to the side of the crowded bar. I assumed it must be old hat, having fans come up to him and tell him that the 'Mats are the best band ever (not just of the '80s).

Michele Schafer
Washington, DC

STEVE PERRY'S SUGARY ARTIcle on the "new" Replacements seems like it was written by Sire Records' promotional department. Perry justifies the Replacements' change from intelligent thrash-pop to Top-40 pop as a boon for the music industry.

However, the article really made me sick of Paul Westerberg and his band. Why, Paul, did you feed the record-buying public and your loyal fans the image that you were one of the last rowdy, rude yet intelligent bands around? Deep down inside, as you thrashed your way to critics' hearts and the respect of fans like me across the nation, you actually wished that you could put out the bland Top-40 dribble we hear on the airwaves today. What a shame.

Jeff Jotz
Notre Dame, IN

THE REAL MAC

THANK YOU, TIMOTHY WHITE, for the in-depth article on Fleetwood Mac (Feb. '89). Even after all the changes within the group, there are some of us who still love their music, love to know what has been going on, and what is going on.

Nancy Markel
Hampton, VA

NEVER HAVE I READ A MORE thorough and perfectly written article on Stevie Nicks and Fleetwood Mac.

Ronnie McCarty
Jonesboro, LA

YOUR ARTICLE REAFFIRMED the fact that this is a group of people who haven't stopped thinking about tomorrow.

Tom Petrasko
State College, PA

KEEP ON CHOOGLIN'

THANKS FOR THE UPDATE ARTIcle on John Fogerty (Feb. '89). Now he can continue to do what he does best: sing, write, produce and arrange music.

Glenn Last
Brooklyn, NY

THE FRIPP TRIP

THANKS FOR THE GREAT INTERview with Robert Fripp (Feb. '89). I admire him as a person and musician.

Illona Trejo
Kansas City, MO

WHAT A SNOBBISH ASSHOLE.

Jeff Gaynor
Franklin, NJ

MAYBE SOMEONE SHOULD TELL Robert Fripp that Jeff Beck hasn't used a pick for at least 12 years. "Mr. Perfect" should stop surrounding his narcissistic self with "Fripp (Guitar Craft) Worshippers" and come out into the real world.

John S. Garcia
Houston, TX

NAME GAMES

YOUR ELOQUENT AND TIMELY article on the great artist and educator Jackie McLean (Feb. '89) is wonderful. It is one of my most rewarding experiences to be associated with such a beautiful human being. And I'm sure Phil Bowder and Hotep Idris Galeta's ancestors would forgive you for misspelling their family names.

Hotep Idris Galeta
Hartford, CT

IN TWO DIFFERENT PLACES IN his article on Lyle Lovett (Feb. '89) Bill Flanagan spells Nanci Griffith's first name with a "y." But on the covers of both *Little Love Affairs* and *Poet in My Window* it is spelled with an "i."

I just thought you might like to know. I'm probably mistaken.

Joe Carrera
Layton, UT

SEEING PINK

J.D. CONSIDINE'S REVIEW OF Pink Floyd's *Live: Delicate Sound of Thunder* (Feb. '89) should prove one thing: that J.D. reviews all his albums from a different perspective, with his head up his ass.

Matthew Krezevic
San Angelo, TX

We recently circulated two pieces of misinformation: First, the Alesis QuadraVerb costs $449 rather than the $499 we reported. Second, there is no hard-disk retrofit available for the Casio FZ-10 rack-mount sampler, but instead a SCSI (or "scuzzy") port has been included on a new version, the FZ-20M. Apologies to both firms.

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STEVE MARSEL

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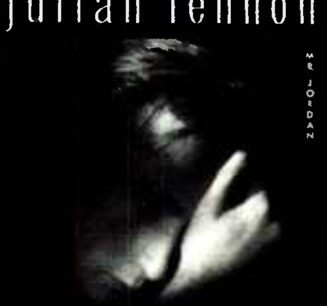

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F A C E S

BLITZKRIEG POP

LAIBACH

Think Yugoslavia. Think of an anvil orchestra from hell, backed by a massed Wagnerian chorale of the damned. A house band for a Nuremberg rally that nobody's ever allowed to leave.

That's Laibach, sonic front line for the New Slovenian Art Movement. Back home in Yugoslavia, they've been waging a totalitarian-tinged aesthetic slugfest that, oddly, seems both in favor of and against the dictates of Communist authority.

We're talking Eastern European politics as art. Don't even try to figure it out. But it's got something to do with the individual as cog in a wheel, beamed to the masses from a region that's been both crossroads and sacrificial lamb since the days of the Roman Empire.

Laibach was the Third Reich's name for the four musicians' hometown of Ljubljana, and parts of the band's shtick are as ominous as 1939. Their live shows in particular are both goofy and monstrous, filled with muscular Aryan manhood, stag horns and syncopated goosestepping during covers of tunes like Queen's "One Vision"—a mechanized yet bestial salute to microchip might and purpose.

Somebody recently called Laibach "Volga boatmen on steroids." But band spokesperson Ivan Novak dismisses the darker descriptions (retro-Nazi, Orwellian, etc.) as "naive and romantic. If we were fascists or Nazis, we wouldn't do what we're doing. As Orson Welles said, 'Nazis look exactly the same as everyone else.'"

Their latest recordings—a song-by-song reprogramming of the Beatles' *Let It Be*, and an EP sporting six readings of the Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil"—are as funny as they are disquieting, all tank-treaded percussion and blitzkrieg bombast. And bear in mind that the band played glitzy dance clubs on its last U.S. tour. But that militant edge...

"Every person has a bit of that inside," Novak says. "Life in New York, for example, is war. But we don't aim to be harsh. Watching western groups, especially heavy metal, there's much more harshness. Western pop seems very wired and strained—though of course it's all very calculated."

So is Laibach—though it's hard to tell where show biz ends and the sinister begins.

"We are a mistake of the east and west," Novak insists. "We want to build that mistake into both their systems."

What's that supposed to mean? Don't ask.

"We are not producing one-dimensional information," he says, "and we don't seek one-dimensional reception. We are not afraid to pay for what we're doing. We are not afraid of being wrongly understood."

– Dan Hedges

JOHN SOARES

Michael Jackson: Hard Times

We're not necessarily saying the following two items are related, but we thought you'd like to know:

• Das Damen's "Song for Michael Jackson to Sell" is one song that Michael Jackson's not selling—or anyone else, for that matter. In January, three months after SST Records released the song on Das Damen's *Marshmallow Conspiracy* EP, the company recalled it under threat of legal action. The song samples the Beatles' "Magical Mystery Tour," which Jackson owns, along with most of the Lennon-McCartney catalogue. Publisher SBK Entertainment threatened a copyright infringement suit. The legality of song sampling has never been tested in court.

• After selling a measly six million copies of his *Bad* album, Jackson has dropped his manager of the last five years. Frank DiLeo got his silhouette on *Bad*'s inner sleeve, but that wasn't enough to launch the album into the rarefied atmosphere of its predecessor, *Thriller* (20 million sales). Anyone interested in the job should write Jackson c/o Epic Records. Love of animals a must.

– Scott Isler

World Radio History

GREATNESS FIRST, HITS SECOND

PIERCE TURNER

"I come from a family of entertainers, so it's natural I would want to be one," smiles Pierce Turner, Irishman and New York resident. "Back in Wexford, my uncle, who always has a cigar in the corner of his mouth, plays accordion in bars. People will give money to sit next to the man, he's so charismatic."

This affable singer/songwriter has chosen a different means of expression. His new LP *The Sky and the Ground* is chock-full of literate, synth- and piano-based pop tunes, delivered in what he calls a "piping" voice that echoes such notables as Peter Gabriel and Steve Winwood.

Though just on his second album, Turner has been knocking around for a while. He emigrated with guitarist Larry Kirwan to New York a good 15 years ago. Following a spell as a folk duo, they took a cue from the new wave boom and formed the Major Thinkers, a bona fide rock band. Their self-titled 1983 EP created a mild stir, thanks to the track "Avenue B," but everything went downhill from there.

When the Major Thinkers gave their label (Portrait) a full LP, Turner recalls, "The singles promotion man said, 'No hits,' and they wouldn't touch it. We did a demo of six more songs, trying to write a hit, and they hated the whole tape." That rejection, combined with their manager's growing interest in his other client—Cyndi Lauper—prompted them to throw in the towel, leaving Turner a solo act.

"I decided the only way to accomplish anything was to have the music be about me as an individual. I know it's been said before, but each person is unique, and if you

confront what you are, even if it's ludicrous, your songs will be unique." Anyway, he adds, "It's better to have a great record that's not a hit than it is to have a hit that's not great."

Turner's reliance on his own life for material has given an edge to *It's Only a Long Way Across* (co-produced by hip composer Philip Glass) and now *The Sky and the Ground*. The latter features the moving "His Reason," written after his mother passed away.

"It's about my father, who was a very inarticulate man," says Turner softly. "He became incredibly depressed when my mother died. He'd sit with me in the kitchen late at night and tell me how sad he was. Later he died of a broken heart."

Wasn't it hard to go public with such a private memory?

"No, not at all," Turner laughs suddenly. "Maybe I'm sick, but it's a great feeling—like an exorcism."

– Jon Young

HE'LL BE YOUR MIRROR

JOE HENRY

Joe Henry is a Midwestern street poet. His songs evoke images of open spaces—streams and wind and mountains—but his Southern upbringing has infused those locations with an aura of mystery. After a childhood in Appalachia (among snake handlers and a faith-healing grandmother), it's not surprising that Henry's lyrics, he says, "have more to do with smoke than with concrete.

"I think if you're too specific, that limits people. It's more interesting for a song to open up from, rather than contain, an idea. I've always liked songs that I thought were very definitely about something but I wasn't too sure *what*"—songs, for example, by Van Morrison, the Band (to whom Henry bears a strong musical resemblance) and Tom Waits.

Like his idols, Henry has a storyteller's flair, albeit an oblique one. "As an artist, you try to construct a mirror that reflects the feeling of whoever decides to look into it," he notes. "I fancy myself more of a windowmaker or a glazier than anything else."

Henry's debut construction, *Murder of Crows*, looks out on a world made all the more rich for the help of such fellow artisans as David Bromberg, Mick Taylor, Chuck Leavell and Anton Fier. But despite the heady company, Henry says his record is really just a road map. "If you listen to the whole thing from start to finish," he says, "I hope you feel like you've passed through something—some dusty small towns or an old traveling circus." *– Robin J. Schwartz*

EBET ROBERTS

World Radio History

NOTES FROM A SURVIVOR

DION

You can take the boy out of the Bronx, not vice versa. Dion DiMucci hasn't lived in his native borough for 30 years, but he'll never get a job as an elocution professor.

Fortunately he doesn't have to. Although he first hit in 1958 as a crooning teen-aged doo-wopper, Dion (as strangers call him—he's almost never used his last name professionally) has had a phoenix-like musical career that's avoided coasting on oldies brain-death.

"I never got into doin' the club thing with monkey-suits and, 'Hey, here's a medley of my hits,'" he says with a trace of excusable pride. "I'd rather be a rebel with a cause than just bullshit."

Recently Dion's been kicking up the dirt in a big way. Late last year he published a brutally honest autobiography that detailed his consecutive involvements with heroin (something else he started doing as a teenager), alcohol and, more peacefully, Jesus. In January an awed Lou Reed inducted him into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame; Dion's corrosively funny speech showed he has no regrets about not living in the past.

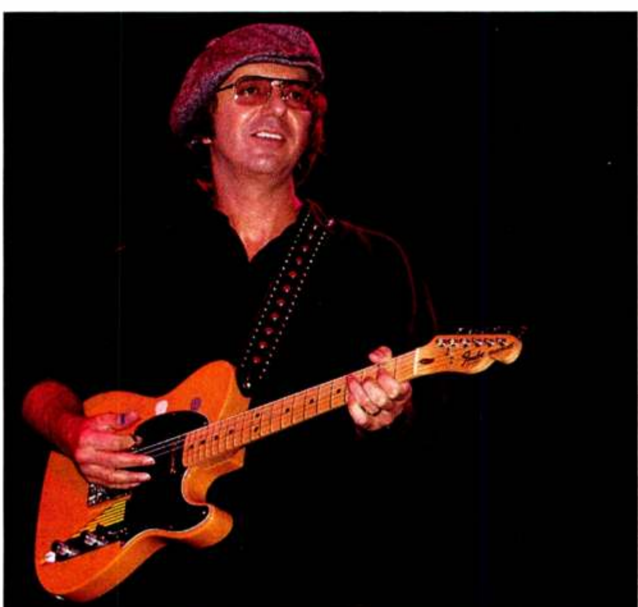
Best of all, this April Arista Records released Dion's first new album of non-religious songs in 11 years. "I didn't know how ready I was," he admits. "The songs just flew out of me, man. I said [to Arista], 'I'll do it if I can make a rock 'n' roll album.'"

The result is not rock 'n' roll in the '50s-formalist sense so much as in its musical directness and forthright lyrics. *Yo Frankie* is gritty, street-tough and soulful. Dion's songs are sometimes nostalgic, never sentimental.

"I got a *lot* to fucking say, man. Over the years I've figured out a few things. I like expressing my feelings, my doubts, my fears, my joys. I still like making people think or feel. That's my job."

Dion will be 50 this summer. So what. "I could almost look at this record like a new career. This is from ground zero. This is me today."

– Scott Isler



DAVID SEELIG/STAR FILE

He was a face. He was an unregenerate drug addict. He was a trumpeter and singer who made jazz history—as much for his playing style as his Central-Casting good looks.

Chet Baker seemed to have it all and then blew it away. Last May he took his last shot, fell out a window and died. He was 58, looked 75 and probably felt that way too. A year earlier photographer/filmmaker Bruce Weber made a documentary on Baker, *Let's Get Lost*, which is just now being released. The Oscar-nominated film is a touching and disturbing portrait of a gifted and troubled human being. He was a genius. He was a creep. He was a musician. – *Scott Isler*

HAPPY AT LAST

GREGSON & COLLISTER

He quit being a music teacher to lead Any Trouble, a likable but ill-fated Manchester, England, quartet. She grew up on the Isle of Man and had a job singing in the predawn hours on a northern English radio station. By the time Any Trouble ground to a halt, Clive Gregson had grown so frustrated and depressed by the "haircuts and trousers" attitude of the music business that he had decided to quit performing and be a full-time songwriter and producer. Then he happened across Christine Collister singing in a Manchester folk club.

Collister guested on Gregson's solo album and followed him into the stage and studio rep company of Richard Thompson. After a 1985 Thompson tour, the couple began working as a duo. Gregson plays the instruments (guitar, mostly) and writes the strikingly honest songs; they both sing, finding harmony in a mixture of roughness and purity. The effect—especially onstage—is magical. "Our partnership wasn't premeditated," Gregson notes. "We just started gigging to fill in some time."

Although Gregson and Collister will next tour with a full band, three years as an acoustic duo has left them tarred with the F-word. "I believe there isn't a folk revival so much as an influx of people who wear acoustic guitars," Gregson observes. "It's become a fashion. I feel no great affinity to folk music as it's defined these days. I don't want to be involved." A forthcoming third album, containing a jumping rock 'n' roll lament for Elvis Presley, should see to that.

Facing a packed house at McCabe's in Santa Monica in February, Collister sang up a storm and Gregson proved to be a surprisingly accomplished and resourceful guitarist. Jazz, rock, blues and folk influences mingled in his acoustic playing, while the pair's unpretentious charm won over the crowd.

"We sell far more records and play to far more people than Any Trouble ever did," Gregson says, savoring the irony. "Everything about this feels positive." *– Ira Robbins*

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THROWING MUSES

Shooting You Between the Eyes with Inspiration

BY JIM MACNIE

Piling on the music: Kristin Hersh, Leslie Langston, Dave Narcizo, Tanya Donelly.

NOTHING MUCH HAPPENS in Newport, Rhode Island, in the middle of January—there's lots of time to contemplate the gray sky, gray water and gray streets. That gives Throwing Muses ample chance to rehearse, worry and write gray songs. During practice sessions these days, trepidation regarding their upcoming tour is the recurring topic. But gathered together, the band—guitarist/vocalist Kristin Hersh, guitarist/vocalist Tanya Donelly, bassist Leslie Langston and drummer David Narcizo—breaks into chuckles.

"Yo, *Hunkpapa*, yeah!" laughs Hersh, while slapping palms with Donelly. "To get psyched," she explains, "we have to do high-fives whenever anybody says the name of the record."

Hunkpapa is the Muses' fifth release, so these one-time critics' darlings should be used to plenty of mentions. It's been over four years since their first LP came out on the British 4AD label, and if getting psyched is an issue, all the Muses have to do is recall how it arrived to the hyperbolic hosannas of the British press.

"The fact that we were so untrendy is what took them by surprise," recalls Hersh. "Fascinated by our lack of style," concurs Narcizo with raised eyebrows. He's got to be talking fashion style, not musical, because the Muses' approach to interpreting Hersh's songs is idiosyncratic to say the least. Her harsh, minor-key tunes are tied in knots, and their density is compounded by the singer's relentless self-investigation. "When we first started playing out in Providence, we thought we were just like other bands," she offers, "but the reaction was, 'You guys are nuts, where did you come from?'"

They weren't nuts, just intense. Call their approach Plath-matics: Their poetic examinations of the psyche are sometimes as confounding as their music is relentlessly piercing. Though the facade suggests the ease of folk music, their overall sound remains archly aggressive. Imagine Television's "Torn Curtain" being played at 78 rpm. Playing their electric guitars like acoustics, the Muses allow swirling, finger-picked interplay to underscore the hazy dread in Hersh's occasionally oblique lyrics. Narcizo's martial drum beats add to the anxiety, and the fact that he avoids the crash cymbals keeps the tension mounting on even the softest songs.

The Brit crits loved this fevered introspection, but according to Hersh, they didn't get the full picture: "I admit we don't look happy onstage, but offstage, we don't necessarily want to talk about razor blades."

Yet that kind of dire tone is what the band's music often conjures. Most of the songs are trilled in Hersh's Betty-Boop-from-hell avant-yodel, which has antecedents in Patti Smith, Yoko Ono, Diamanda Galas and Lauren Newton. Hersh, who was only 14 when she and Donelly first started trading songs back and forth in high school, actively acknowledges the first of those references. Patti's *Wave* is on in the background as the interview starts to roll.

"I studied music," she explains, "and learned technique for expressing sound, but I was never taught to grab that fire that music should always have. I could always trust my voice to do that. I like whiney voices, like Gordon Gano's. But when I hear myself singing, it sounds like this smart girl that I don't even know; I'd never be able to think of all that stuff. I think the way I sing has added to confusion about us."

Hersh's main fear is of being dubbed an art band; it isn't an unfounded worry. While the leader acknowledges that her fervent vocals might have steered the Muses toward a decidedly non-mainstream turf, the drastic design of their music accomplished much the same. By eschewing traditional verse/chorus/verse arrangements early on, the Muses divorced themselves from the rock norm. The build-build-blast arrange-

JOHN SOARES

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ments were a plus in helping individualize their sound, but the band has found them a bit tough to translate to listeners.

"I always thought that being a musician meant learning and growing and exploring every possibility you could," she offers seriously. "We tend to pile on as much music as we can, everybody playing at the same time. As our producer, Gary Smith, says, 'Kristin, you never heard of a whole note.' I just wanted it to be fast and full of life. Sometimes our parts were impossible to play."

On the indie circuit, out-of-stepness can beget its own currency. Yet at a time when every third or fourth band came off as R.E.M. clones, the Muses seemed singular; some of their songs sounded drastic even for the fringes. "I thought you were *supposed* to sound original," Hersh says. "Why would we need another conventional band? You hear them all day long. 'I don't want to play a C major right now, okay?' I thought you shouldn't go back to playing chords, you had to explore the extent of every progression and rhythm you could, and see what happened along the way. But that alienates a lot of people."

Therein lies the rub. After six releases (*The Fat Skier* EP and *House Tornado* LP are also on Sire), the Muses' churning countermelodies, psychic housecleaning and visceral rhythms are still looking for a larger audience. *Hunkpapa* isn't a drastic change of scenery, but instrumentally it allows for some newfound breathing room. The Muses are often compared to wise, women-only units like the Raincoats and Slits, but *Hunkpapa* should widen the field of reference.

"I think we *do* rock out," Hersh maintains with a grin, "albeit in a different kind of way. Expressing ourselves on vinyl has been difficult; the albums sound a bit tame opposed to what we do onstage." "I used to let the drums follow the guitar parts real closely," adds Narcizo. "There almost wasn't any difference. But this time I wrote drum parts that weren't quite so manic."

You can hear the change in "Dizzy," which yields to convention in an inspired, refreshing way. As the band sits around the apartment checking out the tune's newly completed video, Hersh comments about her need to communicate. "I continuously learn that I know nothing about listening habits of the general public. True, we attract an alternative crowd, and sell an alternative amount of records, but if I thought we were being elitist in this, I'd give up. We're not trying to alienate people.

"We never relied on our craft much; we thought that other groups were forsaking inspiration, just relying totally on craft, and because most of it was crap, we didn't want to be part of that. So everything we did was gut level; I wanted to pack a million emotions into one song. But people would say, 'That

CONTINUED ON PAGE 97

MUSE-IC CLASS

"WE couldn't afford electrics when we started," recalls **Hersh** without a trace of sentimentality, "but after a while we got a couple of $50 guitars and a bass. We had one amp; we called it 'Big Fucker.' It was really old; we all plugged into it and it picked up every radio station within a 50-mile radius." The Muses have been plugged in ever since. Hersh finger-picks her Fender through a Mesa Boogie Simul-Class and Boss chorus pedal. **Donelly**'s Strat (with rosewood fingerboard) chirps through a Roland Jazz Chorus 120. The service of a Boss Digital Metalizer and a Rat distortion pedal are available with one stomp. It's a Tune Technology Bass Maniac for **Langston**, with Yamaha pre- and power amps and a Gallien Krueger 4x10 bottom. She EQs herself with a Rane Graphic EQ. **Narcizo**'s heartbeat approach comes from a Sonar Performance Series kit and Zildjian high-hat—no other cymbals.

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ENYA

Clannad's Little Sister Sails Away

BY MICHAEL AZERRAD

Away from the mountains, Eithne Ni Bhraonain goes with the flow.

ENYA IS SITTING IN Geffen Records' New York offices, looking a bit perplexed. "People in the British press were referring to me as... 'beat.' Something about Paul Simon's *Graceland*..." You mean world beat? "Right. I was thinking, 'What is *world beat?*' I had no idea what it was!"

Enya has no idea what world beat is because, she says, she doesn't listen to music. In an effort to keep their music as original as possible, she and producer Nicky Ryan have cut themselves off from all outside musical influences. "Also, I've been in the studio working on music non-stop, so when I have any free time, the *last* thing I want to do is listen to music. I've never bought an album in my life," she says.

The isolationist strategy may have backfired—Enya's new album, *Watermark*, sounds a lot like a new age record, all reverberating spaces and soft timbres. *Watermark* echoes Gregorian chant, Satie, Eno's *Music for Airports* and more than a wee bit of Irish folk music. It would teeter over the brink and into an innocuous ambient wash if it were not for some frankly sweet melodies, evocative lyrics and an incredibly rich sound. The first single, the tuneful travelogue "Orinoco Flow," became a bi-continental hit; not coincidentally, it's by far the hookiest thing on the album.

Enya, a petite, soft-spoken woman of 27, is quite pragmatic and quite reserved; she's far from ethereal. Ask her about her emotional stake in the music and she'll give you a blow-by-blow account of how it was made. She wears a ring depicting two hands clasping a crowned heart, an old Celtic symbol whose meaning depends on which way the heart points. She wears hers with the heart pointing down, meaning what? "Meaning that I just like the way it looks with the heart pointing down."

And how does she respond to the new age tag? In classic fashion: "People can't categorize it, so they say it's new age." Nevertheless, *Watermark* is burning up the new age chart (if indeed anything can "burn up" a new age chart). The record is shot through with a sort of spirituality manqué. "Cursum Perficio," a choral piece sung in Latin, might sound like a Catholic hymn, but the lyrics actually come from an inscription on the portico of Marilyn Monroe's last home. Enya says, "The reason people say it's religious-sounding is the amount of reverb we use. That's what they keep relating to the church. That aura is around it because of the long, long reverb." But the lyrics contain many references to water, a classic symbol of rebirth. It's not just the reverb people are talking about. "It *is*, though. It's the sound that gives the church feel."

Enya, born Eithne Ni Bhraonain (pronounced Enya Nee BREE-nine), is influenced by the landscape—all mountains and beaches—of the northwest Irish coast where she grew up. The Irish influence extends to the three songs on *Watermark* which she sings in Gaelic (her first language). Enya's older brothers, sisters and uncles make up the Irish group Clannad (Gaelic for "family"). In 1980, Nicky Ryan, the band's long-time producer/sound and light man/manager, enlisted Enya to play synthesizer in the band. She was 18, at least nine years younger than anyone else in the group.

Enya and Ryan left Clannad together in 1982. Enya's explanation is that she was tired of being a second-class citizen in the band, and Ryan was frustrated by Clannad's reluctance to try new things, including featuring more of Enya. It's rumored that Clannad fired the two after learning they were romantically involved, but the band refuses comment. "It sounds bigger than it was," Enya says of leaving Clannad, "and it wasn't because they were my family. When we were actually working with each other, it

MIM MICHELOVE

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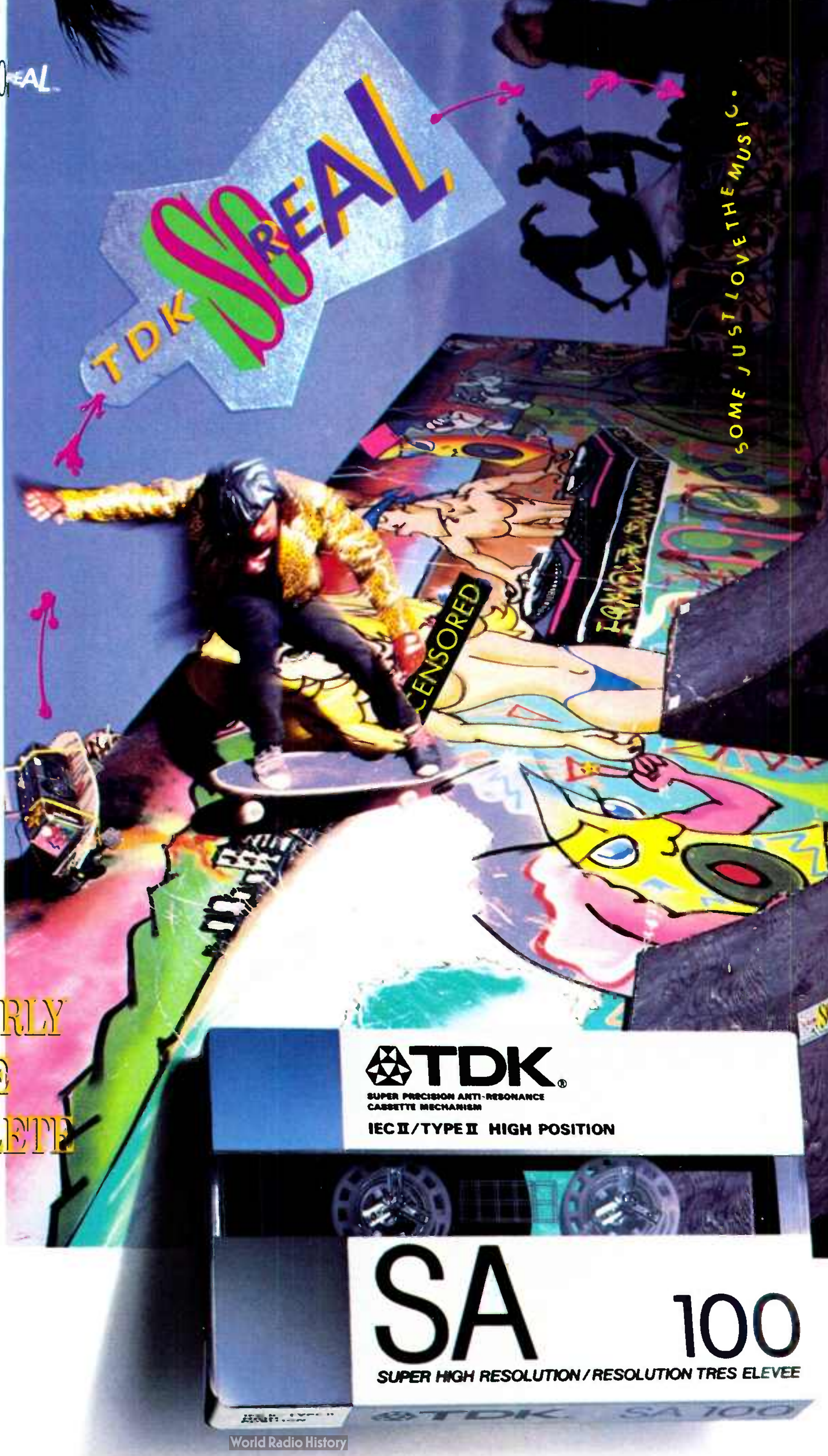

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was very different. They had a set way of working and were so used to being together. When I joined it was different, also there was a bit of an age gap. I had not seen them for long periods of time because I was at boarding school, and all of a sudden I was with them 24 hours a day. We had great likes and dislikes, and there was a big clash. I liked being more independent and found I was somebody in the background with them. I found I would never be a full member of the group."

The split with Clannad was traumatic for Ryan, who lived and worked with the band for eight years and is no longer on speaking terms with them. It was less so for Enya, who was only in the band for a couple of years and remains deeply loyal to her family. After the break, Enya moved into the Dublin home which she has shared with Ryan and his wife, Roma, for the past six years, and the three started a creative partnership. In effect, Enya moved from one family to another. She and the wizardly, mustachioed Ryan often finish each other's sentences.

The new team's first project was a soundtrack for the film *The Frog Prince*, for which Enya wrote the music. It got her name around, and soon film producer Tony McAuley commissioned a soundtrack for the BBC documentary series, *The Celts*, released as *Enya* on Atlantic's "New Age" imprint. The album cover featured a high-heeled Enya posing with a couple of stuffed wolves. Soon after, the three signed with WEA/England, insisting on artistic freedom. They also won control over how Enya was portrayed—no more stuffed wolves—and commenced work on *Watermark*.

As it turns out, the album owes its sound not just to Celtic scenery and Enya's pure, pretty alto; underneath it all, *Watermark* is a tour de force of patience and a determination to find ghosts in machines.

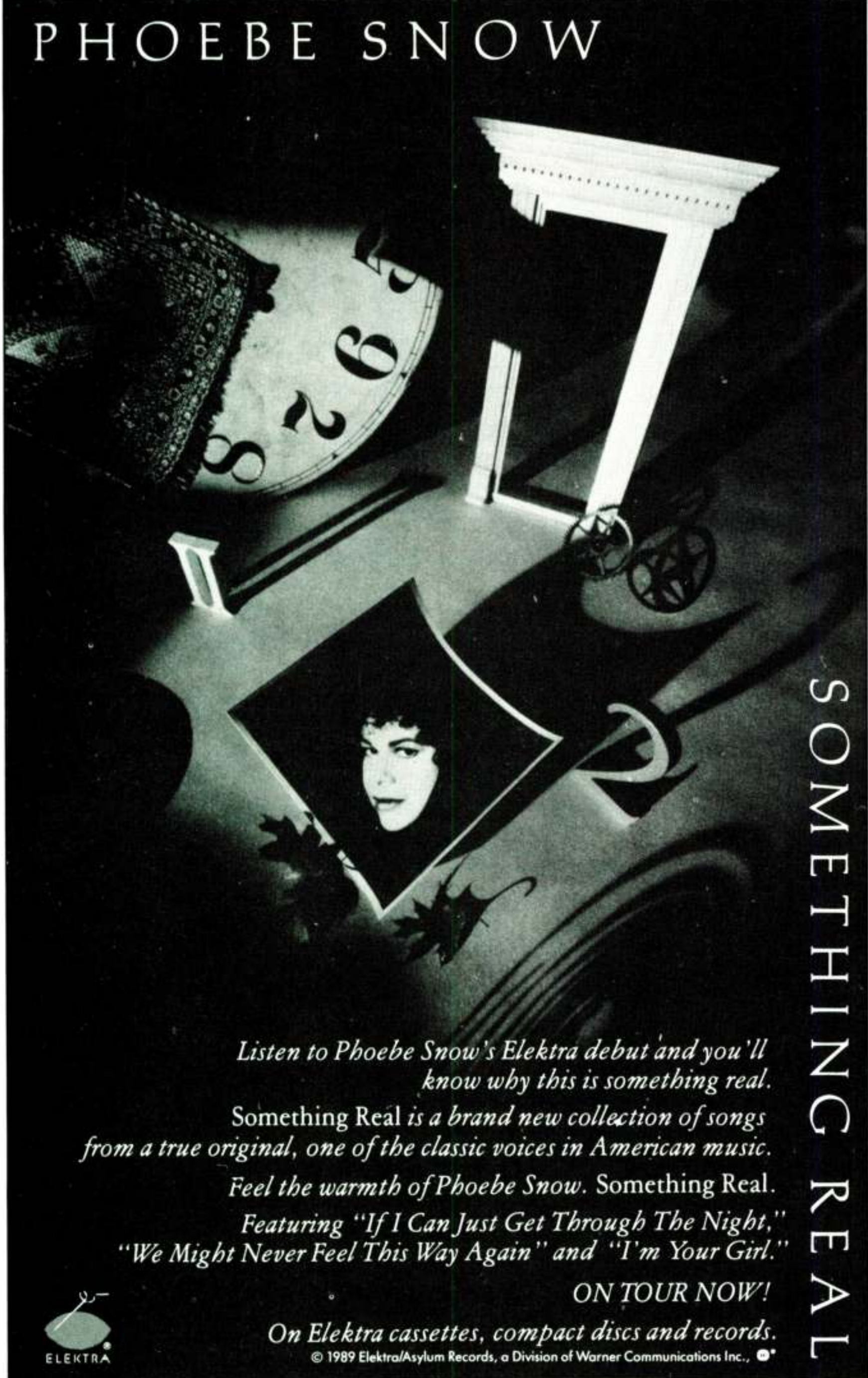
Watermark's vast vocal harmonies are stunning; the effect, which Ryan and Enya call "multi-vocals," requires superhuman discipline. The painstaking process involves recording as many as 140 separate, perfectly matched vocal tracks, creating a veritable Mormon Tabernacle Choir of Enyas. It sounds something like the Carpenters' massed harmonies, a comparison which Ryan politely disavows. Enya says she enjoys doing multi-vocals, although she often sings for so long that her knees give way before her throat does.

"With multi-vocals," she says, "you've got to do the 90 or 100 vocals—you cannot do just five or six and know if it's going to be right. After we had sung a hundred or so vocals for 'Miss Clare Remembers,' we realized vocals didn't suit it, so we just wiped them right out." They erased weeks of work. It's a bit of an understatement when Enya explains, "I'm a perfectionist, and so is Nicky."

They're such perfectionists that they spent nine months recording *Watermark* in Ryan's Dublin studio before deciding to re-record the entire album digitally. Enya also sings and plays virtually all the instruments—only the clarinet on "On Your Shore," the uilleann pipes on "Na Laetha Geal M'oige," the low whistle on "Exile" and the subtle percussion on "River" and "Storms in Africa" were by outside musicians, and even then, she dictated their parts.

For a more human feel, Enya played everything without a click track, and they turned the quirks in studio technology to their advantage. Ryan and Enya both dislike equipment that's "too perfect." When the notion of the happy accident was lofted, she replied brightly, "That's what we work with all the time!"

"Orinoco Flow" was born of their piecemeal method. One day Enya started playing a little tune and Ryan, a Phil Spector fan, had her play the chords in five different octaves. As Enya puts it,



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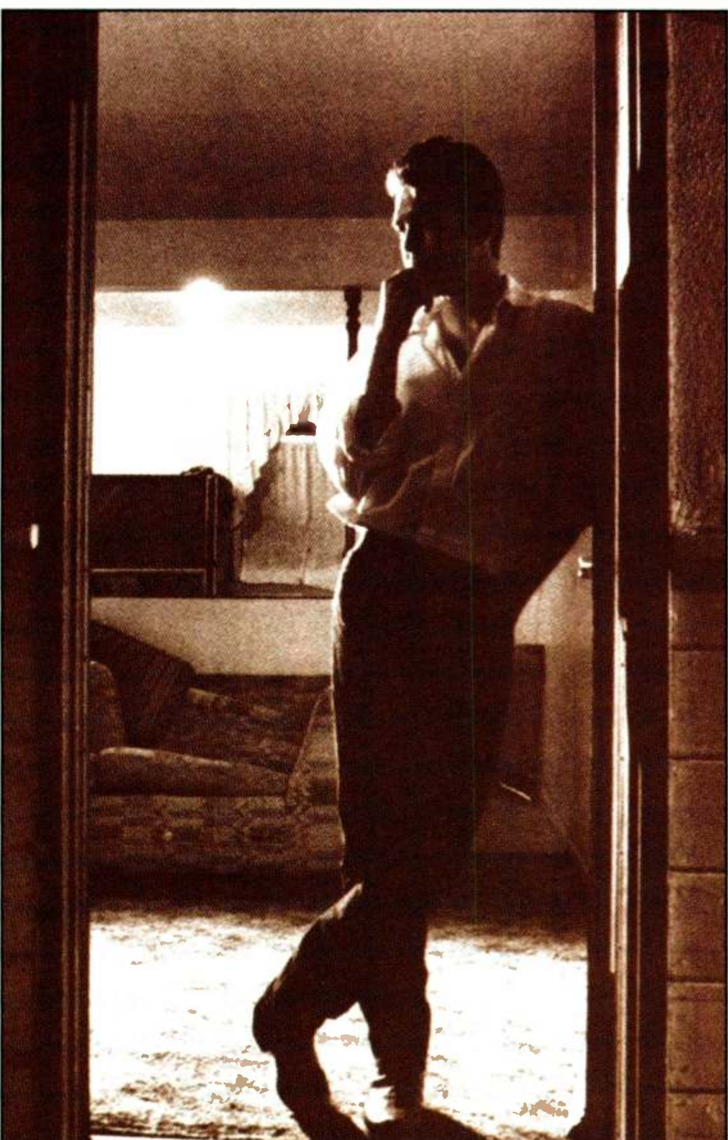

MURDER OF CROWS
the debut album by Joe Henry. (SP 5210)

Produced by Anton Fier

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"This *sound* happened!" Then they went on to something else. While in a London studio re-recording *Watermark*, they needed one more track. They remembered that layered riff (the "sail away" section of "Orinoco Flow") and built the rest of the song around it.

After they completed *Watermark* in April of 1988, Rob Dickins, managing director of WEA/England, pronounced that "Orinoco Flow" would make a nice single (and not just because he's mentioned in the song). To heighten the mystery of the album, Dickins cannily decided against liner notes, even for the Gaelic songs. According to Enya, the ploy worked: "Everyone seems to conjure up their own images and emotions with the music. It's something very personal to them—which is true, because they bought the album, it *is* theirs. It's a strange feeling to touch so many people, especially when you weren't doing it consciously." Then again, maybe it's just the reverb. M

ENYA EAR

ENYA'S synthesizers include the Roland D-50 (she likes the "heavy feel," optimum for playing sampled tympani and strings), the Fairlight III, the Yamaha TX (the rack version of the DX), an older Oberheim rack version, and the Roland Juno 60 ("We wouldn't part with it for anything in the world"). "We also used this really old keyboard called the Wave, which has got wonderful sounds, like the little sound on the beginning of 'Evening Falls,' and the quiet 'turn it up' part of 'Orinoco Flow.'" Enya plays a piano of unknown provenance, given to Roma by her auntie. They'd like to use the new MIDI-able Yamaha acoustic piano. Enya and **Ryan** use the Akai S-900 for sampling.

For mastering they use a professional DAT machine—the 2500. They used to master on the Sony F-1, and still use it for flying-in stuff. Two Mitsubishi 32-track machines were used for "Orinoco Flow" and "Storms in Africa."

Microphones include a Sennheiser MD-421 and the Calrec Soundfield: "The interesting thing about it is you can telescope into the sound source, so you don't have to use a pop shield. It's an extremely transparent microphone—there's absolutely no noise inherent in it all. The stereo is extremely panoramic—it's a very magic microphone. It's also beautiful for monitor room work. We often record in the monitor room, and we pick up some of the sound from the monitors as well, so when you include that in the mix, it really widens out the sound."

Ryan likes the Alesis Midiverb II. "They have a texture to them that the Lexicon doesn't have. There's compression built in. They really shouldn't have it there, but it is there, and it adds something. The reverb hasn't been built for us yet, neither in length nor the sound we want."

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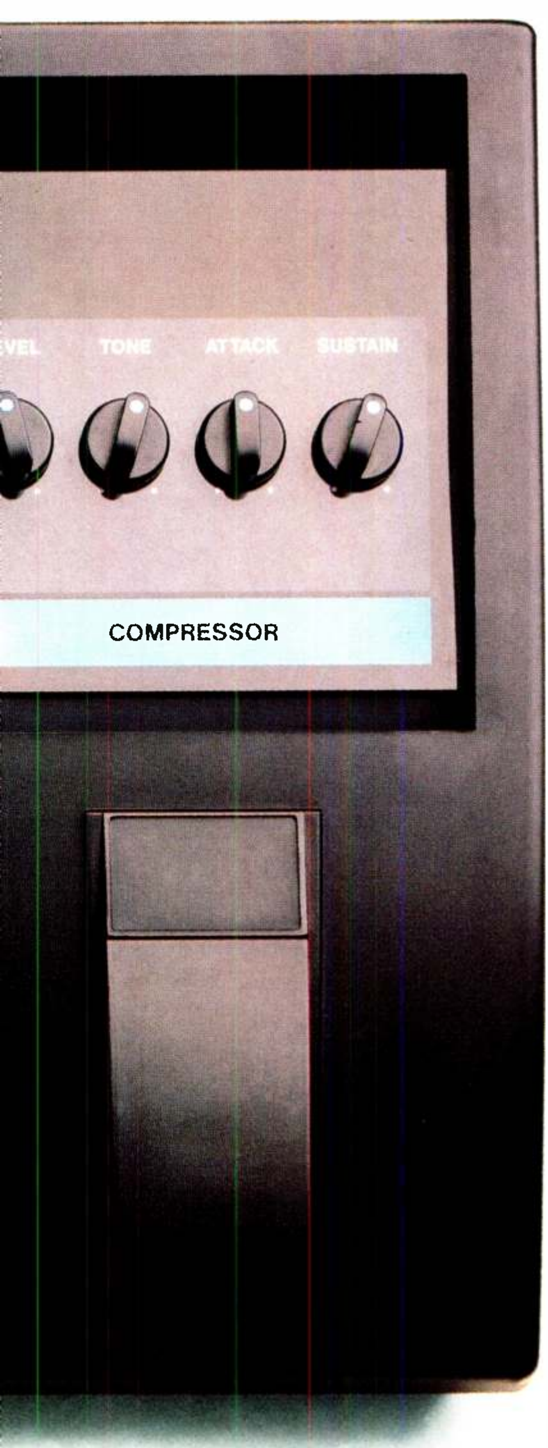

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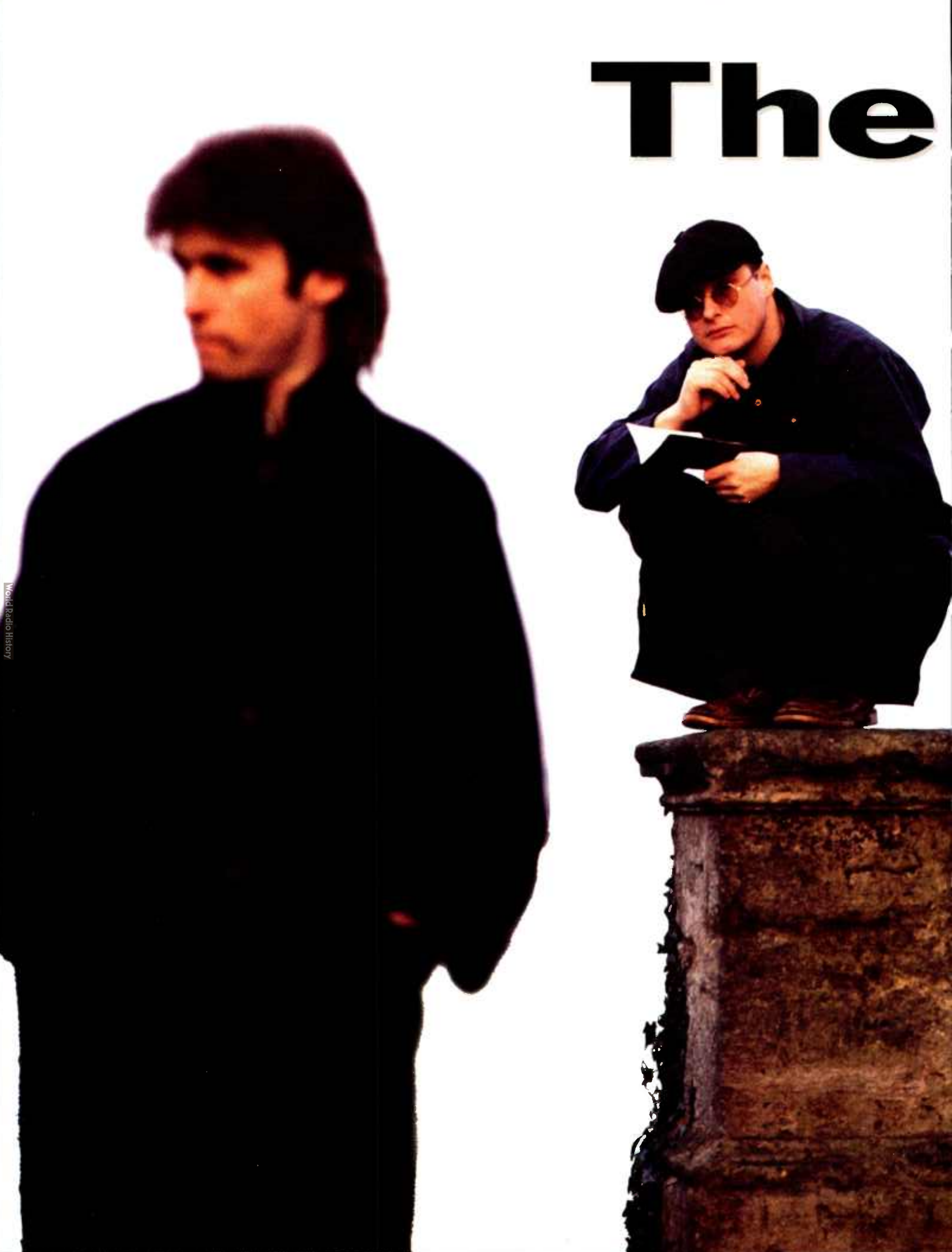

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Dukes *of* Swindon

XTC does it their way, for better or worse

First fly to London. Then catch a train to Swindon, 70 miles west. Then a cab from the station to a house in the Old Town section. Go through the door, up a flight of stairs. (Ignore the dog and two small children; you're not there yet.) On the landing, ascend a metal ladder through an opening to the attic. Stop. This is it: Andy Partridge's demo haven.

Whaddayamean, "so what"? Out of this small but fairly clean room have come some of the world's most cherished songs—"Love on a Farmboy's Wages," "Earn Enough for Us," "The Mayor of Simpleton"—and at least one of the most detested, "Dear God." This is where Partridge, guitarist and main singer/songwriter of XTC, comes to escape his idyllic family life and plunge into the whirling ferment of his brain that feeds his band's curious existence. If these walls could talk, how frightening that would be.

In today's high-powered rock world, XTC stubbornly remains a cottage industry. And like most cottage industries that manage to survive (a dozen years, in this case), the band's developed its own way of doing things. Their drummer left over six years ago and they never replaced him. That's not as bad as it sounds, because XTC doesn't play live. They stopped doing *that* seven years ago; Partridge realized he had a phobia about appearing onstage, and he's refused to tour ever since. Still, XTC's previous album, *Skylarking*, was its most successful yet, helped by a song that wasn't on the record; it was a single B-side, and the band's record company had to reissue the album to include the "hit." Can't these guys do anything, er, right?

Well, yes: the music. Partridge's songs are dizzyingly intoxicating in their felicitous wordplay and sinuous, multiple-strain phrasing—although he can also deliver charmingly straightforward "pop" tunes. Bassist Colin Moulding, the band's other songwriter, complements Partridge's giddiness with more delicate melodies and more introspective lyrics about the human condition—though both writers are way beyond the superficial themes of more popular music.

By Scott Isler

Photograph by Peter Ashworth

World Radio History

Strolling in the Garden of Earthly Delights: Dave Gregory, Colin Moulding and Andy Partridge stop to pick a bone with a fan.

Guitarist/keyboardist Dave Gregory, the most technically accomplished of the three, helps work up arrangements that at XTC's baroque best reveal new touches with each listen.

The resulting rich concoction may well be too much for the masses who determine this country's Top 10. But the band's attracted a loyal cult that supports three XTC fanzines in as many countries (and two languages), and whose members aren't afraid to invoke the Beatles in the same breath as Swindon's finest. They may even have a point: Both groups push the pop song into the realm of art while keeping a sense of humor. Perhaps the only thing the Beatles had that XTC doesn't was Beatlemania. It couldn't hurt.

"As a schoolkid I was totally in awe of groups like the Small Faces and Pink Floyd," Partridge remembers. "Singles like 'See Emily Play,' 'Arnold Layne,' 'Itchycoo Park'—singles that had a high magic content: a three-minute thing of a very memorable tune but with a big dollop of magic injected, either some strange effect or totally nonsensical lyrics that painted great brain pictures. I did love psychedelic singles."

Oranges and Lemons, XTC's ninth album of new material, is a brilliant collection of songs that pay homage to Partridge's influences without slavish paisley revivalism. A nursery rhyme inspired the album title (which also unintentionally recalls Pink Floyd's "Apples and Oranges"), and a sense of childlike wonder pervades the 15 songs—from the burbling glee of the opening "Garden of Earthly Delights" to the dreamy conclusion of "Chalkhills and Children." Most amazingly of all, XTC recorded the album in Los Angeles—a mixture as friendly as spring water and strychnine.

"I never went out at all," Partridge says of his five-month stay. "I'm really anti-sun. Los Angeles is not my idea of a dream place to live. Everything about it I find rather 'waaaaah!'—from the weather to the people. I don't think I can honestly say I believed anything a Los Angeleno told me."

He seems more in his element sitting in his attic studio on a gray Swindon day in January, comfortably attired in a flannel plaid shirt, blue jeans and moccasins worn through at the big toe. There's nothing put-up about Andy Partridge; he's almost aggressively friendly. He's also the usual bunch of contradictions found in creative artists: a sharply clever individual who left school without papers or tests at age 15; a critic of warmongering political leaders who has shelves full of troops—

World Radio History

battalions—whole *regiments* of toy soldiers; the composer of the sincere "Thanks for Christmas" and the militantly agnostic "Dear God."

Two years ago "Dear God" gave XTC its biggest publicity boost in the U.S. when some adventurous radio stations (talk about contradictions) discovered the song on the flip of a British single from *Skylarking*. Partridge says he didn't want "Dear God" on the album. He was dissatisfied with it because "it wasn't spiky enough; I thought it's got to stick in people's throats. It failed in that respect." (At least one Florida XTC fan, however, thought enough of "Dear God" to phone in a bomb threat to a local station spinning the song.)

XTC began its musical life in 1976 with much the same agenda. "We really wanted to annoy people, to get up their noses," Partridge says of *White Music*, the debut album a year later. Partridge, Moulding and drummer Terry Chambers had been musically terrorizing Swindon under a variety of aliases since 1973. In 1977, with keyboard player Barry Andrews (since replaced by Gregory), they signed with Virgin Records, who probably thought they were getting a new-wave band. Despite a very occasional U.K. hit single over the years, they've had a rocky relationship with Virgin ever since.

The situation wasn't much better in the U.S., where XTC bounced from label to label. The band signed to Geffen Records in late 1983. Three years later Geffen was "rather despondent at the lack of sales," Partridge says, and tried to unload the band back to Virgin. The British company hadn't started up its Virgin America division yet, so it "panicked and said, 'No, keep them.' They didn't want to farm us around to other labels with a past record of no sales. *Skylarking* came out and Geffen just patted it on the back and sent it off—put it in a bag and threw it in the river."

Whether because of "Dear God" or in spite of it, *Skylarking* became XTC's best-selling American album, a sleeper that sold almost a quarter-million copies. Its corporate faith in XTC restored, Geffen actually seems excited about *Oranges and Lemons*. Typically, XTC hasn't made it easy, delivering an over-budget, hour-long album that needs a double-LP set to do it justice.

"I wanted to make a very simple, banal-sounding record," Partridge says ingenuously, "and it got lost in translation a little and came out rather multi-layered—in fact, very dense. We just got swept along with the enthusiasm: For the first time since our very first few albums, we were making an album that people actually wanted to hear."

Partridge wrote many of the songs just before the band went into the studio. Consequently they tend to reflect his optimism over both his professional turn of luck and his burgeoning family: His daughter Holly is almost four, and a son, Harry, will be two this summer. On the other hand, he's also capable of scathing topical commentary like "Here Comes President Kill Again," "Scarecrow People" and "Across This Antheap."

"There is a bit of split personality," Partridge acknowledges. "On 'Garden of Earthly Delights' I'm trying to get a message over to my kids, although they'll have to wait some years before they can appreciate it: Somebody's being born and I'm saying welcome—like, 'Welcome to the Holiday Inn!' I'm in the foyer: 'This is life. Come in and do what you want to, but don't hurt anyone.'" (The song's lyrics add, with Partridgian wit, "'Less of course they ask you.") "I'm sure that's what heaven is, really. Heaven is not hurting anyone."

So Andy Partridge, nonbeliever, believes in heaven?

"Yes. Here, now. This is heaven and hell. It's all metaphor stuff." But don't get him started on the subject of religion.

On the fatalistic "Here Comes President Kill Again," "I'm just saying, 'Go ahead, have your little bit of power and vote for who you want, but there's no difference.'" Partridge says he "won't" vote: "I can't feel part of giving people that sort of power. There's a certain sort of person that wants to be voted in; it's almost like, if they're a politician, that's the very reason you shouldn't vote for them." This might strike some as an evasion of responsibility. Partridge feels, however, that "it's not like mankind can't find a better way. But I don't think mankind is smart enough to control itself yet. I totally distrust mankind, to be truthful."

The album's most affecting song may be "Hold Me My Daddy," a first-person plea for understanding between fathers and sons. "I found it difficult writing that," Partridge says. "It's a subject matter men aren't supposed to think about, loving their fathers. I played it to my father; he insisted on hearing it. We got to that point on the album and I had to leave the room: 'Hm! Is that the baby crying? I'll just go and have a look.' I came back, and I don't know if he was embarrassed or whether he really didn't hear the lyrics." Partridge adopts a gruff lower register: "'Couldn't 'ear a bloody word of that bloody row.' Maybe he did and he didn't want to say. It's sort of a primal oink, a sniffle."

Partridge's father was a musician himself, a drummer in jazz/dance bands. "I'm sure my parents still think I'm going to get a proper job one of these days. My father's sort of interested but he thinks it's too weird, too unusual—noisy pop music and loud guitars. My mother just likes it when people say to her, 'Oh, I saw your son in such-and-such magazine.'"

Funk Pop a Roll: Chambers, Partridge and Moulding fight the phobia at CBGB, 1979.

EBET ROBERTS

He himself disclaims fame. "I like people to buy the records, but I'd be quite happy if we were faceless musicians and it was just the name XTC they bought, like a steak sauce. I always felt uncomfortable with fame. Howard Hughes is my hero." The self-described "Charles Laughton of the new wave—the last new wave" appreciates XTC's hard-bitten fans, even if he

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can't quite understand them. "It's like an odd-shaped mirror: very flattering to look into, but very weird 'cause it's so distorted and unreal."

Okay, Andy, we understand. Now how do you write the stuff? "Tricky to say. Deadlines can help scare music out of you. I always get this feeling that I'm never going to write another song. I'll sit up here staring at a blank page. Then some song will come out and it's complete... rubbish! Then a few more rubbishy ones come out. And then, suddenly, whaa! Something good'll come out. And whoa! Where'd *this* come from? It *is* like crapping; you have to get the blockage out of the way and then it all comes flowing out.

"If I don't find playing live pleasurable, why be given money for something I don't enjoy doing? I might as well go sweep out the sewers."

"Each time we finish an album I think that's the last thing I'm ever going to write. Then somebody says, 'Time for another record, isn't it?' The motors start clicking inside and I think, 'Hmm, have I got any songs?' And each time it's usually better than the last time out. 'Chalkhills and Children' is as good as anything I've ever done. 'Here Comes President Kill Again' is a fine marriage, the way the lyrics fit the music."

It's now time to meet Colin Moulding, who's been very patient. Moulding contributed three songs to *Oranges and Lemons*—thematic bummers, each and every one of them. (Though Geffen is considering the musically sprightly "King for a Day" as a single pick.) "It's the winter of discontent," he laughs. "If you're in a writing spree for two or three months, usually you don't feel up and down and up and down. I suppose it was more of a down period for me. I was just feeling really depressed. I think I've dragged meself out of it now. I tend to go through these, 'Oh, what's going to happen?'"

Moulding apparently labors longer over his songs than Partridge, which accounts for his smaller output. He had an unusually high percentage on *Skylarking*, a result of producer Todd Rundgren choosing the material. "I caught 'im and Todd holding hands a few times," Partridge says with malice towards none. "To be fair," Moulding quickly interjects, "we sent tapes over for *Skylarking*—I hadn't even met Todd—and the album running order was sealed." "It was a very weird sensation," Partridge adds, "to have somebody tell you what your album's gonna be, the order it's gonna be in, and how the songs will segue together."

That was just the beginning of a clash of wills that marred *Skylarking* for Partridge. "The whole Todd experience was frustrating," he says. "We were obliged to shut up and be produced, or else; 'it's your last chance.' That was very difficult to swallow, and it obviously put me in a belligerent mood from day one."

For *Oranges and Lemons*, Virgin Records was pushing the band to stay with an American producer—for dubious commercial reasons, Partridge believes. They chose the relatively inexperienced Paul Fox on the strength of a complete overhaul he'd done of a Boy George single. "The stuff they heard that I had done," Fox says, "was a little more mainstream than what they were used to doing." But Fox, an XTC fan, "knew that they did not exactly have a great time making their last album," and was determined to give them a better experience. He also had a valuable background in keyboards as a former session musician—and an even more valuable in at Los Angeles' Summa Music Group Studios, available to XTC for one-sixth the rate of the English studio that was their first choice.

Partridge professes satisfaction with the results and Fox's respect. "It was nice to have somebody who listened to and tried our suggestions, even if they failed. It's difficult to play tennis on your own. You have to have somebody to whack the ball back; that's what keeps it going."

The drummer this time around was Mr. Mister's Pat Mastelotto, an old session-mate of Fox's. "I had known he was a big XTC fan," Fox says of the drummer, and he also thought Mastelotto's "bandier" approach—that is, less like an L.A. session pro—would fit in well with the group. "I knew that he could already play like Terry Chambers," Fox adds. Mr. Mister agreed to lend out Mastelotto, who had a blast requesting old XTC songs during the three weeks of rehearsals that preceded recording.

During those rehearsals Fox and the band arranged and restructured the demo recordings which were in varying stages of completeness. Partridge admits his are pretty rough. "Sometimes you have a definite image of what you want. You hand the song over to other members of the band and say, 'Do what you will; I'd like this kind of atmosphere.' Sometimes they get it totally wrong and it can be surprisingly rewarding. Sometimes they get it totally wrong and they'll smother it."

"The Mayor of Simpleton," the initial single from *Oranges and Lemons*, started with lyrics Partridge wrote a few years ago. "It was a much more slow, mournful kind of song; early demos put it somewhere between UB40 and the Wailers, very reggaefied. It had a different tune, with much more of this miserable lope to it. I liked the lyrics, and I thought it needed vitality." "Across This Antheap" also accelerated from a bluesy tempo to its current "Latin" feel, according to Partridge—"from Tony Joe White to War." That's a sampled Partridge shouting "hey!" throughout. "I said, 'Look, can you make it sound like I'm shouting down a ventilator shaft?' The engineer said, 'Why don't you go and shout down a ventilator shaft?' The simplicity of ideas sometimes is astounding!" Partridge did, and that's what you hear.

One pronounced trait of *Oranges and Lemons* is the criss-crossing of vocal lines. "Countermelody madness!" Partridge exclaims. "It's just a habit we've gotten into—the joy of several songs happening at once. It's musical masturbation; I can't leave the thing alone. We feel like we sort of own it. Not many people do that now—not since *West Side Story* or *South Pacific*."

He notes that the three drummers on XTC's four post-Chambers albums "all have different personalities. Prairie Prince [on *Skylarking*] had a tight, flicky kind of sound—a very controlled feel. Pat Mastelotto was not afraid to use a lot of electronic bits and pieces, and not afraid to play along with

JULIE KRAMER

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machines; in fact, he encouraged it, which we thought was quite revolutionary in a drummer, 'cause drummers mostly think of machines as putting them out of work. He's very metronomic, and that underscored the precise feel to a lot of tracks on this album."

Doesn't Partridge ever long to have a permanent drummer?

"No, 'cause I wouldn't know what to do with him—bring him around once a week for a cup of tea and, 'See ya in seven months' time when I've written some songs, then!' We're not like the Monkees; we don't live in one big house."

Still, he likes the interplay of a band situation. "I need Colin to upset me, to bring demos around and for me to go, 'Shit, these are really good.' I need competition. If I was doing it all I'd get really lazy." He describes Gregory's role as "icing chef, decorating the cakes that we give him. He knows the chords I'm playing"—unlike Partridge sometimes.

With the album out, Partridge feels he's due for another bout of arm-twisting from Geffen to get him to tour. "They try that regularly. Someone gets very chummy, a few drinks go down, I get a little bit merry—and then he starts on a touring thing.

"I don't want to tour because I don't see that as pleasurable, and I don't see any reason at my age [35] to do anything or have anything inflicted on me that I don't find pleasurable. I should be in complete control of my life at my age, and do what the hell I want to 'cause I've earned the right—well," he reconsiders, "these various roads have led to the point in my head where I don't feel indebted to anyone; I don't have to follow any particular orders or instructions." He's speaking softly now. "If I don't find playing live pleasurable, why be given money for something you don't enjoy doing? You might as well go sweep out the sewers."

Partridge doesn't think XTC's "living death" as a studio band bothers Moulding, another family man. Gregory says he'd like to do more, "but I'm just a lone voice. These two guys are writing the songs and keeping the band afloat—if indeed there is still a band."

"He likes to play and crank it up," Partridge says of Gregory, "so I think he's a little frustrated. I've tried to urge him to go on the road with other people so he can get that evil spawn out of himself and come back and be with us." He switches on a broad west-country twang: "'You're not having sex in this marriage so it's all right to go to a prostitute if you want.'"

He's suggested that Moulding and Gregory find another singer/guitarist for touring purposes: "I can stay at home and write songs and design stage shows for them. But I think that was a non-starter—we'd probably get all the Beach Boys shit

CENSUS WORKING OVERTIME

HE may (or may not) be the Mayor of Simpleton, but **Andy Partridge** knows one thing: The Roland PG-1000 programmer that goes with his D-50 confuses the hell out of him. "I'm not a very logical person," Partridge declares, and the PG-1000 "is aggressively logical and it rather upsets me." Until he figures it out, he's happier with a "tiny little Yamaha sampler" that he used for songwriting until recently. He seems to be having more fun with a new toy, an Alesis HR-16 drum machine. Partridge records home demos on a 1982-vintage Tascom Portostudio; for that purpose he keeps a "fizzy" Session MKII amp—"not fantastic." He *was* impressed with a Fender Stage Lead he played through during the *Oranges and Lemons* rehearsals. Oops, guitars: Until '82 he played an Ibanez Artist exclusively, but that changed when he got a Fender Telecaster Squier—"it has a nice clangorous tone"—that's his current electric one-and-only. On the acoustic side, Partridge has played his Martin D-35 on all XTC albums dating from *English Settlement.* He also has a small Yamaha acoustic for "twanging" purposes, and a "Woolworth's" bass guitar (no name on head) with a "very unusual tuba-like tone to it." Guitar strings are D'Addorio or Ernie Ball Regular Slinky. Other gear: Korg DDD-1 drum machine, Yamaha D1500 digital delay, Alesis MIDIverb, Hitachi boom box. He has PG Tips teabags but prefers coffee.

Colin Moulding used three basses on *Oranges and Lemons,* predominantly a Wal. Back-up basses were a Fender Precision and, for the double-bass sound on "Pink Thing," an Epiphone Newport. "It goes 'poun,'" Partridge describes helpfully. Moulding's album rehearsal amp was a Trace Elliot—"so clear it was unbelievable"—and he holds his group together with Rotosound strings. Instead of a pick he prefers a fingernail (home-grown). He writes with the help of an Ovation acoustic guitar.

Now if you want to talk guitar, ask **Dave Gregory.** He was crushed that he couldn't take his entire guitar harem (over 20) with him for *Oranges and Lemons,* but he made do with his faves: a 1953 Gibson Les Paul gold-top; a Schecter Telecaster-style ("quite versatile"); a 1963 Stratocaster; a semi-hollow 1964 Epiphone Riviera with miniature humbuckers, heard on the "Pink Thing" solo ("It has a nice Beatley sound"); and one of the first 25 Rickenbacker 12-strings shipped to England in the wake of "A Hard Day's Night." Gregory uses Ernie Ball strings "out of force of habit," but creates his own gauge set: .011-.013-.016-.024-.038-.050. He has a Roland JC-120 amp "for those rare occasions that I go out of the house," and a Japanese Fender Sidekick 30 amp for home practice. Effects include a MIDIverb and D1500. For keyboard dabbling he keeps a Roland JX3P with MSQ-100 sequencer, and "an old acoustic piano."

Co-producer **Paul Fox** called upon his background as a session musician to add some keyboards to *Oranges and Lemons.* He used mainly an Emulator III (e.g., the "strings" on "Across This Antheap") and, "for layering," a Roland Super Jupiter. He also employed on Emulator II, Roland D-50, PPG Wave, Prophet VS, Yamaha DX7, Oberheim Xpander, and his "museum rack" with an Oberheim 4-VC, Prophet 5, Roland Jupiters 6 and 8, and a Juno 106 MIDIed through a Sycologic box.

Drummer **Pat Mastelotto,** a Yamaha endorsee, played on a Recording Series kit with Remo heads. But he obviously loves variety: He switched among eight different tom-toms (8" to 16") and 15 different snares. The 22"x16" kick-drum with a DW pedal pretty much stayed put, except for "President Kill"'s early-'40s Leedy parade drum; and on "Scarecrow People," featuring Mastelotto's old red Rogers—as well as ashtrays and pots and pans to approximate Partridge's idea of a scarecrow drum kit. Cymbals tended to be Paistes for crashes, small (8", 10" and 12") Sabians for rides. "Scarecrow People" has an old K-Zildjian with rivets (courtesy of Fox); "Garden of Earthly Delights" includes a pair of 6" or 8" Sabian splashes. The high-hat was a 10" Sabian with a Paiste bell underneath.

Mastelotto isn't shy with electronics. He used "a fair amount of samples" for composite snare sounds, including three alone for "King for a Day," played on a Roland Octapad, and the overtone of "a very ringy Ludwig similar to a tube-lug snare" sampled on an Akai S900. The drummer and his tech Paul Mitchell bent the samples with a warp function "to a note that sounded good" for each track. Tambourine-shaker, congas, tablas and other oriental percussion come from Casio FZ-1 samplers. A Yamaha RX5 drum machine crops up on the fade of "Hold Me My Daddy"; elsewhere Mastelotto used an MX8 MIDI patch bay to increase the velocity of a LinnDrum fed into a Yamaha QX2 program. An old Simmons SDS5's kicks and snares are on "Chalkhills and Children" and "Poor Skeleton Steps Out." There's a Pearl SC-40 on "Cynical Days"—"similar to a tambourine but more of a bongo"—and "Garden of Earthly Delights," "for a low kick that bends up like a tabla." "Garden" also employs a Roland TR727 drum loop. And Mastelotto still uses sticks: Pro-Mark 5Bs or 909s, "butt-end."

Finally, a few words of discouragement from Andy Partridge: "I don't take that much pride in instruments....There's still no equation between better gear and better-quality songs, unfortunately."

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flung at us. I've even considered getting a band together, calling them something like Farmboy's Wages, and they'd go out, like *Beatlemania*. It probably wouldn't be quite the same."

"They're really great live," says Fox, who had the privilege of being the entire audience at XTC's *Oranges and Lemons* rehearsals. He'd love to see a tour, though "I'm not going to hold my breath. They're all such good musicians." (Those with fading memories of exciting XTC shows will vouch for that.)

"I understand his—no, I don't understand his reasons for not touring," XTC manager Tarquin Gotch says of his recalcitrant charge. "I work on the assumption there will be no live touring, but secretly hope, in the back of my mind, some miracle might happen." Until it does, Partridge is likely to remain in Swindon, for which he harbors no great love. "The place is a dump, no romance about it. London is a bigger dump. I'd like to move out to the edge of the countryside, away from people a bit more."

It's not so much that adoring locals follow Partridge wherever he goes. "No, they probably resent the fact that we actually did something."

"Swindon's quite an apathetic town," Moulding concurs. "A lot of them think we split up, I think."

Only Gregory speaks for the defense. "There are pockets of people who are proud of what we've done on behalf of the town, I suppose," the soft-spoken guitarist says. "We put the town on the map."

Now if only the public would put XTC on the charts. "It's sort of like a hobby, a paying hobby," Partridge says of his shabbily genteel career. He sounds incredulous when he notes that both Virgin and Geffen "are very happy with the songs we've given them. It's nice to have them positive for a change, rather than surly and saying, 'Well, I don't hold up much for the future if you don't get the sales figures up.' But it's funny: The more positive they get, the more unserious I get. They can sniff cash in it now, it's losing its appeal to me. If that redresses itself properly, I'll end up a house painter."

Speaking of hobbies and house painting, no XTC article would be authoritative without mention of the band's alter ego, the Dukes of Stratosphear. XTC almost *was* the Dukes of Stratosphear, but the shorter, snappier moniker won out the last time the group changed its name, in the mid-'70s. In 1979 Partridge asked Gregory—not yet in XTC, and an even bigger psychedelia nut than himself—"if he would be interested in making a psychedelic album under another name, like Electric Bone Temple."

That project was shelved until 1985, when Partridge dusted off the "Dukes of Stratosphear" handle for a remarkably authentic-sounding EP of pseudo-psychedelic ptributes. Partridge was pshocked to discover that the tongue-in-cheek *25 O'Clock* sold twice as well as the previous XTC album, *Big Express*. Virgin insisted "the Dukes" record a follow-up. (Geffen hadn't released the EP in the U.S.) "I'd told the Dukes joke and that was it," Partridge says. "But lots of letters came in; 'Can you *ask* the Dukes to do another album?' I relented, and I felt like we were doing *The Empire Strikes Back*, or something 'II.'" The full-length Dukes album, *Psonic Psunspot*, contains better songs than its predecessor, Partridge feels, but with less of a period ambience.

In between these efforts, XTC proper was starting to play for real what the Dukes of Stratosphear did as a studied goof. The '60s aura of *Oranges and Lemons* makes it even harder to tell where one "group" stops and the other begins. Partridge

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There's a pure idea in every mind.

TIM FINN

The Capitol debut album from the founder of Split Enz includes "How'm I Gonna Sleep," "Crescendo" and eight other tracks made to be remembered.

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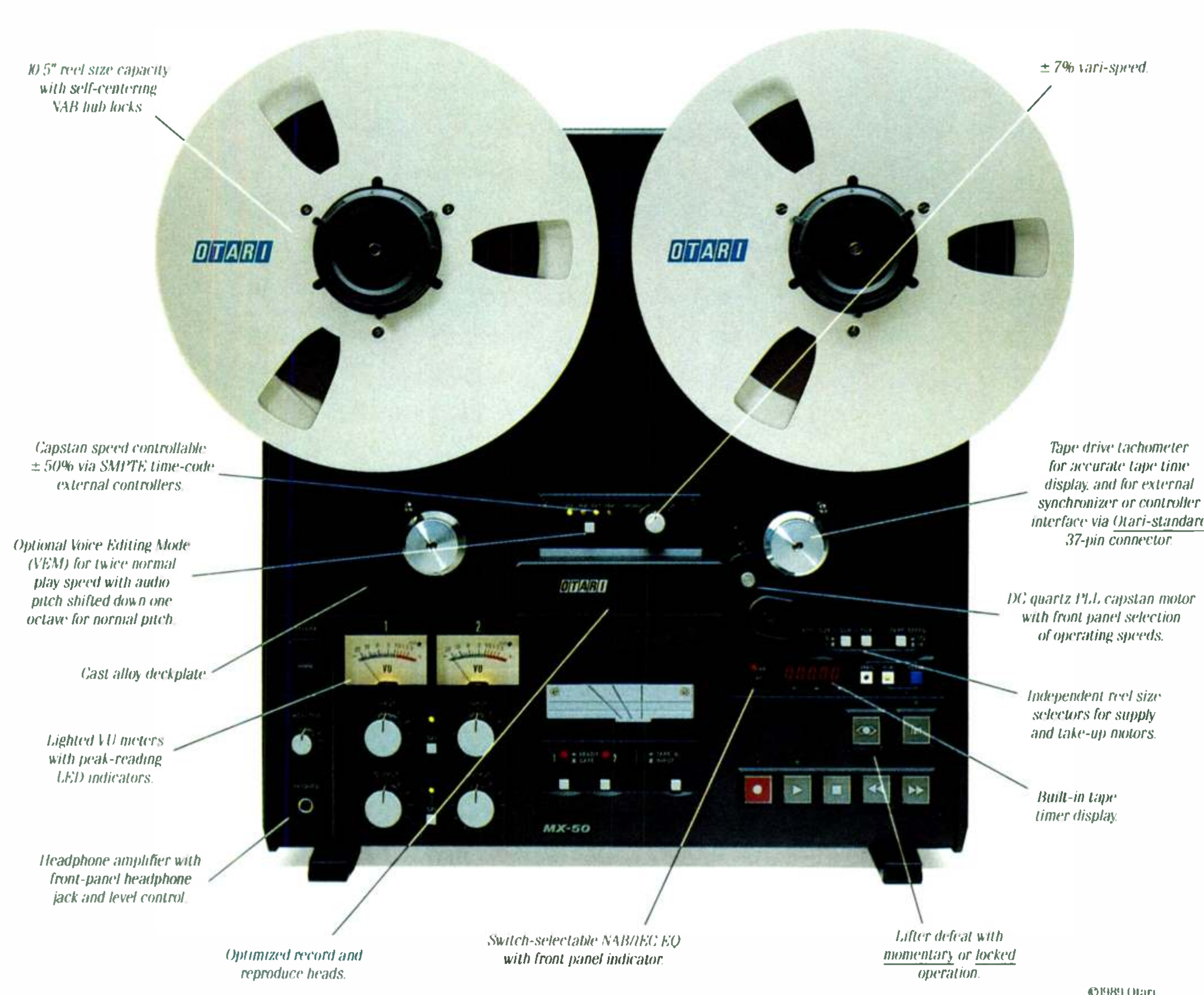

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Cooking with Fine

The Band That Plays Apart Stays Together

By Scott Isler

CERTAIN PEOPLE may start bands only for the purpose of making money. Most musicians, though, presumably can temper their greed—or at least cloak it tastefully—with more elevated reasons for uniting: The desire to join together to achieve artistically what the individuals couldn't accomplish on their own. An urge to celebrate the community of mankind. A loophole in the income tax laws. The realization that in unity there is strength. One member's particularly good stash of pot. A place to crash.

Now welcome to real life, stupid. The Beatles not only didn't live all in one room that looked like four joined houses on the outside, they've been suing each other for years. In case you just graduated from college, this is an age in which raiders plan hostile takeovers, and dewy-eyed newlyweds get dewy-eyed from studying the fine print in their marriage contracts. You can't even share a needle these days, and crack smokers tend not to pass the pipe.

In short, the Woodstock Nation communal ideal has long since shattered into

PHOTO BY LONDON FEATURES INT'L

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Young Cannibals

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Roland Gift, Andy Cox and David Steele

neurotic shards. Let Iran pose as a community; in the civilized western world, it's strictly an I for an I. The late '80s are a time of platinum-card-carrying individualists stalking the Darwinian jungle, all looking out for number one. In England Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is busy dismantling the country's socialist institutions: privatizing the post office and water companies, proposing to make the National Health Service a little more, er, selective...

"Everything must go!" Andy Cox comments drily. "Closing-down sale." Who does this punk think he is, criticizing a head of state? Before you get too excited, consider that Cox's band, Fine Young Cannibals, is a perfect example of the social disintegration all the above tried to convey. The band is a drummer-less trio, so right away you know there's gonna be a certain anomie. They've released two albums in four years, which normally would indicate admirable sloth. But Fine Young Cannibals have been breathlessly busy; they just haven't been busy with each other.

Guitarist Cox and bassist/keyboard player David Steele worked on the soundtrack to *Planes, Trains and Automobiles,* produced British acts the Wee Papa Girls and Pop Will Eat Itself, and landed their own dance-floor hit single (Top 20 in the U.K.) as 2 Men a Drum Machine and a Trumpet. Singer Roland Gift was acting in movies: first as a mysterious squatters' leader in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid,* then in *Scandal,* about England's early-'60s Profumo affair.

On paper, it looks like these guys are rushing into solo careers without waiting for public confirmation of their band's appeal in the first place. On tape, though, Fine Young Cannibals have consistently delivered the goods: The 20 tracks on those two albums infuse '60s and '70s soul forms with current ideas about arrangement, production and song themes. The result is a timeless distillation of an American genre, with Gift's remarkable vocals building on the tradition, not resting on it.

Despite being two mild-mannered mumblers, Steele and Cox have already made their mark in British pop music history. The former grew up on the Isle of Wight; he remembers his mother taking him, aged nine, to see Jimi Hendrix (10 days before his death) at the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival. Eight years later he met Cox and Dave Wakeling, two Birmingham teenagers summering on the Isle of Wight by making solar panels for Cox's brother-in-law. The three shared musical interests, and when Cox and Wakeling returned to their Midlands home they invited Steele to join them. "I think

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they were quite amazed that I actually did!" Steele recalls.

His arrival catalyzed the formation of the Beat, known in this country, for legal reasons, as the English Beat. The band debuted 10 years ago this March; reminded of this anniversary, Cox comments, "We usually celebrate the day it broke up more." The Beat appeared simultaneously with other Midlands-based bands that were racially integrated, used the jumpy, up-tempo rhythms of Jamaican ska (reggae's predecessor) and criticized the government early and often. But unlike the Specials, Selecter *et al.*, the Beat never fit in comfortably with these "2-Tone" bands—and not just because they didn't record for the Specials' record company of that name.

The independent streak began with the band's eccentric make-up: six people, including a 50-year-old saxophonist. It continued with the Beat's musical taste, which couldn't be pigeonholed; they had a U.K. hit single with an Andy Williams chestnut, "Can't Get Used to Losing You," and were thinking of recording "Begin the Beguine" when they split up in 1983. Even the split was distinctive: Another record company announced they'd signed Wakeling and fellow Beat singer Ranking Roger as General Public before anyone knew the Beat was no longer together.

In contrast to Wakeling's instant transition (and first General Public album a year later), the Steele/Cox faction of the Beat seemed to take an extended vacation to inner earth. Actually they were looking for a suitable singer, one with plenty plenty soul. They set their sights on the U.S., advertising via MTV—not the most likely source for a soulful singer, come to think of it. They spoke with Bernard Fowler of the funk-dance group N.Y.C. Peech Boys. Then they remembered Roland Gift.

Gift was the singer and sometimes-tenor saxophonist of the oft-misspelled Akrylykz, who had opened for the Beat on tour. His looks alone guaranteed him attention: Mephistophelian widow's peak, crème-caramel complexion, almond-shaped eyes. But Gift could sing—and write lyrics too.

They found him in London, playing clubs with a band called the Bones. It must have seemed a logical step for Gift to move from the Bones to Fine Young Cannibals, named on a whim after a 1960 Hollywood film. The new band's first release was the single "Johnny Come Home" in May, 1985. From the opening guitar note, "Johnny Come Home" is a compelling soundscape of cool textures, propulsive rhythm and shifting harmonies befitting Gift's equally rootless protagonist who wonders, "What is wrong/In my life/That I must get drunk/Every night?"

"Johnny Come Home" was the last song written for the first Fine Young Cannibals album. Gift feels it points the way to the band's approach on its current album, *The Raw & the Cooked*, in its dance orientation and use of a drum machine (unlike the other tracks on *Fine Young Cannibals*). "We wanted to keep the idea of songs and give them a modern groove," he says, "but not sell out to the groove. This sort of soul music—Motown, Stax—is what we were greatly influenced by. We don't want to throw that influence away."

Gift's well-modulated speaking voice is considerably lower than the range in which he usually sings. "His voice is very changeable," Cox notes. "He's got a lot of different tones—to the point that you try to get him to match something the following day and he'll be slightly different. His voice used to change a lot all the time—which is great in some ways and kinda irritating in other ways."

Although Steele and Cox relocated from Birmingham to London partly to live in the same town as Gift, Gift himself—the youngest Cannibal at 28—was born in Birmingham. His mother is British, his father a West Indian who immigrated during England's sweep of its colonies for labor in the 1950s. "A few hundred years before," Gift says, "they were brought in as slaves to do the work and then told to fuck off. This time they were invited and coaxed and led to believe they'd have a wonderful time if they came to England. And now they've been told to fuck off—again. It's an irony." He's not smiling.

When Gift was a teenager his family relocated to Hull, in northern England. During these years he got involved in acting. When the British new-wave music explosion detonated in the late '70s, Gift turned his attention to that art form. "I used to like singing, but if you were a good singer it would inhibit you, around the punk days. So I decided if I wanted to be involved in music I ought to play an instrument that demanded some skill, which singing didn't."

He chose saxophone and then proceeded to ignore it, as he couldn't sing and play at the same time. When someone offered to buy the sax from Gift, "I said, 'Give me two weeks, I'll let you know.' I had the saxophone case open in my bedroom. In two weeks I never picked it up, so I realized I didn't really want to and I sold it."

Before that happened, Gift had joined the Akrylykz and toured with the Beat. "I quite liked them at first," he says of the Beat's live sets, "but after about 45 minutes they got boring. I actually used to like Andy and David from that group, personally. They gave off a comfortable vibe."

That chemistry undoubtedly helped bond Fine Young Cannibals. Although Cox takes an occasional co-composing credit, the main songwriters are Steele and Gift. "I don't really like to explain how we write our songs," Steele says, "'cause I think it ruins the mystery." Mystery be damned, after an applied Yankee headlock he's a little more forthcoming:

"We start with the music—Andy writes or I write—and between us we get it so you can actually play a whole song. We play it to Roland as a finished piece of music."

"I'll listen to that," Gift continues, "and whatever that brings out of me—I usually let the music coax ideas out. Sometimes I might have a title. There's a song called 'Couldn't Care More' on the first album. I remember I was having an argument with somebody about that whole subject, about wanting to care and not being able to, so that's where that song came from. But normally it's just whatever the music brings out."

"We wanted to keep the idea of songs and give them a modern groove. But we didn't want to sell out to the groove."

Listeners often notice that what the music brings out of Gift in the way of lyrics would induce mass suicide among Brownie troops. On *Fine Young Cannibals* the songs' narrators rail against the government when they can rouse themselves from the emotional wreckage of their own lives. The album's most ingenious set of lyrics, "Move to Work," combines the two themes: economics forcing a couple apart.

The Raw & the Cooked's lyrics are even more singlemindedly depressing. Don't be fooled by the titles: "Good Thing" is about a bewildered, jilted lover; the singer of "It's OK (It's Alright)" is neither, since his baby's up and left in the middle of the night. Only "Don't Look Back" offers a glimmer of hope: "We'll get by," Gift sings, although, of course, "times are bad/And it makes you want to die." Even the band's choice of non-originals—"Suspicious Minds" and the Buzzcocks' "Ever

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Fallen in Love"—maintain the downward course. Are Fine Young Cannibals the Most Successful Pop Group Ever Eligible for Lithium Treatments?

"It could look like that," Gift admits. "But I also think you could describe what we do as modern-day blues, where you maybe are singing about horrible things or things that hurt, but just the act of singing them is cathartic, makes you feel better about them. That's what it is for me. The subjects probably are quite miserable, but when we're playing live I feel far from miserable."

Too bad they haven't toured in nearly three years. Gift doesn't act like someone about to throw himself out a window, but he does allow there's a strain of existential angst running through *The Raw & the Cooked*. He denies he's living the life of his gloomy protagonists, "but there's always that danger. You can become what you're performing, like that actors' disease; they take their work home with them. But sometimes I do wonder what the fuck is going on. When I'm flying, for instance, I think, well, so what if I *do* die? It isn't going to be such a big deal. But at the same time I really want to live.

"When I was younger I don't think I minded much either way if I lived or died—really. I wasn't that worried about what was gonna happen. Life's a bit more important to me now than it was then."

Unhappy childhood? "Not particularly. Not more than anybody else. It wasn't a fantastic childhood, but it wasn't fantastically awful. There wasn't really very much money around. But money's not everything."

That may be easier to say when you've got a single homing in on the top of the charts and an album that's sold a half-million copies in two weeks in the U.S. alone. Fueled by "She Drives Me Crazy," *The Raw & the Cooked* is just as deserving to be a huge hit as *Fine Young Cannibals* should have been. Steele argues that the new album's music is stronger than before, but the sudden U.S. acceptance has taken the band by surprise.

"The whole thing's been pretty weird," Steele marvels. "I don't know really why it happened"—though he suspects MCA Records' hot promotion team of doing a better job than A&M Records, who distributed the first album. "We didn't know what was gonna happen," Gift says of the current album, "because it was so long since the last one. After you've been away for three years you can't expect to go Top 10 with your first single off the album."

Helped by MTV exposure, "She Drives Me Crazy" has done just that. The song boasts the "raunchy rock guitar sound" that Cox claimed to hate four years ago. "Born again!" Steele offers helpfully as Cox ponders his aesthetic about-face.

"There's only so far you can go," the guitarist responds, "using no amplifier and no effects. Eventually you have to try something else." Cox furthermore takes distorto guitar breaks on two of the new songs. Can a heavy-metal solo be next? "We'll be working up to it on the next LP," Steele says.

Not likely. But "She Drives Me Crazy" is instructive of how Fine Young Cannibals (two of whom are vegetarian—insert big laugh here) go about their work. "It started out as 'She's My Baby,'" Gift says. "That just didn't have enough of an edge, so David came up with the title 'She Drives Me Crazy.' Then we brainstormed that one a bit. It wasn't really working."

"'She Drives Me Crazy' must have taken, like, two years to write," Steele says. "The riff came right at the end."

"It was a chord sequence for a long time," Cox adds. And Steele mentions that Gift "couldn't find the right way to sing it for a long time either. It was only when he tried the falsetto that it sort of clicked in.... We tried it a lot of different ways. He was just messing about, really, and he thought it sounded good. So we kept it."

They try to have songs nailed down by the time they enter the recording studio, but flexibility appears to be a Cannibals hallmark. "We usually try three or four different arrangements," Steele says. "Sometimes if we've got a verse we think is really good, we drop the chorus and write a new one."

"Then the chorus is better than the verse," Cox picks up, "so the verse goes. We change the key a lot—and always end up where we started."

"It just seems to be something—"

"—we have to do with every song: play it in every possible key before we can record it."

Anyone taking the time to figure out *The Raw & the Cooked*'s infuriatingly encoded production credits—the symbols are in different colors overseas, and so less of a struggle—will realize that nearly half the album was originally heard on film soundtracks. "Ever Fallen in Love" was in 1986's *Something Wild*, appears on that film's soundtrack album (also on MCA, conveniently), and was further released as a single. Three other tracks are from 1987's *Tin Men*, for which no soundtrack album exists; "just this," Cox smiles, referring to *The Raw & the Cooked*.

"The *Tin Men* stuff was like doing an LP," Cox says. "We simply did it a lot earlier"—and threw it in a film. (The band unanimously hates its recording of "Ever Fallen in Love," however. It's on the album due to the insistence of the record company in England, where it was previously a hit single.)

Okay, we'll give them the *Tin Men* songs. Still: Three years to come up with nine new tunes? "Shocking, really," Steele yawns. "It's hard for us to write songs. We write very slowly. Roland found it hard to write lyrics for a while."

Gift speaks for himself: "I got a bit too self-critical. I just couldn't feel it. I think it was because I was probably forcing myself too much. Also, it's a second album. Even some friends were saying to me, 'After your first album you'll be crap, you'll be too rich to write any good songs.'"

Another reason for the long wait between albums is that the band spent virtually all 1986 on tour. "It just made us tired," Cox says. "It didn't really seem to make any difference to how the record was doing anyway. In fact, it seemed as soon as we arrived in a country the record would go down the charts."

"We may sing about horrible things, or things that hurt, but just the act of singing them is cathartic, makes you feel better."

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That experience left the band extremely reluctant to hit the concert trail again. They'll undertake grueling international promotional tours for interviews and personal appearances, but please, no shows.

"They have a horrendous time doing tours," says the band's U.S. manager Tony Meilandt. "They *hate touring.* They went into their shells after the last one." For now, band members say they're thinking of touring after the *third* album. No timetable available.

Fortunately for the band, *The Raw & the Cooked* has been selling at such a clip as to make touring unnecessary—at least for the time being. That also means more free time for Martin Parry, Fine Young Cannibals' hired drummer. Parry played on almost the entire first album, but is on only one *Raw & the Cooked* track. The explanation is an increasing use of—and preference for—drum machines.

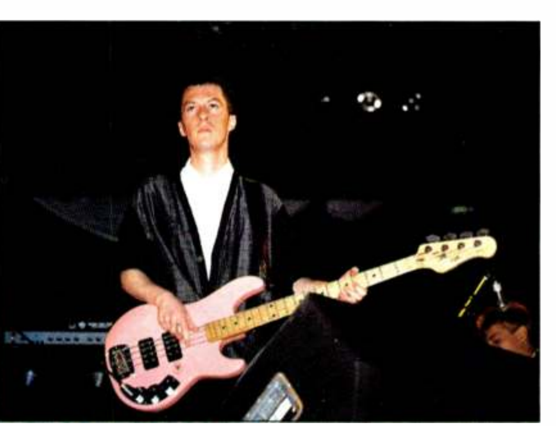
"You never have to make three takes," Steele explains, "and you're listening to 'em all and thinking, 'Does it slow down there?' It gives us the freedom to work on our own. Andy and I program the drum machines. We don't have to explain to someone what we want, we just do it. I like the sounds you get out of drum machines as well. Who wants a real live drummer? It sounds worse!"

Cox qualifies this enthusiasm. "There's probably three or four drummers in the entire world that it's worth getting their feel. But a lot of the time you're just struggling to make a drummer play in time—or, if not struggling, there's always that little variation."

So drum machines are go with Fine Young Cannibals—even if they did recruit Jenny Jones for the relaxed ballad "As Hard as It Is." "She's really good with 6/8 tempo," Steele says, but "we'll never use her again. She's become too right-wing in her politics. She reads [British tabloid] the *Sun*. That's how we fell out with her. *Sun* newspaper—she loves it."

"So we can't really work with her anymore," Cox adds, reasonably enough. Martin Parry doesn't read the *Sun*.

"Luckily," Cox says. "Although he has bought a pair of really weird shoes lately. We're gonna have to have words with the band."



TODD KAPLAN/STAR FILE

"I like the sounds in drum machines, and we don't have to explain what we want. Who wants a real drummer? It sounds worse!"

That doesn't quite hide the fact that Fine Young Cannibals do take their politics seriously. Their second single, "Blue," contains such single-entendre lines as "Government has done me wrong/I'm mad about that"; the song's title refers to the color of Great Britain's Conservative party. If Americans didn't pick up on that, Gift says, "they sure as shit did in England! Loads of TV shows dropped us 'cause it was a political song."

His lyrics are less overtly political on *The Raw & the Cooked*, "but I've got no reason for that. I'm not afraid of political songs. I feel if I actively try to write a political song it would sound contrived and a bit clumsy. Of all songs, political songs, unless they're good, sound really really bad."

Gift may not consciously try to write protest songs, but other factors in his life are less avoidable. "Racism is not something I come into contact with that much because you tend to lose your color when you become a celebrity. Now and again, when people don't recognize you, you get reminded of it. That, in a perverted way, is quite a good thing because it does make you aware of what it's like for other people who aren't as protected. To a degree, I'm not gonna be brutalized by the police; the record company's got money invested in me, I've got an agent who'd like to see me do some more movies.

"Four or five months ago I went up to Stratford-on-Avon with some friends to see a play. We checked into a hotel and went out to have something to eat. We came back and as we were walking up to the door a security guard jumped up and said, 'You can't come in, we're closed'—and this is a hotel, hotels don't close. We said, 'We're guests here,' showed the keys, and he let us in.

"Then we saw there was a discotheque across the hall. We walked across to have a look and this other security guard jumped in front of us and said, 'Sorry, lads, you can't go in there, you're wearing jeans.'

"There were four of us. Three of us did have jeans, I didn't—and it was three black guys and one white guy. As soon as we were in there, the security guards were sort of—uncomfortable, alert and jumping around.

"We went to the manager and said, 'Can't we go in, we're guests.' He said, 'No, if you're wearing jeans you can't go in.' So we got some drinks and sat over somewhere else.

"Then I said, 'Look, I'm not wearing jeans, I think I'll go in.' 'Cause I was a bit suspicious. I went to go in and this security guy jumped in front of me and said, 'You can't go in, you're wearing jeans.' I said, 'Look, these aren't jeans.' He said, 'Yes, they are.' I was pushing him and he was pushing me. I said, 'I'm gonna go in there, and a tin soldier like you is not gonna stop me.'

"He got the manager of the club and said to her that I was wearing jeans, and what's more I'd called him a tin soldier and that I couldn't go in. So she didn't have to make up her own mind. She said, 'You're wearing jeans,' I said, 'No, I'm not,' and it just got ridiculous.

"Eventually I said to her, 'I think you're doing this because you're racist.' She said, 'Oh no, there's some black people in there already.' I said, 'Well, I'd like to go meet them.' And she said, 'No, you're wearing jeans.' And *then* she said, 'You mean you're gonna go in there without your friends?' Sort of proved to me it wasn't because she thought I was wearing jeans. 'Cause she needn't have said that.

"It really upset me for a few days because it was just ridiculous. What was really sinister and strange about it was I wasn't actually wearing jeans, but they said I was. They were just changing language and meaning there on the spot. That kind of thinking is very dangerous; it leads to genocide."

Not exactly your typical rockstar adventure, but it helps explain the background against which Fine Young Cannibals work. And if Gift's lyrics often wallow in despair, the band's music can preach a different story.

"Just the act of singing makes you feel good, it raises the spirit," Gift says. "Music is an important thing to have in your life because it does that. You can do it with narcotics but it's not as good. I don't want to sound like an anti-drug person,

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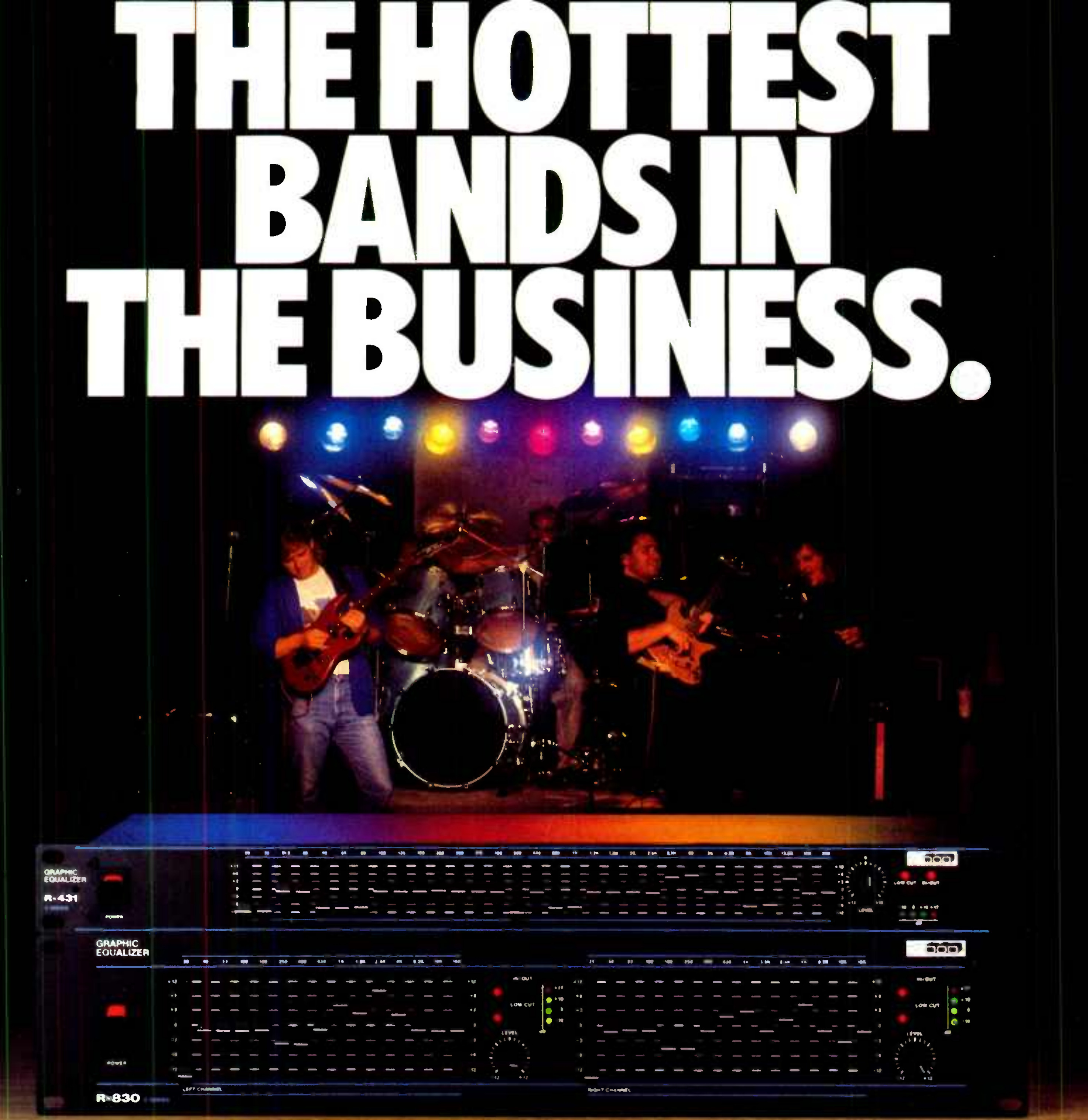

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but... you can get that feeling without it.

"When I first used to go onstage I used to drink loads. Then I decided I'd try to do it without, so I cut down; each time I'd have less to drink. In the end I didn't have anything. I enjoyed it more 'cause I could see, I could feel more. I drink now and again, but sometimes it stops me feeling. I don't like that."

Critics have compared Gift to various soul legends, most of whose names start with Otis. The comparisons are unnecessary. If there are any similarities, maybe it is because Gift has seen some of the things they saw, felt what they felt. Fine Young Cannibals' success is a victory for communication. Theirs is the sound of hurt—the sound of life.

GOOD THINGS

JUST how technoid are Fine Young Cannibals? "When we finished the last tour of America," guitarist **Andy Cox** says, "we sold everything." Well, what do they use, if not own?

Cox prefers Fenders: On *The Raw & the Cooked* he plays an early-'60s Telecaster and a Mustang. He also plays a "real weird thing" that fellow Cannibal David Steele cannibalized from an American guitar. "We used loads of different amplifiers: Fender Twin-Reverbs, a Marshall combo, Mesa Boogie and a really old Fender about the same size as a combo" but two different units. In-house engineer Robin Goodfellow has created various effects for the band, including "a version of a Roland GP-8 with a valve in it." (NB to Americans: "Valve" means "tube.")

David Steele still uses a G&L bass he sprayed pink during the Beat days. On keyboards, "I usually use a lot of samples. Also, I must be the only person in the world to still use a Yamaha DX7." He further mentions Akai, Roland, a Casio CZ-101, toy keyboards and "really cheap effects." Drum machines are an Alesis, Casio, "sometimes an Emulator" and something called a Movement of which apparently only six were made. "It looks very science-fiction," Steele says, and we'll have to take his word for it. Pianos by Steinway.

Steele adds that the band made an interesting discovery about recording singer **Roland Gift**. "He sounds good through this cheap microphone. We had these really expensive microphones and we couldn't understand why he didn't sound any good. Then we put up the one we normally use"—a Shure 57—"and it sounded great."

MILLER from page 53

For *Amandla*, Miller made the most of Miles' current mania for go-go. "Coincidentally I had been working with a band called E.U. from D.C. I wrote a song for them called 'Da Butt,' and E.U. turned me on to go-go rhythms. At the same time Miles had hired Ricky Wellman, who was the teacher of a lot of the young drummers in the D.C. go-go scene, so it seemed like a natural way to go. Go-go has got a swing to it, and I thought it would be interesting for Miles to superimpose some of the swing phrasing from his earlier days over this beat. The sound is a little like a throwback, yet completely new."

So after nine years of knowing Miles, does Miller *really* know Miles? "Well," he says with a trace of perplexity, "if you ever go over to Miles' house, he'll be painting, because that's what he's always doing. But his painting's like the opposite of his trumpet playing. You'd think somebody like Miles would paint a red line down the middle of the canvas and a blue line across, and that would be it. But his paintings are a lot more dense. There's a lot of interesting stuff: Each person has, like, three legs and four heads. Wild stuff. And yet when he plays he says so much with those little phrases. Still, I guess it all comes from the same place." – *Ted Drozdowski*

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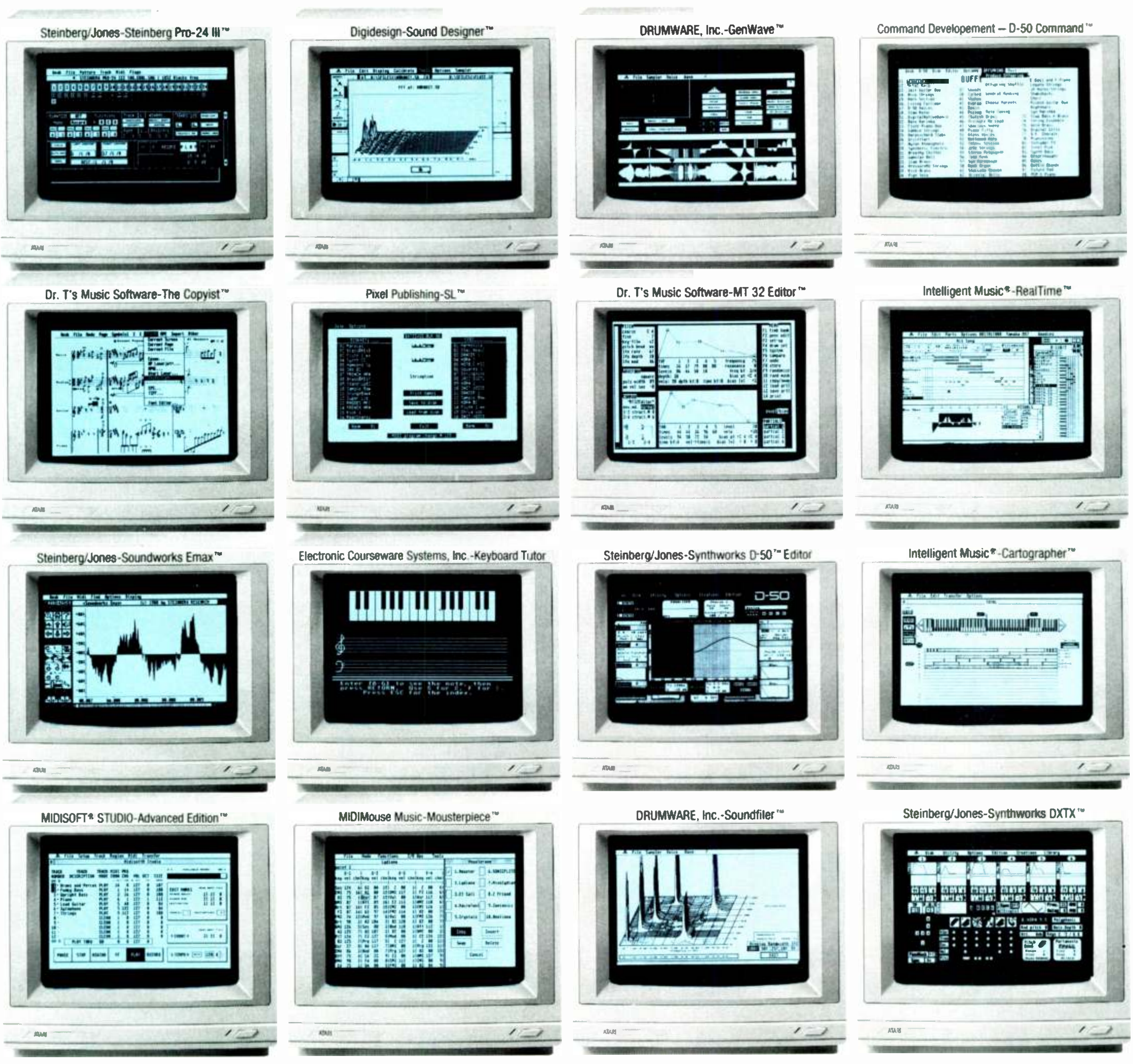

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MILES DAVIS:
REBEL WITHOUT A PAUSE

BY PETER WATROUS

Reflections on the Art of Playing Changes

"WHAT DO YOU WANT?" asks Miles, like I'm wasting his time.

It's hard not to stare at him. Thin, with taut skin, he's immensely imposing, even though he's probably 5′6″. He looks fit, and handsome, and he stares at you when he speaks, waiting for you to respond, like a snake waiting for a mouse to move. His eyes have the milky white circles around the iris that old people often get. He walks with a bit of a limp.

I've been at his Malibu beach house, an hour away from Los Angeles, for 45 minutes; Miles was in town getting acupuncture treatment for a crick in his neck. There is art all over the house. The tile porch overlooks impossibly beautiful ocean, strewn with rocks and clumps of seaweed that break the surface, causing ripples. A path wanders down to the beach; at the window in the living room a huge telescope stands silhouetted against the sky. It's just been reported

PHOTOGRAPH BY GILLES LARRAIN/RETNA, LTD.

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in some seedy paper that Miles has AIDS; around New York rumors of his demise—bone cancer, lung cancer, anything else—float like trash on a wind down Broadway. He looks fine, even healthy, and the exercise cycle is prominently displayed near his piano and an oversized TV. He drove up to his house in his silver Ferrari.

"I want to ask you some questions," I say, playing the stare-back game. It's obvious he has no idea who I am. No response. He goes and talks to his assistant, Mike, who's gotten out of the car by now. Then he returns.

"Go make yourself at home, Peter. Go out on the porch. It's nice out there." Miles, it turns out, is a nice guy.

He's also a guy who, for all his musical movement and lip service to the present, is inexorably drawn to the ideas of his youth. He has taken the original tenets of the be-boppers and lived them: change, elusiveness, a sense that art had radical imperatives. But still, this dates him both ideologically and as a memoirist. His comparisons are all to the great figures of his youth, before he became great himself. Of his musical compatriots, Charlie Parker's name comes up over and over, not Wayne Shorter's. And although he has a paternal interest in his band, his new record, *Amandla*, isn't much on his mind. His autobiography is coming out soon, and Columbia Records' boxed-set summation of his Columbia career—instead of reissuing the records themselves—brings a frown to his face. When I ask him a question about it he misunderstands and thinks that Columbia is doing another one. This genuinely shocks him.

"Yeah, I think people are trying to close the chapter of the book called Miles Davis. I know the nature of man, which is to do that. People don't like to talk about the same thing over and over again," he says. "You see this pin? It's from the Knights of Malta; I'm Sir Miles Davis. The guy who gave it to me said, 'We know style when we see it, but we don't know how to teach it. We can see a person and say, "They have style," but you can't take a person with non-style and teach him style.' That's what they told me when I got knighted: Keep on doing what I'm doing and not to discriminate. They said that I was the one they picked because I kept trying to keep the music going, change the colors. But that's my nature."

When did you start thinking about your sound?

"Forever."

But what were you thinking? Did you think that you had to have an individual sound?

"I just followed the sound that I liked. You just follow your body; I liked my instructor's sound when I was a kid in St. Louis."

What were you thinking about yourself, your playing, when you were a kid?

"Me? I didn't have time to think about myself! I was too busy playing."

But to get something distinct musically, you have to think.

"I was thinking about what chord Dizzy was playing. Sarah Vaughan and a woman named Mabel showed me major sevenths, what to do with them."

But you leave all this open space in your playing, I bludgeon.

"If you get a good rhythm section, why blow over it? It knocks me out when I hear it. I play against a rhythm section. They push you; that's what it's all about. You have to fit in, not over, in, like you fit in a chord, not over a chord. You do all of that to goose a rhythm section, 'cause they get tired of playing like this [*imitates a drummer playing a ride cymbal*] if you don't do nothing. Tony Williams played with one of them trumpet players, it wasn't Freddie Hubbard, might have been Wynton. Put his sticks down. Tony's like that anyway. If he doesn't get a chance for interplay, he'll get fed up; if you're not going to play with the drummer, why not get a drum machine and hook it up?"

Very few people of his generation have changed contexts as readily as Miles—Max Roach is another, maybe Roy Haynes, but that pretty much sums it up. And of his generation, Davis is easily the most controversial. Bringing up his electric music in a room of the wrong jazz critics is like bringing up Salman Rushdie at an ayatollah conference. Does he adapt his musical principles to his market, something which would be anathema to a hardcore be-bopper?

"Me? I know what you're saying, but I don't do that, I wouldn't change my style because that's the going thing. I make music that I like, but I found out that usually what I like, somebody else will like, too. If you're sincere about it, somebody else can see it. But I have to change."

"If you get a good rhythm section, why blow over it? I play against it. They push you; that's what it's all about."

So what if the music doesn't change? Say if you said to yourself, "Well, I really like this group with Herbie and Wayne, I'm going to do it for the rest of my life and explore all the things that weren't explored." Why not? It's good music.

"It's good, but styles change. All cars look like Mercedes now. Corvettes look like Ferraris. Styles change, man, if you're not here to see it, say you're in jail and you've just come out, it becomes really obvious. Styles change subtly, words change their meanings."

But why do you have to change? Nobody *has* to change.

"Who? Me? I just have to play in different styles. Which doesn't mean that I'm not me. When your friend calls you

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can tell it's them by the tone of their voice. It's not that you change, right? I can't say I'm going to change tomorrow. You've got to do it gradually, you change every day; last year was go-go music. Now people have added something to it. Those that didn't hear it last year have to listen twice. I love the beat; we got it on the new record.

"Go-go is like Max used to play, the beat swings. I can tell you where it came from. Years ago when Art Blakey and Max and Kenny Clarke, Kenny Klook a mop we called him." [*Davis starts singing rhythms.*] "'Salt peanuts, salt peanuts.' See? That's the same thing."

When you heard go-go, you recognized it?

"Uh-uh. I felt it first. If I analyze something, I won't like it. But you can break it down, hear 'Salt Peanuts.'" He sings more rhythms. "I showed Vince, my cousin, that and he said, 'What!!!' What else you going to ask me? When can I be free?"

"New York was the best school you could ever go to, 52nd Street, all the musicians! You could take your pick."

Even though you say your music hasn't really changed, it's become more pop than it was before.

"How so, what's pop?"

It's dealing with popular rhythms more than it did before. It's closer to dance music.

"For who? All people? Chinese people? Japanese people?"

We're talking about American people. If you play "Kind of Blue" or "'Round Midnight," that's not dance music.

"It was then."

People were dancing in the Blackhawk or at the Vanguard?

"Not in the Blackhawk, not the Vanguard. But Art Blakey, Kenny Clarke and I would play the Audubon Ballroom and people would dance."

But the newer music sounds like dance music.

"How? It's the beat? Lionel Hampton had the same beat, and Mingus threw the drums off the stage, because Lionel liked the beat too much, which drove Mingus nuts." Miles laughs at the memory. "Anyway, I don't think if something is popular, it's bad."

But people say that, right?

"The only person I ever hear say that is Wynton Marsalis, and he doesn't think like that unless he's being interviewed. He wants to be an innovator, and he is, but he doesn't talk like that. Wynton plays perfect, like Fats and Brownie, he's a hell of a trumpet player. We're not talking about his mouth, his vocal cords, we're talking about his musicianship; he's a motherfucker. Maybe he has to talk to let off steam. I know some crazy bitches that made the best love.

"Crazy guys too, the tone that we all had in St. Louis, that we all got from listening to a guy called Levi. Levi was crazy. He'd start laughing and they had to take him back to the asylum. Clark Terry would call me and say [*imitating Terry*], 'Levi just got out. And he's over at whatchamacallit. And he has his horn.' I'd say, 'Levi, just put your horn up to your mouth.' And he'd just smile.

"You look at Wynton's mouth. Wynton is a perfect trumpet player. It's just what he says...you have to let people think for themselves a little bit."

Davis' greatest influence has been his own unmistakable sound. He revolutionized mute playing. His broad, vibratoless sound matched the plains around St. Louis, dry and unsentimental, but immensely romantic. And it's his sound that has wrecked generation after generation of trumpet players, as well, musicians who should have been finding their own way, instead of Davis'. "Sound is the most important thing a musician can have," he says. "Because you can't do anything without a sound. If a musician is interested in his sound, then you can look for some good playing. Because if he doesn't find his sound, he can't play what he wants to play, can't do what he wants to do, can't play a good line. In the electric age, it works with the mix onstage, too. When I played out in Brooklyn I told the promoters, 'If you don't get the sound together, I'm not going to be in the band.' If the sound ain't good you want to kill yourself.

"The least little thing is exaggerated. Like the spit in your horn: With electronics it's like..." He makes a sound like an elephant dying. "If you don't hear your sound, you won't be able to play what you want to play, to connect phrases, you won't get nothing from it.

"Nobody can sound like Coltrane, for example. 'Cause it's Trane. First place, he had one tooth out. And it took Coltrane a long time to mature and ripen. Lucky Thompson and I used to talk about chords and shit, so I'd give Coltrane four or five chords to run on one chord, and he's the only one that can do it, he and Lucky and Bird and Coleman Hawkins. Nobody has that thing he had, which is from Eddie Davis and Sonny Stitt. Benny Carter [one of Davis' first employers] could do that too, if he chose to. He's real slick. He's always blinking his eyes and saying, 'Do I sound like Charlie Parker?' I'd say no. Because he knew that I used to play with Bird, and Bird was all the noise then. But Benny was a brave musician. Working with him, I learned a lot and so did J.J. Johnson. Look out, Vince!" he yells to his cousin, who's cooking barbecue. "What's happening over there? What else you want to know?"

What effect did living in New York have on your playing?

"New York is the place for me. You get that rush. You see so much art in New York, a guy can do something like that," he motions to the art work on his dining room table, "you can play like that. I think Charlie Christian had a big influence on me and Bird. Blanton, the Southwestern style, that's the way I play. I thought everyone was playing like Dizzy when I turned on the radio and it's the John

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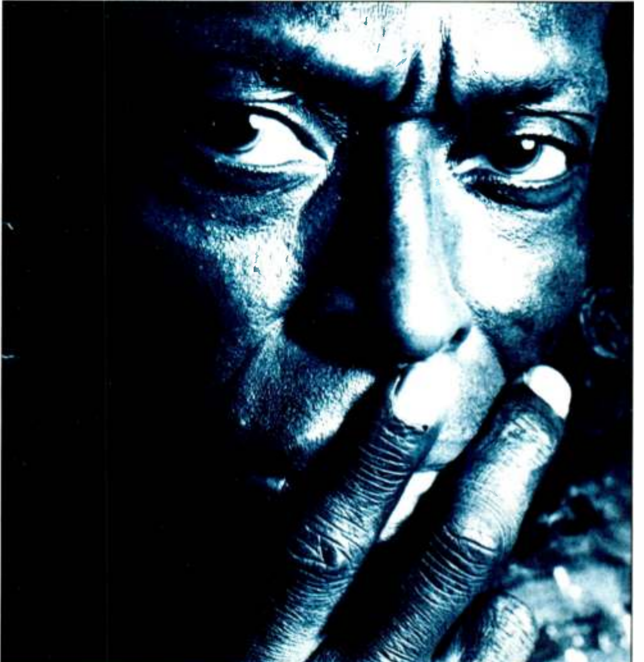
Kirby band, and I hear this trumpet player that sounds like Dizzy. I say, 'Goddamn, I got to go to New York, because if all the trumpet players play like that I got to get up there.' So I asked Dizzy, 'Who's that playing with John Kirby that sounds like you?' He said, 'That was me! Charlie Shavers was sick.' Goddamn! That made me go to New York sooner. When I got to New York nobody was playing. Dizzy, Bird, Vic Coulson had a nice tone.

"But back to Charlie Christian. He was one of the first be-boppers, 'Solo Flight.' We used to play like that. I was in school, and right across from school my friend Duke Brooks lived, and he'd get so high his mother put him on the porch and made a room for him. He was about four years older than me, but he played like Bud. He'd say, 'I got something to show you.' The piano was right there. He smoked so much reefer: reefer, piano and the bed, that's all he had in there. We played 'Airmail Special,' everything that the Benny Goodman sextet played. That was a good band. He and I, a bass player and a drummer. He'd play octaves, and we'd add a little bit to the arrangement. Ben Webster used that diminished chord in 'Cotton Tail,' stuff like that made my ear go west."



When you came out to Los Angeles in the '40s, what was the difference between New York and Central Avenue?

Davis rolls his eyes. "First place, they had two unions in Los Angeles. A black and white union; the black union, all the Tarzan movies—you saw the natives?—they just called up the black unions and got their extras. Central Avenue wasn't nothing like New York. New York was the best school you ever go to, 52nd Street, Ben Webster, Art Tatum, Charlie Parker, Dizzy, Sid Catlett, Earl Bostic, Savoy Ballroom, I got in on the tail end of that.

"America should be ashamed of the way it treats artists. When they don't understand something, they put it down."

"All the musicians! You could take your pick for what you wanted to hear. For instance, Bird, you never heard anybody play as fast and loud as that, and with the long length of each note. That was the way I was taught. Don't sacrifice height for speed, if you play high; the only person I know who could play even in all the registers is Fats Navarro. He'd come and get me to jam. We'd go to Minton's. Funny too, when we'd play together, we'd sound alike. When you do art with someone, whatever that style is, that's what you do. Even if you write together, 'What about this, how about this!' It's exciting to collaborate.

"52nd Street was much more progressive. They didn't even like us out here. I remember working with Benny Carter; I came out to see Bird, and they gave him shock treatments because he was...America should be ashamed of itself the way it treats artists. A guy doesn't have to be white to be a bad motherfucker. Somebody should recognize these people. If someone wants to use dope, let him use dope; it's his life. Bird scared a lot of people, especially white people. When they don't understand something, they put it down."

It wasn't just white people putting him down then. Black people didn't pay that much attention, either.

"That's true, but during that time, playing like we played, when we came out to L.A. we'd go to jam sessions, and people would want to hire us and the union would say, 'No, you have to wait three or six months.' That's not fair, to put you on ice. I'd go to the union hall and they'd whisper, 'There's Davis, he's playing that new stuff from the East.'

"I didn't give a fuck what they were saying, because I knew what I liked. I had gone out there—I had let Lucky Thompson stay with me in New York—and when I came out here I said to him, 'I can't stand Benny Carter's band—Benny's all right, but his band...' He said, 'Well, just leave, stay with me'; he'd bought a little house.

"I played with Mingus then, you know. Mingus is so funny; he likes the way Duke Ellington wrote. Myself, I like smooth voice leading and Mingus was a bad motherfucker, everybody can't do what he did. To me he was like a relative. He used to write things and we'd play them in the living room with six or seven people. And he'd order us to play them again, because he wanted to hear it. We'd argue a lot too, about chords. Bird and Dizzy, Bud Powell, the beauty in their playing is the way they add on to a chord. A chord is given, so add on to it, instead of changing it completely. Mingus would be walking along straight and all of a sudden he'd walk down five steps. I'd say, 'Mingus! How can you do that? You hear what the tune's doing.' But he was so stubborn. Then he wouldn't say anything. He gradually cleared it up.

"A lot of guys will do things like Sun Ra; you can't recognize the tune, it's destruction. Gil Evans and I had to

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Doin' the Rat Dance

Marcus Miller on Collaborating with Miles

Ask him. Marcus Miller will tell you that Miles Davis is a reg'lar guy. A genius? Sure. An institution? You betcha. But a reg'lar guy all the same.

It's not obvious, of course. Nothing about Miles is. Hell, Miller knew him for five years before he found out. "I didn't *really* get to know Miles until I started producing him, on *Tutu,"* he relates. "Honestly, I was scared to give him any kind of direction. I was even scared to tell him where to play. Because he's Miles, you know? I'd just turn on the tape and say, 'Do what you want.'

"But he pulled me aside and said, 'C'mon, man, I don't mind a little bit of direction. You wrote the tunes. Tell me where you want me to play. It helps me out, gives me a framework.'" See, a reg'lar guy.

Miller has been Miles' closest collaborator in the '80s, following in the giant steps of Gil Evans and Teo Macero. He's played bass in The Man's band, written music for and with Miles, hung out, and produced three of his records. Back in '81 when Miles first beckoned, Miller was a session man who'd "learned bass in the streets" and held a degree in clarinet from Queens College. "I was doing this country & western date when I got the message. I called Miles back, and he wanted to know if I could be ready for a session in two hours!" Miller made the gig and stuck around for three years, playing on *The Man with the Horn*, *We Want Miles* and *Star People* before splitting for producerville.

"Miles is always good at putting the pressure on you," Miller testifies. "He really made me find my own voice as a bass player. I mean, I had the facility, but.... It's one thing to play like somebody else on a record. If you get criticized you don't really feel responsible. But in Miles' band, there was no one I could copy and sound right. He forced me to play what I felt. And once you put your soul on a record, you have to deal with criticism, because it's criticism of you. Miles taught me how to deal with that, too, because he's always heard it, but you could tell criticism never got beyond that first layer. He'd go, 'Yeah, yeah, I'm gonna do what I do anyway.'"

Miller had already produced and written songs for Luther Vandross, Aretha Franklin, David Sanborn and Natalie Cole when he heard that Miles had jumped from Columbia to Warner Bros. "I hadn't seen Miles for a couple of years, but I called [Warner VP] Tommy LiPuma and told him I had some ideas, so if Miles had any space on the record I'd like to send him stuff. Miles said yeah, so I finished three demos, 'Tutu,' 'Portia' and 'Splatch,' and asked Tommy if he wanted me to send them to L.A. He said, 'Nah, just come out here and we'll record them.' I went, but I was really nervous because they hadn't heard a note. I was scared they'd put me on the next plane back to New York.

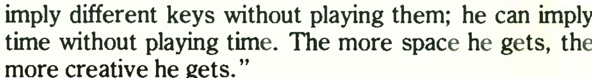
"Tommy liked them, but the big test was Miles. The first one he heard was 'Tutu.' A friend of mine, Jason Miles, who's a synthesizer programmer, just happened to have a Miles sample, so we used it on that demo. I played the solo on a keyboard, thinking I sounded just like Miles. When I played it for Miles I waited for his reaction. He listened for a while, finally turned to me, and said, [*in a rasp*] 'Who's that on trumpet? Sounds like Nat Adderley.'

"I've found out that when he's working on a record he's always up, very creative, never has a bad day in the studio. I try to get all the mundane work, like setting up the machinery, out of the way before he comes in so when he shows up we're ready to roll. Because usually his first or second takes are the ones. After that he says, 'Hey, that's it. That's the best I can do.'

"He's unpredictable, too. 'Portia' on *Tutu* was a first take. I showed him the melody on a soprano sax I had, so he could relate to another horn, and then we started running tape. I was sitting there while he was playing, and he picked me up by my collar and pushed me up to the microphone to play the melody with him. I'd never played soprano on a record before, and we were both going onto the same track. He was playing so great that I was afraid I was going to make a mistake and ruin everything Miles played. That was one of the most tense experiences I'd ever had."

In comparison, cutting tunes like "Rat Dance" and "Lost in Madrid" for 1987's *Siesta* soundtrack was a sleepwalk. "I'd just roll the video tape, which was SMPTE'd to the multi-track, and play some things on keyboard that I thought matched the scenes. Then I'd get my bass clarinet and Miles and I would react to that, then go back and see how it worked with the film.

"The trick was to have Miles play Spanish music and not have it be a carbon copy of *Sketches of Spain.* It may remind you of *Sketches*, but the movie had a lot of eeriness to it, so I got to use darker colors and more space. It really let Miles explore his tones. And he's a master of that. He can imply different keys without playing them; he can imply time without playing time. The more space he gets, the more creative he gets."



Miller says that "what you need to do to produce Miles is really get to know him and his music—hang out and listen. A lot of people associate Miles with one kind of music: whatever period of Miles' career they love the most. But you have to combine all the elements of Miles' experience with what's new and exciting today, because that's what Miles is into."

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DEBORAH FEINGOLD

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THOMAS DOLBY Has The Man of a Thousand Faces Spread Himself Too Thin?

BY ALAN DI PERNA

1 *OPEN ON LONG SHOT of Hollywood skyline. Grimy fog and half-hearted drizzle give the city the mean, seedy look it always has when the sun deserts it.*

2. Dissolve to medium shot of Thomas Dolby's living room. A fire glows warmly beneath an ornately carved mantel, providing welcome contrast to the bleak opening shot. The camera pans left, across the eclectically decorated room—an antique floor lamp, several model ships, some Memphis chairs, arched doorways with '30s-style "Hollywood-Moorish" grillework, two grand pianos and large French doors overlooking the 101, the Hollywood Freeway, where the guy in Dolby's "The Key to Her Ferrari" has his auto-erotic epiphany.

3. Cut to two-shot of Dolby and interviewer seated on opposite, facing sofas....

Okay. Wait. Enough already. CUT!!! Let's get real here.

Ah, but that's just the problem. Dig for the "real" Thomas Dolby and all you come up with is an infinitely receding series of personas. Mercurial little characters you remember from videos and songs. Dolby? That's not even his real name, although he recently won a lawsuit with Dolby Labs giving him the right to keep on using it. His bio reads too much like a movie plot.

Voice-over: The precocious son of globe-trotting academics, young Thomas became a citizen of the world....

Very likely, all this is true. But from "Europa and the Pirate Twins" onward, Dolby has woven his bio/plot into his songs in such a way that you can't tell where the story leaves off and "real life" begins. Yeah, that's what good entertainment should do. But Dolby's way of blurring the line between reality and illusion makes it hard to get him into focus. Maybe it's that wistful, filtered-

Techno Tennessee Williams

RON DELANY

Urban Rap Guerilla

STEVE JENNINGS LGI

PHOTOGRAPH BY LONDON FEATURES

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lens, geographic rootlessness of his first two albums—part and parcel of the pan-European bio/plot, once again.

"In the past, my songs have been very abstract in that sense," Dolby acknowledges. "Very devoid of any focus in time or place. They could be set now or in the past, in England, Europe in general, or wherever."

All that changes, of course, on Dolby's most recent album, *Aliens Ate My Buick*. Much of the record is an exercise in Hollywood regionalism. A brash romp in Tinseltown which surprised, perplexed and even repelled some fans of Dolby's oddball Oxford don persona. All of a sudden, he's writing songs packed with tatty local detail... smog alerts, Bel Air bimbos, pink leather upholstery, stupid license plates....

"You could say there's a slightly journalistic quality to it," is how Dolby sums the album up. "I come here, take in all the impressions I can and reflect them in songs. I think the English are very snobbish about America—particularly L.A. I've tried to resist being that way about it. But at the same time, it *is* a curious kind of culture."

The album, of course, stems directly from the latest chapter in the Dolby saga. He relocated to Los Angeles two-and-a-half years ago and, just last June, married actress Kathleen Beller ("Dynasty"'s Kirby Colby, who can also be seen clinging helplessly to hubby on the *Aliens Ate My Buick* front cover).

Voice-over: After years of restlessly wandering, the artist settles down to wedded domesticity in the Hollywood hills....

It seems eerily like a dramatization of Dolby's song "Screen Kiss." But could this be the real thing?

The man sitting across from me on that wet afternoon is real enough, a two-day stubble covering his face and the portion of his recently-shaved scalp that's visible beneath a black leather cap. The house, too, is real, as described.

Angry Post-Punk

'60s Retro-Man

"It's an old movie star mansion," Dolby explains. "The last person to live here was the art director for *Bladerunner*." The place does seem like a governor's residence in India or the Sudan—an expatriate enclave, a cozy bastion of civilization in a wild, tropical land.

"But I don't consider myself an expatriate," Dolby insists. "Because I was never really a 'patriate.' I spent all of my life traveling around. And I always felt divorced from that kind of Englishness. It's something I'm not really proud of. I think the familiar gripe of English people in L.A. is 'well, there's no history, no culture, no ideology.' Which would seem to suggest that there is in England. But what there is in England is the residue of an empire which in the last hundred years or so has just crumbled around us. And I think what you're left with is this very low morale—a very intolerant race of people.

"The way that's reflected in music—although there's lots of musical talent coming out of England—is a very low acceptance of anybody who chooses to be different. If you're going to be different it has to be in a very predictable direction. You're only allowed to be unconventional if you do it in a conventional way—a new hairstyle, a slightly new beat to the music. And I find that my sort of stubborn individuality as an artist is not really accepted in England the way it is here. I think that here it's applauded. People say, 'Yeah—go for it.' That's why, as a creative environment, I find it a lot more positive. And that, to me, is more important than what side of the road people drive on or what the interior decoration of the restaurants and nightclubs is like. Those are all things that I can tolerate. But I'm really here because I enjoy living and working here. I find it a healthy place to live and work in."

Geography aside, this whole business of defining the "real Dolby" wouldn't be such an issue if it weren't so important to the man himself. It's well known that he's devoted quite a bit of energy to making sure he doesn't get typecast as the lovable P.G. Wodehouse zany for the rest of his days. "The songs on the first album [*The Golden Age of Wireless*] were quite varied, but it was 'She Blinded Me with Science' that broke through. That's what people identified me with and maybe missed the point that there was quite a range to what I did. So when I came to make the second album I tended to lean more in a quiet, moody direction. Just to restore the balance, I guess. To show people that I wasn't just making novelty dance records.

"And I think I got that off my chest with *The Flat Earth*. I felt, 'Okay, now people get the point a little more. They don't just identify me as this sort of nutty scientist. And that freed me up, on *Aliens Ate My Buick*, to just go where the mood took me. And where it took me was back to a more outgoing attitude, certainly in the personality of the vocals and the lyrics."

The three-album process that Dolby describes, though, has taken seven years to unfold—hardly a prolific output. "I think it's plenty, personally. Although I know it's the low end of the statistic as far as artists go. But then most artists don't also write, play keyboards and produce for other people, act, write and direct videos and movies and all those other things. And if I've just spent three months in the studio on an album of my own, I'm not really ready to dive back in there and spend another three months working on someone else's album. So yeah, as it pans out, it takes me time to do things; but it's also a situation that allows me to keep a fresh attitude."

There's no denying that Dolby has always moved in increasingly concentric—and sometimes downright incongruent—artistic spheres. Before the 1982 release of *The Golden Age of Wireless*, he'd played with Bruce Woolley and the Camera Club, penned Lene Lovich's 1981 single "New Toy" and performed session synth duties on Foreigner's *4* and Joan Armatrading's *Walk Under Ladders*, among others. The success of "She Blinded Me with Science" launched him as a video director as well.

He originally approached rockvid pioneer Steve Baron to direct the "Science" clip. "But he was busy with another project at the time. However, he and his sister Siobhan Baron [at the time a producer for the siblings' Limelight Productions company] looked over my ideas for it. They said, 'Well look,

GARY GERSHOFF RETNA   PAT LEWIS

World Radio History

some of your vocabulary is incorrect, but all your ideas for the video are very good. Why don't you just come hang around one of our shoots and you'll soon pick up the lingo. Then you'll be able to direct it yourself.' So it's really because of their encouragement that I started directing."

As a result, Dolby became one of the first musicians to direct his own videos *and* do a good job of it—an anomaly even in rock video's initial and most creative era. He's in a unique position as a video director: able to sense and punctuate every key sound or riff with some onscreen action, cut or facial twitch.

"I had a pretty clear idea of how the video for 'Hot Sauce' was going to be before I ever recorded the song. There's one section that's a very Broadway kind of musical flourish: some fairly radical chord changes ending in this big string cascade. And when I wrote that, I had this vision of me spotting this large Latin lady across a room and getting a little glint in my eye like Davy Jones in the Monkees when he falls in love. So I recorded this piece of music to accompany the video."

Boy Wonder Scientist

Rock video, as is well known, often leads to the harder stuff: feature films. Dolby wasn't exempt from their lure. In the years following the 1984 release of *The Flat Earth*, he scored a few small-scale box-office flops like *Quicksilver* and *Fever Pitch* before getting a chance to write music for a colossal, big-budget flop, George Lucas' *Howard the Duck*. While working on the picture, Dolby became attracted to the idea of using film as an alternative means to radio for getting his music across. So, although he went on to score Ken Russell's *Gothic* in 1987, the Lucas project understandably left him with a bitter taste.

"As *Howard the Duck* illustrated very well, you ultimately have so little control of the end product in film. I still do love the idea of people first encountering my music in a movie theater rather than on the radio. But in the process of getting tied up in somebody else's project, I have to give up a lot of control. At least with radio, in ideal circumstances, you give your record to a radio programmer who says, 'I think the audience will like this.' And he plays it. With film, there are so many more layers of distillation. You can write great music for a lousy movie that nobody sees and you've defeated your purpose entirely."

But Dolby didn't spend the entire four-year stretch between *The Flat Earth* and *Aliens Ate My Buick* courting the movies. He kept active as a player and producer, too. On one hand, he's gravitated toward introspective lyricists like Joni Mitchell (whose *Dog Eat Dog* album he co-produced) and Paddy McAloon of Prefab Sprout, for whom Dolby has produced two records: *Two Wheels Good* and *From Langley Park to Memphis*. But on the other hand, he's been increasingly drawn to the out-of-bounds funk of Mr. George Clinton. Dolby co-produced Clinton's *Some of My Best Jokes Are Friends*. Funk's founding father reciprocated by contributing vocals and the song "Hot Sauce" to *Aliens Ate My Buick*.

"George taught me a lot about attitude really. He always regards going into the studio as an occasion—an event. He'll have arrangements with some studios whereby they'll call him up if there's a cancellation. Then he'll call anybody from his whole entourage who's in town and say, 'Come on down to the studio.' This is all without any specific idea of 'Well, tonight we're going to cut that Funkadelic tune....' He'll just get in the studio with whoever's available and then decide, in the cold light of morning, what to call it, who to pay or not to pay. If you have a methodical mind like me—a lot of it's out of insecurity—you need to be reminded all the time that the best stuff comes about when there's a sense of occasion."

Dolby's flirtation with the funk points up one thing that makes it so hard to get a fix on him as an artist. He's a compulsive appropriator of styles. "Pulp Culture" from *Aliens*—which hints that popular culture is "there to be plundered" and "redefined"—can almost be taken as a summary of his favorite artistic method. Time and again, Dolby will latch onto a signature groove, sound or catch phrase and find some sly way to wrench it out of context—making it uniquely his own in the process.

"In a way, 'Pulp Culture' is an anthem to that kind of thing," Dolby allows. "The song is interesting because it doesn't mean very much. A lot of the vocal lines were just the first words that popped into my head when I was writing the song. Lines like 'with a gun' are very iconoclastic in a way, because they're completely meaningless in the context of the song. A lot of what I do is really a collage, where you have little found bits and pieces you just throw together until the whole creates the impression you want."

So while Dolby may change musical styles from album to album, there is one constant: You'll always find him snatching those cultural signposts and replanting them in unlikely places. The first wave of British synth bands used techno gear to come off, predictably enough, all futuristic and Orwellian. Dolby came along on his first record and used the same electronic pop timbres to evoke that elegiac, Old World nostalgia that defined his early style. And speaking of appropriations, even the phrase "blinded with science" is an old Brit expression for praising...shall we say...female pulchritude. (As in, "Cor, that one fair blinds you with science!")

Old Man River

This continues on *Aliens Ate My Buick*, where you get tunes like "My Brain Is Like a Sieve." Here Dolby uses a reggae rhythm as the tongue-in-cheek backdrop for a song about some poor guy who wants to lose his memory so he doesn't have to dwell on how his girl has dumped on him.

"I tend to lock onto a specific style of groove fairly early and work with the conventions within that," says Dolby of the tune. "Triplet echoes are something that obviously go with that upbeat reggae kind of lilt. So when I get an environment to work in, elements will come up and propel me to a certain style of singing. I'd never done anything in a reggae style before. I guess eventually I'll run out of styles. But when I'm exploring a new area like that, I try to make use of it by twisting clichés around. For example, in the part of the vocal where the word 'murder' gets echoed (a standard DJ dub move), I had the idea of using a

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'50s cop-show voice for that toasting yelp in reggae."

Aliens does differ from Dolby's past records, in that it's the first album where he decided to assemble a good old-fashioned, gigging band—the Lost Toy People—rather than relying on session players and arrangements based on layers of overdubs. "Going into this album, I was at a bit of a loss. When I recorded my first album, the sounds I was using were considered fairly techno. And in those days, I really felt like a pioneer. Not many records had synthesizers or drum machines. But now that's flipped completely. My accountant has a DX7 in his office. So in a way, I felt a lot of pressure. Like, what sort of bizarre drum sounds am I going to come up with this time? I don't like to think I have to make a certain kind of album because I have to use certain kinds of sounds. It really felt like, to continue the path of exploration that I've always taken, I had to go back to playing with a band."

Shortly after he got to L.A., Dolby began advertising for players in a local paper, rather than harvesting the L.A. grapevine for the usual session sauternes. Many of *Aliens*' groove-oriented songs grew out of auditions for the Lost Toy People: "I didn't want to give unfair advantage to people who really knew my songs well, so I just came up with several grooves that I'd have the players work on."

The grooves grew into songs. And when the Lost Toy People played a series of L.A. gigs—deliberately underpublicized—Dolby's vocal approach for *Aliens* began to gel. "The vocals are much more 'in your face' than anything I've done before. That's because I was used to going out and singing the songs in clubs, trying to get the whole idea over. The vocals had to be in your face in order to convey a song like 'Pulp Culture' over a bad P.A. in front of an audience that had never heard it before. And that attitude just carried into the album."

Dolby's impulse was to transfer the band's live arrangements directly to record. In practice, though, that proved a little more complex than it sounds. "We did a set of demos of all the songs on the album in about a day and a half, which I think

DOLBY'S LAB

FOR years, Thomas Dolby's Fairlight CMI Series III took care of nearly all his sequencing and sampling needs. But now that Fairlight has fallen on hard times, this is likely to change.

"I'll probably be okay for my next album," he speculates. "But after that, my Fairlight will probably be demoted to the role of expensive sample player and I'll most likely be using a different front end. I've started investigating Mac sequencers. It's hard for stand-alone systems like the Fairlight or Synclavier to compete with software-based systems because of the standardization that happens when you've got many software companies in competition. When somebody comes out with a new innovation, everycne incorporates it into their next revision. I mean, look at word processors. If you can work one Mac word processor, you can probably work any of them. I think the same thing will happen with waveform management, sample editing and hard-disk recording.

"As for which sequencer you choose, I think that depends on what style of musician you are. If you're basically a player, then [Mark of the Unicorn's] Performer is great, because you just sit down, pick a track and record. But I've always done a lot of graphic editing. My approach very often will be to play in a bar of something and then copy it across to the next eight bars. Then I'll transpose it and make the next eight bars. I tend to do things mathematically in that sense. And for that I prefer [Passport Designs'] MasterTracks Pro to Performer. But the one that I've finally settled on, and which I'll probably use for the next album, is Opcode's Vision. It's really like the best aspects of Performer, MasterTracks Pro and MIDI Paint all rolled into one."

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mallory Earl is a 20 year veteran producer/engineer who's long list of credits include, Freddy Jackson, Brenda K. Starr, Blue Oyter Cult, Jefferson Airplane, Hot Tuna, Graham Central Station and hundreds more. His years of experience with musicians made him realize the need for affordable information regarding this business. With years of research and first hand experience Mallory Earl has compiled the vital information of business practices and attitudes in one easy to understand Home Study Course.

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is the fastest I've ever worked in the studio. We just set up as if we were onstage, miked everything and recorded. If I really had guts, I would have just released that. It was reasonably well recorded, but it sounded kind of old-fashioned. Unfortunately, if you just mike up a drum kit, it doesn't sound very exciting anymore."

While Dolby stays on top of the techno arms race, he hasn't been blinded to the down side of science. "People confuse production with engineering, I think. But the approach I take is that 80 percent of production is good arrangement—song structure. Engineering a good sound is pointless unless the arrangement is there to begin with. Records have gotten very, very brittle and overly bright in the last five years. And I hate that. I can't listen to a lot of records. *Aliens Ate My Buick* is a lot duller than the average these days, but I think it's more listenable. In order to compete, to jump out on the radio, people tend to crank up the high-end, eight- to 12-kHz frequencies. Because that does open your ears up the same way a fire in a fireplace or crickets outside alter the audible spectrum you're aware of. But still, once you've opened people's ears up, you have to justify that by proceeding to play music that's worth opening them up for. And a lot of people seem to miss that."

Onstage, Dolby hyperactivates with a MIDI rack consisting of an Akai S900 sampler, Roland MKS-80 and MKS-20 modules, a J.L. Cooper MidiLink switcher, Yamaha SPX90 and Alesis MIDIfex signal processors and an Akai MPX-820 MIDI-automated mixer. The latter feeds the house P.A. and Dolby's personal monitor system, QSC amplification with two TOA full-range speakers.

"Every patch that I have on the MIDI switcher is a combination of the source instruments, effects patches and a mix on the Akai mixer with panning and EQ." Patches are selected via two Yamaha programmable footpedals while Dolby gets his fingers on the keys to his Yamaha KX5 MIDI remote keyboard.

When the final versions of the songs were cut, "The Key to Her Ferrari" was played live, but Dolby's Fairlight Computer Music System crops up on other songs. "A lot of the album was programmed," Dolby elaborates. "'Pulp Culture' is actually *all* Fairlight, including the lead vocals. Everything is samples. But the difference is this: In the early days of sampling, the elements you had were single notes. You had one note of a marimba and you played tunes with it. What I did on this album, however, was to record each song in the studio, the way we'd done it live, against a click track. Then I'd find two good bars of drums and I'd sample them—the whole kit at once. I'd do the same with bass, guitar... everything. And I'd put my groove down by combining the best segments. In other words, I was working with much larger elements than you normally do with a sequencer. So it doesn't really sound sequenced in the way that we're used to hearing."

Aliens' grooves do often rock with an authenticity that's far from mechanical. And the idea of a mild-mannered white guy from England playing hard funk—and decently, too—gives extra punch to the record's culture-shock wit. But funk is a genre where Dolby definitely sees a role for himself:

"I think black music in America is generally very inward-looking. But from time to time, things begin to stifle; and then an element from the outside is brought in which breathes new life into the music. A good example of this is the fact that Kraftwerk, a bunch of Bavarian aristocrats with synthesizers, could create hip-hop—without even knowing it really. But within black music, I think there are really only a couple of artists who, instead of funneling inward, have always branched out. George Clinton is one and Prince is another. So although

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Freddy Jackson may claim I have no right to be making funk music, I think I can say I'm such an outsider that maybe I can contribute something new to it."

He's not that much of an outsider, of course. This year, he was nominated for two Grammys: Producer of the Year for *Aliens* and Best Instrumental Arrangement with Vocal Accompaniment (huh?) for "Ferrari." He won neither, but appears gratefully surprised to have been nominated at all: "I mean, look at the producer category. There's nobody else in that category who didn't sell two million albums this year. Ten times as many people must have heard Tracy Chapman's album as heard my album."

Meanwhile, Dolby's role in mainstream music circles is beginning to move beyond mere session keyboard duties. He's entertaining a few production offers and has just written some songs for a new Maurice White album. Dolby hints that we can look for similar projects in the future. "I come up with a lot of songs that wouldn't be right for me to do personally. In the past, I've very often just let those sit. I'm feeling now that I'd like to put my publisher to work and get some covers."

And for an artist who'd like to add films to his bio/plot in a big way, what better place could there be than Hollywood?

"While I was still in England, I put out the word that I wanted to do film scores, but I didn't get any decent offers. At that time, I remember that people I knew in England—among them XTC and the Art of Noise—told me they'd had similar experiences. They'd always wanted to do film but they'd never been asked. Then, very shortly after I arrived in Hollywood, I just happened to meet Martin Scorsese at a party and he said, 'Oh, I love your music; I wanted to get you to work on *The King of Comedy.*' So I said, 'Well, what happened?' And he said, 'I didn't know where to find you.' So he went with someone who had a reputation in his circle, rather than lifting a telephone, calling a record company and finding me—which he could have done in 10 minutes. I mean if your name is Martin Scorsese, you can get a foot in most doors.

"So it is a very cliquey thing. It works against you if you're outside it. But once you're in, it works in your favor. Because they can't be bothered to find the Art of Noise they'll go, '...Well, what about Dolby?'"

So now Hollywood knows *where* Thomas Dolby is. But do they know *who* he is? ■

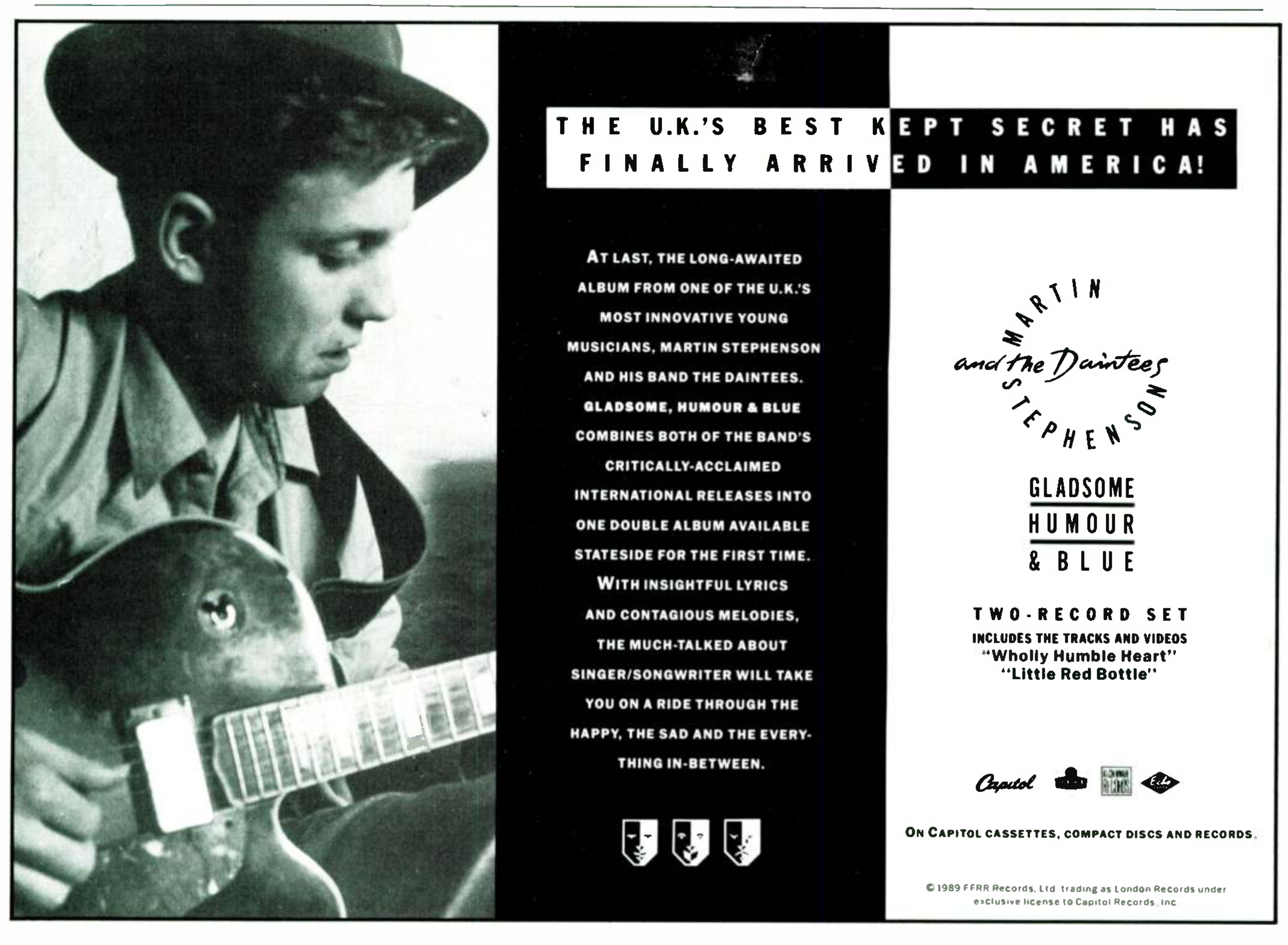
XTC from page 32

hints darkly that he may have to "do in" the Dukes, perhaps "in a bizarre kitchen accident." Are the Dukes of Stratosphear the real XTC? Since his school days Partridge had "wanted to be in a group that made that kind of music. It looks like XTC has now turned into that kind of group. We'll either get a damned good kicking because of that, or people will allow us to be what I always wanted to be. There was a split image and now they've merged."

Maybe the moon is in the right house now for XTC. They've got a striking new album, a pushy new manager and even some record-company interest. Too bad Partridge—proud but not conceited—doesn't share the enthusiasm.

"We're just like dough," insists Swindon's swami of simile. "What can you say about dough? We are the record, and nothing else."

That's the way he likes it. ■



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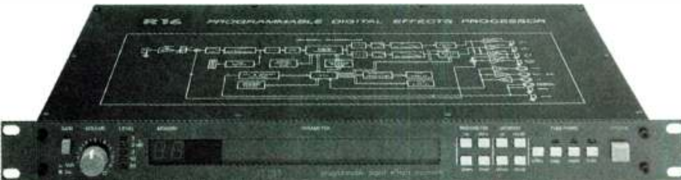

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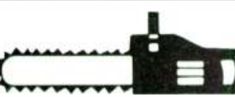

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Live Deals

What you need to know about the business of gigging, including agents, contracts and getting paid.

By Stan Soocher

THERE MAY BE NOTHING more discouraging than walking off a stage after a high-powered performance only to discover a club owner has decided to delay paying your act—maybe indefinitely. Some musicians simply storm out the door never to return to the venue. But others aren't willing to give up those hard-earned dollars without a fight. Take, for example, Atlantic Records' cajun-style rockers, the Subdudes.

TIM BOWER

"When a club owner in New Orleans refused to pay an earlier incarnation of our group, we were so outraged that we refused to leave the club," recalls Johnny Allen, bassist for the Colorado-based outfit. "The sound man wrestled with the band. A club window was broken. But it was all to no avail. The police were called and we were asked to leave the premises."

Since then, the Subdudes have thankfully learned less physically demanding ways of attempting to procure concert wages [*including placing in* Musician's *Best Unsigned Band contest last year*]. But the non-payment problem they encountered dramatizes all sorts of business and legal issues that musicians who work the live circuit must face. What methods are typically used to determine payment? Should you or shouldn't you work with a booking agent? If you think you should, how do you find a good one? What terms—such as backstage hospitality requirements—can a band reasonably expect to get from a venue operator or concert promoter? It's said that a little legal knowledge can be more dangerous than none at all. But in this case, some preventative medicine can help musicians concentrate on sharpening their stage presence rather than worrying whether there'll be money at the end of the night to cover the next payment on that new amplifier.

THE PAPER CHASE

The performing contract—an agreement between the band or its legal representatives and the venue operator or promoter—is the basic legal tool for staging a concert. Not all acts sign such written agreements. This is especially true of up-and-coming bands that haven't released any recorded product or who have no guaranteed following or audience. But the critical points in oral and written agreements are fundamentally the same, varying primarily in degree.

The essentials of the written deal are often laid out in a short document prepared by or similar to the one used by the American Federation of Musicians. This is known as the "contract face." It contains the agreed-upon date, place and time of the show, length of

World Radio History

set(s), venue capacity, ticket price, gross sales potential and method of payment.

An act that wants a written agreement will consult an attorney to draw up a standard rider to be utilized in all situations, from clubs and middle-sized halls to large arenas and stadiums. This rider supplements and expands on the basic terms stated in the contract face. It covers specifics such as sound, lighting and backstage hospitality, along with a variety of other details. (More on this later.) The act and its manager present the rider to a booking agent, who adds his or her own thoughts to the document and then procures concert employment for the act.

DOING IT YOURSELF

Verbal agreements offer a simpler, somewhat less reliable—but often necessary—alternative to all this. Oral deals are often struck up when a band contacts a venue operator directly. The informality of these agreements can convince a club owner a band is flexible and that a booking will require little negotiating time. However, particularly in oral deals, unequal bargaining power can work in the club owner's favor on many issues. For instance, dressing room accommodations will likely have to be accepted "as is" (read "minimal"). The band may be allowed free guests but, in exchange, may be required to pay for their own drinks and for guest drinks. But for most acts on the rise, a network of such informal club relationships is crucial to gaining exposure before as many people as possible to build a word-of-mouth base for that hoped-for breakthrough to success.

WHAT DO I GET?

One of four methods of payment is commonly used to determine compensation for a concert appearance: 1) a simple percentage of the gate; 2) a flat guarantee with no percentage of the gate; 3) a guarantee with an artist/promoter split at varying percentages for all amounts over the guarantee plus promoter's expenses; 4) a guarantee against a percentage of the gross, whichever is higher. Promoters typically pay an act or its booking agent an advance of 50 percent, with the balance payable just before showtime or on a weekly basis for a tour.

"We usually work for a small guarantee against 80 percent of the door," notes the Subdudes' Johnny Allen. "One club we played in Denver was booked exclusively through an agent. But he took 10 percent and the club took nothing, so we ended up with a better deal because we got 90 percent of the door."

Bands that rely on percentages in oral agreements will have to post their own

Colorado's Subdudes wouldn't take no for an answer.

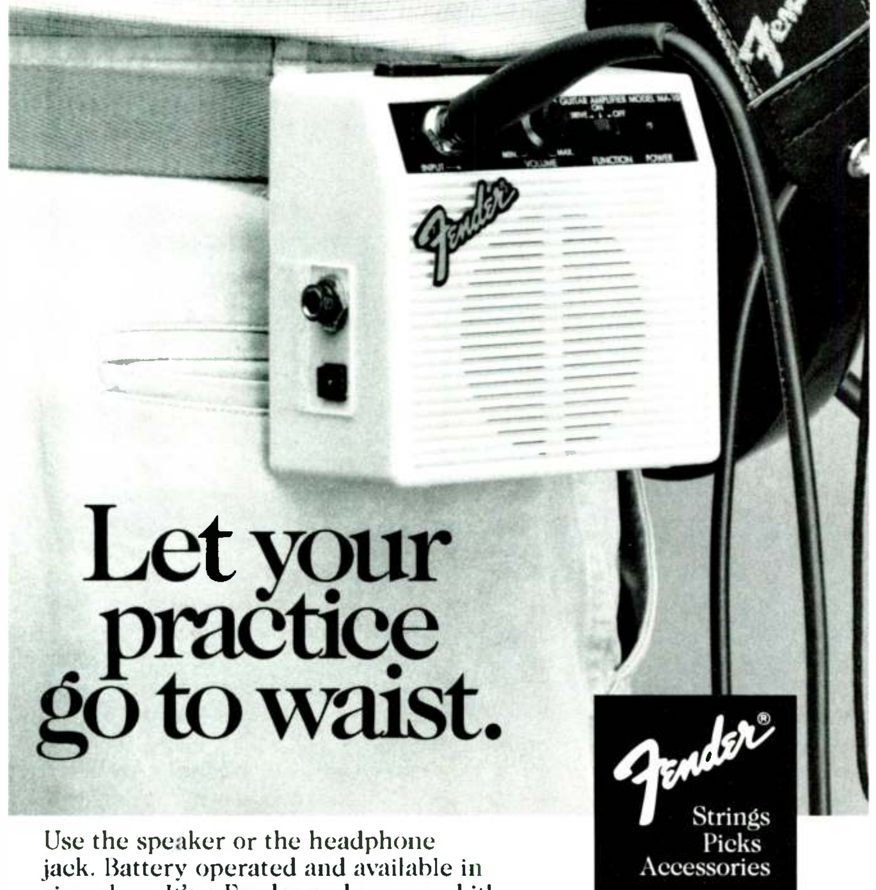
personnel at the door or trust clubs to keep an accurate customer count. Once you become familiar with a club, though, you'll be able to come up with a good estimate of audience size.

But what if the worst happens and the club simply refuses to fork over the money it owes you at the end of the night? For a modest filing fee, clubs that fail to pay can be brought to task in small claims court, if the money owed falls below a certain ceiling (e.g., $1500 in California and New York). And of course, after one non-payment snafu, the band may choose simply to drop the club from its working list of live venues.

Members of the American Federation of Musicians can also call the AF of M's Travelling Engagement Emergency Relief Hotline (800 ROAD GIG). In the event of a non-payment problem, the AF of M will advance emergency cash for its members, hire legal counsel for them and add the defaulting venue to a list of "known offenders" which it maintains.

THE BOOKER TEASE

Many groups try to find booking agents near the outset of their careers, an unenviable task at best because booking agents won't be interested until there's at least enough income from which a worthwhile commission can be drawn. More likely, the band will first connect with a manager who may call clubs and



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CONTINUED ON PAGE 79

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colleges on the band's behalf. (Note ... representative for you when it comes to ... agent to represent an act

WORKING MUSICIAN

Bill Nelson

Still walking the line between pop and impressionism, a former Be-Bopper heads into the Mystic.

By John Diliberto

IN THE LARGE COUNTRY kitchen of his 300-year-old Yorkshire mansion, Bill Nelson plays a cassette of his new pop song demos and laughs. "I don't know whether I'll ever make a mature statement when it comes to writing lyrics," confesses Nelson, "because I still have this terrible heritage of being a pop musician, which is rather like an unwanted erection. It crops up at the most awkward time. I'm always thinking, 'Well, I'm singing now, maybe this could get on the radio; let's lighten it a bit here.'"

"You see, regardless of whether it's a guitar or a piano or whatever, it's still the same person with the same thought."

Over a period of a few months he wrote more than 120 songs, love letters to his then-estranged wife, and he seems embarrassed by the sentiments, especially after the volumes of cerebral, atmospheric instrumentals he's crafted in the last few years. In fact, he thinks they're so personal and rough that he's only making them available to his fan club. He's more comfortable with *Simplex*, an album of impressionistic music he composed for a film about the sculptures of Henry Moore.

"I either tumble into a pit of obscure instrumental arcana or I end up trying to sound like the Archies," he says, his eyes tearing with laughter. "Wait until you hear this new stuff. Lyrically, I mean it's kindergarten 'I love you' stuff. 'Come home, I miss you, all is forgiven,' boom, boom, cha."

But Nelson's pop music is more sophisticated than he'd lead you to believe, walking the borders of kinetic techno-pop grooves with sinuous melodies and supple lyricism. Despite his self-derision, the emotional trauma these songs represent is still evident. "They were very therapeutic for me," he admits.

Having just turned 40, Nelson feels far removed from the rock music he made in the 1970s with Be-Bop Deluxe, a second-string British progressive group that had modest success in England and cult status in the U.S. When Be-Bop disbanded in 1978, Nelson split his career in two, making quirky pop records on one side and personal instrumental miniatures on the other.

Nelson began experimenting in his home studio on antiquated tape machines, making musique concrète structures out of backward tapes, loops, kitchen utensils, found sounds and voices recorded off the TV. "Yeah, retro-tech stuff, it really was," he recalls. "I had the Mini-Moog I think, and I had an old ARP string machine. And a four-track machine, an autoharp and some bits to bang together, old toms and things. Very crude, you know."

The early solo records, 1981's *Sounding the Ritual Echo* and *Das Kabinett*, were darkly impressionistic, psychological diaries, full of distended melodies and peripheral whispers, much like the films of Nelson's heroes Man Ray and Jean Cocteau. His own photography reveals inclinations towards subjects lifted out of context and viewed in ambiguous, shadowy light.

Nelson formed his Cocteau label for these

GLEN LA FERMAN

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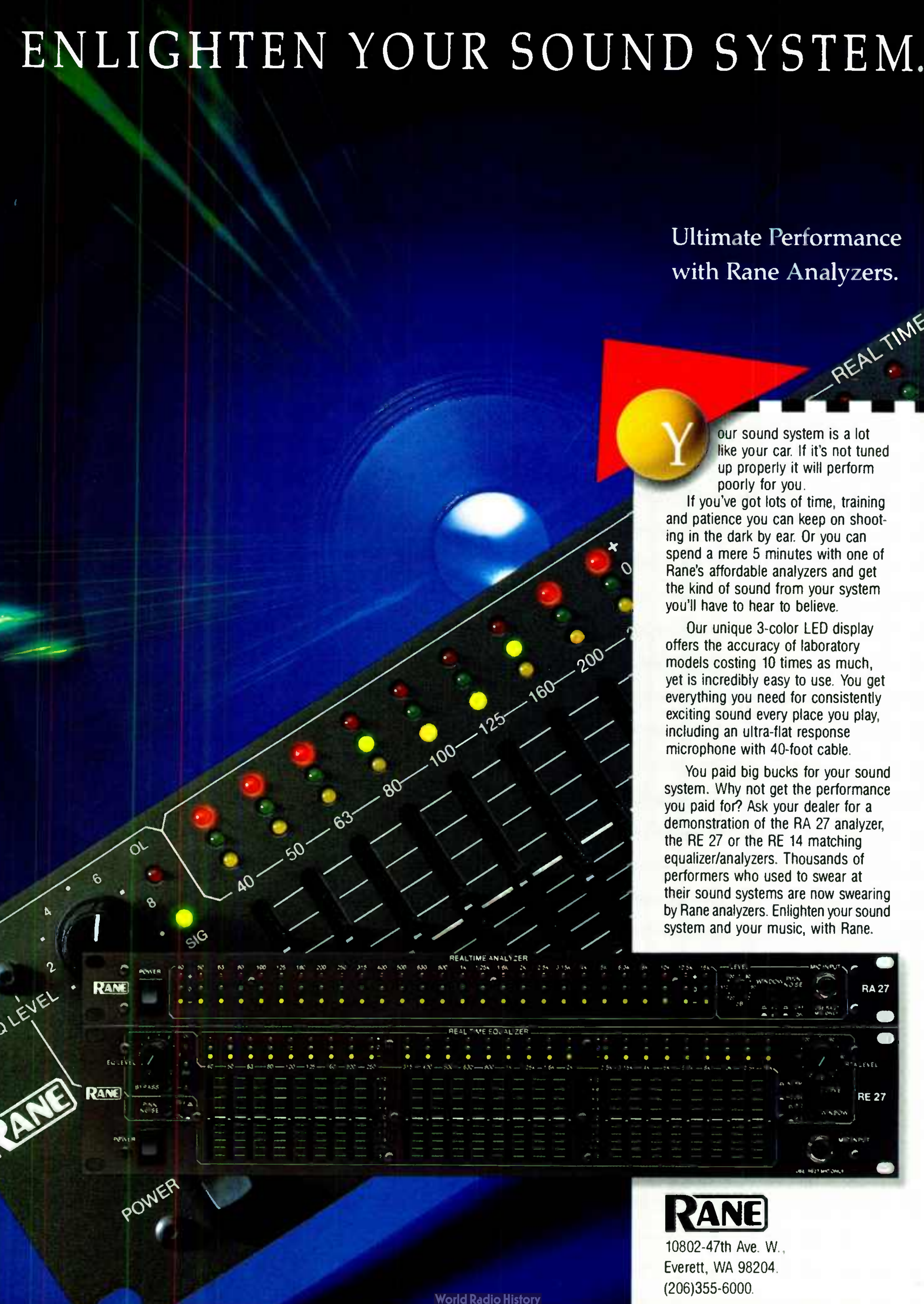

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tone poems and has issued over 13 LPs of this material, including *Trial by Intimacy (The Book of Splendours)*, a four-record boxed set with a book of his photographs, and, in 1988, the two-volume *Chance Encounters in the Garden of Lights* and *Optimism*. The latter two are available on Enigma in the U.S., which plans to release the entire Nelson catalogue.

Despite an improvement in technology with 16 tracks, digital synthesizers and samplers, Nelson's instrumentals still have a home-grown, clandestine diary charm. Even the dance grooves of *Iconography* and *Optimism* are deployed amidst a psychedelic stream of consciousness. They're so far removed from Nelson's usual oeuvre that he released them under the thinly veiled pseudonym Orchestra Arcana.

Nelson thinks of *Chance Encounters in the Garden of Lights* as a meditation record, although its turbulent atmospheres would trigger psychotic reactions from most meditators. In its liner notes, he writes that the album is "ideally suited to the occultist in search of ritual atmosphere or serene meditation," a claim that should bring Geraldo Rivera beating the Yorkshire bushes.

"It seemed to be music that was dealing more with meditational states and I thought it might be useful for people who wished to use it in a ritual context, for meditation purposes or magical purposes or whatever," says Nelson. "And the cover, the whole mode of the thing, was done for that purpose. It's a philosophical album in many ways, in terms of my own beliefs."

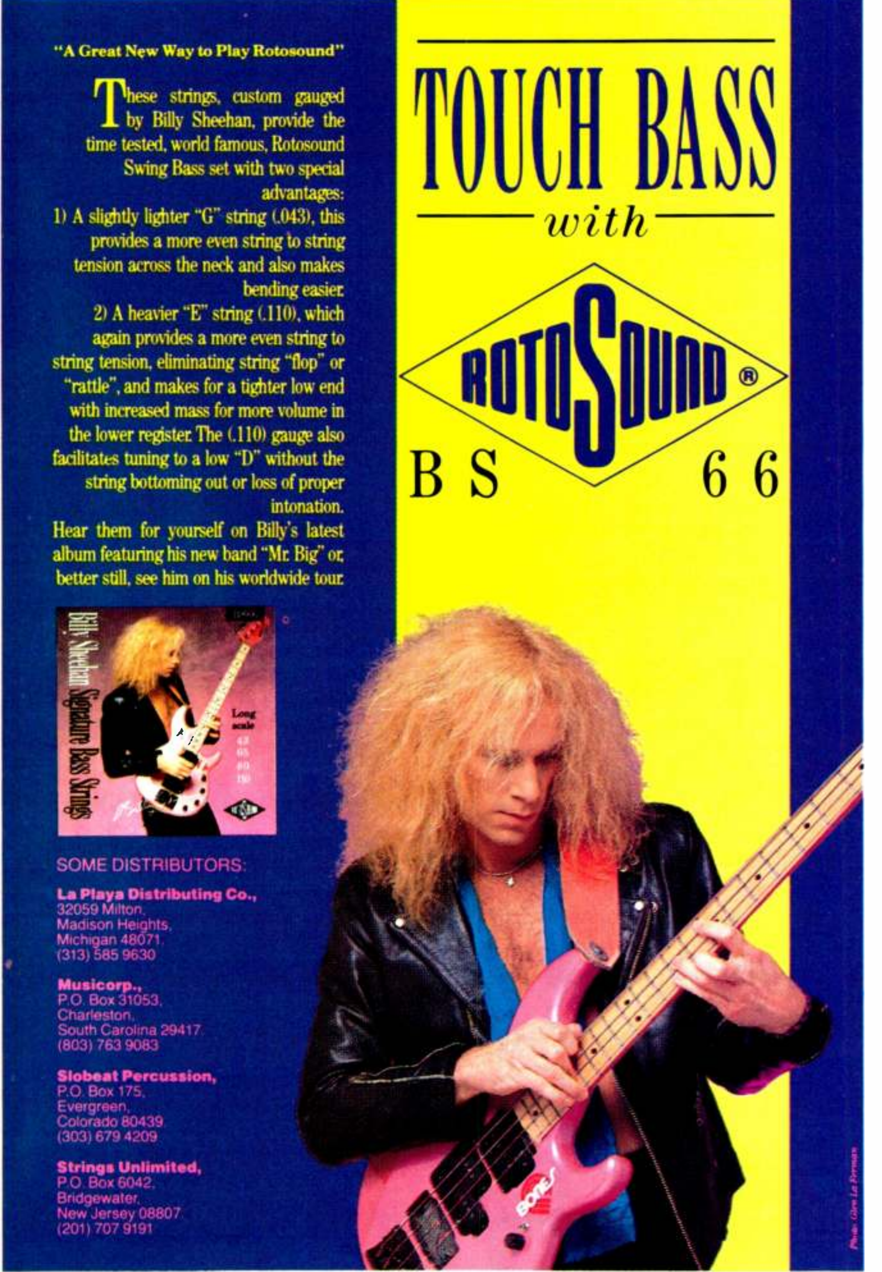
One of those beliefs is automatic writing, the idea of the unedited subconscious creating the music. "One of my heroes besides Cocteau is a man called Austin Osman Spare," explains Nelson. "Spare died in 1956. He was an artist who was also involved in occult and magical practices. And one of his techniques was automatic drawing. He believed greatly in the idea of the subconscious knowing more than the conscious and the Jungian idea of an archetypal set of imagery. So I use some of these ideas to apply to the musical side of it. Which means basically doing things very quickly and not thinking about them too much and allowing the subconscious to take a greater hold. Of course, sometimes it produces terrible results. And in a sense the music becomes a living entity.

"Alchemy, Rosicrucianism, esoteric Freemasonry, Hebrew Kabala, tarots, I've looked at the whole gamut of things available and kind of synthesized things for myself. You get to the stage where you invent internally your own philosophical structure, which is impossible to explain to anyone, because it only works for you. Now I've been involved in this for several years and it's something that's difficult to talk about," he admits.

It's also difficult to incorporate into music, let alone rock music, without coming off like some sword-and-sorcery caricature or a new-age airhead. But Nelson has done it on several rock vocal albums, beginning with 1982's *The Love That Whirls*, a record powered by a hypnotic rhythm-machine pulse infused with sexuality and spiritualism.

"One of the techniques was to use sexuality as a means to some kind of spiritual enlightenment, which is a common sort of idea throughout the whole world and different cultures, apart from the repressed Westerners," he laughs. "But the Indian tantric ideas and the idea of dance, at that time, I found fascinating, particularly the idea of whirling dervishes. They have kind of white skirts that spin out, so they look like human spinning tops. And they just whirl and whirl and whirl for hours on end."

Despite the high-tech gloss, infectious melodies, undulating guitar lines and Nelson's smooth tenor voice that recalls



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David Bowie, *The Love That Whirls*, an American compilation called *Vistamix* and *On a Blue Wing* failed to catch on in the United States. It was a mixed blessing for Nelson, because it gave him additional time to work on his more experimental compositions and his performance art work, "The Invisibilists Exhibition," a multi-media show he occasionally puts together.

Nelson inserts found dialogue into the music as non-sequitur evocations, with disembodied voices seemingly appearing out of nowhere. Sometimes it's familiar, like the dialogue from *Citizen Kane* on *Optimism*, rhythmically repeating "Welcome home, Master Kane." But more often they have an out-of-context mystery, as if tuning in short-wave radio broadcasts late at night, mumbling things like "I believe that all of my imaginative work is composed during deep sleep, but I'm very seldom aware of dreaming."

"Some of the early ones were just literally taken off TV into a hand cassette machine and then I'd just spin them in," he reveals. "So they are not structured greatly in any way and are more there for their own sake, because they are charming little quotes. But you find by throwing them in at random, 'Oh, I like this one, I like that one, let's put them in,' that somehow a meaning starts to emerge. They start to talk back to you and dictate, 'Oh, that should move around a bit, you know.' Some of the newer stuff is much more structured because I've had the facility to sample and that gives you the chance to think about it a little bit more and maybe you give it more meaning and so on. But I hope they have meaning."

Nelson's brooding environments have drawn him to film composing. He scored a TV documentary called *Map of Dreams*, an action series called "Brond" and the movie *Dream Demon*, a stylish horror film that plays on the dream/reality themes of *Nightmare on Elm Street*, but without the cartoon cut-ups of Freddy Krueger.

Lost in all these textures has been Nelson's sinuous guitar. In the late '70s and early '80s he developed a sensual solo style using the E-Bow, a device that drives the strings into continuous sustain, allowing him to sculpt long, curving lines through his techno-rhythms. But recently, he probably played more guitar on David Sylvian's *Gone to Earth* album, albeit mostly acoustic, than he has on his own records.

"You see, regardless of whether it's a guitar or a piano or whatever, it's still the same person with the same thought," he says. "And the thoughts have changed the use of the instrumentation. For a while I really did look upon the guitar as being an overstatement of the very obvious things, and there were so many guitar players around with the same kind of clichéd approach. And it suddenly

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ALTHOUGH Nelson's music is increasingly electronic, he still plays guitar. His main instruments are three Yamaha SG2000s, a Japanese knock-off called a Tokai and an unusual acoustic fretless bass guitar made by Kif Wood. His long sustained solos are via E-Bow.

His electronic arsenal includes the Sequential Circuits Studio 440, a Yamaha DX7, Yamaha CS-70M, a Mini-Moog, Akai-Linn Drum Machine, the Emulator E-Max and under a tarpaulin is a Bergeault Marimba that he doesn't play much now that he can sample it.

For processing he runs through an MXR 01 Digital Reverb, Roland SDE-3000 delay line, Yamaha SPX90, Fostex compressor and delay line, an old Marshall Time Modulator and an Ibanez rack-mounted effects unit, which combines compressor, phase, overdrive and stereo chorus and flanger.

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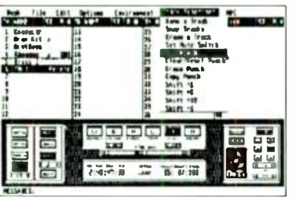

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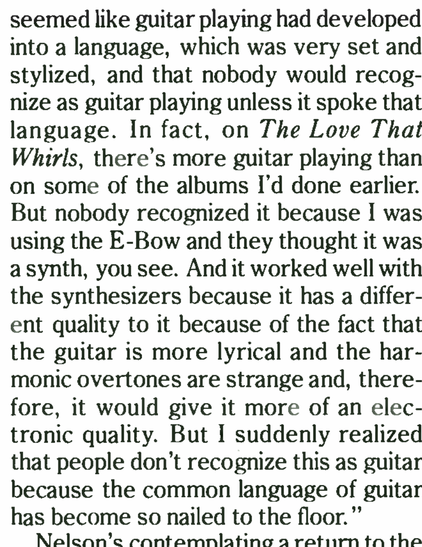

seemed like guitar playing had developed into a language, which was very set and stylized, and that nobody would recognize as guitar playing unless it spoke that language. In fact, on *The Love That Whirls*, there's more guitar playing than on some of the albums I'd done earlier. But nobody recognized it because I was using the E-Bow and they thought it was a synth, you see. And it worked well with the synthesizers because it has a different quality to it because of the fact that the guitar is more lyrical and the harmonic overtones are strange and, therefore, it would give it more of an electronic quality. But I suddenly realized that people don't recognize this as guitar because the common language of guitar has become so nailed to the floor."

Nelson's contemplating a return to the pop world with mixed emotions. "I think I've spent a lot of time with the serious composer's hat on and maybe for a year I can allow myself to dress up like a fool again and leap around a spotlight, you know, hopefully get some applause."

Nelson might also be a little gun-shy. After Be-Bop Deluxe, he went solo with a fictional group called Red Noise and the 1979 album *Sound-on-Sound*, a brilliant *Future-Shock*-1984-is-now work that did worse than languish. His American record company, Capitol, sent him some survey responses, all of which ran along the lines of "out-Devos Devo" and "Too whacko for us." Which might account for why the album still sounds so good a decade later.

"It's funny," says Nelson. "I was talking to Andy Partridge from XTC a year ago and he said, 'I dug the Red Noise album out the other night. That was a great album.'" Nevertheless, it took Nelson two years to get his next record, *Quit Dreaming and Get on the Beam*, released.

The situation hasn't improved. His 1986 album, *On a Blue Wing*, a danceable exploration of Western mysticism and Christian imagery, provided him with another controversy. In England it was called *Getting the Holy Ghost Across*. The original cover, changed for American release, depicted an angel holding a city in her hand, surrounded by "magical" alphabets and seals. Apparently it didn't quite fit in with the PMRC-fueled retreat of the record industry in 1986.

"Basically they said, 'We can't have this cover here and we can't have this title, because these shops won't stock it,'" claims Nelson. "It was, in a sense, an immoral judgment because they are saying, 'We'd rather have money than present your true ideas to people. And you know if it means we can make less

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money from the record by putting it out in its true state, then we are going to have to change it,' so eventually they came up with a cover of their own.

"But certainly I must be a threat to religious morality in America," he laughs sardonically. "I wish I was."

However, Nelson is not one to deny the rock artist within him, especially when he picks up the guitar. A few months back he performed unannounced in a local pub with a pick-up band, and the rock guitar heroics were still there. "We just turned up on the evening and jammed on blues things and within half an hour, I was wiping the guitar up and down in front of the amplifier and throwing it in the air and, you know, it was there, it's there," he says exuberantly. "All I need is a rebel to help rouse it in me. And the audience was going for it, so I just had a good time. So that's not dead. It's something I can call upon when necessary, I think."

LIVE DEALS from page 69

specifications; insurance, security and hospitality responsibilities; ticket sale arrangements; and provisions for personal appearances and interviews in the concert area. These conditions are all negotiable to some extent.

The hospitality clause in particular can be the subject of lengthy negotiations. After years of hospitality excesses, venue operators and promoters have become reluctant to provide unusual demands to all but the most sought-after acts. For example, one recent hospitality condition required a Pacman video game be made available for a popular singer touring Australia. If not, the singer had the right to cancel the engagements and keep the advance.

"One band wanted a dressing room painted a certain color before they walked in," Snadowsky claims. "But once you get past sandwiches and drinks, it's all ego."

The merchandising clause, on the other hand, has grown tremendously in importance in recent years as bands have come to realize that sales of T-shirts, posters and buttons can help make up for a weak turnout at a concert. Some acts have even lost money touring on the basis of ticket sales alone, but earned an overall profit when merchandising revenues were added in. Younger fans usually spend more money on such merchandise, especially for heavy metal groups. A venue operator will generally receive a percentage of gross receipts from merchandising sales.

Of course, the proliferation of music videos has made musicians more careful about prohibiting the filming of their performances for either commercial or private purposes without prior written consent. Some rider clauses even provide for specific damages a venue operator or promoter must pay if any unauthorized tapings are made.

But, according to Ian Copeland, the most profound change in concert deals has been the shift of responsibility for an unsuccessful show from venue operators and promoters to the acts. "In the past if a show was cancelled due to an artist's illness, or low ticket sales from delay of an album release, the promoter would shoulder the burden [though non-appearance insurance is now popular]. Today the acts are being asked to renegotiate if this occurs and may even end up returning part of the guarantee paid by the promoter."

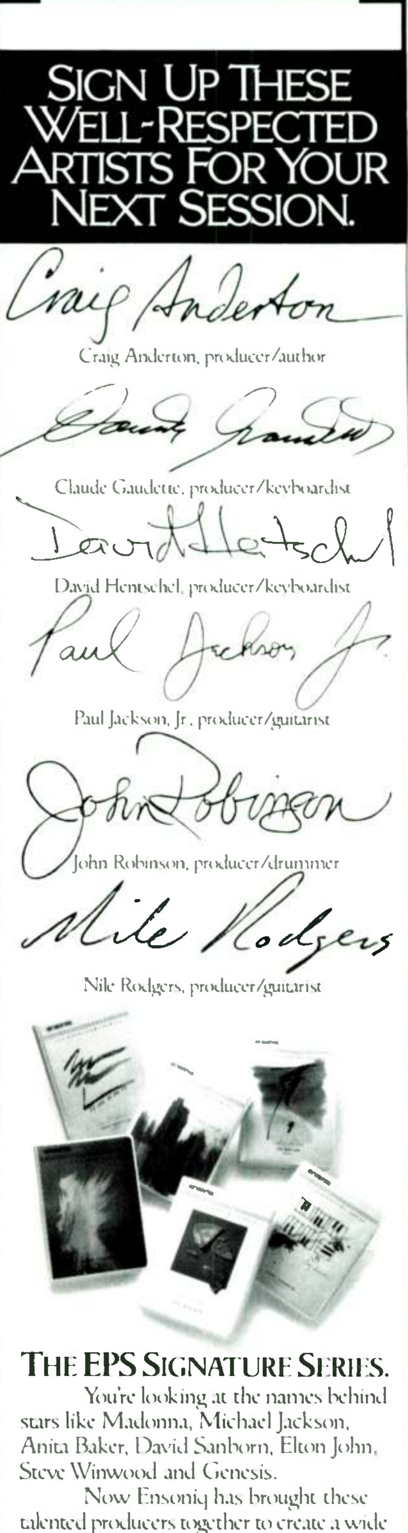
Which brings us back to our starting point: Careful attention to the details of performance negotiations can make it a lot easier to get paid nearer showtime, or to find a legal way to collect if you do play and you don't get paid promptly.

Reprinted from The Musician Guide to Playing Live, *now on sale at your musical instrument or record dealer.*

DEVELOPMENTS from page 82

where the string sits actually dampens it by pulling it down. But when you pluck the string, it travels from side to side, where the Trembucker pole pieces are. In fact, the magnetism on either side pulls the string back and forth a bit longer and makes the tonal output richer. The Trembucker ain't cheap at $115, but think how long you've been waiting for it. Another thing Seymour Duncan's been up to is releasing the Duncan Custom pickup Seymour did for Jeff Beck in an Alnico II magnet version, reportedly the same thing he's been doing privately for Eddie Van Halen. This is the Custom Custom, part of the Underground Series. And metalmongers will surely want to hear the Metal Live Wire Humbucker, a low-impedance, high-output pickup with more scream than cream and a nice lift in the midrange.

As we exit to the sound of high-octane guitar squeals, we still haven't gotten to everything at NAMM worthy of mention. But since our big Drum Special is coming next month, we'll save the new Hotz and KAT MIDI percussion controllers till then, as well as the big blitz in multi-tasking and notation in MIDI software and the big roar in reinforcement. Till then.



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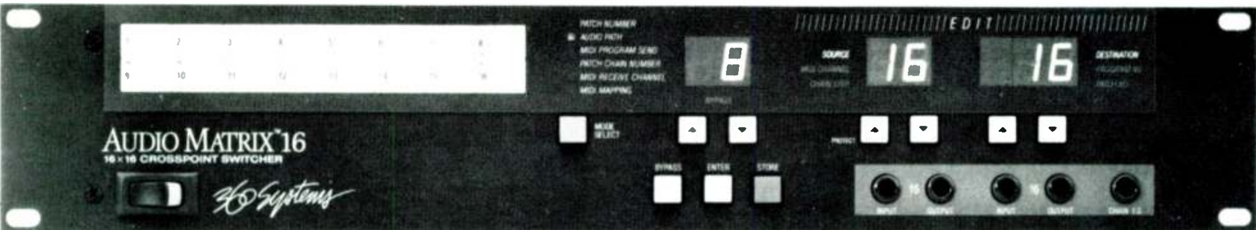
Developments

More hot product from NAMM, like a MIDI audio switcher, luxury wireless and better sequencing.

By Jock Baird

HEN WE TRY TO cover the moving-and-grooving Winter NAMM show in one story, there's inevitably stuff that gets left out. These remainders get cobbled together into the following issue's column, and usually tend to be about as exciting as warmed-over macaroni and cheese. Not so this month. It's a measure of how good a NAMM show this past one was that the leftovers are as tasty as the main course. For some, even tastier. Let's say, for instance, you're a guitarist who knows a big rack of signal processing is the wave of the future, but you have most of your processing bucks already tied up in untrendy stomp boxes and/or pre-MIDI racks. You certainly can't junk your whole rig, especially because it's now part of your sound, but you're getting tired of stepping on six pedals between songs or (God forbid) solos. Boy, has **360 Systems** got a solution for you!



360 Systems' remarkable $700 Audio Matrix 16x16 switcher; (below) Shure's Beta 58 mike, a radical update of the redoubtable SM58.

Meet the Audio Matrix 16 16x16 crosspoint switcher. It's a MIDI-controllable audio switcher and patch bay that routs 16 inputs to 16 outputs in any configuration you desire and saves the patch in one of 99 memory locations. You can send one input to all 16 outs without signal degradation, and you can even program what they call performance chains of up to 32 steps. That means if your rig sounds different with the compressor patched in *after* the distortion box than vice versa, you can have it both ways. Another problem with the single-chain configuration most guitarists use is what those little boxes do to your sound when they're not in use: between the signal losing its crispness and gaining plain old noise, you're much better off just bypassing them until you need them, which is what the Audio Matrix 16 will let you do. What will you do with all those pedals now that you don't need to keep them at your feet? Well, 360 Systems has a little rack-mount shelf with velcro fasteners to keep them all up where you can actually adjust them—what a concept! Then you can run your whole rig from one master MIDI pedal, and because the Audio Matrix 16 also sends program changes out through MIDI it can run your MIDI-equipped processors as well.

You keyboardists and studio heads will immediately see this affects more than guitarists. One-finger repatching for multi-track tape playback, automated MIDI muting for mongo keyboard stacks, multiplying capabilities for single effects busses or small consoles... the possibilities seem endless. And if you find it inconvenient to patch in through the back, channels 15 and 16 can be accessed from the front. Now how much is all this worth to you? A company named Tantec sold something like this for around $2400 a year or so ago, but this baby is only $700. And if you'd rather have it in a balanced version, with a ring-tip-sleeve phone jack configuration, a new model coming this summer will go for an even grand. No wonder NAMM shows are so exciting.

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WELCOME TO THE FAST TRACK

Your music sounds better than ever. But until you get someone to listen, talent alone won't put your career on the fast track. You've got to sound good on tape, too. Ask any talent agent or A&R person. They'll tell you, that without the right production values, its hard to make great music stand out in a world full of mediocrity.

Having the right equipment can make all the difference. Whether you're getting ready for a session or polishing your demo, the Seck 1282 and 1882 recording consoles can give you more quality, features, and capabilities than many expensive mixers, in a compact and very affordable package.

To succeed in this business, you have to be more than a performer. You must also be a producer and an engineer. That's why Seck consoles were designed to let you focus on your music, not the mechanics. Input channel controls are laid out logically, with offset knobs for quick adjustments. All connectors are in plain view for quick and efficient patching.

Seck consoles are right at home in your studio. These 8 buss boards include features like three band mid-sweep EQ, in-line monitoring, solo and stereo LED meters. And, Seck consoles make mixing with effects simple. You can layer effects through 6 aux busses and 4 aux returns, plus use the pre-fader inserts to enhance individual tracks.

For eight or sixteen track recording, Seck consoles are versatile enough to make your job easy, yet are rugged enough to take on the road. Features, size and rugged construction combine to make the 12 input model 1282 and 18 input model 1882 ideal for the sophisticated home studio and double nicely for sound reinforcement.

So remember, you'll find the on-ramp to the fast track is as close as your nearest Seck dealer.

SECK

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The trend in wireless systems lately has been to do the limbo—as in, how low can you go? But **Samson** has decided to work the other end of the price spectrum with their $2000-area Broadcast STD Series wireless. What more can you get for that kind of cash? A lot. For instance the receivers and transmitters—be they mikes or belt-packs—*both* have 10 selectable channels of frequency to send and listen on. A five-segment LED indicator on the BR-3 receiver then allows you to check the RF level on each side of a channel (a true diversity system has two signals, remember) to find the quietest path. You dial up a channel on the display window and then look at the RF level. If it's nice and low, great, but if it's blitzing and fritzing away at the right side of the LED, it's telling you to avoid that channel like the plague. This way you can tell in seconds what your best channels are, saving the aggravation of trial-and-error searching or the extreme expense of bringing in a spectrum analyzer just to find a good frequency. The Broadcast STD series also has **dbx** noise reduction, adjustable sensitivity controls, balanced outputs and a nice selection of mike elements. Who says you don't get what you pay for?

Technics' SY-MQ8 sequencer, a "home"-priced unit with "pro" features.

Not everything making waves at NAMM was cutting-edge high-tech. One item was a cute little hardware sequencer from **Technics** called the SY-MQ8 and designed primarily for the "home"/P&O market. But hold on—for around eight hundred bucks the MQ8 is actually competitive with most of the so-called "pro" sequencers costing twice that. It's got eight tracks, a disk drive, holds 23,000 notes and standard sequencer edit functions like copy, merge, delete, loop, punch-in/out, transposing, quantization and variable tempo control. About the only thing it can't do is individual note or step editing, which many musicians don't use anyway. One newsworthy feature aboard the MQ8 is called "auto event trace"; if you start the sequence in the middle, it looks backward to find the last program change before your begin point. That way you won't suddenly find flutes playing your lead brass part. Beyond the features, this sequencer has a nice simplicity and logic to its panel, and seems to be more roadworthy than many—it excels at taking a one-pass, multi-channel dump of your home computer-built sequences so you can gig with it. And speaking of Technics, the AX series of synths they debuted last summer are finally rolling out; with their competitive prices and "soft-knob" style idiot editing features, they're definitely worth a second look.

One sequencer that's been the subject of some disagreement is the one aboard the **Korg** M1 workstation. While some users are more than satisfied, others wish it could do a bit more. Enter the Frontal Lobe, from **Cannon Research**. It patches into the MIDI plugs and sits right on the top of the M1, like a helpful consultant. Once activated, the Frontal Lobe gives you a better window into the sequencer, allowing you, for example, to access various edit windows while the sequencer is playing, giving you real-time loop control with a foot pedal, and offering a big boost in onboard memory—15,000 events worth. It'll also let the M1 behave like a regular multi-timbral keyboard when it's in sequencer mode. If you want even more, the $400 Frontal Lobe can be enhanced with two $200 memory upgrades, both of which double the capacity, up to 64,000 events. There's also a $400 1.44 meg disk drive which turns the Lobe into a sys-ex librarian. And it also has an RS-232 port for computer interfacing. With tens of thousands of M1s out there, this product could be a sleeper.

Talk about sleepers, who knew that when **Shure** first put out the SM58 microphone all those years ago that it would become such a universal workhorse? But the competition has grown fierce for the dynamic cardioid live-mike dollar, and Shure has launched a new counter-attack using an old number: the Beta 58 and 57, or Son of SM58. Two great leaps are incorporated, one being the use of neodymium in the magnets to get a hotter output (this to call Electro-Voice's N/DYN bet). The second is more significant—the development of a triple-stage directional tuning network to tighten up the pickup pattern at a broader range of frequencies. Y'see, not all super- and hyper-cardioid mikes are that way at every frequency; sometimes a low-mid might creep in even though the mike's rejecting a high. That means discolored sound and feedback bumps. The Beta Series is said to maintain a supercardioid pattern at all frequencies, which means you can crank it louder before the feedback devils start wailing. Shure also put new shock-isolation ideas into the Beta 58 and 57, the latter being the rough-and-ready instrument counterpart to the vocalist's 58. This is one sequel that could outshine the original.

Seymour Duncan Trembucker: at last, a humbucker to fit your Fender or your Floyd.

Finally, our award for the Most Overdue Product at NAMM goes hands-down to **Seymour Duncan**. How many readers out there have put a humbucker on your Strat, or any Floyd Rose-equipped axe, only to notice that the pole pieces didn't quite match up with the strings because the Gibson spacing is wider than the Fender spacing? And though guitarists have been doing this for well over a decade, no one made a new humbucker with Fender spacing—until now. Enter the Trembucker, which is not only a kick-ass little humbucker, but it has an '80s wrinkle: two pole pieces for each string, known as the Parallel Axis system. The idea is to keep the area between the pole pieces in a low flux state, because excessive magnetism right

Samson's Broadcast STD wireless lets you check your channels for heavy RF traffic.

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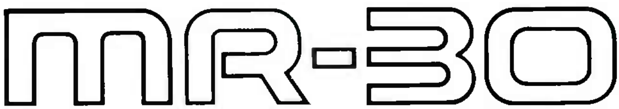
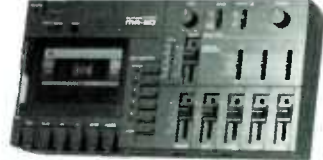
CAPTURE YOUR CREATIVITY



Capturing your creative ideas can be a tough job, but the MR-30 multi-track recorder makes it easy! The MR-30 is a new concept in multi-track recorders because it combines high technology with quick and simple operation. With features like Dolby noise reduction, independent volume controls, and 3-band post recording E.Q., the MR-30's sound quality is superb!
The MR-30 is an ideal musical "notebook" for songwriters and composers, and with its compact size, you can create music wherever you go. Don't let it get away ---- capture your creativity with the MR-30!!



Features:

* User-friendly operation
* 4-track overdubbing
* Dolby noise reduction
* Stereo recording compatible with standard cassette decks

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Mama Don't Go, Daddy Come Home

MADONNA

Like a Prayer
(Warner Bros.)

STEVE BRODNER

EARLY REVIEWS OF Madonna's new record are hailing it as her most nakedly autobiographical work to date, picking through the wreckage of her marriage, wandering the lonely corridors of her sad childhood; in short, Madonna's *Plastic Ono Band* record. Do not be misled! Yes, there are some unusually personal songs here—one for her mother, one for her father, one for estranged hubby Sean—but this ain't ponderous psychodrama. This is a classic Madonna album, the kind of big pop we've come to know and expect, so touch up your lipstick, toss a crucifix around your neck and hit the dance floor.

Madonna has summarized *Like a Prayer* as "an album about what I was going through when I was growing up, and past musical influences" (she describes two tracks as tributes to Sly Stone and one as an homage to Simon & Garfunkel). These portents of seriousness may alarm longtime fans who appreciate her music for its brazen lack of depth, but Madonna knows exactly how far she can push her audience. *Like a Prayer* is thematically more ambitious than previous LPs, but the overall gestalt of her music hasn't changed a whit, and this LP is perfumed with the teasing eroticism Madonna's parlayed into an empire.

The debut single, "Like a Prayer," which you've all heard by now thanks to esteemed patron of the arts Pepsi-Cola, is vintage Madonna à la "Into the Groove." The kind of song you want to blast on the car radio, it segues smoothly into "Express Yourself," and the pair of tunes combine to kick off the record in an upfill way. Next is "Love Song," a collaboration with Prince that's more Prince than Madonna: Deep funk built around a heavy, whomping bass track, this song has considerably more bottom than your usual Madonna fare, which skips along a few feet off the ground as a rule. "Till Death Do Us Part," an oddly perky eulogy for her recently bagged marriage, is next, and the side closes with "Promise to Try," a mournful ballad Madonna wrote for her deceased mother.

Side two opens on a cheery note with "Cherish," a starry-eyed pledge of devotion tailor-made for adolescent first love; from there, the record begins to lose steam. "Dear Jessie," a sticky-sweet song to a child, is too cute for comfort with its "Puff the Magic Dragon" lyrics and orchestral arrangement reminiscent of the Beatles' "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite." Next is Madonna's song for her father (an angry, accusatory song it is, too), followed by a celebration of family titled "Keep It Together" and a sultry tune with a Caribbean flavor titled "Spanish Eyes."

Production throughout is high-tech—occasionally a tad clinical and rote—but, whereas the sound fails to break much new ground, Madonna's voice has improved considerably. For proof of that, go back and listen to her first hit single, "Everybody"; that thin, high chipmunk chirp of yore has ripened into an instrument of character and range.

More than the pedigreed pop that she makes, the real marvel here is Madonna herself and the persona she's created. Few among us are up to the task of being a goddess, and this driven girl from Detroit works at it with a vengeance. Now 30, she's succeeded in fashioning herself into a singularly glamorous woman, an icon that people around the world understand and respond to. If Madonna occasionally seems narcissistic and vain as well, who can blame her? She's as smitten with the creature she's conjured as we are.

– **Kristine McKenna**

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