



SOUL ASYLUM



CHRIS ISAAK

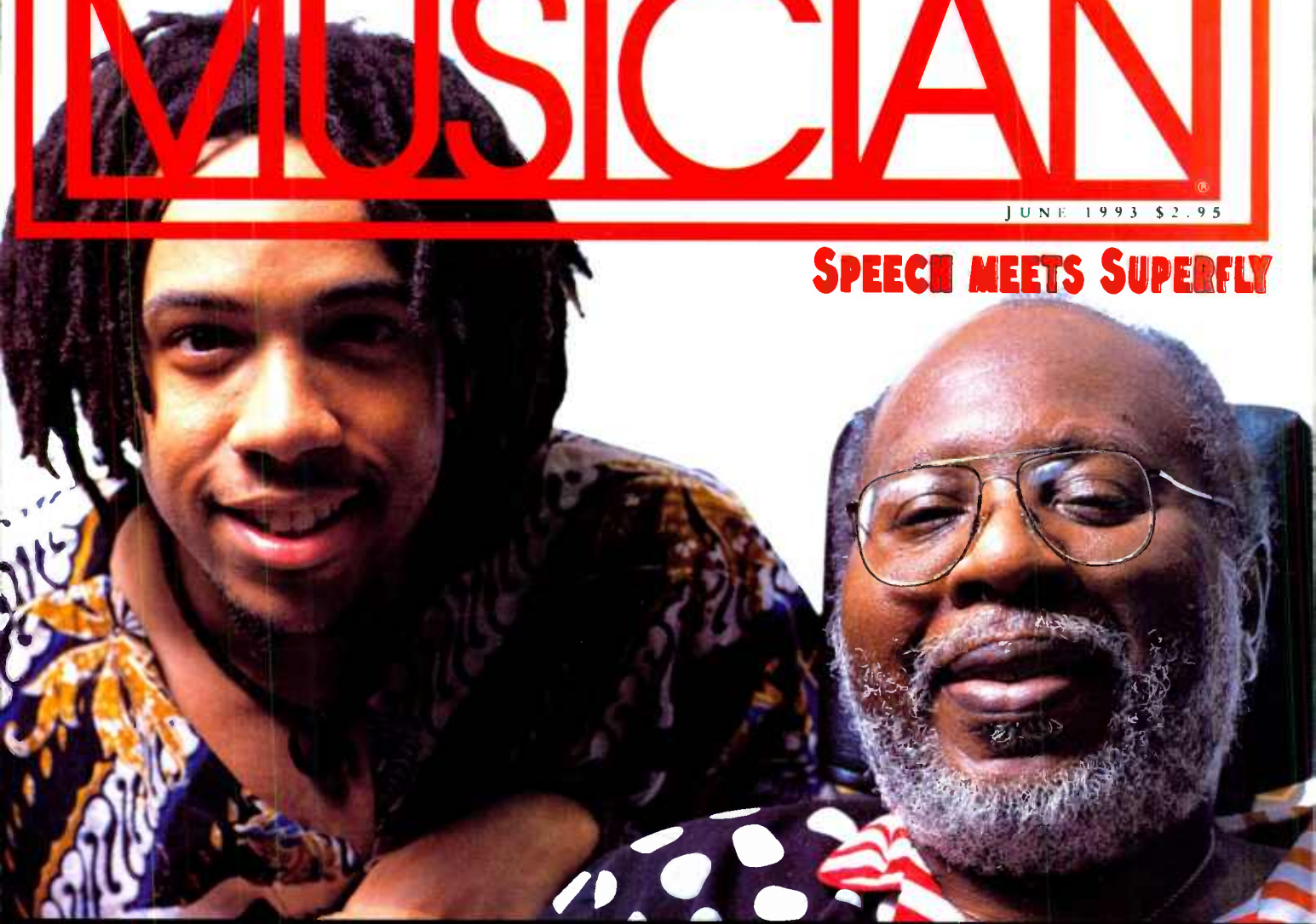


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PHOTOGRAPH: CARLA GABR

Willie Comes Across!

"This is Brilliant...★★★★"

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WEEKLY

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startlingly eclectic...it's
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RAY DAVIES

FRONT MAN

What's the secret of your acoustic guitar sound, Ray?

I've got an old Martin D-60; it's the same one [Big Bill] Broonzy played. I saw a clip of him playing on television when I was a kid and I said, "I want a Martin!" I remember going into a music store on Shaftesbury Avenue in London when we were about to make "Lola." I said, "I want to get a really good guitar sound on this record, I want a Martin." And in the corner they had this old 1938 Dobro that I bought for \$150. I put them together on "Lola," which is what makes that clangy sound: the combination of the Martin and the Dobro with heavy compression. I ended up doing the same with the song "Scattered." It's got that same jangle.

"Scattered" is a real beauty.

It took me 10 years to write that. I originally wrote the song because I ended a relationship and my trousers were in New York and my shoes were in London. I realized when you're in the middle of a relationship you forget your personal goods—bits of me were scattered. So it was personalized. But it took until 1990 when I lost a dear friend for the song to take on a cosmic thread. Until that person died—she died of cancer—I couldn't finish the song. There's a dedication to her on the record. Sometimes I keep songs like that. I kept "The Informer" back because I couldn't resolve it until I lived in Ireland and found out what it was really like. I hold some songs in my head and I know they're not complete. Then I go through a personal experience and I say, "Yes, this is what I mean by this song."

"The Informer" is about a meeting between two enemies who were once close. It could be a divorced couple, ex-bandmates, estranged brothers. At the end you reveal it's a man about to kill the old friend who sold him out.

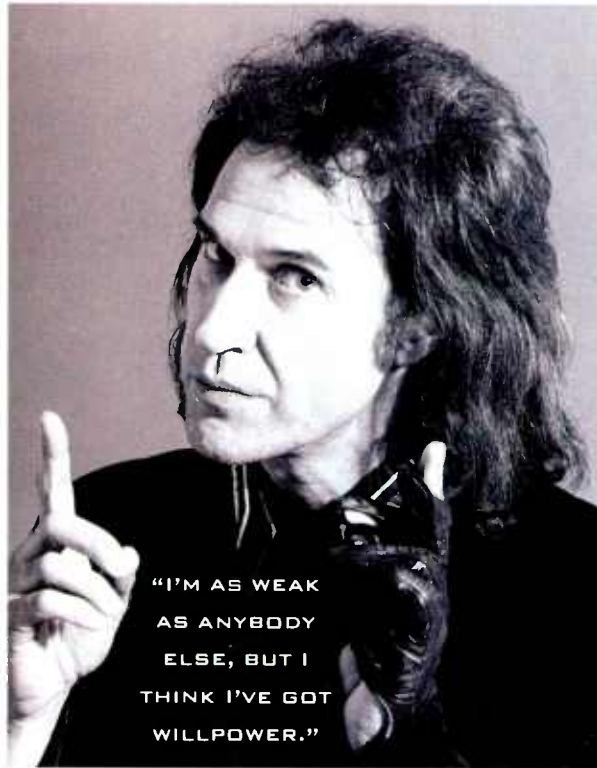
When he says, "I'll be the one to take you home tonight," he's saying, "I want to be the one to pop you. I was your best friend so you couldn't go out any better way." Chiller. It's a dark, dark record. I don't know why.

Usually your writing deals with your sensitive side, but you've got to be a hard, tough person to do what you've been doing for 30 years. This album, Phobia, admits that. In "Hatred" you sing, "On the surface I'm a mild-mannered person, until you scratch the animal inside."

I think my performance in "Hatred" is a wind-up to Dave. He's doing his guitar solo and I'm going "Hatred!" on top of it. On "Hatred" I said, "Let's just go for it, guys." It's the way we sounded at the Marquee in 1964. Harmonica riffs played in unison with the guitar. I really love all that.

But yeah, you've got to be a bit hard to do certain things, and certainly "Drift Away" and "Wall of Fire" are hard songs. I suppose the hardness is there, but I don't know what I am. I don't know whether I'm hard or soft. I'm as weak as anybody else but I think I've got willpower. Maybe I'm stubborn. I think toughness comes out of a gradual building up. It's like building a brick wall. You've got to build the foundations very delicately, otherwise the thing will fall down. I do value the foundations and the subtleties, but when the subtleties are rehearsed and everybody knows them, they can be played in a brash manner. The idea of great rock 'n' roll is dynamics. Not to have the Marshall on number 11 all the time. That's what I value. I love power but I love to take it down to subtlety.

The live Kinks went through a very abrupt transformation after the



"I'M AS WEAK
AS ANYBODY
ELSE, BUT I
THINK I'VE GOT
WILLPOWER."

Sleepwalker tour, just before Low Budget. Suddenly everything got loud and broad. Dave's leads and his onstage manner became much more aggressive.

What happened was we went on longer tours. And having Mick [Avory] in the band... Bob Henrit is a great drummer but I do miss Mick on the road because he would always be the last one to go to bed, you'd have to break the door down to get him to the airport, he just turned into an animal. And the band became a touring animal for the first time in America. That change wasn't contrived in any way, Dave did become more aggressive. It was, musically, quite a violent time. *Give the People What They Want* was the culmination. On the track "Around the Dial" I ended up in the studio saying, "It's not *hard* enough!" So we put sheets of corrugated iron opposite the drum booth, opened the room entirely and put a microphone down the hall. You hear that slamming snare drum on the beginning of the track. It's true force. I mean, that is really hard. We were trying to put on record what we were hearing onstage.

That's coming from the man who wrote "Waterloo Sunset." I can't work that out, it's two parts of me. Jekyll and Hyde. But they are both with good intent.

Do you ever write songs and then say, "This is good therapy for me but the world doesn't need to bear it"?

Yeah, I've got a cupboard full of them. I'll be very careful in my will. I'll probably leave them to other writers. Leave a couple of songs to poor old Elvis Costello to finish.

BILL FLANAGAN

WARREN HAYNES

TALES OF ORDINARY MADNESS



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ORDINARY MADNESS*.**

**FEATURES:
FIRE IN THE
KITCHEN
INVISIBLE
I'LL BE THE
ONE**

PRODUCED BY CHUCK LEAVELL
CO-PRODUCED BY WARREN HAYNES

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BILL FLANAGAN
editor

CHRIS HOWLAND
art director

CHARLES M. YOUNG
executive editor

MATT RESNICOFF
senior editor

MARK ROWLAND
(213) 525-2298
west coast editor

KEITH POWERS
managing editor

TED GREENWALD
developments editor

RUTH MAASSEN
typesetter

MAC RANDALL
assistant editor

JOCK BAIRD · J.D. CONSIDINE

PETER CRONIN · SCOTT ISLER · JIM MACNIE
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TIMOTHY WHITE · JON YOUNG
contributing editors



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publisher

GARY KRASNER
executive publisher

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associate publisher

ANDY MYERS
national advertising manager

SANDY MASUO
promotion coordinator

PHILIP E. HOPKINS
DEVLIN SHERLOCK
sales/promotion

JEFF SERRETTE
(800) 223-7524
classified

HYACINTH AMERO
assistant to the publisher

NATHAN BRACKETT
NICHOLE BURKE · MARK PELOSI
administration

JOAN MASELLA
circulation director

ALLIS RUNCO
assistant circulation manager



33 COMMERCIAL ST.
GLOUCESTER, MA 01930 (508) 281-3110
main office/production/retail sales

1515 BROADWAY, 11TH FL.
NEW YORK, NY 10036 (212) 536-5208
advertising/editorial

GORDON BAIRD
SAM HOLDSWORTH
founders

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Thank you for the article on Neil Young and Peter Buck (Apr. '93). I've listened to Neil for many, many years; I may not always like his current incarnation, but I thoroughly respect his integrity and readiness to experiment. His philosophy of music? "Somebody who doesn't know shit, and is just happier than hell to be there, and will try anything." Makes sense to me. Thanks, Neil.

*John Nathanson
San Francisco, CA*

Neil Young isn't the only prominent musician to have qualms about digital recording—Peter Gabriel and Keith Jarrett have both complained about the inadequacy of digital technology as well. Can anyone have failed to notice that the "better-sounding" CDs—Eric Clapton's *Journeyman*, Gabriel's *So*, Young's *Harvest Moon*—are initially recorded using good old analog tape machines? Why use such supposedly "primitive" equipment? Because digital doesn't cut the mustard.

*Douglas E. Rollins
Ogden, UT*

Has R.E.M. bought a controlling interest in *Musician*? Every month I pull my issue out of the mailbox, just to find one of their ugly mugs staring back at me. Please try and go 25 pages without a mention of R.E.M.—I think you can do it.

Thanks!

*Dave Bradley
Springfield, VA*

Since I've been a loyal reader I've read some great double interviews (Mahavishnu *v.* Malmsteen) and some not-so-great ones. Your recent interview with Neil Young and Peter Buck was unfortunately the latter.

The best I can say is that Peter

Buck wins this year's sympathy vote for being left out. Mark Rowland threw Buck maybe one or two puffballs in between worshipping Neil, and Buck was left with nothing else to do but join in the worshipping. But perhaps the worst offender was Young himself. Not only was I left wondering if he even knew who Peter Buck was, but worse still, I came away convinced that he could care less.

*Benjamin Albert
Tarrytown, NY*

PLAYBOYS

A tip of the white hat for the great article on the Texas Playboys (March '93). Having had the enormous privilege of singing at the second Texas Playboys Reunion in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, reading the article stirred up plenty of personal memories. A picture of Eldon Shamblin and me (taken in his office in Claremore) sets prominently on my stereo.

I have just two additions: First, the Fender Strat that Eldon plays is the Stratocaster prototype (no number) given to him by Leo Fender to "try out." Eldon also has the first G&L guitar—also given to him personally by Leo Fender. As he often said: "Hell, man, if it hadn't been for people giving me guitars, I probably wouldn't have had anything to play." I think not, Eldon. Thanks again for giving these very talented and *very* cool musical legends some long-overdue recognition. Bob Wills is still the king.

*Simeon Franks
Tablequah, OK*

There were probably a lot of young readers out there who wondered why you did an article on an

old group like the Texas Playboys. By the time I finished I realized it was musicians like this who, for no other reason but their love of music, forged a path to make the music what it is today. All of us young aspiring musicians owe them a big thanks.

*Dennis Godshalk
Conshohocken, PA*

ROLLINS

Although not a fan of Henry Rollins (Apr. '93) as such, I read with interest his comments on growing up in a "dysfunctional family," his honest admission that he's a "loner" and his candor in describing the difficulty he felt when asking a girl out. It's insights like these that allow the layman listener to peek inside the musician and understand where the songs come from. Not since your "Guitar Issue" two years ago have I read such inspiring interviews (I recall Steve Vai and John McLaughlin waxing philosophic...I attacked the issue with a yellow highlighter). It's one thing for the musician to *tell* you these things, but it's quite another for you to decide to *print* them. Keep up the good work.

*Christopher Marks
Clifton Park, NY*

UH 1 AND UH 2

To reader Mark Miglietta's (*Letters*, April '93) anguished put-down of Lawrence Welk ("not even a musician"): Well, Mark, just because it ain't our taste. Let me share two brief Lawrence Welk stories with you. When big-band trumpeter Harry James passed away, his obit described how James had auditioned for Welk, who dug him and asked what other instru-

ments he played. James said, "Trumpet and drums." Welk turned him down and apologized. "I'm sorry, but everyone in my band plays *five* instruments."

Jo Jones related how "once we had a battle of the bands between Bennie Moten and Lawrence Welk. We had 17 pieces; he had five. After we got through, Welk called 'Tiger Rag' and his horn player got up playing two trumpets! That was Lawrence's way of saying, 'Here's some "Tiger Rag" for your ass—can you get to this.'"

*Chip Stern
Contributing Editor, Musician
New York, NY*

BAD LIVERS

Bad Livers (*Faces*, Feb. '93) indeed! So many of us have been wondering what became of fellow Renaissance Faire alumnus and squeezebox player extraordinaire Ralph White. Did he go to Madagascar to look for those fabled cousins of the Cajun accordion players? France again to commission and destroy another custom wood and leather box? Retired to his caravan and hammock to hypnotize the songbirds? And here he is showing up in a photo in the pages of *Musician*, same crooked smile, apple-picker's bandana and squeezebox with an attitude. Just proof that *Musician* really does cover a few bases to include some real rain-and-dust working musicians. Thank you.

*John Bromka
Marcellus, NY*

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
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FACES

Dinosaur Jr.: Fancy Footwork

J Mascis' Big Step

When Dinosaur Jr comes to your town, get ready for a unique event: the Dance of the 17 Footswitches. Yes, the band's guitarist/frontman J Mascis uses 17 switches onstage—some effects boxes, others connected to effects in an arcane quasi-switching system—making every Dinosaur show a fancy footwork display. "On tour, I've got a case of effects as big as a refrigerator," Mascis says. "It's ridiculous. But I *do* use them all."

Mascis is a tone fiend, forever in search of the ultimate sound. This trait is even clearer in the studio. The story goes that J was still working on the perfect bass drum sound long after Dinosaur's record company thought the Amherst, Massachusetts trio's fifth and most ambitious album, *Where You Been*, was finished.

The new tunes are as engaging as anything the band's done, but Mascis says, "I don't know, I think I still like [1987's] *You're Living All Over Me* best. I would have liked to remix a few more of these songs."

This modesty carries over to Mascis' guitar playing, hailed in



L to R: J Mascis, Murph, Mike Johnson

alternative circles as godlike. "I'm not very proficient on guitar. I only switched [from drums] because nobody I knew played guitar the way I wanted. Live, my playing gets stale; maybe once a tour I'll have a good show. But I'd rather not play at all than play rhythm guitar. I'm just not into chords."

MAC RANDALL

Mr. Hart Goes to Washington

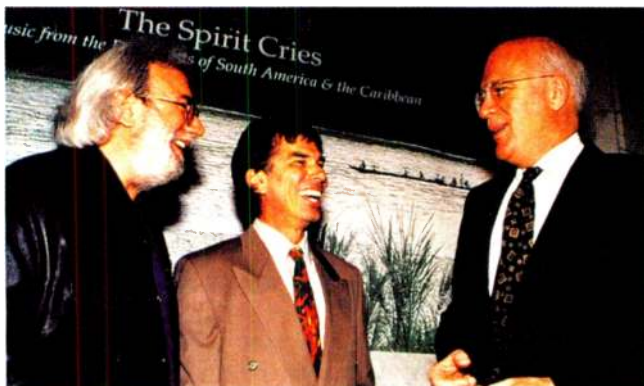
It was hardly your typical Washington party. With members of the Grateful Dead as the main drawing card, a few hundred Congressional types, academics, activists and well-connected Deadheads milled around beneath the marble columns of the Library of Congress's Great Hall. And there in a corner was Mickey Hart, the Dead's effusive drummer, whipping off his Jerry Garcia tie and presenting it to a smiling, bald-headed Senator Patrick Leahy

(D-Vt.). "I'm finished with it," Hart said. "This is for you."

Hart was in town to offer another kind of gift, the music of native peoples from endangered rain forests in South America and the Caribbean. He, Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir attended to help unveil a new CD, *The Spirit Cries*, the first release in the uniquely collaborative Endangered Music Project. Hart's long-time interest in preserving the rich variety of world music led him to bring together the Library of Congress's American Folklife Center, with its 50,000 field recordings, and Rykodisc, home of the 19 or so albums Hart has produced largely from his own recordings of musicians from Tibet to Egypt. As Hart told the enthusiastic crowd, "It is as important to preserve cultural diversity as it is to preserve plants and trees."

The value of the music became clear enough when two members of the Aluku people, Maroon descendants of African slaves, raised their voices to sing after an arduous journey that began a few days before with a six-hour trip in a canoe. Dressed in conventional American-style clothing, the man and the woman traded hoarse, affecting cries, and the crowd fell silent. As they looked up, the singers could see the names of Western giants they did not know emblazoned on the frescoed ceiling—Bacon, Aristotle, Cervantes—while they added their own culture to the Great Hall. No one there valued it more than Mickey Hart, who had told the audience, "Music is powerful medicine for the soul," and, for a moment at least, the Aluku's music could soothe the savage beast, even in Washington.

ART LEVINE



L to R: Jerry Garcia, Mickey Hart and Patrick Leahy

DAVID MCLEAIN

FRANK OCKENFELS 3

FACES

Chris Mars *Less Is More*

“I get a little sick of the subject,” concedes Chris Mars cheerfully. “The band’s been dead a couple of years, and there’s only so much you can say.”

With his second solo album in the racks, the former Replacements drummer would like to bury the past, thank you. Like his debut (*Horseshoes and Hand Grenades*), the delightful 75% *Less Fat* features witty pop tunes designed to deflate poseurs and creeps, which naturally inspires speculation that he’s discussing the old days. “Pretension has always grated on me—a song like ‘Bullshit Detector’ is inspired by a bunch of different people, not the Replacements,” explains Mars, who realizes folks will spot references regardless. “I suppose even the title of the new record could be seen in that light, but it meant I wanted a more stripped-down feeling than I had the first time.”

Fine-tuning the music isn’t a problem, since he plays everything except the bass. A tedious procedure? “Nah, it’s fun. I’m not trying to be a hot dog. I just look at the studio process the same way I do my painting, and nobody does *that* with me.” Ironically, he still tries to approximate the feel of a group. “I hear some stuff on the new record that’s a little out of tune, but who cares? It’s rock ’n’ roll.”



LINDA COVELLO

Mars won’t be playing live gigs any time soon. He’s still recovering from 10 years onstage with the ‘Mats, and anyway, he’s eager to get back to the graphic arts. Specializing in the kind of surreal figures that adorn both records, Mars has finished enough pieces to mount his own exhibition. Sounding supremely healthy, he says the important thing is “just to have fun. There’s too much emphasis on sales. If I got dumped by the record company I’d still go back to my four-track machine, and if I never sold another picture, I’d still enjoy doing them.” JON YOUNG

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FACES

Green Tarty Pop

“Somebody recently said we’re the Jerry Lewis of Holland,” says Jeff Lescher of his band Green being able to draw thousands in the Netherlands while remaining a cult act at home. The comparison’s not entirely apt, however. Lewis, worshipped by the French, is an object of ridicule among the stateside cultural elite, while Green has been an emphatic critic’s favorite throughout its nine years of bandhood. From Green’s self-titled 1984 debut album to 1990’s *White Soul*, reviewers have gushed a torrent of superlatives on the band. Lescher’s ’60s-shaped yet arresting original songs, and his jaw-dropping vocals—he leaps from husky rasp to Princely falsetto in a single bound—have attracted particular admiration.

Now comes *The Pop Tarts*, Green’s fourth disc (and first for New York label Futurist/Mechanic). There’s plenty of the scrappy, tuneful, lovelorn pop so dear to Green fans—the irresistible first single/video “Hear What You Want to Hear,” for instance—but, as bassist Clay Tomasek puts it, “This is the heaviest Green record of all. It’s got some pretty songs, but there’s a couple of excruciators.”

“Excruciators. Ouch,” winces Lescher. “It is sorta in your face, right off the bat.” Leadoff cut “Long Distance Telephone” is a revved-



L to R:
Gregg
Potter,
Jeff
Lescher,
Clay
Tomasek

up raver sung (screamed, really) entirely in falsetto. Tomasek’s “Nature Boy” is a Black Sabbath riff-o-rama with hilariously megamacho rapped lyrics. Then there’s “Hot Lava Love” and “B.I.T.C.H.,” berserk larynx-shredders whose lyrics are unintelligible even to the band.

“It’s like that Nick Lowe theory that the sounds of words are more important than the meaning,” explains Lescher. “I can remember listening to ‘Happy’ about 200 times, trying to figure out what Keith Richards was saying. Every week, I had a different version of what it meant. At one time, it was, like, a treatise on relativity.”

Although critics have long characterized Green’s output as “pure pop,” Lescher notes, “Every record has had its heavier stuff. And even with the pop stuff, there’s always been...*dirtiness*.”

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FACES

Big Head Todd

“Spinal Tap’s not funny,” says Todd Park Mohr, singer, guitarist and songwriter for Big Head Todd and the Monsters. “When I watch it, it’s just like watching work.”

The Colorado-based threesome has been through “almost every scenario in that movie” themselves—topping the movie when all their equipment skidded down a mountainside and crashed into a tree when their host insisted he could back their van out of an icy driveway himself.

Now gaining a niche in the post-Dead jam-band scene, Big Head Todd knows the van-rat life well. “What we’ve done up until the last year is play all night,” Mohr says from Cleveland, where he was promoting their major-label debut, *Sister Sweetly*. “I feel like I’ve been on tour for seven years.”

The band formed in the mid-’80s in Boulder, where Mohr, bassist Rob Squires and drummer Brian Nevin grew up. After Squires finished college and Mohr and Nevin dropped out, they drove to Chicago, hustling enough gigs to eventually build a solid following in the Midwest, San Francisco and Austin for their three-hour shows and two indie albums.

“This is the first album we’ve ever done overdubs on,” says Mohr.

Sister Sweetly is a pastiche of ’70s-hippieish styles, from opening cut “Broken Hearted Savior”—which sounds like a countrified version of Bad Company’s “Feel Like Makin’ Love”—to the light funk of the title track, the Hendrix tribute of “Groove Thing” and Eaglesesque



L to R: Todd Park Mohr, Rob Squires, Brian Nevin

ballads. Growing up, he listened to Hank Williams, the Byrds and Bob Dylan which accounts for the country side; as for ’70s rock, he says, “I bought my first Led Zeppelin record like three weeks ago.”

A summer tour—possibly with Steve Miller or the Spin Doctors—is in the works. Mohr has finished the music and is working on lyrics for their next album, which he wants to be closer to the band’s live sound than the radio-friendly production they opted for on *Sister Sweetly*.

“I’d like to have more drumming,” he says. “We’re a three-piece raw kind of band, very much without rules.”

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Raging Slab

Rick Rubin sent me clothes!" On the eve of Raging Slab's Def American debut, *Dynamite Monster Boogie Concert*, slide guitarist Elyse Steinman is quelling over a surprise package that just arrived at the Pennsylvania farm she shares with husband, Slab songwriter and frontman, Greg Strzempka. The sweetly embroidered denim jacket she's discovered is wrapped in its own irony: The maven of macho rock who booted these postmodern cowpunks out of the office when they started banging in New York in the early '80s, Rubin is now so sensitive to their raging eccentricities he's spotted Steinman's ideal treasure—and in the perfect size, yet—across a crowded vintage clothing market.

"Rick hated our band for years. He said we sucked," says Steinman, an L.A. beauty school dropout and "strictly *Kill City*" slide technician who is the first woman Rubin's ever bothered signing to his label.

"No one got us," adds Strzempka, who was advised by another metal idolmaker that he "was too smart for the stupid audience."

The sonic art punks on the Lower East Side didn't have similar brains 'n' gender biases, but the couple, who say they'd probably be rock critics if the band folded, found their populist rock theories and arena-sized ambition welcomed as warmly as, well, rock critics. A particularly vicious hair-pulling incident with Pussy Galore convinced



MARK SELIGER

L to R: Paul Sheehan, Mark Middleton, Elyse Steinman, Greg Strzempka, Alec Morton

the duo to head for the country, where, after a brief, unhappy relationship with RCA, they've been setting the *Boogie Concert* stage for the last three years.

"I've never understood why what's influenced by the Velvet Underground should be treated more reverently than what's influenced by Blue Oyster Cult," comments Strzempka. "There is a middle ground between Twisted Sister and Mudhoney. I know why it's dumb and why it's beautiful. Raging Slab may be the only band willing to have fun with rock 'n' roll now and not be embarrassed about it." **DEBORAH FROST**

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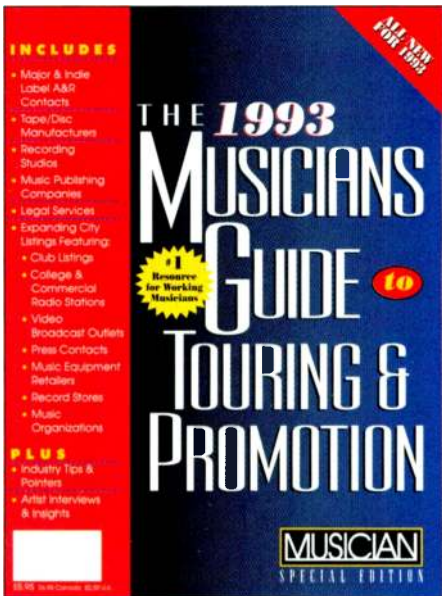
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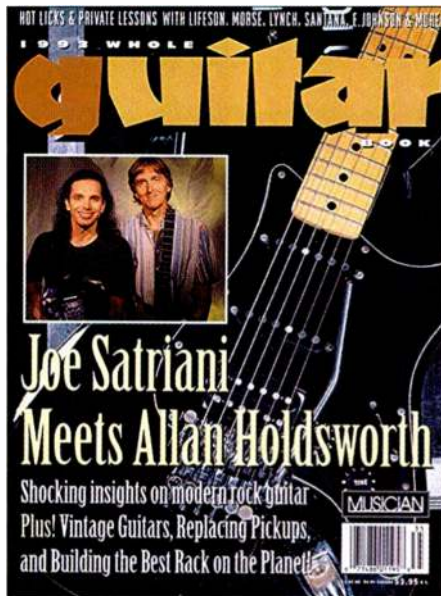
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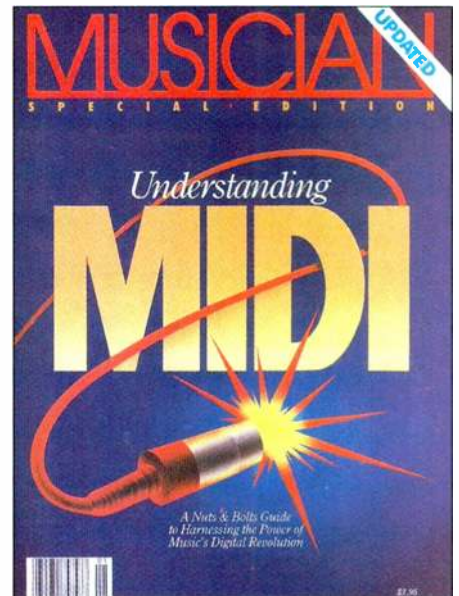
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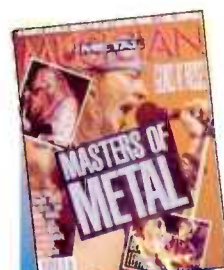
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ON STAGE



DIGABLE PLANETS

I'M FROM EVERYWHERE," BUTterfly of Digable Planets told the crowd during a pause between songs at New York's Continental Club. He was sticking to the rap group's spacey line on their origins: On "It's Good to Be Here," he rhymes about "splitting to Earth to resurrect the funk" from some interplanetary home, in the star-hopping tradition of De La Soul, Sun Ra and Parliament/Funkadelic.

Arriving from outer space has been an advantage to Digable Planets; people see what they want in them. To hip-hop purists, they're credible MCs who continue in the vein of jazz-rappers A Tribe Called

Quest and Gang Starr. To many music critics, they're an alternative to standard hard-rap posturing. And to the punters who put their debut album *Reachin' (A New Refutation of Time and Space)* onto the upper reaches of the *Billboard* Top 200 in its first week, they're hipsters who make funky, accessible songs.

An uncommon (for rap) male-female mix helps the trio's cause as well. A large contingent of women was present at the group's 50-minute set, cheering loudly whenever Ladybug, the female member and perhaps the group's most accomplished rapper, took her turn on the mike.

Fan bases and cagey origins aside, Butterfly, Ladybug and Doodle Bug (the monikers derive from the group's respect for insect solidarity—really) have made the most appealing rap album of the new year. On *Reachin'*, they

combine laid-back funk and jazz tracks with offbeat rhyme cadences to create eminently catchy yet uncompromised hip-hop.

As a rule, rappers run into trouble live, especially at large shows. With the exception of cutting and scratching by the DJ (the hip-hop equivalent of the guitar solo), there isn't much to watch, and usually less to listen to. Faced with sounding like muddled versions of their records, even the most progressive groups rely on hackneyed call-and-response standbys ("Everybody say HO!") to keep the crowd engaged.

Digable Planets sought to avoid that fate by living up to their "jazz-rap" tag: Backing them onstage were a DJ, stand-up bassist, drummer, trumpet player and alto saxophonist. Having MCs rap over a band is not a new idea (see the Brand New Heavies' *Heavy Rhyme Experience, Part 1* and "Yo! MTV Raps Unplugged"), but the Planets took it past the gimmick stage. In the process, they became a different animal from the one on *Reachin'*.

Live, the album's mellow cool was replaced by an urgent funk. On the album sampled horn loops add jazz flavor; in concert the trumpet and sax gave the songs real propulsion. At times the horns threatened to overwhelm the rappers, but that was a minor complaint given the aggressive workover the tunes received. The interplay between drummer Steve Williams and bassist Alan Goldsher provided a hard, if unvaried, rhythmic center for the group. DJ King Britt, unfortunately, was rendered a quiet casualty of the horn section for most of the show.

The DPs themselves made a smooth transition to the stage, their jazzy elocutions surviving both the PA system and youthful inexperience. Initially subdued, they gained confidence as the show went on, and by the time they performed their hit single, "Rebirth of Slick (Cool Like Dat)," they were as comfortable as their band was in the pocket. In a loping version of "Where I'm From" the Planets described a home where "boogie, jive and rap are life" and "hip is just the norm."

"We love it where we're from but we kick it where we're at," intoned Ladybug as the horns riffed over her verses. To the crowd's delight, Digable Planets made good on her promise.

—NATHAN BRACKETT

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P.M. DAWN

SAMPLE REALITY



THE TITLE IS SARCASTIC," SAYS PRINCE BE SOFTLY. "ON THE FIRST record, we tried to show bliss by example, through utopianism. This time we tried to show bliss through the lack of it, so the lyrics are less optimistic."

Talking about *The Bliss Album*...?, the hefty mastermind of P.M. Dawn doesn't seem like the type to discourage easily. Prince Be/The Nocturnal (a.k.a. Attrell Cordes), along with younger brother DJ Minutemix/J.C. The Eternal (Jarrett Cordes), hit paydirt in late '91 with *Of the Heart*, *Of the Soul*, *Of the Cross: The Utopian Experience* and its smash single "Set Adrift on Memory Bliss." A dizzy brew of soul, rap, pop and you name it, P.M. Dawn played hip-hop with a cosmic tint, merging spacey romanticism and emphatic beats.

Since Be's head-in-the-clouds sensibility found an appreciative audience the first time, you'd expect more of the same on *The Bliss Album*. However, the vibe has changed somewhat as this self-styled "warrior of the mind" takes greater heed of

BY JON YOUNG

the material world. "It's a reaction to being forced to deal with a lot of things, from the KRS-One incident to Ice-T's 'Cop Killer' to Rodney King and the L.A. riots," he says, pushing aside blond-streaked dreadlocks to sip a diet soda. "Somebody said to me, 'Prince, you're a human being, regardless of what you think, and you can't be a human being and not acknowledge reality.' But that doesn't mean I have to like it."

Rude awakening number one was the KRS-One "incident" of January 1992, on the stage of New York City's Sound Factory club. Prince Be

*"I'm a
sampling artist, not
a rapper"*

had been quoted as saying, "KRS-One wants to be a teacher, but a teacher of what?" In response, the mad-as-hell chief of Boogie Down Productions forcibly disrupted P.M.'s set.

"I had a right to say what I said about him," Be says. "Not only as a matter of free speech, but because I'm a KRS-One fan. If I didn't respect him, he'd be the last thing on my mind. He wrote songs like 'Stop the Violence' and then he wrote '9mm Goes Bang.' That confused me and I wanted to understand."

Despite the flap, Be is unrepentant. "I've said a lot of things innocently that pissed people off, but I don't think there was any other way I could have said them," he smiles. "I was very open. I was surprised people were upset with me, but that's just too bad."

Be also drew flak for declaring he wasn't a rap musician, leading to suspicions of a superiority complex. "I wasn't dissing rap. I just said I'm a sampling artist, not a rapper. My music is based in hip-hop, but I pull everything from dance-hall to country to rock together. I can take a Led Zeppelin drum loop, put a Lou Donaldson horn on it, add a Joni Mitchell guitar, then get a Crosby, Stills and Nash vocal riff. It's all music.

"Sampling artistry is a very misunderstood form of music. A lot of people still think sampling is thievery, but it can take more time to find the right sample than to make up a riff. I'm a songwriter, just like Tracy Chapman or Eric B. and Rakim."

Bliss...? is a carefully constructed argument for Be's vision. More wide-ranging than

Of the Heart..., it features a handful of gritty raps designed to refute the notion he lacks street smarts. "‘Plastic’ is for the hip-hop audience and anyone else who wants to listen. There are a lot of hostilities between hard-core hip-hop and alternative hip-hop, and the song says there shouldn’t be."

On the other hand, Be hasn’t neglected his melodies, devising some of the creamiest tunes since Stevie Wonder’s heyday. Under-scoring the diversity, he places "The Nocturnal Is in the House," a swaggering rap, next to the elegant "More Than Likely." Be also

reveals roots deeper than ’70s R&B, covering the Beatles’ "Norwegian Wood." Admitting he wanted to "educate the audience" about the possibilities of sampling, Be notes, "Al-

NIGHT AND DAY

For their latest astral journey, **PRINCE BE** and **MINUTEMIX** traveled light, using an **Akai S1000 sampler** and a **Technics mk 1200 turntable**. Be’s microphone was a **prototype Crown Radio Headset**.

though there’s two bits of live guitar and some strings, the rest is totally sampled from various sources. You can’t deny it’s ‘Norwegian Wood,’ but it’s also something different. It’s as if I were to take a Van Gogh, cut it into a thousand pieces, add parts of the ‘Mona Lisa,’ then add pieces of dogs playing poker. It’s my creation."

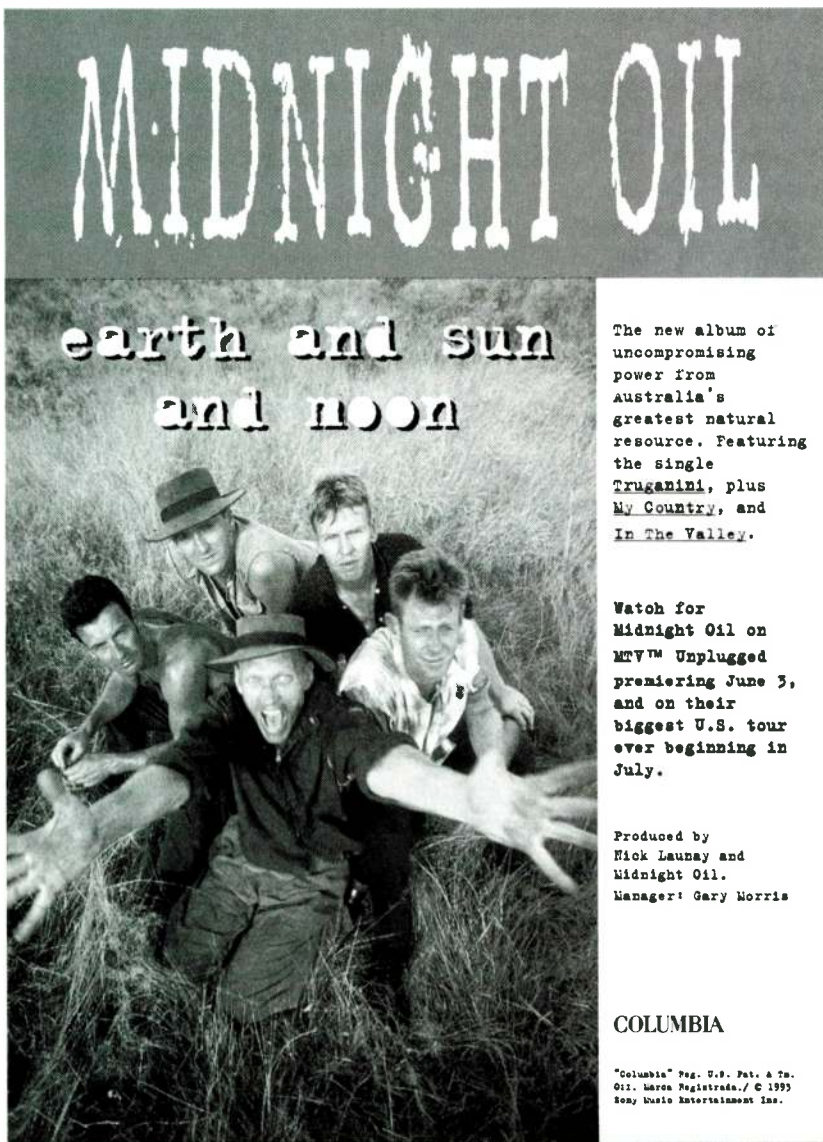
He points out that Joni Mitchell readily gave permission to incorporate a slice of "I Had a King" into "The Ways of the Wind." Smiling, he adds, "A lot of people from her era are bitter about sampling, but she was very supportive. I always liked her music and was proud of her for responding that way."

In other cases, Be and Minutemix encountered turbulence when they attempted to license samples. One drummer thought he’d been sampled and tried to copyright some of the sounds in "I’d Die Without You," not realizing the song features only live instruments. "Needless to say, he’ll be buried in litigation soon," grins Be wickedly, transcendental pursuits temporarily forgotten.

Most frustrating was his experience with Allen Klein, trying to clear a Stones sample for a track that didn’t make the album. Mutters Be, "He wouldn’t even license it for 100 percent of the publishing. He wanted 110 percent! The idea was to own that entire song and a piece of another." Don’t expect to hear this one soon.

The creative and business hassles pale next to the scare Be received last December, when he discovered the hard way that he had diabetes. "I’d had warnings, but didn’t know what they were. I was always thirsty and really tired, but I thought it was just because I was in the studio till all hours of the night and my sleeping patterns were erratic. I called my brother up and said I was gonna take a nap, then I went into a diabetic coma for three days. It’s no big deal now," he says, noting that he can control his condition with medication.

Despite these trials, Prince Be isn’t another big-star whiner, but a man who prefers the upbeat. The Cordes brothers are looking forward to their first full-fledged tour. Says Be, "We’re gonna have a 12-piece band and use live samples to compose songs onstage. No one’s actually seen the creative capabilities of sampling—everybody thinks you just go to the tape and do the same thing every time. In our show you’ll actually see us do what we do in the studio. If it doesn’t work we’ll be idiots, but I don’t see how it can’t." ❧



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Let's take an example. Assume your first album is a hit, went gold and 600,000 cassettes were shipped by the record company with a suggested retail list price (SRLP) of \$10. That's a gross of \$6 million. That means financial security for you, your band and your band's children, even after everyone else gets paid, right? Wrong.

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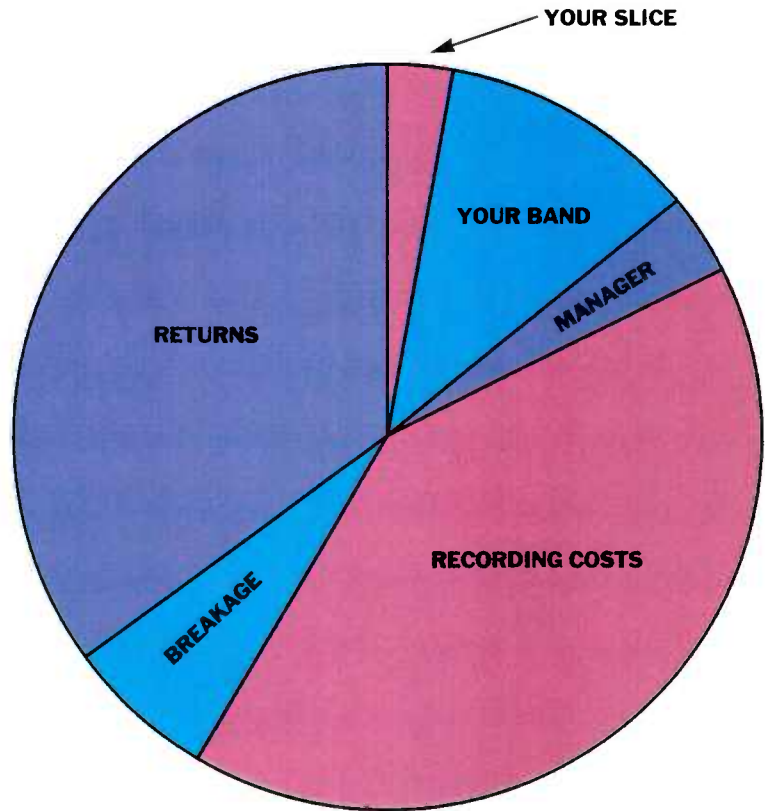
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five. Your cut is \$10,370. Now it's time to repay your uncle who fronted you a couple grand for that new amp, and then everybody's uncle: Sam. But don't be too discouraged. There are ways to negotiate to protect your financial interest. The easiest way...become a star.

The authors are attorneys with the firm of Stuart Lipsky, P.C. in New York.

THE ROYALTY PIE



BY RONALD LIPSKY & STUART LIPSKY

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UNDER MIKE KENEALLY'S HAT



("Full Metal Jacket is an analogy that comes to mind," Keneally remembers). The guitarist resumes his survey of the piece, an ear trained on the strings, an ear on the drums, hands and voice navigating the tricky twists of these tunes, whistling the orchestra to a halt to correct the percussion section about one dropped bar. Keneally clearly wears his genius slightly to the left—later in the evening, his head still ringing from his first Lynyrd Skynyrd concert and at least one six-pack of Miller Lites, he flits casually through Zappa's complicated "Black Page"

*A Phi Beta Zappa
pulls off the big trick*

theme on a poorly tuned piano and makes it sound magnificent.

Keneally is a man of big gestures loaded with subtle implications—an "Always Man," as he refers to himself by title on his big-gestured, generally incredible debut *bat*, where beautiful, funny pop songs segue into metal or performance art or jazz-rock under a blanket of good-natured cynicism and sheer preposterousness. It could have only resulted from an epiphany at age nine hearing Zappa's *Freak Out* and thereby collating his obsessive interests in good music and *Mad* magazine. His story tied together neatly: He won some keyboard competitions and moved from Long Island to play in San Diego cover bands, placing a call to Zappa's office in 1987 on a prayer that Frank was missing a guitarist. He learned difficult audition material in the back seat en route to Frank's studio, where he pretended to sight-read piano charts of songs he'd memorized years before. A tour resulted in *Broadway the Hard Way*, *Make a Jazz Noise Here* and *The Best Band (You Never Heard in Your Life)*.

"There is no way to describe the feeling," he says about singing Mothers classics and clowning with his mentor onstage. "I actually did dream about doing it. It was especially a kick because a lot of songs on the tour hadn't been played in many years. He can't remember how the songs go, so he relied on bandmembers who knew the songs to put the arrangements together."

"He has the most remarkable ear of any of the guitar players who have been in the band," says Zappa. "Because he also plays keyboards,

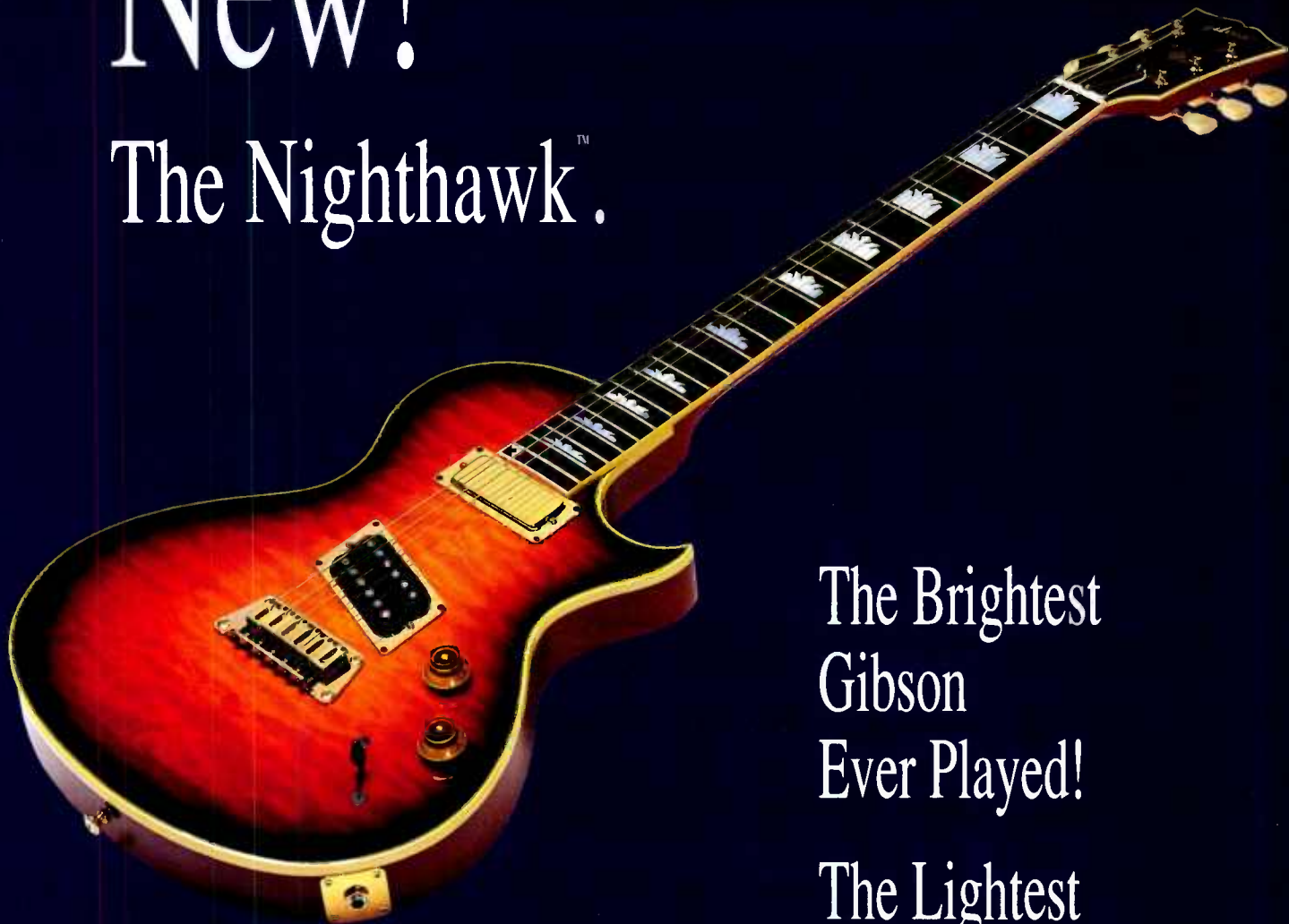
WAY UP ON THE UPPER EAST SIDE, ON ONE OF THE COLDEST Manhattan mornings he'll probably ever see, Mike Keneally stands before an orchestra that is playing the music of his childhood. The string section is slowly repeating fragments of long, complicated lines, goaded towards the rote precision that will be the minimum standard this weekend at Lincoln Center, where the ensemble is scheduled to perform a round of works by Frank Zappa and Edgard Varèse. There's also a fair epidemic of raised eyebrows as the electric contingent receives gentle warning about punctuality, drum solo volume, appropriate manner of attire.

Now, as Keneally traipses across the music room in a maroon ski hat embroidered with the word CREEP, he looks like nothing if not a well-bitten nipple slung with a guitar. To his side an occasional eruption comes in the form of Scott Thunes, the veteran Zappa bassist whose job often involved leading the band through rehearsals in the maestro's absence

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he can hear something and just *play* it, the whole enchilada, and complicated stuff. I used to tease him and call him Evelyn Wood.”

Such maddeningly acute skills were indispensable for Keneally’s frank approximations on the tribute *Zappa’s Universe*, recorded for video and audio release and on the drawing boards as a tour; the rest of his time is booked by guitarist Marc Bonilla’s “metronomically imposing” rock project and eldest Zappa son Dweezil’s band Z, though Keneally admits those side affairs are quite a different bag of figs than *hat* and

a far leap from the source material which helped inspire it.

“He’s such a presence,” he says. “It’s virtually impossible to sit in a room with Frank and not feel affected; he’s still iconic. Until the opportunity to make *hat* was presented, I thought maybe that’s what’s been the purpose of my life. When I got done with *Zappa’s Universe* I was seriously toying with the idea that I was placed here to play Frank’s stuff. There was a lot of emotion in the room, because the first of those shows was the day of the press con-

ference where Frank’s illness was announced; a lot of really sincere people were grabbing my hand, looking straight in my eye and going, ‘You’re the guy that’s got to carry it on.’ But for me, that view is pretty arrogant. I love his music and am more than happy to do shows, but now that *hat* exists, I know that that’s what I’m supposed to do.”

Thus was his living room wallpapered with blueprints for *hat*’s neckbreaking segues, his musician friends paid gas money as a surrogate day rate, his tape deck fried by preparatory demoing and some final takes. “Backstage at Wilson Phillips” is brutally direct trio instrumental work; “Eno and the Actor” is a song “so abstruse it elicits blank expressions. People have asked, ‘What do you have against Eno?’ Nothing—maybe that he says ‘accountement’ presents him as slightly precious. The range of reactions it receives is fascinating.”

The closer is a home-grown epic which travels into unthinkable realms but inexorably returns homeward. “A week of my life was spent doing nothing but ‘Lightning Roy’ in my living room, getting done with one episode, grabbing a beer and stalking the apartment for hours trying to figure out the perfect thing to follow it. *hat* up to that point was already excessive, and to have it all lead up to this *completely* excessive thing is an appealing concept. I’m into the Zen concept of sensory overload.

“I like ambitious people’s visions rendered accurately,” Keneally continues, nipple wiggling. “I like the Coen Brothers; *Barton Fink* is my favorite movie. They set out to do something and captured it perfectly. People couldn’t get into it, but I think it’s unbelievable the way the tone of that film is sustained without a single misstep. I only hope to do that with my music.”

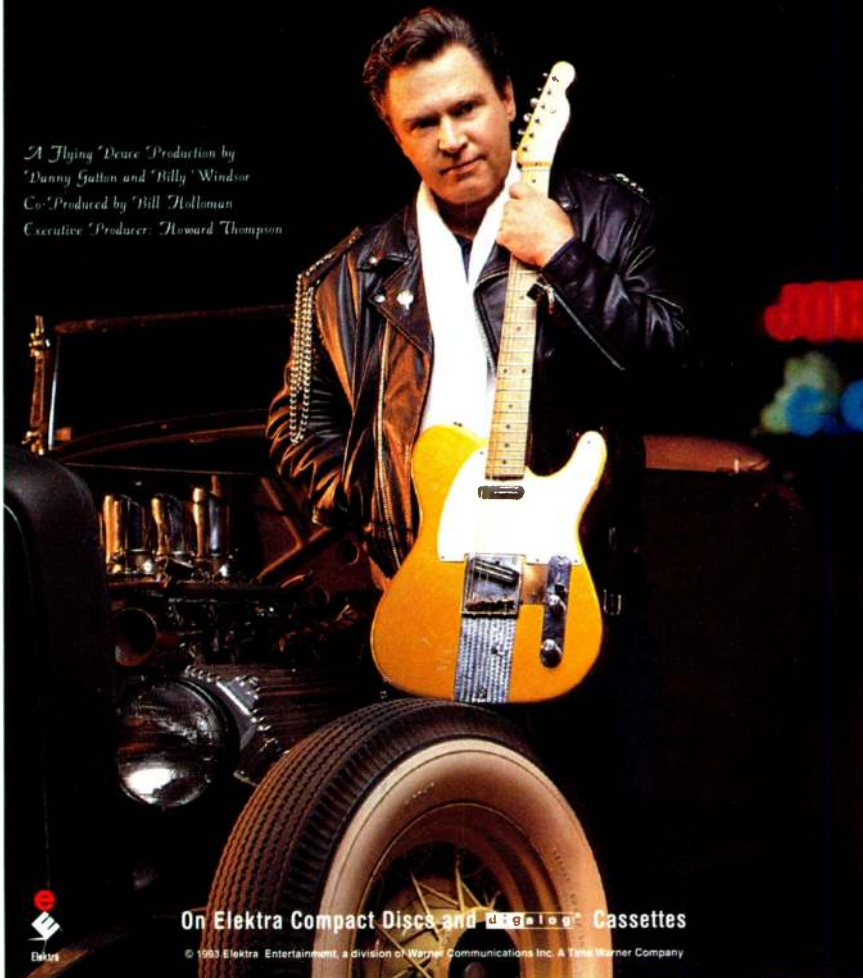
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HAT RACK

KENEALLY the guitar savant plays a Fender Clapton Strat with 250L Fender strings through a CryBaby and a Korg multieffects. He’s “never happy with guitar sound in the studio,” so every tone on *hat* was gotten through a Sansamp, which he puts into “The Twin” onstage. Doubling was done on a Yamaha SPX90. Keneally the keyboardist likes his Kurzweil K1200 and the Korg M-1.



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SOUL ASYLUM'S LAST-MINUTE SAVE

After losing their deal and going back to their day jobs, the big break finally came.

BY STEVE PERRY

SOMETIMES YOU CAN'T CATCH A BREAK, and sometimes good karma pours over you by the bucketful. Here it is early February, barely past Groundhog's Day, and Soul Asylum has already had its best year ever. "The Tonight Show." Opening act on the Keith Richards tour. Featured attraction at the MTV Inaugural Ball—where they shared the stage with no less than Al and Tipper Gore, whom a zonked-looking Dave Pirner greeted with a public plea for the new administration to make things better in "South America and Kuwait." "I didn't think too much about what I was gonna say," he allows. "I wanted it to be spontaneous."

And following nine years' and five albums' worth of tenuous times, their first Columbia disc, *Grave Dancers Union*, is a hit. It's number 51 with a bullet in *Billboard* this week, having already moved enough copies (280,000 so far) to make it the biggest-selling record by anybody from Minneapolis who is not Prince. Not bad for a band many left for dead after its last A&M album, *Soul Asylum and the Horse They Rode In On*, stiffed in 1990.

Clearly, room service is in order. Studying the direc-

tory of hotel services for a long minute, frontman and songwriter Pirner finally calls downstairs and orders a six-pack of Corona. Meanwhile his bandmates are cataloging the ways success has changed Soul Asylum. "Floor hockey sticks," says drummer Grant Young, pointing to a bundle of shiny new ones over in the corner. The band is planning to play before soundchecks. "We go into all these big, empty rooms, and we never get any physical exercise," he groans.

That's not all. "We get our own rooms once in a while now," notes bassist Karl Mueller, "so you get to control your own TV remote. You get to eat a little better..."

"A big bag of chips," avers Pirner, "instead of a little bag."

Success has also earned Soul Asylum a new label, meant no doubt as a compliment: the next Nirvana. Which *grates* a little considering the bands' relative longevity, sort of like calling James Brown the next George Clinton. But hey, no hard feelings. "The only time you feel resentment," says Pirner, "is when you open up your closet and look at that plaid shirt and you just can't put it on anymore."

"You know what we call that, when a punker moves from Minneapolis to Seattle? Grungy-jumping." But he sounds more touched than irascible about all the recent attention to the Seattle scene. "It's kind of cute. And I'm not uncomfortable with being a link in that chain that somehow wound itself around the United States. The Stooges, the MC5, the Ramones—see, to me it looks like one big long folk ethic. People think music is based on the industry or something, but it's not. It's a chain reaction. There's a lot of kids out there playing guitars, and it's a totally natural thing to happen."

In a minute room service comes with the beers.

"Twenty-eight dollars?" Grant's searching the ticket for a math mistake. It's 28 bucks, all right. Fortunately the waiter's cool about offering to take it all back, even offering directions to a liquor store a block from the hotel.

"Hey, tip the guy," Dave whispers belatedly as the waiter leaves with six Coronas on a tray. Too late.

"Twenty-eight bucks for a six-pack, man." Grant shakes his head.

"That's like five bucks a beer," nods Dave.

"If we walked down to buy 'em at the bar, it'd be 18 or 22 bucks or something," offers Karl. "They add a room service charge."

But wouldn't the label pick up the room service tab?

Grant shakes his head again. "It'd just get charged back to us anyway," he grimaces.

PIRNER, LIKE MOST rock 'n' roll frontmen, didn't start life as a popular guy. "I didn't get in too many fights," he says of his formative years. "But I did get punched a few times. So...I guess I was a puss. Whatever." Excelling in sports was Pirner's way of combating his wimpy rep; music was how he fought the sense of isolation that underlay it. Not the music you'd

expect, though; in those days he was a horn player in school bands and the Youth Symphony. "People definitely thought I was a puss for that," he remembers. "It was like, 'What do you play—flute?' But I just went along and did it, because I got this sensation when the whole band was playing along together that was so cool. Kids from all different walks of life got together and played one song. It was a beautiful thing. I loved it. It probably *sounded* awful, but I loved that it was a common ground everybody stood on."

To this day Pirner remains obsessed with the notion of common ground; if there's an overriding theme in the Soul Asylum oeuvre, it's the quest for connections. All that studied postpunk diffidence aside, Pirner has more than a little of the preacher/healer in him. His songs constantly reach out to proffer reassurance to the geeky, self-con-

scious kid who's still alive in a lot of people—the one who gets punched silly from time to time.

The songs on *Grave Dancers Union* reflect a broader range of emotions, from outrage to outright sentimentalism, than anything Pirner's written before. The music is different, too, melodic and driving and mercifully unafraid of its own commerciality. "People are really multifaceted personalities," he says, "and the problem with a lot of kinds of music is that they reduce that. There's a macho element to loud music that wasn't as much a part of me as I've always made it out to be."

For Pirner, learning to broaden his voice as a writer and player was

more a matter of confidence than of exposure to new ideas; he's been exposed to a lot of musical ideas since he was a kid. Early on, "I was into jazz," he says. "It's weird, but when I first thought of playing music, it was jazz or classical. I'd buy a lot of trumpet player records—Maynard Ferguson records."

Meanwhile, "I was listening to the radio under my covers ever since I can remember. I was just into the pure energy of it for a long time before I got into the introspective side of it. I went through this whole hard rock/metal phase associated with puberty. After that, I remember moments, like listening to Lou Reed's 'Street Hassle,' that changed the way I thought about music and what it could do."

Pirner discovered Reed, Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie around the age of 16, at about the same time he first heard punk. "That's when I started playing guitar," he says. "I heard the Ramones and the Vibrators and I thought, man, I can do *this*. Once I could play a song on the guitar, it was over: This was my medium. At first it was all punk rock songs, like 'Screw, Screw,

Screw' and 'Drive, Drive.' Stuff like that.

"Lou Reed was really pivotal for me. He was cool enough that he penetrated the punk rock movement, and he was smart enough that he took me away from it also, and made me look at it differently. I think a lot of it was realizing the non-musicality of guys like Reed and Dylan. Lou'd got like a seven-note range. And that fit in with the Ramones/Vibrators anybody-can-do-it thing.

"All of a sudden we weren't talking about Maynard Ferguson anymore. It wasn't about technique and finesse and mastering an instrument. It's being able to communicate an idea or a feeling more than anything. I realized you could work your way through all this and get better at it. And you could actually learn in public, pretty much. Nobody cared how well you could play, just how well you got that *thing* across."

"If I could be as honest in my day-to-day dealings with people



as I am in songs, that would be a quantum leap."

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To Pirner it sounded an awful lot like the lesson he heard wafting across the years when he listened to Woody Guthrie. "It wasn't until I found his music that songwriting started to make sense to me as an ethic—a storytelling ethic. I really like the idea of writing a song to be understood: There it is, it's real upfront, it's not convoluted or caught up with any trend or fashion. It's plain and simple music for the sake of sharing something with somebody."

Punk and its progeny lost track of their original immediacy and visceral honesty, says Pirner—some of his own songs included. At a certain point, the challenge was to pare it down again. "I think I reached a plateau," he muses, "where I discovered that where I wanted to be was not on the avant-garde. I started going, this is bullshit. There's all this trying to out-cool and outweird people, to be the most obnoxious thing in the universe. That's where we started out. The idea was to be this hateful sort of assault on the senses and shake people up. Make them mad 'cause we're mad. We thought that was cutting-edge, and we thought that was more arty because it was more difficult to deal with. It started to feel pretentious. It started to feel more caught up with an attitude than with making music."

Degraded as some of punk's best impulses may have gotten en route to becoming just another insider's language, it's all the same thread as far as Pirner's concerned: folk and punk, Woody and the Vibrators. "Music by the people and for the people," he says. "Punk music is folk music, and folk music has this rich history that just gets passed on through weird kids in weird places wanting to say something."

THE COVER OF *Grave Dancers Union* is a kind of spiritual index of its contents. In the haunting tinted photograph by Czech artist Jan Saudek, a mother and two naked children walk down the road with their backs to the camera in a barren, almost surreal industrial landscape shrouded by fog. The emotional tenor of the image is hopeful as well as foreboding, though, evoking a sense of endurance, regeneration and openheartedness that the hard circumstances can't suppress.

"I saw a show by Jan Saudek when I was in Paris," says Pirner, "and I thought that was it. I tried to get that image for both our A&M albums, but they couldn't secure the rights. I said I wanted it again this time, and Columbia got the rights. The negotiations were funny—they said it was gonna cost about five grand to use the picture, then Jan's manager got ahold of it and they reevaluated the price. Suddenly it was like \$57,000. Then I talked to the president of the label, Donny Jenner, and said I still really wanted it, could he make it happen? He

said, well, let me see what I can do. He gets two guys on the phone and the next day it's settled at six grand." Pirner laughs at the thought. "It's amazing what you can get done."

The episode makes a pretty good parable for the difference between Soul Asylum's A&M days and its new deal with Sony. The band had the misfortune to join A&M at a time when major shakeups were part of the routine there. The A&R man who signed them left the label just before their second—and final—A&M disc, *Soul Asylum and the Horse They Rode In On*, came out. Around the same time PolyGram bought the label; three weeks or so after *Horse* was released, the new owners dumped dozens of field staffers. *Soul who?*

"We heard it was a musicians' label, started by Herb Alpert, that it was a family thing," recounts Pirner. "And that's what it turned out to be. People in my family bought the record..."

"My family bought a bunch of them," says Mueller.

"They gave us things we needed to grow," says Pirner. "They gave us a studio to work in, they gave us producers. But we got lost. We weren't accomplishing anything by working so hard."

The period following *Horse* plunged Soul Asylum into a kind of limbo they'd never experienced. They were still under contract to A&M, but it was clear no one at the label felt much commitment to the band—or at least they had no idea how to put the music across. They would eventually work out a deal whereby the band could move to Sony in exchange for a cash payment and royalty points on *Grave Dancers Union*, but that was a long time taking shape. In the meantime, with two major-label sales bombs on their resume, there was no guarantee they'd be making more music, period.

"I got kind of—defensive, I guess," says guitarist Dan Murphy. "I didn't think the band wouldn't exist anymore. But if we took a year off, what was I gonna do in that year?" Karl Mueller felt the same doubts when he found himself going back to the day job he'd held off and on for years, cooking at a local restaurant—only this time with no Soul Asylum engagements in sight. Murphy made some cash and filled his time by renewing his interest in antiques, eventually opening his own spot in a Minneapolis antiques mall.

"I wanted to get as far away from it as I could," Murphy continues, "'cause I didn't have enough confidence to be in a band. That's the kicker—we've never been overly confident to begin with, and you come up against these things you don't think you can persevere over. We were thoroughly sick of the road and of each other. I guess it's a

"People think music is based on the industry but it's not."



"It's a chain reaction. There's a lot of kids out there playing guitars."

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denial thing: If you don't think about the band, you're not in it."

For Pirner the time off between records and recording deals was doubly scary: He'd been having problems with his left ear, and a doctor told him to lay off loud music indefinitely. Like anyone's first encounter with intimations of the body starting to give out, it rocked Pirner back on his heels for a while—as you might guess from the first two songs on *Grave Dancers Union*, with their images of encroaching age and disability. "I think there was definitely a period when I had to

go, hey, I'm just like everybody else. I'm gonna get *old*," he says.

"I think," says Pirner, "we just stopped in our tracks then. I had to get away for a little while and think about what I was doing. It just seemed like we'd been playing with our heads down for years, going at this grueling pace: Make the record, do the tour, stay on the road forever, come back, make the record, do the tour, stay on the road forever..."

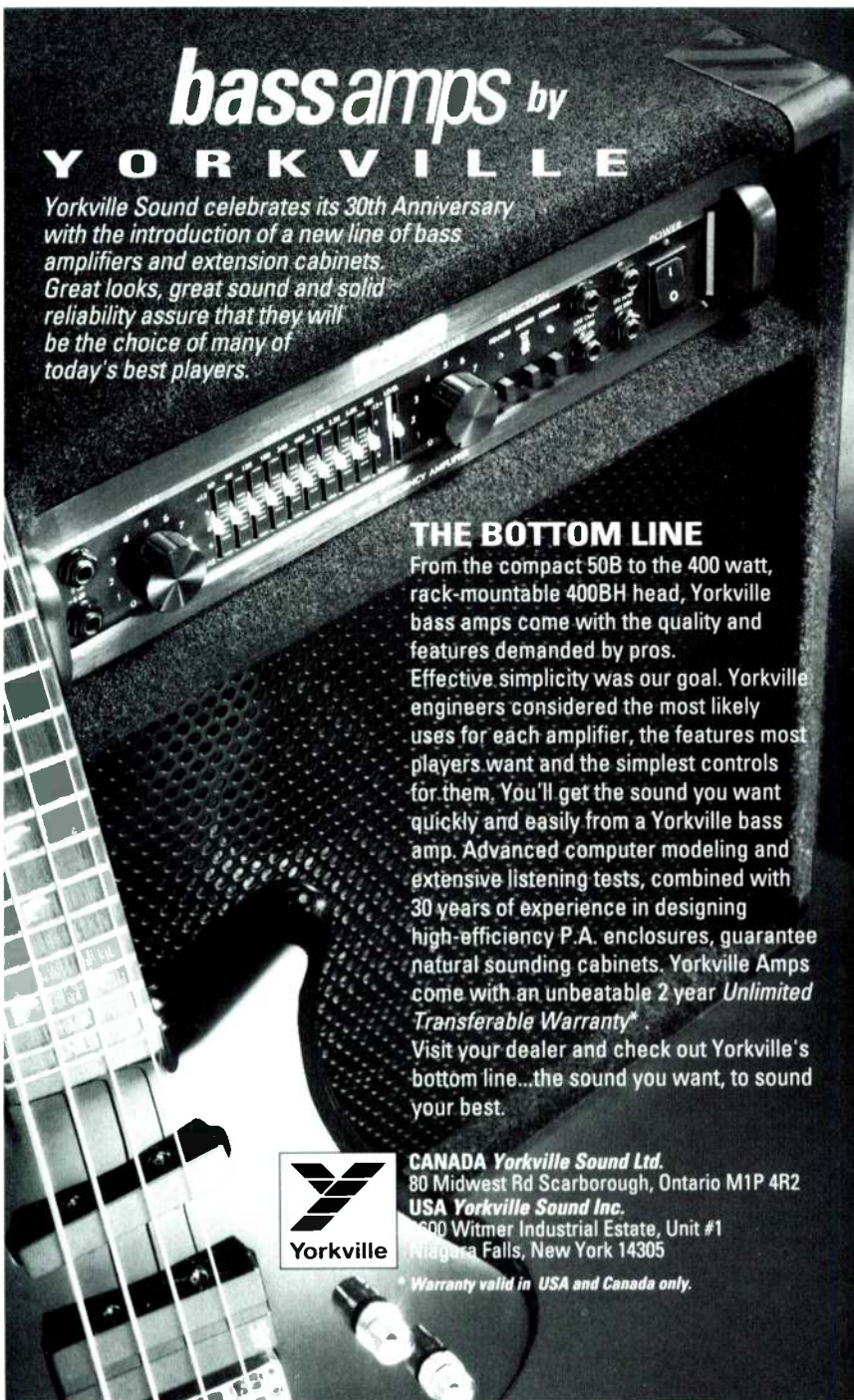
"Stopping that for a second was really a good thing. What is this all about? We're going and going, and nobody has any idea what it means."

What he revisited in that time was "all the insecurities and fears—the whole trip that goes with being in a rock band. This is not gonna last forever; we can't do this for that much longer, really. So do you get on with your life, or do you get on with your life? Do you say, we gotta seize the moment and have fun with it while we can, or do you say, this isn't worth it, it's a dead end? We had this ethic in the beginning that I'm sure you've heard before: When it's not fun anymore, we're not gonna do it anymore. After a little bit of haggling, we decided yes, it *is* still fun. It was a great feeling to be able to say that."

It felt like the time Soul Asylum's first drummer quit, eight years ago. "I was devastated and felt totally deprived then," he remembers. "My music had been taken away from me. At that point and again this time, I realized how important it was to me. That got the ball rolling in a new direction. It was the beginning of a new era for me psychically. I realized I can't live without this. I gotta do it good. I needed to do a better job, to explore more angles. It reinitiated my enthusiasm for the process of making music and the discoveries involved in it."

Pirner started tinkering with the music-making process. In the past he'd always come up with the rudiments of songs and taken them to the band to flesh out in rehearsals. This time he stayed away from the band, keeping to himself and writing finished songs. Some of these he took to Dan Murphy first; then the band was called together. Pirner tinkered with them, too: "We said okay, we're throwing out all the amps for a while and we're gonna sit in my basement and play acoustic and use brushes."

"That was easy. And I thought, duh, why



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didn't I think of this five years ago? Because it brought a whole new perspective to what we were doing. Everybody all of a sudden had to think differently about how they were playing, because there wasn't this wall of noise that everybody could hide in. Every instrument was more naked, and you were more responsible for what you were playing. You had to be more tasteful. You couldn't just blast away all the time."

After shopping demos, after the legal machinations of the transfer from A&M to Sony, after interviewing lots of producers and settling on Michael Beinhorn, Soul Asylum took to the studio. But having a record deal didn't mean everything got easier. "Now I can say it came out really good," says Murphy, "but the whole time we were making it, in all honesty, it felt like doom. We didn't know if we'd finish, we knew we wouldn't finish on budget, the producer drove us crazy and we drove him crazy."

"I do think in a way it made for a more deliberate-sounding record. The sad songs are pretty sad, the aggressive stuff is aggressive. It wasn't a good experience. We spent three months on this thing, and there weren't a whole lot of days we were sitting around the studio chuckling. But that needed to be the process for this record, 'cause that was the mindframe it was written in."

"A lot of people, when they look back at our band, think *Made to Be Broken* was a pivotal record. But this is the best one in terms of songwriting and playing. Whether you like the songs or not, they work; they're more realized than things we've done in the past. I think when we were making *Horse* we thought we could allude to what the band was about because everybody'd seen us live. I think in general we and our producers were too reliant on our live reputation when we made the records. *Horse* just doesn't come off like a live show, even though that was the concept of the record. This time we threw away all that stuff about 'It's a live band and that's the way we should record.' We bought into that one too many times."

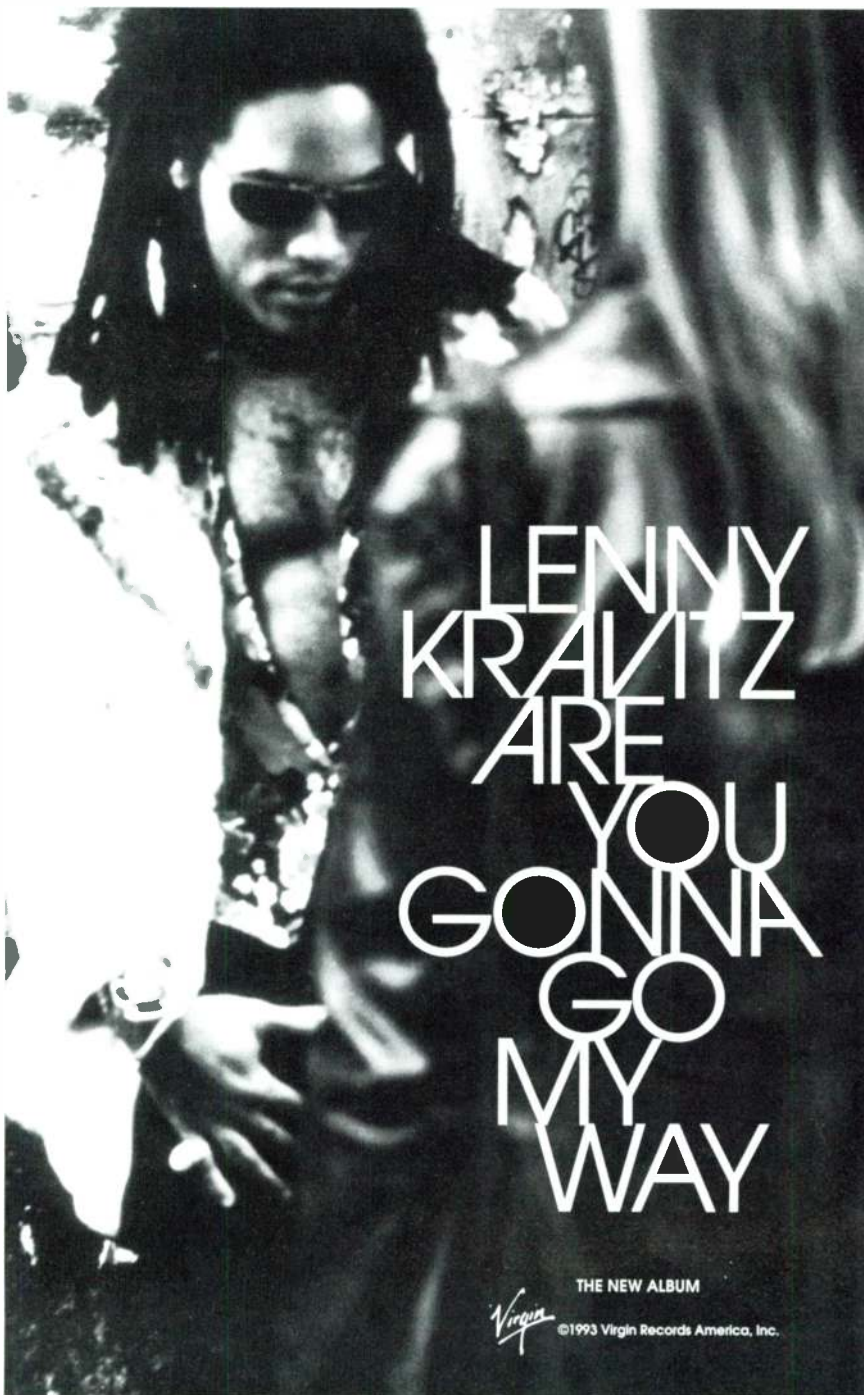
Lots of bands have their unsung heroes, the person who has both good musical judgment and common sense, the one who ends up shepherding the creative process and keeping an eye on business matters, too. Dan Murphy is Soul Asylum's unsung hero. By Pirner's own admission, "if he's impressed by one of my ideas, I know it's a good one. If he doesn't like something, I don't necessarily think it's shit. There are things I can't get past him that are maybe directions in music I'll

have to explore without him. But I definitely look to him for approval."

Murphy and Pirner play foil to each other in pretty much the way you'd guess from watching them onstage: Murphy takes care of business while Pirner pours his emotional life into songwriting—which, more often than not, becomes a substitute for taking care of business in the world at large. "So much of songwriting for me," says Pirner, "is saying things I can't say to people. If I could be as honest in my day-to-day dealings with people as I feel like I am in my songs, that would

be a quantum leap for me. That's what writing is all about: sitting down and being very precise about what you want to say, and putting as much thought and emotion into it as you possibly can. And then all of a sudden, you do it—and once it's done you think, okay, I don't have to tell this to anybody anymore, 'cause I'm telling *everybody* this."

"We don't verbally communicate terribly well," says Murphy. "It's like we're on two different planets. Making this record, we weren't getting along at all. I felt put off because it seemed like [cont'd on page 49]





GETTING LOW

THE REAL DAVID BOWIE WILL **by Josef Woodard** realm of the concert hall, Philip Glass never stand up, because phantoms have no corporeal presence. But there was a real, rational man sitting on the couch in a Los Angeles hotel on a recent, rain-soaked afternoon. The Thin White One, looking cool and composed in blue slacks, white shirt, shiny black shoes and wire-rim specs, suggested a model of grooming compared to the relatively bohemian countenance of composer Philip Glass, seated across the coffee table; the proto-minimalist, with his un-combable mop of hair and rapid, restless patter, provided desirable contrast. * Between them, the subject was *Low*. The “Low” Symphony, that is, which Glass has developed from themes first concocted by Bowie and Brian Eno on Bowie’s *Low* LP from 1977. The 40-plus-minute opus is, coincidentally, the first symphony in Glass’s voluminous oeuvre. Has he created a bridge between high and low art worlds in

broke into the Metropolitan Opera House—quite an accomplishment for a living, breathing composer—with *The Voyage*. This spring, Glass’s touring ensemble is coming to a town near you, playing his live score to the film *Powaqaatsi*. * Glass arrived in L.A. via Bombay, India, where he was negotiating that country’s premiere of his opera *Satyagraha*. Bowie drove over from his local apartment, one of the places he stays when not at home with his wife Iman in Switzerland or in the Caribbean. * Separated by a decade in age and a variety of cultural baggage, Glass and Bowie still have plenty in common, including an easy gift for gab. At one point Bowie took note of a photo on the coffee table which depicts himself and Glass staring in opposite directions, perhaps contemplating separate navels. “The thinking man’s posture,” he laughed. “We’re both con-

with David Bowie

the process? The response to this accessible work from the classical world—where Glass remains a figure of controversy, and where Bowie’s name holds virtually no stock—has been generally positive. Bowie, meanwhile, has just released *Black Tie White Noise*, his first official solo album in six years and his finest work in a decade. * The late-’70s period of Bowie’s pop experimentalism—roughly from *Station to Station* through to *Scary Monsters*—produced some of his most rewarding if commercially precarious music. With the release of the “Low” Symphony, and the return of such edgy sonic undercurrents on Bowie’s new album, it is an era that’s likely due for some pop revisionism, at least from Bowie. (In a 1987 *Musician* interview, he said: “It was fine to be experimental, but because of my lack of discipline or control over the elements I was writing with, a lot of it missed the mark completely.”) Prior to ushering Bowie into the

ceptualizing. Philip’s saying, ‘I did a symphony,’ and I’m saying, ‘I could do that.’” * **BOWIE:** Philip probably doesn’t know that I first caught him in performance in England, in the very early ’70s. * **GLASS:** In ’71. Then we got to meet. I sent David a copy of *Satyagraha* and he loved it, and I got the idea that you were maybe thinking about playing it. * **BOWIE:** Yes, I was. * **GLASS:** It was easy for me to be aware of David’s work. I wasn’t so aware that you knew about my work. But the generation of people who were doing experimental music got very interested in the people who were doing experimental rock music. † For one thing, we had similar kinds of technology and similar ideas about things. Our backgrounds were different and our audiences were different. But in many other ways, there was a lot of room for, let’s say, beneficial influences. *Low* came out in ’77, and I remember when we were rehearsing *Satyagraha* in ’79 in

and Philip Glass

Amsterdam, we would go to a friend's house, relax after rehearsals, and put on *Low*.

BOWIE: In the '60s, it seemed that the two forces that were coming together musically were jazz and rock. I remember things like Charles Lloyd coming out with *Forest Flower*.

GLASS: That's right. That didn't really take, did it?

BOWIE: No, it sort of petered out again. Maybe it was because they narrowed their horizons irredeemably when they *allowed* themselves to be categorized as fusion. That did more disservice than good. And in the '70s, it seemed to me that, politically and philosophically, there was an overlapping between rock musicians and so-called serious or classical composers and musicians, probably for the first time ever. The venues themselves changed—especially in New York. I'd never seen performers and writers like yourself working in rock clubs.

GLASS: You see, we played there and in art galleries because that was where we could find our audience, and also, in those days, I couldn't play in concert halls. I wasn't respectable enough. I am now. [laughs]

MUSICIAN: *Having worked your way from the fringes into more established music circles, was there a sense of vindication for you arriving at the Metropolitan Opera last fall?*

GLASS: Oh sure! It's not complete in the sense that there still are places I can't play and haven't been invited to. But I'm looking after those, too. I think the "*Low*" Symphony is a way for me to get into the concert hall, which I have not been in very much. I don't really care about the academic community. If I'm not invited to talk at a lot of the music schools, it doesn't really bother me. Actually, very often when I play at the universities, I'm invited by the student activities department and the music department has nothing to do with it. I've been able to make my case, and play my music, ultimately, where I needed to. But it has been a vindication, and I've enjoyed it.

When we played in art galleries in the '70s, I think that the new ideas were coming from the artists. The rest of us, the musicians, were gobbling it up. We were subject to some of the same people, and that kind of drew us together, because it gave us a way of recognizing things in each other.

BOWIE: There was an explosion of rock performers and writers—especially coming out of England—at that time, also with the first batch of American failed painters, musicians. A lot of us took our choices with music rather than art. There is a certain history with that in British bands. With most of our major bands—the Beatles, the Who, the Kinks—there was some connection with art. Somebody in the band had gone through art school or taken conceptualism.

MUSICIAN: *Low always struck me as a very painterly project, pieced together in the studio as a collage.*

BOWIE: I think both Eno and I had worked that way. I remember when Brian had just left Roxy Music and was making his first album, *Here Come the Warm Jets*, we were both working in the same studio, unbeknownst to each other. I was doing *Diamond Dogs*. So we were both these disillusioned guys who knew that rock could go somewhere else, working separately on albums that were considered pretty weird at the time. It was such fun to get together at last. But yes, the same situation of working in a painterly fashion is very strong with both of us. In fact, we take a lot of our cues and maxims and all that

from painters.

MUSICIAN: *What was the germ of the "Low" Symphony?*

GLASS: It had been in my mind for a good 10 or 12 years. But I didn't really know what I was going to do. In fact, when I first started talking to David about it, I really didn't know. Then David suggested other material that wasn't on the original album. In fact, the second movement, "Some Arc," actually isn't on the original. I just knew that it's a very rich musical source.

BOWIE: Philip said, "Do you have any sort of ideas that you'd like to throw in?" I thought, "Oh, he's just being polite. He's obviously got this whole thing together."

GLASS: David said I should go off and do what I wanted. I started with "Subterraneans," which is such an interesting piece. I couldn't find a theme: It's a complex of themes. So, I couldn't take one, and I thought if I'm going to take the theme, I'll have to quote the whole theme, and the theme is the first three minutes. The trick, then, was to go into the fourth minute. Once I got into the fourth minute, I was okay. I

began by listening to the record and transcribing it for orchestra, then I just kept going. The beginning was a bit daunting. I knew where I wanted to be at the end. I didn't, at that moment, know what the second movement would be. I scribbled down half a dozen themes. There were a number of other possibilities. There was one very pentatonic, Chinese-y one.

BOWIE: "Weeping Wall."

GLASS: That was almost the second one. But I'd done a lot of pentatonic themes myself and I decided to stay away from that. And then the one I finally picked was a turnaround from the way it was done on David's record. I souped up the tempo and made it a kind of footstomper instead of the way it was.

BOWIE: That is one of my favorite areas in the piece.

GLASS: The trouble with the *Low* record is that there is more material

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than you can use in one symphony. I don't use but three of the themes. But a 43-minute symphony is a hefty piece of music, so I'm already getting into trouble. A piece of that length is like a long Beethoven symphony or a short Mahler symphony. For a symphony orchestra to program it, it means they'd have to devote half their program to a new work. It would have been smarter to do a 20-minute symphony.

As I was working on it, I kept warning my friends at the record company, "No, it's not a crossover, it's not a fusion record. Don't get

the wrong idea." I don't think anyone really believed me until they heard it. There's no point in my trying to make a rock record out of a rock classic. It would be silly. Also, it's not my area of competence. I wouldn't know how to do it. I've made my successes and failures in my own field...

BOWIE: That's plenty wide enough, isn't it—one's own field. Quite enough room to crash one's own aeroplane in there, I think.

When I talked with Eno and told him that "Some Are" would be one of the pieces, he had absolutely no recollection of it at all. He

couldn't remember being involved with it. I said, "Damn, I shouldn't have credited you, Brian. You'd never have known." [laughs]

Speaking for myself, it was probably as brave as it was because it really was the first time that I wrote and worked with no commercial expectations. It was a work of love and purely for peace of mind.

GLASS: David, I always wanted to ask: Where does the title come from? I guess I should have asked you this long ago. [laughs]

BOWIE: Actually, it was a double pun. It was "low" art, because it was rock 'n' roll—but we knew it was art, see? And the other was my mood at the time. It was particularly low. One thing that I found so promising, in an emotional way, about what you did with the music is that you gave it the hope and promise that was lacking in mine, because I was so emotionally distraught at the time we made it. There's an icy tension under ours that's totally explicable because of my state of mind. Listening to it today, it's more of a yearning to see the light.

GLASS: And you think that came out in the symphonic version?

BOWIE: No. It's as though you've taken that same statement and resolved it. It definitely has the light of dawn.

GLASS: Well, I knew from the beginning that "Warszawa" would be the last cut, because there's that interesting descending line. This is one of those funny things, that music that ascends is the feeling of hope and music that descends is the opposite. It's one of those stupid things—like major modes are happy and minor is sad. But these stupid things actually have some effect. And that beautiful melody, which just keeps modulating and ascending... I always knew that would be the last piece. But it's quite an astonishing melody. It wasn't until I actually sat down and took it off the record that I realized how it was put together. It's deceptive. It starts off in one key, which is a complete false start. It goes into another key, and then that key starts to change.

MUSICIAN: *The original has been implanted in my head since I first heard it. So this piece is reshuffling a memory.*

GLASS: How did it strike you?

MUSICIAN: *A lot of art that moves me balances the familiar and the foreign. So while some of the themes registered, it seems like a new entity.*

BOWIE: I think it might be assumed by a lot of people that the artist has some idea about what that foreignness is, or where it comes

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from. I think the great thing about artistically successful music is that the composer, the writer himself, has surprised himself and touched an area that is foreign to him.

I am no closer to fully understanding the best things that I've written, because there's a sense of something being quite untouchable. For some reason, you've caught the waves of whatever it is you're going through and been able to express them emotionally. And it's something quite fine unto itself.

Eno, of course, would disagree with me completely. Was it Socrates who held that poets should be able to explain themselves?

GLASS: He's not my favorite philosopher. He was the one who was going to outlaw music in the *Republic*.

I don't think I could have written this piece without having gone through the experiences I have: I had to reach a certain point in my thinking and writing. There are two aspects: One is that I had enough of a sense of my art that I could take on someone else's art. It's hard to do that. You have to really know who you are before you deal with somebody else. The other point is that, technically, having gone through all those operas that I did, I finally had a clue about the orchestra. I knew how to write for it. Ten years ago I couldn't have done it. And I wasn't a bad composer in those days. I'd just done *Einstein* and *Satyagraha*. I think there are some great things about being older, aren't there?

BOWIE: Yes, I'm really feeling the weight of the added years in a pleasant way.

MUSICIAN: *In terms of accrued wisdom?*

GLASS: If only it were wisdom. Let's say experience.

BOWIE: It is crude. [laughter]

GLASS: Also, you're a little more relaxed. To take a classic like this and to try to do something with it is a kind of shameless thing. I think you just have to be relaxed enough about failure and success. You've had enough failure and success so that neither one is going to change you very much. Don't you find that?

BOWIE: Yes. And if at the end of the writing and the recording process you think it is a success, then it is a success. It doesn't matter how it's received. When I was younger, I endeavored just to be inventive. That was very important. Now, it's quite fine that I'm maybe repeating bits of what I've done before, reevaluating them and incorporating those techniques into what I'm writing now. That has come with the years. And it's not necessarily something that a 25-year-old is going to feel.

There are obviously exceptions. But, generally, the younger you are, the more you write for other people, to have reflected glory.

MUSICIAN: *At the time Low came out, each of you was bucking a system. Philip, you've mentioned that you were fleeing from the serialists.*

GLASS: That's very true. We were involved in a reform movement within the field of contemporary music. That was what so-called Minimalism was—basically a reform movement to throw out all the over-intellectual stuff that had landed everybody in a cul-de-

sac. It was clear that something dramatic had to happen.

David and Brian were also rebelling from a kind of conventionality that had overtaken—and continues to overtake—pop music. In pop music, that cycle is much faster.

BOWIE: Every time that cul-de-sac is reached, you've just got to strip back everything that's gone down and throw away all the artistic pretensions of the time.

GLASS: Try to get back to the roots...

BOWIE: Try to get back to the roots of why you wanted to do it. It doesn't just happen once. It

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can happen many, many times. Philip has always meant a lot to me. I also like Steve Reich a lot. I thought the album he came out with a few years ago, *Different Trains*, was absolutely marvelous. Into the classics and really quite silly music, as well—French chansons.

When something is well-crafted and responsive to the society that it's written for, then it gets me and I just get it. Except for country western. When Buddy Rich was being wheeled into the operating room, the surgeon asked, "Are you allergic to anything?" "Yeah, country western." I feel like

him. I don't get it. I get Johnny Cash.

MUSICIAN: *David, a lot is made about your chameleonic changes in image over the years. But there's a logical aspect to an appropriatist like yourself, shifting personae and raiding the annals of culture in the late 20th century.*

BOWIE: I'm a post-modernist. [laughs] It's been the only phraseology that I think has been applicable to what I've done—sort of eclectically put together an alternative reality of things past, remembered. Actually, I'm a pre-post-modernist. That's one of Brian's

phrases. And I don't know who he got it from. [laughs]

MUSICIAN: *Ironically, though, in the '80s—while post-modernism was having its field day—your work was more in the pop mainstream than, say, up through Scary Monsters. After Let's Dance, you headed down the middle of the road, didn't you?*

BOWIE: '83 through '88 were very hard years for me, artistically. I didn't like them at all. The *Let's Dance* thing in '83 really floored me. I had gotten very comfortable with the idea that I was a sort of major cult artist, on the level of bands like the Cure. The two albums that followed had so many artistic pitfalls, and do show them. My concern is that I think there are some really good songs on the albums. Because of my indifference or my timid attitude about what I was supposed to be doing, not quite knowing, I gave arrangements away to other people working with me. They did a very fine job, but it wasn't the kind of job I would have done had I applied myself to it.

And then, fortunately, I met up with Reeves Gabrels, and it was probably his being there that pulled me out of it. It was not necessarily his musical influence, because his influences are ones I recognized in a lot of my older collaborators, like Eno and Fripp. But it was just like he represented them all, all in one rather tubby body. [laughs] Sorry, Reeves. Everything, the wit, the intelligence, the attitude to playing, just made me reflect what it was I really enjoyed doing in music and why I loved it so much. So I think getting into Tin Machine was a natural follow-through from that.

To some extent, that avenue has led me to do a solo album, which I really hadn't perceived doing for quite some time. The other thing was the wedding that I had, and the music that I found I would need to write for the service. Those two things together, the experience with Tin Machine and the wedding, really propelled me into making a solo album.

MUSICIAN: *"You've Been Around" seems like a fairly autobiographical tune. Is that safe to say?*

BOWIE: It *infers* autobiography. Now, whether that's an invented autobiography or not, I'm not sure. I'm not sure if I really want to analyze it myself, either. Some lyrics I really do stay well away from. There are lyrics where I really don't want to know what it was I was saying on them, because they probably reveal more of me than I thought I was revealing at the time.

Which, of course, is ludicrous, because all

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artists, painters, musicians or whatever, reveal everything about themselves. Every time they commit an artistic act, they blow the whole thing.

I always thought I was objective and distanced from my work, but looking back, it's quite evident that each album I've made has been an accurate snapshot of my state of mind at that particular time. Which is not altogether a bad thing. It might help me recollect what it was I was going through. I should listen to my albums more often.

MUSICIAN: *In terms of the production and layering of elements, you predated the cultural ransacking/hip-hop sensation. Did that influence you as it came to fruition in the last several years?*

BOWIE: Yes, I think it did. That was the major thing for me about hip-hop and also a lot of the backing work to rap music—the way that they juxtapose different elements together, and the way they cut up and sampled things. It really felt like [conceptual artist] Brion Gysin coming of age. Bill Burroughs said it would happen someday, that the only way to face chaos is to answer with chaos. There's no point in trying to answer chaotic questions with rationality. It's fighting fire with fire.

I thought that first wave of black music was really exhilarating. Although I wouldn't expect to be doing rap music on the next album. But the idea of revitalizing the idea of cut-up technique was fabulous, I felt. It certainly helped me to get back into that. I probably hadn't done that to any great extent since *Scary Monsters*.

MUSICIAN: *But Black Tie White Noise is layered horizontally as opposed to vertically.*

BOWIE: Yes. I think that's possibly because it is rooted in far more the romantic approach to melody. They're very strong and sweeping melodies and are not very modern in that way. Again, the juxtaposition of those melodies with a sort of rather formally restructured underpinning, musically, has made it quite interesting.

MUSICIAN: *You were mentioning how R&B melodies tend to carve their own path. That's particularly true of the title tune on the new album. The Marvin Gaye influence really rises to the surface.*

BOWIE: That was done consciously. It was trying to evoke some of the feeling he had when he put out that album, *What's Going On*. It was a referral point. That was a very strong message at the time. I wanted to pay some kind of lip service to that.

MUSICIAN: *This album has a fairly romantic*

nature, in general, despite its points of friction.

BOWIE: It does indeed, with all its questionings. That was it. I didn't want pure slop, but definitely the bias was towards the commitment to a relationship. But it is underpinned with questionings of why one does that and what, in fact, is it going to bring—hazardous things that you're not supposed to question, I suppose. But one does.

MUSICIAN: *Part of being human, I guess.*

BOWIE: Yes. The humanization of Bowie. God, I can see it now.

MUSICIAN: *"The Man Who Fell to Humanity."*

BOWIE: Oh, the times I've seen that—the man who finally fell to Earth. Oh, man. On every album I fall to Earth, since I stopped doing characters. My first man who fell to Earth angle, I think, was with *Heroes*. He's gone to Berlin and found some of himself.

MUSICIAN: *Philip, collaboration has been a part of your aesthetic for a long time. But the "Low" Symphony is different, somehow. It's more like a variations-on-a-theme, isn't it?*

GLASS: Not that different. I said to David once that this is a collaboration in which he did his part in '77 and I did my part in '92. It isn't that

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different, actually, from my working with Twyla Tharp or Bob Wilson. What's interesting about collaboration is that it brings you to places that are unexpected, things that you couldn't get to on your own.

I started collaborating with visual artists and dancers. It's only been in recent years that I've begun to collaborate with musicians, and it's very difficult and interesting. I did this record with Foday Musa Suso called *The Screens*. People who aren't close to me—who are close in one way but not another, people like Foday, who is a West African

griot or David, who's an English griot. [laughs] The history of the tribe, recounted in song.

Variations-on-a-theme is one thing. I think this is different. For me, collaboration is about discovery, and very often, variations-on-a-theme are about composers being very clever. Rachmaninoff's "Variations on a Theme by Paganini" is extremely clever, or the Brahms-Haydn. There's an American guy, Frederic Rzewski, who did some nice variations. But often, the variations form is where a composer shows off.

Anyway, David, I want to get you to talk about your work with Brian on the record. You never really told me much about it.

BOWIE: An awful lot of the time it was spent out of the studio from each other. We found, ultimately, that the best way of working with each other was to go away when the other one came in to work. We've both got very strong opinions.

Often we would do something like—Brian would come up with a tempo and count off beats, lasting for, say, four or five minutes. Then, we'd pick a key and he'd write something in a chordal way in that key and notate on a piece of paper how many beats he'd been playing that chord. Then he'd go get a sandwich and I'd go in and take the tracks down so that all I knew were the keys of the chords as they came up, according to the beats. I'd just play, say, a melody line over that section. Then he'd come back in, we'd pull up the faders and see what happened. If it was nice, we kept it. If there were any interesting mistakes, we'd repeat it, so it would sound like an arrangement.

GLASS: How long did it take to do the original?

BOWIE: Not very long. Three weeks or so.

GLASS: This procedure that you were talking about in terms of working in the studio would not be uncommon to people working in experimental music, creating a conceptual strategy that would produce something unexpected.

BOWIE: And that was very much instigated by Brian himself, because, ultimately, his road in life is as a conceptualist. I completely concur with Philip on the subject of collaboration, because I think some of my most pleasurable times have been when I'm collaborating with someone. A third point of view becomes apparent, a third sensibility that happens, quite magically.

MUSICIAN: Low began as a collaboration and now continues—

BOWIE: Absolutely. It's the quintessential collaborative work.

MUSICIAN: What's its next phase?

BOWIE: [laughs] I believe Nirvana is doing a version.

MUSICIAN: Has your longevity surprised you?

BOWIE: God, yes. It surprises me that I've got any money in the bank, because I'm totally incapable with business. Oh yes, I give thanks every day. It's wonderful to still be doing work in the profession that I chose. It's a gift. It's fantastic. [He looks heavenward, clasping his hands contritely] Thank you. I thoroughly appreciate it. [Then he looks downward] I promise I have forgotten the deal we made. ♪

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[cont'd from page 39] everything was on his time schedule. I was up all night every night for two months, and that's not me. It was tedious, but we'd get together to work on the songs—musicwise, it's a pretty trusting rapport between us. And you do what you need to do to maintain that."

THE SUCCESS OF *Grave Dancers Union* isn't the only thing that's changed for Soul Asylum since the days when they went by the name Loud Fast Rules. Dan Murphy is 30 now, and none of the others is much more than a year behind him. Everybody's married besides Pirner, who's had the same girlfriend since junior high; Murphy has a three-year-old son. Compared to all that, the changes they're going through now don't seem so dramatic.

Grant: "The more popular this record gets, the more we end up talking about ourselves. You lose yourself a little when you talk about yourself so much. You lose some of the naivete the music is partially based on."

Karl: "I live in a double bungalow, and people keep asking my neighbor, when's he moving out? He must be rich now. Everybody wants my fucking apartment. In people's perception things are wildly different. But day to day they really aren't."

Dave: "There's definitely a romantic air attached to the days of being stuck in a van, sleeping on people's floors and meeting the strangest people you could ever imagine. But when you're sleeping in that cold van, you're not thinking *hey, this is great!* Things like having a guitar tech have been a very meaningful experience for me. At the gigs my guitars just used to disintegrate, and you could not do the job. It drove me crazy. But hire a guy and then the guitar's put in my hands and it's in tune and it's a great thing. What a great invention: the guitar tech."

If there's an overriding emotional current on *Grave Dancers Union*, with all its songs about feeling cut loose from old moorings and unsure of new ones, it's fear. That seems appropriate when you realize that Pirner wrote the songs without knowing whether Soul Asylum would even get to release them. Or whether he'd get to play his guitar loud again. "I really am afraid," he says. "I was raised to believe you had to get an education or you were fucked. To walk away from that was a big deal for me. I think a lot of my fear is of having to do something I don't want to

do. I cherish the opportunity to make music. During the time I didn't have it, I was scared to death. I felt totally worthless. I felt like I was stuck back in the world I grew up in."

Having a hit record pushes that specter a little farther back into the closet. But not much. "It definitely seems to me like I'm gonna be able to do it a little bit longer. I can find comfort in that. But it just means," he laughs grimly, "that I'm gonna be that much older when it's over."

"I'm wary of becoming a victim of my creative output. It really doesn't teach you to do

anything else. I'm totally wound up in making music, to the point where I can't deal with a checkbook. I can't wake up in the morning. I can't find my way around in a car—people always drive me. And I sit there and think about writing songs. It's kind of scary to think of ever going back to the real world and getting a job.

"That's kind of lame, I know. But it's still a little too good to be making a living playing music. I'm realizing a romantic ideal: to keep the spontaneity and to give yourself a context to be totally out of control, all the time." 🐾

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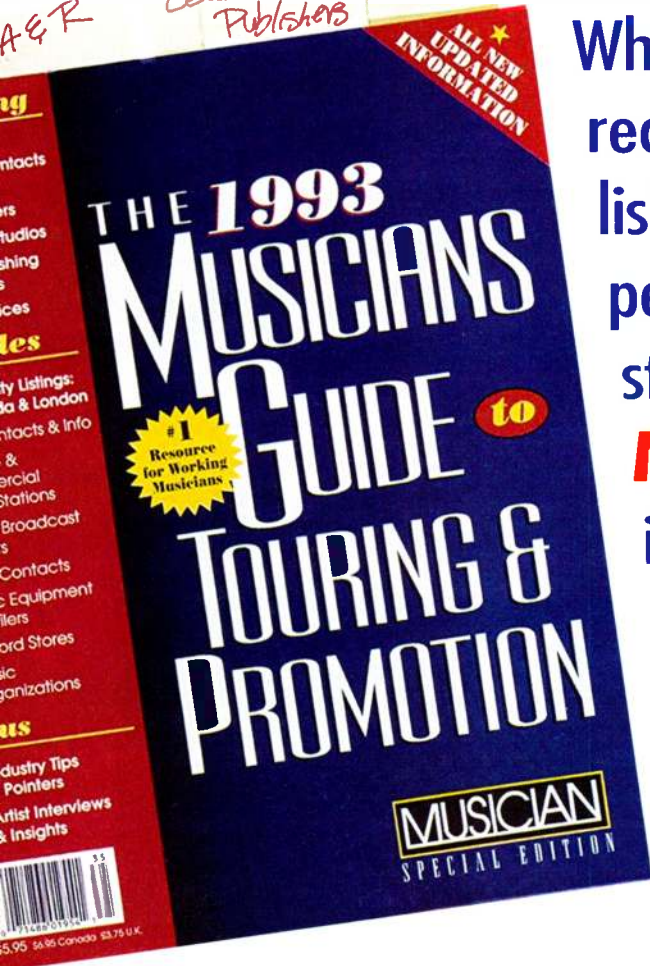


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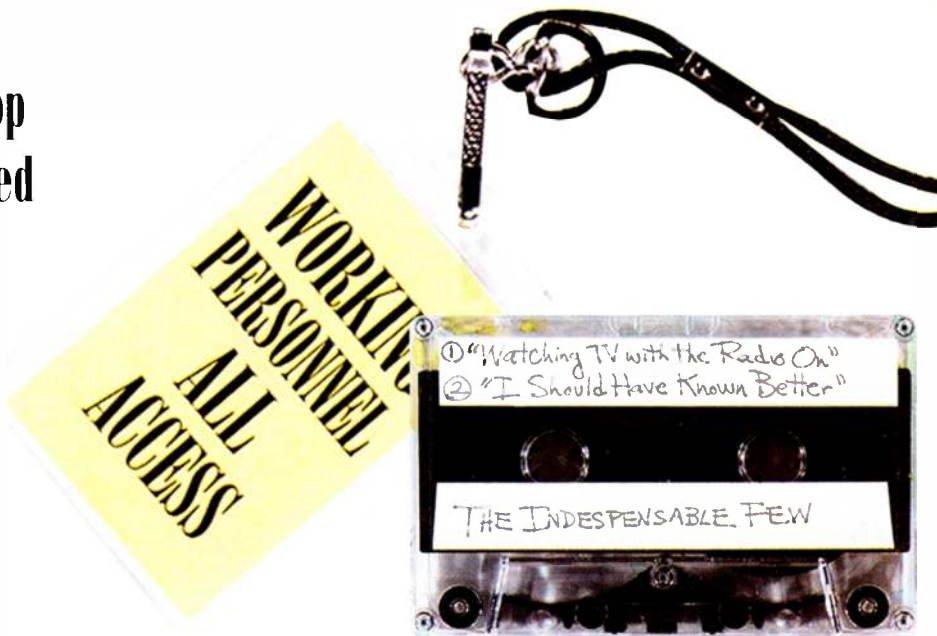
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THE ALIENATED LONELY LOVESICK ISOLATION OF

CHRIS ISAAK

A LOST POET ADRIPT FROM HIS OWN BEGINNINGS—
LIKE OTIS IN MAYBERRY

CHRIS ISAAK HAD A DREAM one night last year that he can't shake. It was a vision of such contentment as to make every conscious moment anticlimactic and dreary in its wake. ☞ His dream didn't involve untold riches laid out in small, unmarked denominations. Nor did it star the cooing background chick singers from "Wicked Game" showing up on his front doorstep with a dozen buck-naked friends as a birthday surprise. It wasn't a bedside visitation from Elvis, Ricky and Roy to bestow their providential blessing on his career. It wasn't about finding the lost tremolo chord or accidentally stumbling across God's own room for reverb. There were no dwarves talking backwards in a red-curtained room. "No," Isaak recounts, steadily and earnestly, "my dream was *weird*." ☞ In the dream he was 15 again, back in his hometown of Stockton, California, riding his bike with the baseball glove hanging from the handlebars like it always did. Down at the local park the boys were waiting. The afternoon was sunny. The dream was a period piece, set in that era in everyone's life when moments are connected by the soft tissue of sweet anticipation and there's so little of the bone-scraping, arthritic agony that follows. ☞ "I was so happy in the dream," Isaak says. "The dream is that

feeling where you're just so happy, no worries, no business, things haven't gone wrong yet. And you wake up and you say to yourself, 'Well, I'm not that, but I do have all these other things'—"

Certainly, Chris. You've sold millions of records maintaining a strict musical integrity when the experts said it couldn't be done. You made the radio safe for pop classicism again. You're on your way to becoming a movie star. Your record company renegotiated your contract to give you a sweeter deal. *People* magazine named you one of the world's most beautiful people. Guys everywhere want to steal your perfect

hair and your cool jackets and girls want to eat your flesh. Life doesn't get much more—

"—And then I thought to myself, 'Aw, I'd trade it.' If I could be 15 and going to play baseball down in the park, I would trade all that stuff."

Chris Isaak has a talent for irony, but when he comes to longing—as he does here, and as he often does in his music—not even the tip of a tongue gets lodged in his well-chiseled cheek. As close as a stranger can come to it, anyhow, this is the real Isaak: hardboiled cynic, lost naïf. Such romantic dualism is a large part of his appeal, and the part of his person-

BY CHRIS WILLMAN • PHOTOS BY MARK HANAUER

ality that suggests that success will never really alter his moods. There will always be the high school sweetheart who got away to inspire a beyond-lonesome lament, the junior high ballgame he can't quite pedal his way to before the alarm clock goes off for that early shoot with Lynch or Bertolucci. As long as the things you convince yourself you want most are safely under glass in that most ir retrievable place, the past, then you've got a potentially limitless supply of, as Dale Cooper might say, *damn good* song fodder.

"I think what makes people romantic is that they have a lot of longing for things that are gone, or for things that they don't think will ever really come to pass. And that can be where I'm coming from, thinking about those things that were so beautiful about that town growing up and stuff that I really do miss. And I would give anything if I could go back. I mean, *really go back*."

"But it's not good to think about things like that," he announces suddenly, perhaps stricken by the severity of his yearnings. "That's what got Oskar Werner in trouble in *Fahrenheit 451*. Remember?"

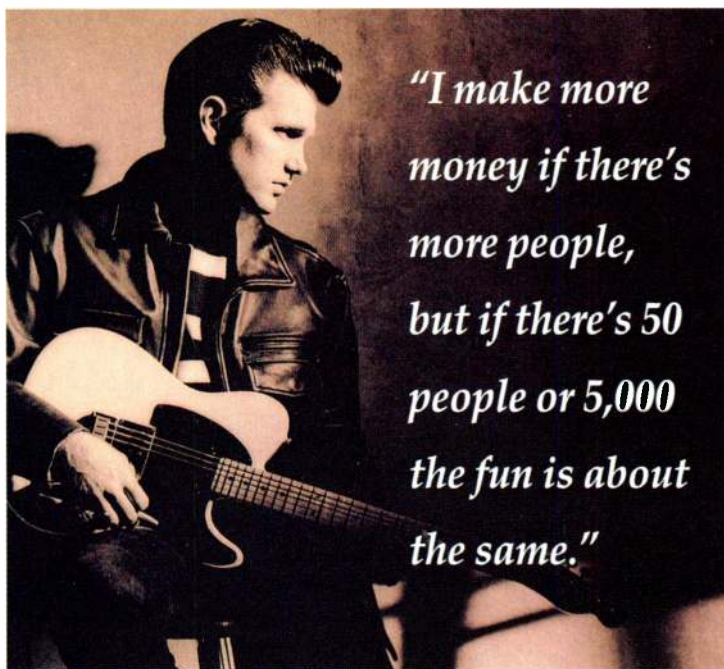
THERE'S SOMETHING DEFINITELY Lynchian—as in David Lynch, who used Isaak's music in *Blue Velvet* and *Wild at Heart* and directed him as an actor in *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*—about the singer's wistful middle-Americanisms. With Lynch, it's impossible to tell for sure how much of the obsession with innocence lost is an affectation and what's heartfelt. But Isaak comes by his nostalgic covetousness honestly, unless he's putting on the world's greatest suckers' act.

We meet up at Isaak's favorite hangout, an inexpensive, out-of-the-way dinner spot in the place the singer has made his adult home, San Francisco's quiet Sunset District.

"Any dessert?" asks the terribly sweet waitress, as the other last remaining patrons file out, leaving us in a lonely but well-lit "Nighthawks at the Diner"—style tableau while the town rolls up outside.

"Nothing for me, I'm okay," Isaak tells her. "Gotta lose 100 pounds."

The waitress does a pretty good double take, falling easily into her role as foil. She knows this leather jacket-, pink shirt-wearing guy's a card; hell, the goofball's eaten here some 200 times in the past year alone, by his estimation. Quite an accomplishment, considering that two months out of said year were spent in the Far East, acting in the movie *Little Buddha* with the esteemed director Bernardo Bertolucci. Before that, Isaak spent long, happy stretches holed up in a recording studio just a short bike-ride from here, where—when he wasn't playing hooky during technical setups by pedaling a few blocks to the ocean to go surfing—he recorded his fourth album, *San Francisco Days*, his first release in almost four years.



"I make more money if there's more people, but if there's 50 people or 5,000 the fun is about the same."

The habit-forming qualities that would move Isaak to cheerfully chow down at the same glorified diner nearly every evening are well in evidence on the record, too. No radical stylistic departures here: Unwavering to the core, Isaak isn't the type to have taken the surprise mass success of his last album as some sort of mandate to branch into previously unexplored avenues of pop. Then again, neither has he tried to reprise that success by coming up with an entire LP's worth of "Wicked Game" clones. "Can't Do a Thing to Stop Me" (the first single) is the sole number with that familiar haunting groove, complete with an impossibly soft, reach-out-and-taunt-someone female backing chorus.

Within the reliable neo-roots rut he's spent years making uniquely his own, though, *San Francisco Days* probably does offer more track-to-track variety than any of Isaak's previous long players. The title track is smoother 'n silk, with kind of a Glen Campbell vibe. ("I'll take that as

high praise," Isaak says at the suggestion, breaking into a verse of "Wichita Lineman.") "Round and Round," conversely, is a fast, sleazy blues. There's a countrified tune and an acoustic ballad or two and plenty of rockabilly to go around. What it all has in common, besides Isaak's perfect, plaintive croon, is timelessness—of a sort connected to a specific era, mind you—and, inevitably, lonesomeness. Of course, it all sounds very pretty.

"Some of the stuff now that I hear, the drum is really complicated or it's a machine drum and it's the loudest thing on the record. That doesn't move me much," Isaak says. "I like

hearing drums, but I want to have the voice on top. Like my grandmother's friends are always telling me"—he feigns impending decrepitude—"Can't bear the voice. How come the voice isn't up loud? I can't bear what you're saying."

Old fartiness aside, he's serious. "Like Bing Crosby or Roy Orbison or the Ink Spots, anything that I like has gotta have some pretty edge to it. To me, it seems like if you're gonna be a guy who prepares food, the number-one thing is, *does it taste good?* With music, does it sound good? Is it pleasant? Does it make you have a nice feeling?

"Sometimes I read all these things, people talking about what it means." A slightly disdainful pause. "It's pop music, man."

While Isaak's ambitions may seem simple, his methodology is painstaking. Studio work on *San Francisco Days* commenced three years ago, only to be rudely interrupted by the story of Isaak's success. When he began in 1990, his previous album, *Heart Shaped World*, had already been out for a year and a half and was with good reason presumed dead. Then the corpse started banging on the casket lid. After hearing the use of "Wicked Game" as an instrumental in a second-run showing of Lynch's *Wild at Heart*, an influential Atlanta

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program director went back to the station, pulled out the vocal version and put it into rotation. A nation of rock jocks soon followed suit. The single zoomed into the Top 5, while the better-late-than-never smash album soared past platinum status. And Isaak, finding himself called to the road to promote the resuscitated project on a hastily booked year-long concert tour, was forced by happy circumstance to perform an act of *studius interruptus*.

"It was like having the laundry call and say, 'We found a lottery ticket in your jacket, and oh, by the way, it's a winning number.' You know what I mean? You weren't even thinking about whether you were gonna win or lose at that point. I was worrying about the next record."

Erik Jacobsen, who's produced all of Isaak's records, points out that about half the songs for the fourth album had already been laid down in the wake of the apparent failure of the third. "But the big hit after 10 years of trying—to be interrupted with that was something we felt we could put up with. Actually it was great, because then there were a lot of expectations on us for the next record, and to have six great tunes already in our hip pocket gave us a real feeling of complacency."

The break was also fine by Isaak: "I think it's been pretty good for the record, because I had time to write more songs, and the ones that weren't as good I set away. It's gotten to be kind of a greatest-hits."

Though they may not be evident to the ear of the casual Top 40 listener, there were a few new wrinkles during the recording of *Days*. The album's chock-full of keyboards, especially vintage organs, from the majestic Hammond B-3 to the classically cheesy Farfisa, played mostly by Jimmy Pugh (of Robert Cray's band), about whom Isaak can't wax ecstatic enough. There's also a little less of lead-guitar sidekick James "Jimmy" Calvin Wilsey, supplanted to some degree by country hotshot Danny Gatton, not-so-spring-chickenish country steel player (and ex-Buckaroo) Tom Brumley and, most surprisingly, Isaak himself.

Of Isaak's one-man dirty blues jam at the tail end of "Round and Round," relates Jacobsen, "I heard somebody say it was the best thing Jimmy ever played—which made Chris feel good. He really burned on that sucker. But don't forget Chris played the acoustic guitar on 'Blue Spanish Sky.' He's played some great shit over the years, but he just had a little more chance this time and we wanted to do it consciously. You want to have Jimmy on there, and he's a great part of the sound and the success of the whole thing, but as long as he was on every tune, that didn't really give Chris a chance to do something on his own."

It's no secret Isaak and Jacobsen have used studio players on every album to supplement the crack touring unit. What's less known is the

extent to which they employ every tool of musical science known to modern man to get a sound that essentially evokes the '50s. They may like the old records better than what's coming out now, but they're far from purists in their approach to arriving at the feel they're after.

"On the one hand, half of the record was made with no separation in the recording whatsoever and no earphones, just playing live in the studio with Chris lip-synching, with all the leakage. Half of it's like that. And on the other half of it we have just totally computerized and sampled. Yeah, we used every trick in the book. Who wouldn't?"

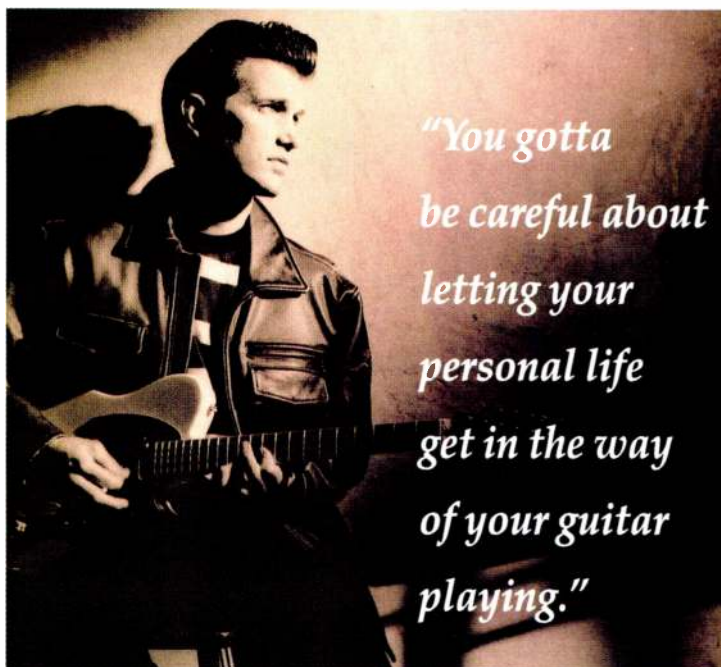
Maybe we need to turn the hearing aid up, then: Where *are* some of these myriad fakeries on the record?

"I don't even want to talk about what's sampled," says Jacobsen, who prior to Isaak was most famous for producing the Lovin' Spoonful's hits. "We had an

Akai sampler in there and made all our own samples. If you would say, 'I noticed it on this song or that song,' I would just say, 'I take the Fifth.' But we use everything there is. It's not a foregone conclusion that anything that's on the computer sounds shrill or doesn't feel right. It's just like a player that's there with great time, on one level... We wanted it to be like an analog record. That said, we immediately jumped into digital, you know what I mean?"

"It's a total case of two perfection-minded guys. Both of us know what we think a good job is and

we don't fool ourselves. We're retentive in every way."



ISAAC HAD AN OLDER brother who turned him on to Hank Williams records at a precocious age. But the Silvertone radio that used to sit in his bedroom became his private turntable, thanks largely to the unhealthy hours he kept. Instead of doing his homework, he'd stay up till four or five in the morning listening to the local all-night oldies show. Since he seemed to be the only one in sleepy Stockton cogent enough at that hour to be safely operating the controls of a rotary telephone, his requests always got played.

"I'd always think, 'Just 20 minutes more.' I called up and requested stuff like Jan and Arnie, before they were Jan and Dean. Remember that song they did, 'Gas Money'? 'Well if you really want to go, you better come up with some dough, I need some gaaas money.' I heard that at four in the morning and I'm going, 'Yeah!' Listening to the Orbison stuff was really cool like that. It was my way of making contact with some other knucklehead someplace. In Stockton, you don't know what else is going on, but you hear this music and you really feel like there's somebody else out there who has some kind of

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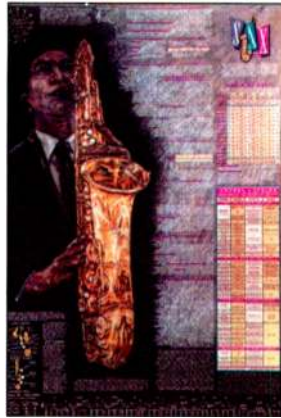


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shared feeling. And from there on it gets poetic and heavy, but there is some kind of big communication going on there. That's why I guess so many people like this stuff."

Isaak kept a writing tool ready by the bedside, to mark the name of key songs for future thrift-store tracking. "Everybody else at school used to listen to modern pop music. I had a stack of 78s and oddball things like Hawaiian records. It was so fun to find those things. You hear a record and it's like you got a message from 30 years ago that maybe nobody else has heard in years, and nobody you mention it to knows that record, and yet it made contact with you—boom—one on one, it totally moves you. What a fantastic feeling that is."

At the time he had no inclination toward being a rock star or even just bottling his own messages. When he did catch the performing bug, moving to San Francisco after post-Stockton detours studying at the University of the Pacific and boxing in Japan, he says he was "embarrassingly naive" about what entertaining entailed in real life: "I went into biker bars when I first started off, and I would sing romantic ballads. I thought you could do that because in the movies, Elvis would go in and sing a romantic

ballad and the place would quiet down. I had never been in bars before and didn't understand how the whole thing works."

Understanding, and experience, haven't affected his lifestyle much. For one thing, Isaak's never even sampled drugs: "I don't do marijuana or cocaine or any of that stuff, and I never have. It's not a big deal to me—I didn't pick my band members and give 'em a drug test. Some of those guys drink a little beer or something, but they're pretty straight. You don't want people messed up around you when you're trying to work."

The first night he ever fronted a band in San Francisco, Isaak recalls, anxiety inspired each player to get plastered, except himself: "I thought, 'If I go out and get drunk, I'll be drinking every night I play. And I plan on playing a lot.' So I didn't, and I was nervous as all hell. And then I realized, you're supposed to be nervous. It's not natural to stand in a spotlight in front of 300 people and sing. So go ahead, be nervous, just live with that..."

"Although," he adds, quick to be reasonable, "I do consume over 15 to 20 bottles of cough syrup a day. But I have a real bad cough, okay?"

If fellow Bay Area-type

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CHRIS ISAAK plays various Gibson guitars and Gibson strings through a Fender Twin. He is currently "between" microphones.

P H E N O M E N A L



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VINNIE COLAIUTA • DW PEDALS

Huey Lewis hadn't already blown it by making it square to be hip to be square, Isaak would surely have a socially acceptable lock on this New Traditionalism. Even now, he maintains, "I'm still a hick in so many things. I make big mistakes." He tells of being out to eat with Lynch and some Hollywood types, and of asking an honest question about the tiny food portions and having everyone laugh because they thought it was *oh that Chris, being a card again*.

Not that he seems a bit insecure about such faux pas. Not when he tells you that mass acceptance hasn't raised his self-esteem or healed his inner child all that much because "my mom always liked the records. Serious, every time we made a record, I'd play it for my mom, and I would trust what she'd think. And I always had a lot of fun. I make more money if there's more people, but if there's 50 people or 5000, the fun is about the same."

Isaak's self-effacing shtick comes off credibly, but there are just enough stray quirks and weirdnesses poking out from under the edges of his rube rap that he still doesn't quite strike you as the natural byproduct of Mayberry.

"I'm like Otis," he retorts, deadpan. "A lost, lonely poet, adrift from his own beginnings."


The *looks* thing is a less comfortable topic. Isaak is profusely apologetic about the famous *Rolling Stone* tank-top beefcake cover shot of a couple years back, which he says he did at the end of a long photo shoot under duress in order not to offend the photographer. And he continues to insist that he looks "goofy, a lot of people do, so I don't

worry about it. I comb my hair nice and wear clean clothes and stuff, so that helps to make me presentable. But before anybody saw me singing or on a magazine, nobody ever made any big deal. I didn't notice girls coming out of the woodwork. And I don't look any different now than I did then."

Jacobsen has a spin on Isaak's almost exaggeratedly humble persona: "I think maybe what you're sensing is a guy who's not afraid to act like he always wanted to act—a guy who really is just not taken with himself, and maybe a guy trying to make a conscious attempt *not* to be taken with himself. He didn't just get handsome yesterday; he wasn't just a star yesterday—he's been a star in San Francisco for 10 years, and he was king of France with a big hit there six years ago. He is very much on the case, but he's a four-square guy. He's more concerned with the type of job that he does on his work. That's what he lives for, really. What more could you ask for?"

What indeed? "I'm not Mister Zen about guitar," Isaak says, "but I'm pretty much focused in on what I do. You can still have your personal relationships. But you gotta be careful letting your personal life get in the way of your guitar playing. Don't want to let that hang you up, man. It's called priorities."


But doesn't finding the winning lottery ticket in your laundry shatter the mood required to write song after song of unrequited desire and alienation, lovesickness, loneliness, isolation?


"Being alone is always there for everybody," Isaak observes reassuringly, his stock in trade safe from stardom. "Being alone is always available. That's pretty easy." 

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SPEECH MEETS CURTIS MAYFIELD

SPEECH CAN HARDLY KEEP HIS EYES OPEN. It's late morning and the leader of Arrested Development was up until 7:30 a.m. finishing the debut album by Gumbo, a Wisconsin group he's producing. There was a lot of pressure to get it done—Speech leaves in two days for an eight-week tour of Europe. He came home to Atlanta just a couple of days ago from Los Angeles, where Arrested Development won two Grammys. The same day, the annual *Village Voice* poll of the nation's music critics appeared; Arrested Development won album of the year for their debut, *3 Years, 5 Months, and 2 Days in the Life of...*, and single of the year for "Tennessee." A.D. had already been

declared Artist of the Year by both *Musician* and *Rolling Stone*.

Yesterday their album hit the *Billboard* Top 10 for the first time. It had already sold more than two million copies. In two weeks they will release an album and video of their performance on "MTV Unplugged."

So Speech is tired, but he's not stopping. He piles into the front seat of my car, Fulani from Gumbo gets in the back, and Speech slips in a cassette of the mixes they finished this morning for review.

As we pull onto Interstate 75 heading out of Atlanta, Gumbo's potent brand of life music kicks out of the speakers. It's easy to see why Speech was drawn to this—there's a rap in the voice of an African captured by slavers, a protest against blacks joining the army, and the

BY BILL FLANAGAN

HISTORY

*A Southern
seminar on own-
ing your music,
flipping clichés
and making art
out of tragedy*



sort of shifting of musical colors that will make Gumbo accessible to people who normally avoid rap. In other words, Gumbo occupies the same sort of 360-degree musical, historical, social and philosophical landscape as Arrested Development. Speech bobs his head as the sound of cross-fading percussion fills the car, beating against the rattle of Fulani snoring in the back seat.

What got these exhausted musicians out of bed so early is the chance to hook up with history. We are going to visit Curtis Mayfield, one of the giants of rock, funk, R&B and most of the other musical ingredients that go into Gumbo and Arrested Development's aural stew. The first thing most rock fans think of when they hear Mayfield's name is his early-'70s double whammy "Superfly" and "Fred-

die's Dead." But musicians know the complete scope of Mayfield's accomplishments. A Chicago native, 16-year-old Curtis began his career with his high school group, the Impressions, in 1958. They scored right out of the box with "For Your Precious Love," such a big hit that lead singer Jerry Butler left for a solo career. Eventually Curtis assembled a new version of the group around his own songs, singing and guitar playing, and that version of the Impressions had hits all through the '60s. They are best remembered for such spiritual-based civil rights-era records as "People Get Ready," "Amen" and "It's All Right."

By the time Curtis went solo in 1970, he was not only producing and writing for the Impressions, but releasing their albums and others on his own Atlanta-based Curtom Records. Like Herb Alpert at

PHOTOS BY JEFFREY SCALES

A&M, Mayfield had realized that there was no reason to let a record company take the lion's share of his creative work when he could do it himself. Even when "Superfly" made him a solo star, Curtis continued to write for and produce the Impressions (who continue without him to this day) and other artists. Among his countless compositions are "Gypsy Woman," "I'm So Proud" and "He Will Break Your Heart," a.k.a. "He Don't Love You (Like I Love You)." Rod Stewart and Jeff Beck had a hit with a remake of "People Get Ready" a few years back, and En Vogue recently scored a gold single with "Something He Can Feel," a song Curtis wrote and produced in the '70s for Aretha Franklin.

Because he was so successful as a singer, writer, producer and record executive, some people forget that Mayfield was also a groundbreaking guitarist. His funk work in the '70s was widely imitated, but he had made his mark even earlier, with the languid, beautiful playing he did on Impressions records. As *Musician* said in naming Mayfield one of the 100 greatest guitarists, "Hendrix's rhythm playing on pieces like 'Little Wing,' with its hammered sixths and seconds in and around clean chords, is all Curtis. His imprint is indelible."

Mayfield continued to play, record and release albums on Curtom into the '90s. One of his last singles was a duet with Ice-T. But there won't be any more. In August of 1990 a lighting rig fell on Curtis while he was onstage in New York City. He was paralyzed from the neck down.

So when Speech, Fulani and I find his big house in an exclusive, woody neighborhood north of Atlanta, we are a little nervous. We don't know what to expect. What we find is a man still filled with the life force. Curtis sits in a wheelchair in the middle of a big living room, surrounded by his kids, grown and small. There is a hospital bed and a stereo system. Arrested Development's CD sits on one speaker. He greets us warmly, sweetly, although he cannot move beyond smiling and turning his head. He dictates business decisions to his son Todd, who now runs Curtom. *Get this song to En Vogue, that tape to Boyz II Men, use this duplicating service and tell them not to...* Shanachie Records has just released *People Get Ready*, an all-star tribute album. MCA has put out a 40-song Mayfield anthology, and Curtom is busy re-releasing his individual albums on CD. Meeting Curtis Mayfield is not like visiting a patient in a hospital; it is like being called into the throne room of a king.

MUSICIAN: *Speech, you're from Milwaukee. Curtis, you're from Chicago. Why did you move to the South?*

CURTIS: I was in and out of here from '58. As a young man with the Impressions we did a lot of touring throughout the southern areas in the early '60s. Eight or 10 acts would travel together by bus. We would go on long tours with Sam Cooke or someone like that topping the bill, whoever had the hot record at the time. Coming out of Chicago and those big cities, we got a chance to see a lot of greenery, a lot of trees. That was my first impression of what I liked about the South. And I could appreciate the *bluntness* of the surroundings. In a black/white situation they met you head-on, you knew where you stood. I especially appreciated Atlanta because never in my life had I seen so many black people en masse trying to be somewhat independent, having their own businesses, owning their own homes. The segregation made black people really want to have their own real estate. I was quite impressed. Plus, my dream was always having a little land around my house.



"I hope when people look back on the '80s and '90s they'll know the gangsta reality wasn't the only reality."

MUSICIAN: *You say you appreciated the bluntness in black/white situations. But the South in the late '50s and early '60s was awful blunt!*

CURTIS: Well, it was blunt everywhere. I'd rather be confronted than stabbed in the back. Chicago was one of the most segregated, prejudiced places I'd ever seen. I could sense the difference.

MUSICIAN: *Speech, you came here many years later.*

SPEECH: 1987. A lot of my childhood was spent in the South. My mother used to send me down to Tennessee every summer to spend time with my grandmother. So I always felt a very special appreciation for that environment, for the earth and for the trees. Up north I was playing with video games, down south I had the grass and the fields. It gave me a whole new appreciation and it gave me a warmth. I felt like a family member of the earth, of the world, of everything that was around me. It gave me a special type of hug. It still does. I feel more at home here. The whole natural environment—the trees, the soil, the weather—welcomes me.

MUSICIAN: *Both of you create spiritual, uplifting music. But both of you*

have worked in styles associated with more negative, violent energy, and subverted the vocabulary of those styles. I'm thinking of Arrested Development's "People Everyday," which turns gangsta rap on its head by suggesting that a real tough guy would not be a bully or disrespect women. And I'm thinking of Superfly—the movie glamorized coke dealing and gangsters but Curtis's songs were presenting an opposing point of view. The songs said, what you see on this screen may look cool, but it will destroy you.

CURTIS: I suppose so. It was very easy for me to recognize many of the surroundings when I read through the script of *Superfly*. It being a low-budget movie and visually showing the glittering surfaces, I chose to go in depth, so people could take the positive way of

thought, even though they were watching a movie that might have invited them toward the glitter and the highlights.

I knew better. You could see where it was coming from had there not been some positive guidances lyrically. I didn't want to insult the intelligence of the kids, the consumers who knew what it was really all about. They needed that. The movie itself called for those things. We talked about the Pusherman, we spoke about Freddie, who was ripped off, we went into the cocaine songs and expressed ourselves. It made the movie more popular.

SPEECH: I use the vocabulary because it's what I'm used to. It's not as if I'm an outsider using the vocabulary to change it around. I'm an insider who has a different viewpoint on some of the issues. The vocabulary was something that was just natural, it's something I hear all the time, it's part of my experience. As far as trying to change it and bring more of a positive light, I felt that it was needed, because hip-hop today is so one-sided. The only viewpoint you hear is that of a gangster and someone who says, "I hate life and F-you," and all this stuff. That may be one viewpoint, but there are others. Black music needs to have a rounded viewpoint, as opposed to having just one view of how black people think. I hope our music gives another perspective of black thought and black reality.

MUSICIAN: *The anti-Arrested Development backlash has begun. As soon as something new starts to take hold, the arbiters of taste jump up and say, wait a minute, this thing is okay off to one side but we don't want it to go down the middle.*

SPEECH: One thing about Arrested Development—we don't either. We don't ever want our viewpoint to be *the* viewpoint. When I wrote the songs I wasn't famous, I was a nobody. I just wanted to give another perspective. This wasn't ever being said. Never did the group want to become the official voice of everyone. I don't think we are and I don't want to be.

Our purpose was not to make just happy-go-lucky music. Our purpose was to make people want to live. To me, in hip-hop the whole perspective of youth had gotten so overwhelmingly depressing. How can anybody want to change the situation they're living in if they don't want to live? We wanted to recognize all the bad things going on—the killings, the shootings, AIDS and everything that's crushing the communities—but we wanted to make people understand that you've got to still be alive in order to change it.

CURTIS: I'd like to congratulate Speech on coming to us with those terms, because it does bring about a respect. A lot of people want to hear it, want to pull away from what is usually looked on as the mainstream. It's something people can relate to. In "Mr. Wendal" you spoke of being able to learn from someone many people look down

upon and pass by. But if they'd just take time they could learn much more than they might through what is considered intellect in schools. It's almost like in one of my songs, "If There's a Hell Below, We're All Going to Go": "Educated fools from uneducated schools." Take a minute to listen to all sides—you might gain much more strength and intellect than you would with a tuition of 30 thou.

MUSICIAN: *In "Mr. Wendal" Speech writes from his own perspective, meeting a homeless man. Curtis, in your song "Homeless" you speak in the homeless man's voice.*

CURTIS: I think over the 50 years I've been here on Earth, if I haven't experienced it, I've been gifted with the ability to see through others their pain, their stress, their hardships. You don't have to have fallen in every hole to understand. I came up as a kid as one of five children, we lived with my mother in a room about as big as this. I went to nine

grammar schools before I even got to high school. It was like gold to me when we got a chance to move into the projects. I was with my grandmother as she was trying to become a minister back in the early '50s, so I could understand a woman's stress way back before women as individuals struggling to become more equal were hitting the media. Her church was the Travelling Soul Spiritualist Church, little storefronts. Even as a youngster I was a good observer of life. If you take it in and be a little serious about what's happening, it's not hard to understand and be able to relate it back.

MUSICIAN: *Both of you have made a point of demanding respect for women in your songs. Curtis' "Woman's Got Soul" has the same message as Speech's "Natural"—which is, "You men may say that woman's not good-looking by your shallow standards, but she's got a beauty that's purer and more powerful." It's another example of how you flip clichés.*

SPEECH: We have three women

in our group. Their influence makes it a lot easier to have respect for women in the lyrics! It would be just as sexist for me to take the credit for bringing about very positive, uplifting lyrics for women. The women in the group played a large role in projecting those positive images and making sure that the group had that type of positive image for women. They had their own strengths, as opposed to me as a man giving them that strength.

My mother was the one who raised me. With that single-parent type of reality, I had a large respect for the women in my family. I dare say that in most black families that I know of, the women are the backbones. I surely have a lot of respect for women.

CURTIS: I'm not going to say I don't love beautiful women. As a

**"While you're shaking
your shaggy shaggy,
you can still have some-
thing to think about."**



youngster it took learning for me. I thought if it was beautiful and pretty and had the features advertised in the media, that might be what you want. But you learn real fast that what you think is beautiful on the surface can be so ugly in depth. And what might be considered to be not in the mainstream of what America considers beauty can be very beautiful if you allow yourself to get into it. I think my first teaching about that was looking at myself! Even now I ain't the greatest looker, but you learn real fast that you can turn all that around if you come real from the depth of your heart and soul.

MUSICIAN: *Is it possible to get that message across to the kids of the video generation?*

SPEECH: More than trying to get it to all kids, I want to make sure with Arrested Development that that perspective is there. Ultimately, accepting it is up to the individual. We just want to make sure that side of the spectrum is represented. I look at our music as a documentation of one side of black thought. In the future I hope that when people look back on the late '80s and '90s they'll know that the gangsta reality and the glamorous women reality wasn't the only reality. There was another side.

MUSICIAN: *In "Mama's Always On Stage" you tell a young single mother that she was right to follow her conscience and not get an abortion. Considering how angry some people get at any suggestion that young girls should keep their babies, I wondered if you got flak for that.*

SPEECH: No, not at all. I'm not trying to promote single parenthood, but it is a reality. Just like Curtis said, if you understand reality, if you see what's around you, instead of complaining about it, try to seek a solution. "Mama's Always On Stage" is a motivational song for those so many sisters that are pregnant and are single. It tells them you still have to live. Those sisters aren't going to fade away. I think the best way for people to address that is to give them support. Not to say that every sister should become a single parent, but we can't just ignore those that are. It's a song to give support and motivate those sisters to keep on going.

CURTIS: That's what you mean by Mama's always on stage. I can identify with that too, Speech. You've got to remember that a creative person has to walk that line between his own creativity and what sells. But what's most important—and I think Arrested Development has shown the world—is that there's always food for thought. While you're shaking your shaggy shaggy, you can still have something to think about. "Hey, that was down with it! Did you pick up on those lyrics?" It's important to be able to put it in song, make it commercial, and still venture into the real things that are happening around us.

MUSICIAN: *It seemed, Curtis, that in your early work with the Impressions you couched your social commentary in spiritual language. But by the time you went solo in the '70s you were being much more straightforward about the injustice in society.*

CURTIS: I found that I could be more open about it. With the Impressions we're talking about a completely different time, when rock 'n' roll was just being introduced to the population. Every once in a while I'd come up with a "We're a Winner" or "Choice of Colors." While it was somewhat out of the norm for what was considered R&B music, it was right on time for those who were in with the equality movements in this country of ours. It hit home for them. The words were things that people always wanted to say, but no one in the music world was making the statement. To be able to make the statement and musically have enough about it that people could still dance

and rejoice was good for everybody, as well as my own personal fulfillment.

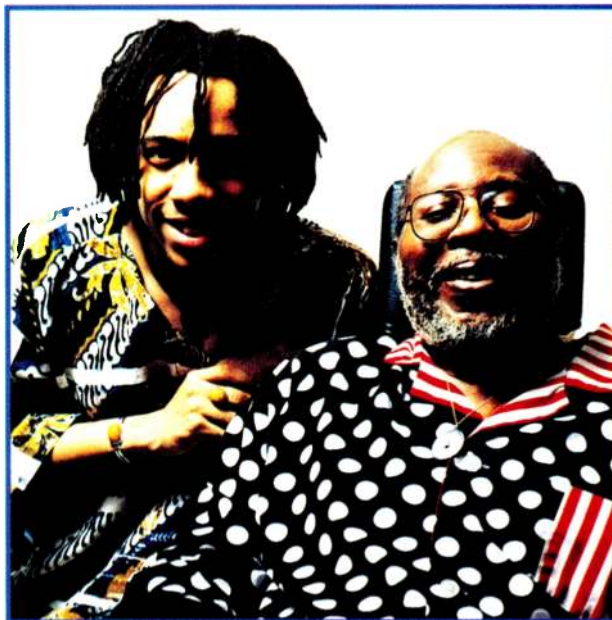
It got a little heavier or more open when I became a single artist and I could write freer, expressing myself without making Fred and Sam have to accept things that might not happen commercially, like "We People Who Are Darker Than Blue," "If There's a Hell Below, We're All Going to Go." It still spoke of inspiration and current events. It was just blunter: "Pardon me brother while you stand in your glory/I hope you don't mind if I tell the whole story."

MUSICIAN: *That's your point, Speech—making sure you tell the whole story. Was the material ever a problem for the other Impressions not just commercially but philosophically, Curtis?*

CURTIS: Well, there was a problem at one time when there were five of us. There was Fred Cash, Sam Gooden, Arthur Brooks and Richard Brooks. I was the youngest and for some reason I kept writing these off-the-wall songs like "Gypsy Woman" and

"I'm So Proud." Richard and Arthur were used to the "5" Royales. They were big, but in my mind we weren't supposed to be them. But Arthur and Richard Brooks wanted to sing that type of music and they quit the group. I remember when we got in one record I wrote Arthur actually broke the record. They wanted to be something else, that was good but that wasn't going forward.

So me and Fred and Sam went on and we set the stage for three-man-harmony groups, which you hear even now. Our next record was "Gypsy Woman," and we carried on with "It's All Right," which lyrically is quite inspirational. I put that song together between shows with Fred and Sam, just sittin' in our station wagon talking. As I would talk Fred would say, "Well, all right." I'd talk some more and



"How can anybody want to change the situation they're living in if they don't want to live?"

Fred would say, "It's all right." Then it hit me—"Say it's all right!" by the time we got back in and dressed we could have sung that whole song on the second show.

MUSICIAN: *I'm trying to comprehend someone hearing "I'm So Proud" and saying, "We can't sing that junk!"*

CURTIS: Yeah, that wasn't where their head was. Sometimes you have those divisions.

MUSICIAN: *Speech, have you had that experience where you can see where music's got to go next, but the other people in your group want to sound like what's already successful?*

SPEECH: It wasn't like that. I picked the people to be in Arrested Development who were most humble at the time, and were hungry and wanted to try something. It was good because they were open-minded about the music. I wrote the music and they accepted it. Plus, they didn't have anything to lose! They weren't doing anything too big before that and neither was I. They had the mindset to want to do something different.

MUSICIAN: *Let's talk about producing other artists. Curtis, you did some of your most successful production work with Aretha Franklin on *Sparkle* and the Staple Singers on *Let's Do It Again*. Do you feel especially comfortable working with singers who come out of gospel?*

CURTIS: Well, so far. Of course, it's important that they have a little talent. But with most people it does become a challenge and a challenge I enjoy. I love *Sparkle*. It's been re-released and from what I hear they can't keep it on the shelves. I'm very proud of that album and of Aretha.

MUSICIAN: *On all the tracks on that album Aretha's voice is way up front and center—except on "I Get High," which is kind of a spooky song about drugs and the ghetto. On that her voice sinks way down into the mix and she wails like she's trying to get out.*

CURTIS: It's funny you mention that. I hadn't heard that album in so

long and a couple of the songs that I had written had been compiled on other albums released by Atlantic. I'd hear something and know it was me but not quite recognize it. I still listen to "I Get High" and I can't remember when I wrote it! [laughter] I must have had just a basic idea and Aretha must have picked up from the other end. What sells that is that it's so spiritual and gospel. I can't make out the basic lyric or how it makes sense! But it really doesn't matter because she carries on in such a gospel manner, it's like a hymn! You kind of get lost in the music. "I had many a..." something. I don't know what she says, but it really doesn't matter. It just works. Like you say, she kind of slows down and buries herself down in the music. It's a production in which Aretha really fulfilled what maybe wasn't a total composition.

MUSICIAN: *En Vogue remade a couple of songs from that album, "Something He Can Feel" and "Hooked on Your Love."*

CURTIS: Yeah, I got a little trophy over there [a gold single for "Something He Can Feel"]. They moved about 2 million of that thing! I feel very flattered. It wiped me out when my kids came home singing "Something He Can Feel" at 10 years old!

MUSICIAN: *Arrested Development did a tour opening for En Vogue last fall. It sounded like a nutty idea but the show worked.*

SPEECH: They asked us, we were flattered. At first I thought it was really sort of crazy. But black people really didn't understand where Arrested Development was coming from at first. It was whites who first supported us. En Vogue has a big black audience and we wanted to reach them. Rap tours are basically nonexistent today because of the violence, so to get a black audience you have to go R&B. I think

it was a good show. It opened a lot of their people up to our album and a lot of our fans up to theirs. En Vogue practice more than any group I've ever seen! They're all ridiculously talented vocalists.

MUSICIAN: *When you're producing another artist, how do you make sure you help them realize their vision, rather than imposing your vision on them?*

SPEECH: You do what's best for the song. The groups that I like to deal with have a definite style and vision of their own. I just try to make it happen the way they want it to.

CURTIS: It's important to know the artists and their abilities—their highs, their lows, their previous hits. And you know, every song you write is not a song you can sing.

MUSICIAN: *Give us an example.*

CURTIS: "Something He Can Feel"! [laughter] Ain't no way I could sing that!

SPEECH: You still have your input, but it's a good thing to get a chance to try things you couldn't do yourself. Like that

part Dionne Farris sang on "Tennessee." I wish I could sing like that!

CURTIS: That was soulfully beautiful.

SPEECH: I gave her some idea of what I was feeling with the song, but it's so good when the artist you're producing brings out sides that you can't do.

MUSICIAN: *I'd like to talk about the direct spiritual roots of what you do. "Jesus" by Curtis is a sermon, "Washed Away" by Arrested Development is a sermon, "Tennessee" is a prayer. Speech, are you a Christian?*

SPEECH: No. But I know God.

CURTIS: You're a believer. I can respect that answer. A lot of people are afraid because the majority of this country is Christian. There are so many things to base your beliefs and your strengths upon, and every-

"The women in our group had their own strength, as opposed to men giving them that strength."



thing taught to you as a kid is not necessary. There's some things you have to discard and some things you have to bring in. It is to put one on the spot to ask, "Are you a Christian," because of the majority. We must still give respect to one who takes from all parts, all sides, whether it be Buddha, Christianity, Muslim, whatever. Every man walks with his own God. Even if you are a Christian and I am a Christian, we may not believe the same things even if we read the same Bible.

SPEECH: The church has always been a pillar to our people, something to hold us up and get us

through some of the roughest experiences known to mankind. So I use the inspiration of the church to keep on moving. But I've noticed a major change in the church and that's what I speak about in the song "Fishin' 4 Religion."

CURTIS: I like that song, there's a lot of truth in that.

SPEECH: Thank you. Before, the church was very much in favor of change and it was very involved with making sure that we changed, that people's situations changed, that the things that you read were acted out. I think that the church for me personally has taken a more pas-

sive role, and that's why a lot of youth are leaving the church. I can speak for black youth especially. A lot of black youth are no longer interested in the church and I think one of the reasons is that we're seeing a lot of drugs, we're seeing a lot of shootings, and many churches are not addressing the issue head-on. They're speaking in too many abstract terms and I think the kids are being turned off. In the song "Fishin' 4 Religion" we're not dissin' the church, we're critiquing it and hoping that they'll gain that strength that they had in the past to address some of the issues the people are faced with in everyday life.

CURTIS: Sometimes everybody's praying, everybody's singing, but when it comes time to do, everybody's leaving it.

MUSICIAN: At the "Malcolm X" press conference you did with Spike Lee last fall, Spike said that he asked Chuck D to write the movie's theme song but Chuck wouldn't do it until the film was cleared by the Nation of Islam. So Spike said he decided to call you because "Speech ain't afraid of no bow ties."

SPEECH: Yeah... I talked to the Nation about that: "Don't get me wrong, Nation, I am scared of you guys!" [laughter] That was funny.

MUSICIAN: You left off one line on the "Malcolm X" lyric sheet: "You don't want me to get a gun now, do you?"

SPEECH: I didn't leave that off! That's not on the lyric sheet? Really? That's amazing! That's a fast one at the record company. [laughter] I didn't read it 'cause I wrote it! By no means would I try to avoid putting that lyric on there. It's a real lyric. It's funny you say this, 'cause the label apparently pulled it away!

I never have wanted Arrested Development to be perceived as something that's unrealistic. We're a very realistic group. Just as there's a need to talk about appreciation for life and the good things that are going on, it's just as realistic to say those good things based on the bad things going on. The world isn't perfect. It's not even great. Our positive lyrics come from the bad realities. "You don't want me to go get a gun now, do you" is just one of those realities. I never wanted to leave that off. I'm surprised that they did. I didn't know.

MUSICIAN: Arrested Development is exploding right now. The opportunities that come with success might distract you from the music.

SPEECH: It doesn't. The music is the reason I'm in it. I'm getting into a production company, but the main reason is to have more control of the music and the creative aspect. I've never really been into business. It's just something I'm enduring. My main focus is music.

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MUSICIAN: In "Give a Man a Fish" you say "You can take away our contracts" but A.D. will still keep going.

SPEECH: Exactly. That's the main thing. If it doesn't happen on the next album we'll still keep making the music the same way we made this album. The music is what's real.

MUSICIAN: Curtis, you owned your own label, Curtom Records. What were the disadvantages?

CURTIS: There aren't any disadvantages. It's very important in this business of music to own as much of yourself as possible. If you have creative talents and don't know how to deal with the business you incorporate, bring people in. Make your intentions clear about how to run the show. You pay out so many dues in the music business, trying to learn. Nobody ever really tells you. You learn from misfortunes and hardships. The name of the game is fortune and fame.

SPEECH: You really have to take control of your own destiny and make sure that what you're doing is what you wanted. I deal more with business now than I do with the music. It's unfortunate, but I have to in order for my creation to come out the way I want.

CURTIS: My way of coming up in this world never allowed me to let go or give away. I have been fortunate. You don't have to be the biggest, or have all the money in the world. But I have been able to have a home, to support and protect my children, to stay above water. Some years it's only status quo. It's not always about making a profit, but at least stay even, don't drop. And always have enough cash so that the world will not catch you in a weak position. That's when they get you. When you can't afford it and must release your strength.

MUSICIAN: Very few artists of your generation could have survived the sort of tragedy you've faced—because they have to perform all the time in order to eat. You must be very grateful now that you kept control of your music.

CURTIS: I can feel so great simply because I get a royalty check for a song I wrote 30 years ago. You live your life to enjoy the present, but we all get old and ugly. [laughter]

MUSICIAN: Let's talk about using music as a response to tragedy. Speech, you wrote "Tennessee" when your brother and grandmother died. Curtis, has new music come to you since you've been paralyzed?

CURTIS: In my mind there's been many a lyric that has come and gone like dreams. I have not written any songs since my accident. If ever there is anything else to be said by Mayfield, I will not play upon my own


personal tragedy. I'm not about making the consumer bleed. These things happen. There's many a song that could be picked up on just through speaking and conversing. I hope to continue to be about the inspiration, the food for thought we people who are darker than blue may need. As well as many minorities and even the majority in this country and the world.

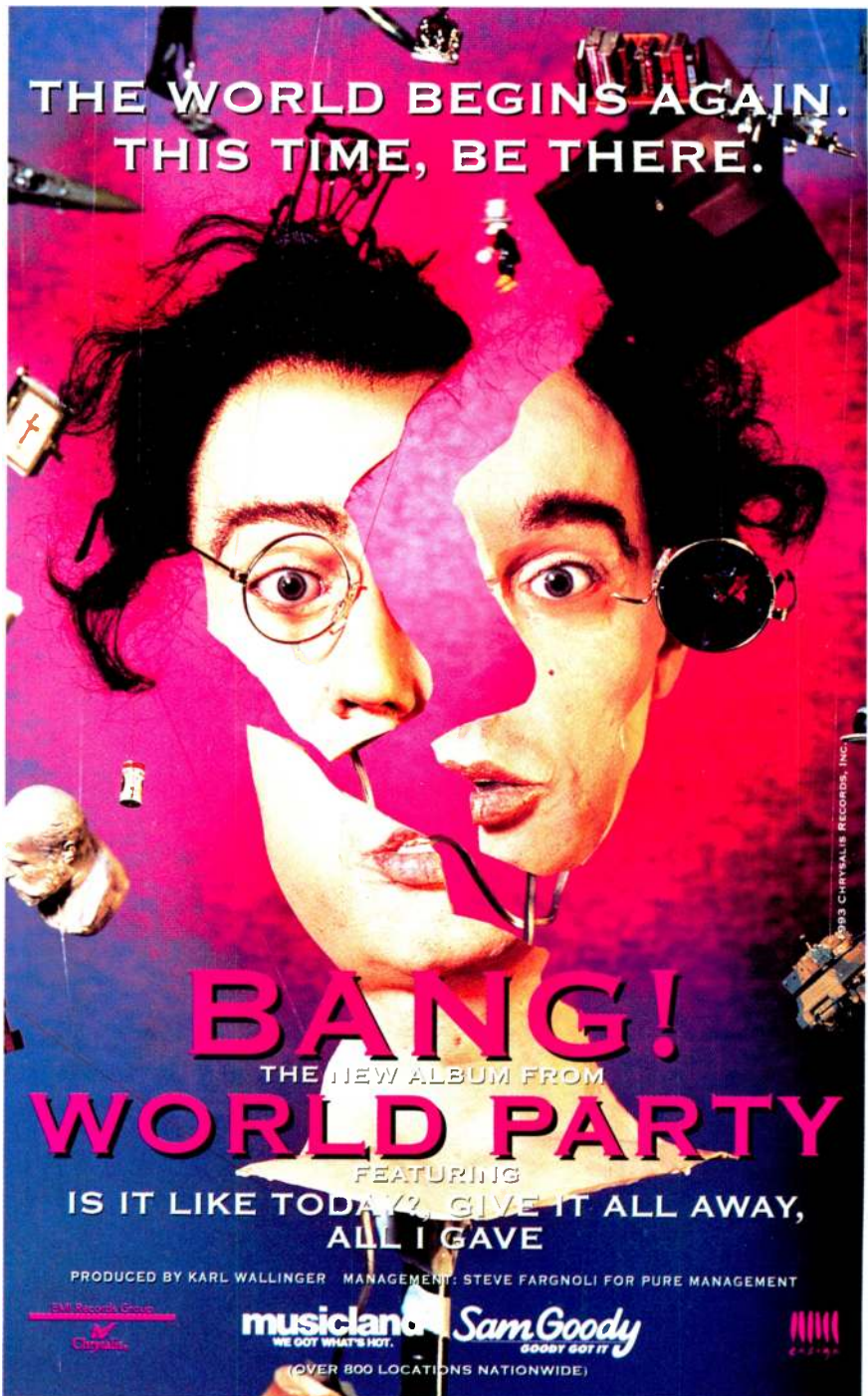
I would think that that is what would be expected of me.

SPEECH: Like Curtis said, you may write a lot of things because of tragedy, but there's no real

upliftment in it. I wrote things I chose not to put out because it was too depressing to listen to.

MUSICIAN: Curtis, can you write without your guitar?




CURTIS: Well, my guitar was the other me, you know? I miss it so much. I used to sleep with my guitar. I miss the sounds, the voicings, and all the movements that it would give me. It was my perfect writing mate. I somehow will have to manage without it. I don't know how I will. I miss it so much. I guess somehow I will survive it. My guitar was a silent partner with a great big voice. 



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The Spin Doctors'

Skin Doctor



Aaron Comess' prescription:
Technique ain't enough
by TONY SCHERMAN

It takes about four seconds to realize that the Spin Doctors' Aaron Comess is a highly schooled drummer. Flanked by his three footloose bandmates, he wears an inward-looking half-smile, playing a beautiful Brady kit with a precision and deliberateness that could only come from years of study.

"You're right," says the 24-year-old. "I started playing when I was nine, and took lessons from day one." But unlike most young players weaned on lessons and exercise books, Comess—probably because he's spent the last two years crisscrossing America in a band devoted to 12-minute jams and group chemistry—has quickly come to see the limits of pure technique. A few days after the Spin Doctors' triumphant New Year's Eve shows at Manhattan's Beacon Theatre, Comess traced his growth.

"I grew up in Dallas, where my first teacher was a concert drummer named Jack Iden. At my very first lesson he gave me a pair of big thick 2B sticks and showed me the ruff, the flam, the five-stroke roll and the paradiddle. The first two years of my

drumming life, all I did was rudiments. After a year he told me, 'You can get a snare drum now.' It was three years before I got a kit, and I really had control of my hands. I studied with him six years and it was the best thing I ever did, as big a drag as it was at the time.

"My next teacher, on drumkit, was named Henry Okstel. We did a lot of technique. Big-band chart-reading, poly-rhythms, independence. He showed me Ted Reed's *Synco-pation*, which is my favorite book. He really got my technique together, but he would never check an exercise off until it *felt* good to him. He'd bring in Elvin Jones transcriptions for me to play, and I remember that one day I played one real raw; I managed to cop the Elvin feel, but fucked up the actual notes pretty bad. Henry checked it off. There we were, working on a whole lot of technique, but he was letting me know how important it is to have fire and feeling."

After high school, Comess went to Berklee College of Music in Boston for a year. "Basically, what I did was practice my ass off. What I really learned at Berklee was how to practice. It would take me a while to get back into this, but here's something like my ideal regimen. Say you've got a summer and want to practice four hours a day. Do an hour of warmups: snare alone, then add toms, then add your feet. After you're warmed up, work on something specific, a book or an exercise, for an hour. Take a break somewhere in there, then take an hour to work on musical forms. Think a 12-bar blues in your head, play a few choruses, take a solo around the form, come back to the song and end it. Do the same thing with a jazz standard. So that while you're practicing, you're thinking music."

Three years ago, Comess came to New York. While the Spin Doctors were getting off the ground, he spent 18 months studying privately with the grandmaster of New York session drummers, Bernard Purdie—"which was great. He's one of the weirdest teachers I've ever had. We spent a lot of time just rapping. Sometimes I'd leave a lesson thinking, 'What a waste of money,' and a year later what he'd said would hit me. Purdie is a heavy dude. We worked on song-playing, which of

course he's great at, and on getting a good sound by hitting different parts of the drums and cymbals. He taught me about balancing my limbs—a lot of people bash their bass drum and their cymbal's too light, or maybe you want one limb to be playing harder than the others. And we worked on time; he'd point out if I was dragging or rushing. I wouldn't mind going back to him for a few lessons right now."

Is there any technique Comess wants to work on? "I'd like to work on Latin stuff. Latin and funk are almost the same kind of thing: You get into a groove and play pretty much the same

figure over and over and the point is to lock into the groove.

"I could get more control of my right foot. Purdie always bugged me to keep my heel down—you get more control that way; also, you can play real light—but I made the mistake of not paying attention to him. I wouldn't mind working on matched grip [a virtual freak among rock drummers, Comess uses the jazz grip], mostly for power in fills. I need to develop finger strength with my left hand, for matched-grip playing."

But right now, chops-building isn't his first priority. What Comess is after is a more myste-

rious, less measurable goal: the groove, the deep groove. "What I want to learn is how to groove harder. But the groove doesn't come from technique. The groove comes from inside. Technique is just a facility for printing out your emotions. For me to take my drumming to the next level, it's not going to come from sitting around working on technique; it's going to come from me learning how to pour my insides out more, how to open up and bust it all out.

"Listen to Tony Williams. He's doing a lot of flashy stuff, but that's usually not what gets me. What gets me about Tony is that he creates a color, and a mood, and when I hear him it just makes me feel great right here, in my heart. What makes Tony great is coming from his mind and his soul. It's your mind that's going to take you further.

"I'll bet a lot of the really heavy guys wouldn't sit here and talk to you about technique all day. They've all worked on technique, but there comes a point when you say, 'Fine, I'll continue to improve technically, but it's time to think more in musical terms.' Most good musicians, even if they're really, really into technique, come to the realization that technique is not music."

"Opening yourself up".... Sure, Aaron, if you say so. But how?

"It comes from being comfortable: with yourself, with other players, comfortable onstage. At Berklee, I ran into a lot of people who learned all this harmony and technique, but if you put them in a room with a band, they couldn't communicate.

"And it comes from awareness. Improving the groove is not the kind of thing I can just sit down and do, but it's something I can strive to be aware of whenever I play, and over the course of time it'll develop. I learn more by listening to myself, and thinking about it, than by practicing. In the last two years I've improved a lot, and they haven't been two of my most practicing years at all; I've improved because I've had so much experience playing [cont'd on page 83]

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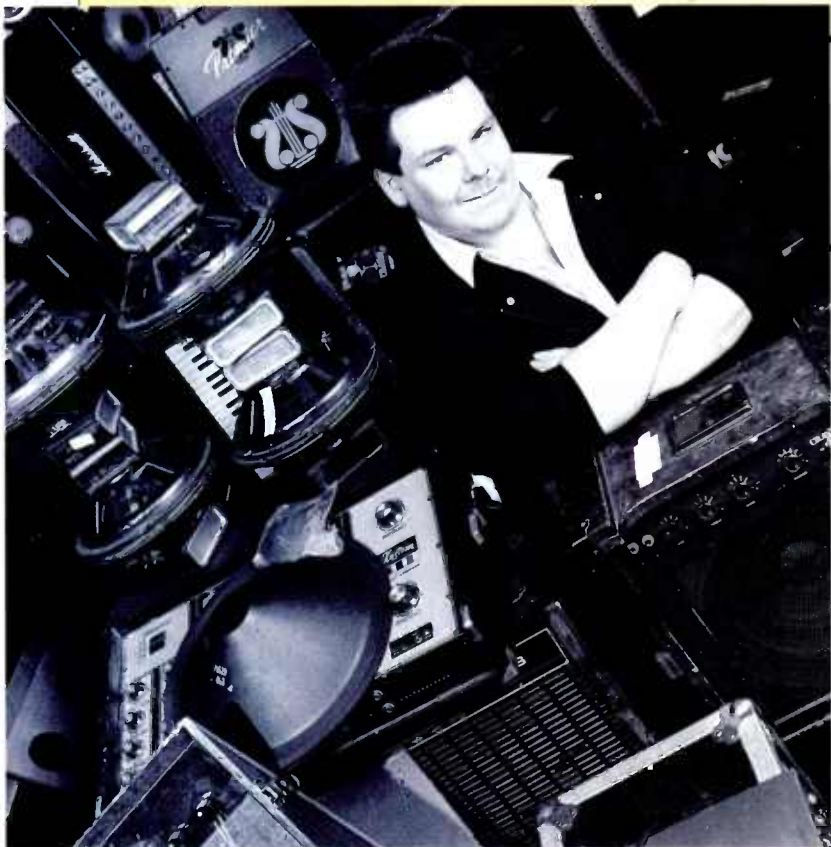
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20 Really Stupid Things to Do to Your Amplifier

*First,
lose the manual...*

by CHARLES M. YOUNG



a real cementhead about your amp. Herewith Gene Andre's list of things not to do if you want to make loud noises at your next gig, and, no, he doesn't think this article will put him out of the repair business. "You can warn people all you want and they won't change," he sighs. "We've got a whole new generation of musicians coming along, and they'll learn the hard way too."

1) **Neglect to switch it on.** "This happens especially with Fenders," says Gene. "When people buy a used amp, they often don't get the owner's manual and they can't find where to turn it on.... No, I don't charge for showing somebody where the standby switch is."

2) **Replacing a fuse with tin foil.** "People need to understand that a fuse in your amp is a safety factor, just like a fuse in your house. If your dog chews the lamp cord, the fuse blows to prevent an electrical fire. If your amp blows in the middle of a show and you don't have a replacement fuse, the temptation is to replace it with cigarette foil or tin foil. But the problem that caused the fuse to blow in the first place is still there! When the job is done, or when smoke starts blowing out, that's when we see it. In a tube amp you can burn the transformer—that's the blood and guts of the amp—and then it becomes a question of whether the repair would cost more than replacement."

3) **Disconnect the speaker.** "If you throw your amp in the trunk of a cab and it bangs around through several miles of potholes, it can jar loose the wire connecting your speaker to your amp."

4) **Wrong impedance.** "Just because you have two jacks in the back of your amp and two jacks in your speaker cabinets doesn't mean they should necessarily be connected. Impedance is the load on the amplifier. If your amp calls for 8 ohms impedance and you hook it up with 4 ohms [8 ohms + 8 ohms = 4 ohms in impedance math] you can damage the amp and speakers. Just remember: Every time you add speakers, you add impedance." *[cont'd on page 75]*

Nestled in the heart of the theater and/or porn district of Manhattan, Andre Audioelectronics lies hidden behind a steel-gray door with an inconspicuous sign announcing its existence. Inside the metaphors leap from every dark corner: the electronic equivalent of a Civil

War surgeon's table, the elephant's graveyard of amplifiers, an alchemical stew for turning static into tone. Stuff in massive piles, stuff hung on the wall all the way up to the high ceiling, narrow canyons for the visitor to negotiate amidst the stuff. A benignly burly presence behind the distant workbench, proprietor Gene Andre learned to repair amps from his father, who started the business in 1969. He does warranty service for Fender, Peavey, Roland, SWR and Yamaha, among other biggies. To speak with him is to know that you are not alone among musicians in being

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World Radio History

Which Release Format for Your Recording?



*CD? Cassette?
Which cassette?*

by MICHAEL COOPER

But cassette tapes are considerably less expensive to produce than CDs. How much money you'll save depends in part on the quality of the cassettes. Cassette shells which are held together by five screws cost a little bit more than the run-of-the-mill molded-shell variety. The latter, less-rigid design allows your tape to bounce around and skew as it travels over the tape heads. Problems such as tape dropouts and flutter (your tape sounds like it's gargling) are the result.

A poorly constructed cassette bridge can cause similar problems. The bridge is the fitting at the bottom edge of the cassette which (hopefully) keeps the tape properly aligned to and in intimate contact with your cassette deck's heads. In fact, many dubbing engineers claim that this component is even more important to good sound than the tape formulation itself. In my experience, cassettes fitted with the Shape Mark 10 bridge almost never exhibit flutter or dropouts. It costs a bit more, but it's well worth it; be sure to ask the duplicator if he offers Mark 10-fitted cassettes.

If you plan to market your album project directly through the mail, avoid molded shells and bargain-basement bridges like the plague—the cost and hassle of replacing defective tapes for disgruntled customers don't justify the initial savings.

The type of tape you choose is also important. Normal bias tape is noisier and has a narrower frequency response than the costlier high-bias types (chrome and ferric cobalt). Your quiet solo piano album is going to sound a lot hissier unless you spring for the high-bias stuff. Chrome tape is less noisy than ferric cobalt at low record levels but has a fairly shrill high end. Ferric cobalt tape makes midrange elements such as vocals and guitars sound louder and more present. The point is that choosing a specific tape formulation is not unlike running your music through an equalizer, so choose carefully!

Another decision you'll need to make is whether to duplicate your tapes at high speed or in real time. Real-time duplication preserves the detail, clarity and high-frequency response

Choice is not to be taken lightly when it comes to decisions that affect your career. As a recording engineer, I'm amazed at how many musicians don't give much thought to which format their demo or album project will be released on. The main reason is ignorance. Obviously, a high-speed, Dolby

B-encoded, molded-shell cassette is going to make your music sound worlds apart from a CD release. Or is this not so obvious? Let's take a look at the various release formats and how they could affect your music.

We all know that CDs have a lower noise floor, better frequency response, wider dynamic range and generally higher fidelity than cassette tapes. And CDs are an absolute must if you hope to get significant airplay for your release—most radio DJs consider it a pain in the butt to cue up cassette tapes. (Vinyl, it seems, is a dead issue. By now, only about three percent of U.S. releases use it.)

of your recording more faithfully than high-speed, keeping drums crisp and reverbs sounding deep. On the other hand, the more efficient (and cheaper) high-speed process is nice if you expect to get 5 million copies of your album out into the world before the next Ice Age arrives.

Until recently, duplication houses typically copied master tapes to huge tape loops (called analog bin loops) before mass-producing copies onto cassettes. The drawback, as you would expect, is that the copying process causes the recording to become duller, noisier and less dynamic. New digital bins replace the analog tape loop with a digital storage medium which will not degrade your recording one iota. Not all duplication houses offer digital bins yet, so ask before you commit to using their service if this option is important to you.

This brings us to the gnarly question of noise reduction. Your only realistic options here are Dolby B or *no* noise reduction. Dolby C and S, as well as dbx, are not found on enough cassette decks to seriously consider using them on your cassettes. Dolby B does a great job of reducing tape hiss. Unfortunately, it also does a great job of reducing sparkly high frequencies and can make your music sound as flat and dry as last week's pancakes. My opinion: Use Dolby B on quiet solo recordings and those where background hiss is a problem. Otherwise, forget it.

No matter which format you end up choosing for your release, insist on getting a test copy from the duplication house before they run all the copies. And by the way, musicians aren't the only ones who need to consider all this stuff. All of these options also affect how your recording project should be mixed and/or remastered. For example, it stands to reason that you'd want to anticipate the dulling effect of high-speed duping by mixing a little brighter, right? If your engineer doesn't ask you what format you've chosen for duplicating your project *before* mixing, ask yourself if you're in the right studio. ♪

Release Format Checklist: Things to Consider

- CD or cassette
- Molded or unmolded cassette shell
- Cassette bridge quality
- Cassette tape formulation
- High-speed or real-time cassette duplication
- Analog or digital bins
- Noise reduction

5) Spill a drink inside. "This happens all the time. Somebody used their amp as an end table and they'll knock over a beer or a soda. Anything sweet is the worst, because it leaves a sticky residue, and we have to use chemicals to break it up. We've also had amps that were caught in fires and got damaged by fire department foam."

6) Store in a damp basement. "Speaker cones are paper and will absorb anything in the air. A constant process of high humidity and then drying out will eventually dry-rot the cones."

7) Let somebody else use it. "The next band comes on, you don't want to go through the bother of changing equipment, so you let a guy use your amp who burns it out using a different set of effects. It is also a grave mistake to assume that just because a musician isn't a punk rocker, he won't stick his foot through your speaker."

8) Fail to maintain. "You should change your tubes at least once a year, and three or four times a year if you're playing a lot. It doesn't cost much and you get the peace of mind knowing you're less likely to break down at an inopportune moment. If you're playing a particularly important gig, we can guarantee your amp will work. Burned-out tubes can also damage other parts of the amplifier."

9) Using a guitar cord instead of a speaker cord and vice versa. "A guitar cord is one wire with a shield. A speaker cord is two wires. If you use a guitar cord for a speaker cord, it will add resistance. If you use a speaker cord for a guitar cord, you will pick up CD radio and other interference."

10) Neglect reading the owner's manual. "Lots of people don't have the slightest idea how to set up their effects loop. We give lots of free lessons, especially to people who buy amps second-hand and never saw the owner's manual. It's also common that they have the manual but refuse to read it."

11) Drop it. "This is our number one complaint. There's no such thing as an indestructible amp. When it drops, it breaks. If it falls forward, the guitar jack breaks off. If it falls backwards, the tubes break. You can also damage the circuit board. And a speaker magnet might shift, cinching the coil around the side so it can't move. We can't fix that, so you end up with an expensive paperweight."

12) Fail to check battery power. "We get this on effects all the time. 'But it's a new battery!' they say. Don't assume just because you

paid four dollars for a new Duracell that it's going to work."

13) Wrong application. "If you play a bass through a guitar amp or a keyboard through a P.A. that's meant for vocals, you're asking for trouble. Then again, a lot of musicians *like* the sound of blown speakers. Several times we've put in new speakers and they wanted their old sound back."

14) Leave amp alone with angry girlfriend/boyfriend. "We've had instances where the spouse took a hammer and knocked off every knob. Plink, plink, plink. We replaced the knobs for this one guy and he came back claiming his amp now sounded different. 'Impossible,' we said. But he insisted, so we looked at the knobs, and sure enough, the old knobs went from 0-10, and the new knobs went from 1-10. So when he had the old treble on three, it was actually four on the new knob. So he was right. It did sound different."

15) Plug amp designed for 110 volts into 220-volt outlet. "There are a lot of older buildings that have 220-volt outlets all over the place for air conditioners. Always check the power supply. And if you don't, be absolutely sure you didn't replace the fuse with a wad of foil. It'll fry immediately."

16) Let friend fix it. "How many times have I heard this: 'My friend took this stuff out. He says it's no good, but now the amp doesn't seem to work.' Most of those jobs we refuse. The amp is just butchered too bad. Or they'll give it to a TV repairman on the theory that the guy can fix anything electronic. Well, we aren't qualified to fix TVs and we don't try."

17) Daisychain. "This means plugging the 'speaker out' line of one amp into the input of another amp, a sure formula for burn-out. Speaker lines should go only into the speakers. If you're looking for more power and have to use two 100-watt amps, use a splitter in the guitar line."

18) Allow 'bandboys' to handle equipment. "Even if they really like the band, they aren't going to treat your equipment with the same care that you would. Usually it's like the gorilla in the Samsonite commercial: They forget stuff on the curb, they back the truck into it, they drop it down a flight of stairs."

19) Leave it on all night. "Tubes will overheat if left on for long periods of time."

20) Critters. "Mostly it's mice and roaches. Mice are probably worse, 'cause they eat the wire. We have a corner of the shop we use for extermination purposes. Spray 'em and air 'em out. You gotta kill whatever's in there before you work on it." ♪

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40 W 57th St, Ste 1515
New York, NY 10019
212/765-4258

CONTACT: Joe Bayland

Imago Songs, Inc

152 W 57th St
New York, NY 10019

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Los Angeles, CA 90024
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818/777-4550

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416/491-3000

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Scorsborough, ONT M1L 4C5
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Los Angeles, CA 90028

213/957-4466
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Comp, Tomi Lester, Som Trust

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Los Angeles, CA 90069
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Kathleen Corey, Mark Friedman

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- 1904 Adelia
Nashville, TN 37212
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CONTACT: David Conrad,
Mory Del Frank, Chris Oglesby

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310/399-7744
CONTACT: Lauren Besencon,
Peter Castro, Alon Melino

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New York, NY 10022
212/751-3395
CONTACT: Michael Brettler

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- 550 Madison Ave
New York, NY 10103
212/445-4729
CONTACT: Koren Brenna,
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- 2100 Colorado Ave
Santo Monica, CA 90404
310/449-2545

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David Landau, Deirdre O'Hara,
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PO Box 1273
Nashville, TN 37202
615/726-0809
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Sony Studios
10202 W Washington Blvd
The David Lean Bldg, Ste 400
Culver City, CA 90232
310/280-6880
CONTACT: Jr. Regisford,
Betty Rosen, Dick Rudolph

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- 1790 Broadway, 6th Fl
New York, NY 10019
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213/464-7409
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Nashville, TN 37212
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PERFORMING RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

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New York, NY 10023
212/621-6000
CONTACT: Jonathan Love,
Debbie Rose, Dwayne Alexander
- Kingsbury Center
350 W Hubbard St
Chicago, IL 60610
312/527-9775
CONTACT: Damon Booth,
John Young
- 7920 Sunset Blvd, Ste 300
Los Angeles, CA 90046
213/883-1000
CONTACT: Loretta Muñoz,
Tom DeSovio, Michael Bodomi,
Alonzo Robinson
- 2 Music Square W
Nashville, TN 37203
615/742-5000
CONTACT: Lorry Willoughby
- 1519 Ponce de Leon Ave, Ste 505
Santurce, Puerto Rico 00910
809/725-1688
- 52 Hoymarket, Stes 10 & 11
London SW1 Y4RP ENGLAND
011-44-71-973-0069

ASCAP West Coast Showcases

- QUIET ON THE SET—Singer/Songwriter
Showcase Series
VENUE: Largo Pub, Los Angeles
FREQUENCY: Monthly
CONTACT: Brendon Okrent,
213/883-1000
- BEST KEPT SECRETS—Alternative Music
Showcase Series
VENUE: Coconut Teoszer, Hollywood
FREQUENCY: Monthly
CONTACT: Tom DeSovio,
213/883-1000
- HARDEST KEPT SECRETS—Hard Rock/
Metal Showcase Series
VENUE: Coconut Teoszer,
Hollywood
FREQUENCY: Monthly
CONTACT: Michael Bodomi,
213/883-1000
- THE REAL DEAL—R&B/Rop/Hip-Hop
Showcase Series
VENUE: The Roxy, Los Angeles
FREQUENCY: Monthly
CONTACT: Alonzo Robinson,
213/883-1000
- 360 DEGREES OF JAZZ
VENUE: Various
FREQUENCY: Annual

CONTACT: Alonzo Robinson, 213/883-1000

- Urban Network Conference Showcase
VENUE: Stouffer's Hotel, LA Airport
FREQUENCY: Annual
CONTACT: Alonzo Robinson, 213/883-1000
- Rop Symposium Showcase
VENUE: Various, Los Angeles
FREQUENCY: Annual
CONTACT: Alonzo Robinson, 213/883-1000
- Seattle Showcase
VENUE: Bumbershoot
FREQUENCY: Annual
CONTACT: Tom DeSovio, Loretto Muñoz, Ron Sobel, 213/883-1000

ASCAP Southern Region Showcases

- Nashville Showcase—Country Songwriter/Band Showcase Series
VENUE: Douglas Corner, Nashville
FREQUENCY: 2-4 times a year
CONTACT: Tom Long, 615/742-5000
- Nashville Extravaganza—Rock, Pop Showcase of Nashville Entertainers Association Event
VENUE: Various, Nashville
FREQUENCY: Annual (January)
CONTACT: Larry Willoughby, 615/742-5000
- Miami Rocks Showcase
VENUE: Various
FREQUENCY: Annual (January)
CONTACT: Morcy Drexler, 212/621-6000

ASCAP East Coast Showcases

- Miami Rocks Too/East Coast Forum ASCAP-Sponsored Rock, Pop Showcase of Miami Rocks Conference
VENUE: Various, Miami
FREQUENCY: Annual (February)
CONTACT: Jonathon Love, 212/621-6000
- Boston Music Showcase and Seminar—Pop Rock, R&B
VENUE: Various, Boston
FREQUENCY: Annual (April)
CONTACT: Jonathon Love, 212/621-6000
- Showcase of National Association of College Broadcasters Conference (Alternative, Rock)
VENUE: Various, Providence, RI
FREQUENCY: Annual (November)
CONTACT: Jonathon Love, 212/621-6000
- Playing for Keeps New York City Showcase Series—All Musical Styles
VENUE: TBA, Manhattan

FREQUENCY: Monthly (beginning February 1993)

CONTACT: Jonathon Love, Morcy Drexler, Debbie Rose, Dwayne Alexander, Audro Washington 212/621-6000

- North Carolino Music Showcase—Pop, Rock, Alternative
VENUE: Various, North Carolino
FREQUENCY: Annual (June)
CONTACT: Tom DeSovio, 213/883-1000; Jonathon Love, 212/621-6000; Larry Willoughby, 615/742-5000
- Million Dollar Music Conference—ASCAP New Artist Showcase—R&B, Pop, Donce
VENUE: Various, Atlonto
FREQUENCY: Annual
CONTACT: Dwayne Alexander, Audro Washington, 212/621-6000

ASCAP Midwest Region Showcases

- Chicago Music Showcases—All Musical Styles
VENUE: Various, Chicago
FREQUENCY: 4-6 times a year
CONTACT: Doman Booth, John Young, Chris Levick, 312/527-9775

ASCAP National Showcases

- CMJ, New Music Seminar, South by Southwest
VENUE: Various in New York (CMJ and NMS), Austin (SxSW)
FREQUENCY: Annual (CMJ—October; NMS—June; SxSW—March)
CONTACT: ASCAP membership office nearest you.

BMI

- 8730 Sunset Blvd, 3rd Fl
Los Angeles, CA 90069
213/659-6947
- 10 Music Square E
Nashville, TN 37203
615/259-3625
- 320 W 57th St
New York, NY 10019
212/586-2000

BMI East Showcases

- Acoustic Round-Up
VENUE: The Cottonwood Cafe, New York
FREQUENCY: Monthly
CONTACT: Jeff Cohen, 212/586-2000
- Collaborators Connection
VENUE: The Lone Star Roodhouse, New York
FREQUENCY: Monthly

CONTACT: Jeff Cohen, 212/586-2000

- Mid-Atlantic Song Contest
VENUE: Various
FREQUENCY: Annual
CONTACT: Mork Fried, 212/586-2000
- Philadelphio Music Alliance Summer Showcases
VENUE: Various
FREQUENCY: Annual (June-Sept)
CONTACT: Louro Hunt, 215/790-2415
- Pro Songwriters Meet
VENUE: Look and Co Studios
FREQUENCY: Monthly
CONTACT: Mork Fried, 212/586-2000

BMI West Showcases

- Los Angeles New Music Nights
VENUE: Molly Malone's, Club Lingerie
FREQUENCY: Monthly
CONTACT: Dexter Moore, Stacy Nick, 310/659-9109
- Oakland New Music Nights
VENUE: Various
FREQUENCY: Bionnuol

CONTACT: Dexter Moore, Stacy Nick, 310/659-9109

- San Francisco New Music Nights
VENUE: Various
FREQUENCY: Bionnuol
CONTACT: Dexter Moore, Stacy Nick, 310/659-9109
- Seattle New Music Nights
VENUE: Various
FREQUENCY: Bionnuol
CONTACT: Dexter Moore, Stacy Nick, 310/659-9109

BMI South Showcases

- Crossroads—Memphis
VENUE: Various
FREQUENCY: Annual
CONTACT: Jody Williams, 615/291-6700
- New South—Atlonto
VENUE: Various
FREQUENCY: Annual
CONTACT: Jody Williams, 615/291-6700
- South X Southwest—Austin
VENUE: Various
FREQUENCY: Annual
CONTACT: Jody Williams, 615/291-6700

This listing of A&R contacts and music publishers

has been excerpted from the 1993 Musicians Guide to Touring & Promotion. To obtain a complete copy of the 148-page guide, which features additional A&R contacts, attorneys, tape/disc manufacturers and studios, plus essential club, press, radio and retail listings for over 125 cities in North America, turn to page 50 of this issue for order information.

Mike Watt's Violent Extremes

*Free your bass and
your mind will follow*
by ALAN DI PERNA



Politically, I think bass is the greatest thing you could ever play," declares Mike Watt. "Nobody's sure what the bass's role is supposed to be in a band. So, as a bassist, you're totally free. You can be a kick drum, a guitar...whatever you want."

Onstage with his band Firehose, Watt takes that freedom to violent extremes. He's

been known to punch pickups right through the back of his bass. Any pickup that doesn't get K.O.ed runs the risk of getting so soaked in sweat that all its treble will just up and die. This was a big problem, says Watt, till he discovered that EMG pickups are sufficiently moisture-proof to survive nightly torrents of perspiration.

Watt's guerrilla bass approach filters jazz, funk and classic rock influences through a "fuck it all" punk sensibility. In this, he has a lot in common with his friends and fellow bassists Flea and Les Claypool. Like the Chili Peppers and Primus, Firehose is a bass-driven band. The lead instrumental voice often belongs to Watt, who writes a good deal of the material. As inspirations, he cites Mingus and Mötley Crüe's Nikki Sixx. Huh? "Bass players who write the *songs*," he clarifies.

The rudiments of Watt's signature style were born during his years with the Minutemen, the seminal Southern California punk band that Mike formed with his old high school pal D. Boon and which lasted till Boon's death in 1986. On early Minutemen records, Watt played with a pick. He didn't switch to fingers until the band's 1984 opus *Double Nickels on the Dime*. "When you're playing with a pick, a lot of your accents come from your right [picking] hand," he explains, surrounded by basses in his funky, cluttered San Pedro, California apartment. "But when I switched

over to fingers, all my accents started coming from my left [fretting] hand, more like a guitar."

From this comes one Watt trademark: the quasi-fretless tone he wrings from fretted basses, thanks to his unique finger vibrato and generous use of glissando (slide). But the way Watt sees it, "right hand is by far the most important hand for bass. My big challenge right now is to get more out of my right hand. In a way I'd like to get back to picking—to use that *and* fingers. My left hand does way too much anyway. Turning into a fusion player is my biggest fear."

Grabbing a trashed-looking Les Paul Signature bass, Watt demonstrates one of his favorite right-hand techniques: something he calls "kick and snare." He'll use his right thumb to whomp the downbeat on the low string, emulating a kick drum. This move alternates with a popped "snare" note on the high string, landing on the two and four, or an offbeat. Many bassists put a lot of "wrist" into their thumb slaps. But Watt keeps his wrist fairly rigid and instead brings his whole forearm down, *hard*, propelling the base of his thumb into the string, holding his palm ready for a quick mute. "Your palm is like an instant noise gate," he advises.


Watt's "kick and snare" thing can be heard in the main bass riff for "Herded into Pools," on Firehose's new album, *Mr. Machinery Operator*. He pounds a thudding A on the low E string, using his left thumb to fret the note—"the Townshend cheat," he calls this move that guitar and bass schools frown upon. The second note of the riff—the "snare" note—is a popped C♯ played on the sixth fret of the G string. From here, the phrase resolves to a G (fifth fret of the D string). The second bar of the riff consists of two pull-offs: A-to-G and E-to-D (seventh and fifth frets of the D and A strings, respectively). Watt calls the riff's initial big tenth jump—A to C♯—"a righteous interval," quoting jazzman Ray Brown and the bassline for "Walk on the Wild Side" to attest to its supreme righteousness.

But Watt wanted to take the interval to a new place: "I said

to myself, 'Let's make it a funk riff.' 'Cause the funk is always so pentatonic—blues, you know? Flatted thirds. I wanted to open it up a little." The fill that goes with the riff, also serving as the tune's intro, is played by barring the tenth fret. Watt strums a G on the A string, pinching his thumb and first finger together to "fake a pick," brushing the semi-muted adjacent strings for extra texture.

On to another major Watt tenet: "The bass guitar is totally made for open-string playing." This really comes through in Watt's work with Dos—the two-bassist side project he runs with his wife, former Black Flag bassist Kira. His love of open strings can also be heard on *Mr. Machinery Operator's* first track, "Formal Introduction," where Watt uses his low E as a big flapping drone string behind the perky E major riff that starts at the seventh fret on the A string. The A and D strings also get used as drones as the riff moves through its poppy changes.

Watt has this theory: He says that bebop completely exhausted the potential of the standup bass, but that the electric bass is only just starting to come into its own: "I think electric bass is part of the power that's changing


music now. When I was a kid, bass was where you put the lame guy. Nobody wanted to play it. Now a lot of kids do. And I think punk had a lot to do with that. Bass didn't have to play a subservient role to guitar anymore, because the guitarist and bassist were *both* lame! Girls on bass, Sid Vicious...punk turned the bass around big time. I don't think Mr. Patitucci or Mr. Jeff Berlin would agree with me here. But I see it in a different kind of context." 

WATTAGE

MIKE WATT's main machine is a '68 Fender Telecaster bass with EMG pickups. Live, he plays through a Hughes & Kettner Fortress preamp into an Ampeg SVT R215 and a Crown MicroTech 1200 power amp driving two Eden speaker enclosures. The signal runs through a Boss CD-50 compressor, a TU-50 tuner, a L.C. electronics dual parametric equalizer and a Sansamp direct box. A Sennheiser 421 catches sound off the speaker cabinet. Strings are DR Highbeams.

[cont'd from page 70] with people, and in front of people, and time to think about it.

"I think all the arts—writing, music, theater—are very similar; what you're trying to do is create some kind of color, mood and feeling. I believe you can create a color through your instrument. You can play the color red. It's basically what the color red is to you. 'Forty or Fifty' is a red tune. 'Refrigerator Car' is dark, almost black. 'Two Princes' is brown and 'Little Miss Can't Be Wrong' is yellow-green. It might not mean the same thing to anybody else, yet it's creating a mood to me, which is going to transfer over into a mood for someone else.

"I don't feel like I have to play something technical, or fast, or make some drummer go 'Wow!' The reward is to look out and see people dancing, to play this simple beat, and groove it. The most important thing for me is to always, for my whole life, improve the groove. Ten years from now, I'll be happy if I listen to something I play and I'm moving the music, making the groove really kick. The deep groove. It's definitely a mental thing. The groove is not a physical thing." 

FAITH AND INSTINCT MADE HIM A BON JOVI WINNER

Congratulations to Darren Locklin, winner of the Faith and Instinct contest! His review follows:

The natives are restless, again. These New Jersey natives, that is. And the members of Bon Jovi have every right to be. After a four year hiatus and successful solo endeavors, these rock icons of the MTV generation have once again charted a course straight to multi-platinum-ville with their latest effort, **KEEP THE FAITH**.

The title track will, without question, solidify its position at the top of the charts. The ever forceful rhythm attack of Tico Torres and Alec John Such creates a funk-like pulse that pulls you in with every beat. Jon Bon Jovi's raging convictions cannot go unnoticed with such lyrics as, "I have suffered for my anger/There are wars that can't be won."

Richie Sambora's chop, wang-slide approach to the track "I'll Sleep When I'm Dead" is sure to be a venue crowd pleaser. Jon's in-your-face vocals swarm like an ocean wave during high tide. The song's not-so-ironic focal point epitomizes the band's contagious energy since their inception in the early 1980's.

"Bed of Roses" creates such a romantic stir that it is certain to bring this band's rockin' fans to a serene cadence. David Bryan's melodic keyboards reveal subtle hints of the band's continual versatility. Enter Jon's convincing testimonial that builds to crescendo. The harmonies are top notch. This is, by far, Bon Jovi's best ballad.

Other tracks that are definitely worth mentioning are "Woman in Love," "Little Bit of Soul," and the song destined to be their anthem for their upcoming tour, "Blame it on the Love of Rock & Roll" - This must be the rationale for their most innovative disc yet.

Bon Jovi proves, time and time again, that faith & instinct are essential for being a cut above the rest. And **KEEP THE FAITH** is no exception. Bravo.

- Darren Locklin

**WATCH FOR THE
SUMMER TOUR**



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RIFFS IN A CAN FOR CLIP-ART MUSICIANS

A NEW PARADIGM FOR COMPOSERS AND PERFORMERS

Anyone who appreciates sampling and MIDI sequencing as something other than the fall of Western civilization might recognize an impending paradigm shift for performers and composers alike: musical creation by clip art.

Of course, hip-hoppers have been cutting and pasting since Grandmaster Flash started spinning his *Wheels of Steel*. In fact, Pierre Henry created

musique concrète in the 1940s by splicing together bits of analog tape.

So what's new? For one thing, the sheer proliferation of ready-made, pre-edited clips offered for sale in the form of standard-format MIDI sequences and audio CDs. Sequences have some degree of built-in flexibility, but sampling CDs are limited by the fact that instrument

sounds and the performances that give rise to them are inextricably intertwined. If you don't like the reverb or the way the drummer flamed every other beat on his snare, there's little you can do about it.

East-West/Sound Warehouse has devised a nifty way around this with their *ProSamples 5: Dance/Industrial* CD-ROM release (\$399). This disc offers a distinctive collection of drum loops. Rather than the usual audio, though, it contains sound data configured specifically for quick loading into a particular instrument, including the mapping of specific drum sounds to specific MIDI notes (that is, keys on a MIDI keyboard). The real twist is that each bank of sounds is accompanied by a MIDI sequence file containing performance data for a drum pattern designed around those sounds. (Supported instruments include the Akai S1100, E-mu EIII, Roland S770 and Digidesign SampleCell.)

Load the sounds into your sampler and the MIDI file into your sequencer, and *voilà!* Drum loops just like you might steal from your favorite Ohio Players record—but fully editable. Want to change the tempo? Slow down the sequence. Add or subtract beats? Record or erase as you like. Substitute your favorite snare sample for the one supplied by East-West? Load it into your sampler. Fantastic.

This approach isn't entirely without pitfalls. Many of East-West's samples have their own internal rhythms (licks, flams, fills and the like). Slowing down the sequence doesn't affect the sounds themselves, so some of the grooves don't work at any other tempo—at least not without further editing.

MIDI sequences without custom samples offer more flexibility, but

since they need to accommodate a variety of sounds, they tend to be less distinctive musically. Prosonus, Trycho and the Music Data Company (a division of Passport) offer sequenced arrangements of popular music.

But the beauty of standard MIDI sequence files is that canned sequences need not represent a finished arrangement or composition. Rather, they can be raw materials for your own music, malleable in tempo, pitch, volume, choice of sound and any other MIDI-defined parameter.

A good example is the *DrumTrax Drum Pattern Library*. For \$99, you get a floppy diskette containing oodles of MIDI files in eight styles: "rock," "R&B," "dance," "ballad," "Latin," "jazz/blues" and fills. The patterns are varied and nicely composed. The performances appear to have been generated by a real-time (read "living, breathing, beating") drummer and left unquantized, avoiding the stiffness often associated with drum machines.

If you've guessed that the canned-sequence idea isn't limited to drum patterns, you're right. Chord progressions, arpeggios, riffs, basslines, any compositional building block or performance gesture is fair game, as long as the MIDI spec accommodates it. The *MIDI Busker Acoustic Guitar* sequence diskette (\$24.95), distributed by Lion Hunter Music, provides a number of strumming and picking patterns characteristic of acoustic guitar performance. They were generated using a MIDI guitar controller, so they're properly idiomatic to the guitar with respect to voicing and the order and timing of individual notes in a chord. If you've ever tried to program realistic guitar parts using a MIDI keyboard, you'll appreciate how much drudgery something like this can save you. The downside is the limited variety of the patterns, and a general lack of dynamism in the performances—problems endemic in sampled and sequenced clip art, by the way—but if you have good guitar sounds, the Busker diskette will get you extremely close to the real thing.

So let's say you use an East-West drum loop to anchor one of your productions, or a slammin' DrumTrax sequence, or a folkie vamp from MIDI Busker—are you acting as a creative musician? Can you save face by calling yourself a producer or an arranger? Or are you just jumping on the instant gratification bandwagon that's obviously got us all in tow?

Most likely, the answer is that you're taking advantage of a new set of expressive techniques that will continue to have a profound impact on music well into the future. Collage has been accepted in the visual arts for nearly a hundred years; music has been slow to catch up. We can all look forward to exciting new production techniques and challenging new music—and a host of difficult legal, ethical and aesthetic issues lurking just below the surface.

TED GREENWALD

• *East-West/Sound Warehouse*, 1631 Woods Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90069; (213) 848-8436. • *DrumTrax*, 51 Pleasant St. Suite 218, Malden, MA 02148; (617) 387-7581. • *Lion Hunter Music*, Box 110678, Anchorage, AK 99511; (907) 349-2456.



MORE MIXER FOR YOUR MONEY



SOUNDCRAFT SPIRIT FOLIO

When I took the \$495 Soundcraft Spirit Folio out of its box, I couldn't help remembering the mixer I had in my first four-track home studio not so many years ago. That board cost twice as much, was three times the size and had only a fraction of the features of this sleek little unit. If you're just getting into the game now, you're in for a treat.

Given its logical panel layout, solid construction and reasonably long fader travel, the Spirit Folio is equally suited for live and studio applications. Each of six primary input channels features a mike preamp, three-band EQ (with sweepable midrange), low-frequency roll-off switch, two effects sends (one of which is switchable pre/post-fader), pan and solo. Each channel sports both high- and low-impedance inputs. Soundcraft says that you can use them simultaneously if you need to get extra signals into the board.

The main input channels are augmented by two stereo pairs of high-impedance auxiliary inputs. These are likely to serve as effect returns, but they're also useful for synthesizers, samplers and the like. If six input channels (plus two stereo aux inputs) aren't enough for you, Soundcraft offers a Spirit Folio with two additional channels for \$625. The larger unit comes in two configurations: one with rack ears, one without. Otherwise it's identical to the lower-priced version.

The bottom line: This mixer is an excellent value, even given the stiff competition from Alesis, Mackie and others. It's clean and quiet enough for recording, and laid out nicely for live mixing. The controls feel substantial. Unlike other low-cost mixers, the Spirit Folio's pots and faders are all sturdily soldered to their respective circuit boards. And it comes with a clear, informative manual.

On the negative side, the unit lacks channel overload indicators, and I

prefer solo switches that latch. These two omissions make it more difficult than it ought to be to set a channel's gain, and would have been worth paying a little extra for.

Overall, though, I give this board very high marks. Don't buy a small mixer without checking out this one first. **SCOTT MARSHALL**

• *JBL Professional, Box 2200, 8500 Balboa Blvd., Northridge, CA 91329; (818) 893-8411.*

ZON SONUS BASS

It's sort of a cliché in reviews of electric guitars to say it sounds good even without the amp, but in the case of the Zon Sonus bass, the cliché rates one more repetition, so here goes: It sounds *really* good without the amp. The design philosophy was to make it sound like a Fender Jazz for the '90s. To me it sounds like a low-end harpsichord, so bright you can really hear yourself play without plugging into anything, so bright even the E string (we're talking four strings here) chimes clearly. Plugging in is equally pleasurable. The active electronics and mixable Bartolini pickups allow for onboard versatility whether you're going for warmth, punch or monstrous treble for soloing.

What makes the Sonus really stand out, however, is the graphite neck. Graphite is colder to the touch than wood, and that is apparently offputting to many players, but to me the main appeal of graphite more than offsets the change in feel: The neck never warps or bows, no matter what the weather or season. The Sonus has no truss rod, and after many years of fearing and distrusting truss rods, I see a vastly simplified future in which I never again have to deal with hexagon wrenches. Twenty-four easily accessible frets on a never-changing neck with consistently great sustain—that's tough to beat.

On the down side, the Sonus was slightly heavy toward the neck, but not enough that the head dropped toward the floor when it was strapped over my shoulder with my hands off. The transparent blue satin finish set off the grain of the ash body beautifully. At \$1695, the Sonus ain't cheap (although it's the least expensive in the Zon line), but if you want a great-looking and -sounding instrument that can absorb a lot of punishment on the road, this could be your beast. **CHARLES M. YOUNG**



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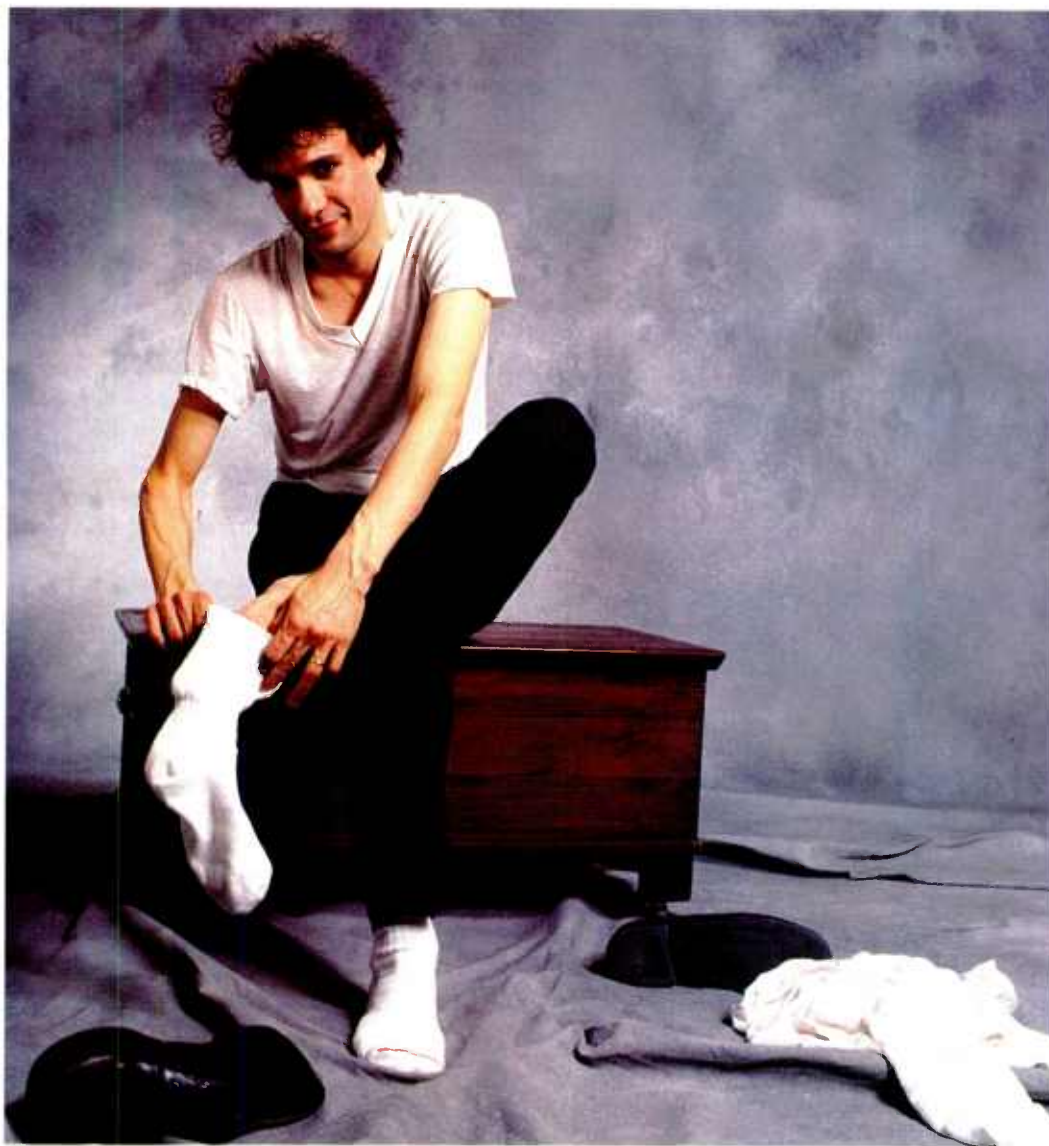
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STRIPPED-DOWN WESTERBERG



PAUL WESTERBERG
14 SONGS
(SIRE/WARNER BROS.)

By all rights, the Replacements should have been the baby busters' Beatles, for Paul Westerberg was formulating the Gen X's guiding philosophy of cynical romanticism, ambitious anti-careerism and hopeful nihilism as far back as their 1979 debut, *Sorry Ma, Forgot to Take Out the Trash* and its credo, "I Hate Music." Of course the born-to-lose 'Mats self-destructed just as teen spirit began to smell the roses, splintering into a flurry of solo albums, including a pair of surprisingly tuneful pop-

rock from drummer Chris Mars and bassist Tommy Stinson's punk bonhomie version of Ron Wood/Keith Richards second bananadom. Also, for those who missed the Replacements' "Bastards of Young"-styled teen anthems, came the Goo Goo Dolls' Westerberg-penned "We Are the Normal."

Still, it is Westerberg's post-group solo bow, the Matt Wallace-produced *14 Songs*, that most 'Mats fans have been waiting for. While the Mars and Stinson albums proved the band had hidden talent, this one

shows that what made the Replacements matter was Westerberg's social satire, self-mocking wit and sense of the highs and lows of romance, attached to melodies that move the heart as well as the mosh pit.

Of all the recent Replacement-like records, *14 Songs* sounds both least and most like the group Westerberg once fronted. Least because, like Paul's "Dyslexic Heart" from the *Singles* soundtrack and much of *All Shook Down*, the band's last album, Westerberg doesn't hide behind a wall-of-racket, but pushes

his distinctive vocals—warts and all—to the surface, from the Faces-like roar of “Knockin’ on Mine” and the snot-nosed mewl of “World Class Fad” to the husky basso croon of “Runaway Wind” and punk buzzsaw chant of “Down Love.” Most because, while he tries out several different voices and instruments (including a plucked mandolin and cocktail piano), Westerberg’s obsessions remain constant: common sense vs. education (“Knockin’ on Mine”), trying to recapture the innocence of first love (“First Glimmer”), lampooning society’s preoccupation with physical appearance (“Mannequin Shop”), the vacuum of rock culture (“A Few Minutes of Silence”), the conflict between art and love (“Things”) and a typically neurotic, deprecating self-analysis (“Something Is Me”).

In short, he’s the same Westerberg we’ve come to know and love, except older and slightly wiser. This time, though, the ‘Mats’ legendary drunken anarchy is no longer a hindrance; the musicians employed here allow the arrangements to suit the songwriting, rather than vice versa. The wonderful “Runaway Wind,” which evokes such previous saloon ballads as “Unsatisfied,” “Here Comes a Regular” and “Night Club Jitters,” or the stark simplicity of Westerberg’s unadorned vocal on the Neil Youngish “Black Eyed Susan,” may not win over the Kurt Cobain crowd. But surely the honky-tonk blues of “Silver Naked Ladies,” with its rollicking organ provided by ex-Faces keyboardist Ian McLagan, and the self-indicting bleat of “Something Is Me,” reminiscent of such ‘Mats standards as “Hold My Life” and “Can’t Hardly Wait,” offer something for even the die-hard *Replacements Stink* holdout.

Paul Westerberg always seemed to have the soul of an old man in the body of a whining post-adolescent. On *14 Songs*, he’s starting to act his age.

—Roy Trakin

ness to give life to the genre’s lachrymose laments, and musically willing to combine honky-tonk and hillbilly configurations with rockabilly beats and stone rock guitar. On *This Time* he hangs tight to all that, while venturing a little further into the dubious area of country pop, the kind of stuff that’s featured occasionally on VH-1 (where, not incidentally, Yoakam was designated artist of the month for April ’93). This is most blatant on the album’s first single “Ain’t That Lonely Yet”—the only song here not penned or co-penned by Yoakam—a bit of bathos-lite with a professionally contempo gloss. Similarly, “A Thousand Miles from Nowhere” sugar-coats its existential yowl, the guitars layered on like an early-’70s George Harrison production; it’s listener-friendly but that essential Yoakam-ness gets buried. He’s also swamped on the flat-out rocker “Wild Ride,” which steals gleefully from “Tumbling Dice” (just as “Fast as You” less felicitously lifts the “Pretty Woman” riff)—nice groove, though.

The singer does better when the new and old elements are more balanced, as on the title cut, a beefed-up honky-tonker. The familiar drip of a barroom piano is there, but the back beat is high-tech aggressive. “Two Doors Down” and “Home for Sale” are wonderfully uninhibited wallows (“Home for sale/Restored like new/Just a place/Two lives outgrew”), setting Yoakam, in his best bruised but brave voice, against an electric piano (“Doors”) and a Big Pink organ (“Home”). For the finale Yoakam shucks the mod trappings to warble an instant chestnut called “Lonesome Roads.” “I’m just a face out in the crowd that looks like trouble,” he sings convincingly enough—but then, having grasped the trowel, heaps it on with “Poor ol’ worthless me is the only friend I ever made.” Yeech. Oh well, *This Time* remains an interesting mix of the shrewd and the guileless, and of each at different times pretending to be the other.

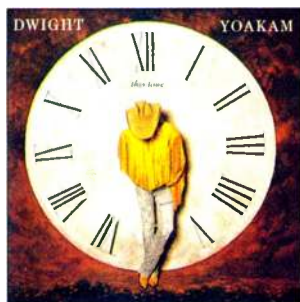
—Richard C. Walls

Earth and Sun and Moon, Midnight Oil’s first studio recording since 1989. Most of the sonic punch—there’s plenty of it—comes from the angry, warbling vocals of Peter Garrett and the guitars of Martin Rotsey and Jim Moginie. Certainly the band shows no signs of going soft after nearly 20 years together. Midnight Oil have been called the “Australian Clash,” but the Rumour and E Street Band are more accurate reference points. Like those groups, Midnight Oil have always had a way of combining hook-laden choruses with vital rock, and here they achieve an especially potent mix of guitars, acoustic and electric, over brooding organ and pumping rhythm tracks.

Earth and Sun and Moon marks a reunion with English producer Nick Launay (*Red Sails in the Sunset*, *10, 9, 8...*), though the band’s overall sound here seems less clearly defined; traces of the Beatles, U2, Magazine and the Clash reverberate through this recording. The ‘60s are present on “Renaissance Man,” from its Fab harmonies to the George Harrison-style lead, and on “Feeding Frenzy,” featuring boss Hammond organ. An insistent single-note piano motif kicks off “My Country,” strongly reminiscent of U2, while the title track, with its lush, sweet-voiced chorus, is as pop as anything the Oils have done.

Midnight Oil’s blend of angry personal and political songs is familiar enough, though abstract lyrics often defy a search for simple meaning. Against densely layered guitar, “My Country” hints at catastrophe, perhaps America’s destruction of an Iraqi bomb shelter full of women and children; “Truganini,” which features slamming acoustic and electric guitars and a backward-tracked lead, describes the last full-blooded Tasmanian aborigine and her unsuccessful fight for the survival of her people. Seducing your attention with beautiful melodies and catchy choruses, Peter Garrett remains one engagingly angry Aussie.

—Chris Rubin



DWIGHT YOAKAM

This Time
(REPRISE)

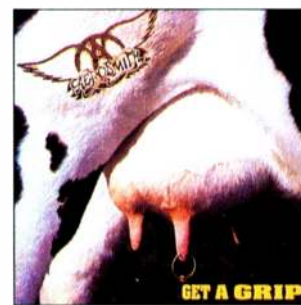
DWIGHT YOAKAM MADE HIS MARK AS a new traditionalist country singer—vocally a natural, with the stoic throb and nasal soulful-



MIDNIGHT OIL

Earth and Sun and Moon
(COLUMBIA)

THE OCCASIONAL STRINGS AND HORNS of past efforts are nowhere to be found on



AEROSMITH

Get a Grip
(Geffen)

NOT TO BELABOR THE AEROSMITH-came-back-from-drug-induced-hell

angle, but their career does fall into two neat halves: Before Sobriety (BS) and After Sobriety (AS). BS, they proved you could create great music while all messed up, and were to rock 'n' roll what John Wayne was to acting—very good at being Aerosmith, but you didn't want to see them trying to play Hamlet. And eventually they failed at being Aerosmith. AS, they've become more like Robert De Niro—still great at the male strut, but they can take on a variety of roles and make them work. On *Pump* in 1989, they added interludes of weirdness with exotic instruments that lifted the album into the rarefied realm of "complete listening experience," and Steven Tyler pulled off one of his most successful attempts at not singing about sex, "Janie's Got a Gun," which explored the topic of child abuse for an audience that needed to hear it on MTV.

In the intervening years, Aerosmith has become a model for endorsing good causes (free speech, voting, feeding the homeless) while avoiding any aura of PC. This is because what Aerosmith is really selling—on top of great guitar riffs, ringing production (by Bruce Fairbairn) and the inevitable heaping dollops of sex—is exuberance. Steven Tyler acts like everyone who's stuck in a desk at school or the office imagines it would be fun to act like: Stick out your tongue and sneer and say exactly what you think. On *Get a Grip*, Tyler is still thinking a lot about sex, as he has for the two decades of Aerosmith's recorded existence, but he is also thinking about wealth in "Eat the Rich" (perhaps inspired by their megamillions deal with Sony) and he doesn't like the damage that large amounts of it can wreak on the personality. There are times when Tyler throws so many words at a situation that you wish he had an editor—on "Livin' on the Edge" Tyler goes for grand overview and can't philosophize any better than quoting old Yardbirds lyrics. But you're also glad he doesn't have an editor, lest some of his exuberance be trimmed as well. Joe Perry remains one of the great riff meisters

(most brutal cut is probably "Fever"), so you got exuberance, riffs and all the production money can buy. And you got interludes of weirdness that are psychedelic this time, not exotic. Sounds like the complete Aerosmith listening experience to me.

—Charles M. Young



ARTHUR ALEXANDER

Lonely Just Like Me
(ELEKTRA/NONESUCH)

THE STORY GOES LIKE THIS: IN 1991 disc jockey Vin Scelsa put together a showcase for a few exemplary songwriters to play their material and discuss its development at the New York club, the Bottom Line. Among the participants was Arthur Alexander, who'd been more or less forgotten since the early-to-mid-'60s when his mix of "country soul" inspired the Beatles and Stones to cover his songs ("Anna" and "You Better Move On" respectively) and John Lennon to declare Alexander his favorite songwriter. Alexander promptly stole the show.

Amidst the excitement of a renewed creative force comes *Lonely Just Like Me*; 12 songs—a handful of remakes peppered with striking new originals—that, with a minimum of fanfare and solid, unpretentious production values (Reggie Young's clean Stratocaster tone is enviable), present Arthur Alexander as a man who has lost neither his knack for concise, to-the-heart songwriting nor his wonderfully sorrowful baritone.

Joined by his old Muscle Shoals compatriots Spooner Oldham, Donnie Fritts and Dan Penn, Alexander starts things in peak form with the new-but-soon-to-be-classic "If It's Really Got to Be This Way." Reggie Young rings out the stately riff and Alexander follows, recounting the simple R&B trial of a woman who has decided to live without him. "I'll cry/But I'll get by/And I'll forget you someday, girl/If it's really got to be this way," sings Alexander, the jilted lover who, though racked with emotion, keeps his perspective and his dignity. That's Arthur Alexander. He turns down the love of his best friend's girlfriend because "I know it would hurt him so," in "Go Home Girl." Admitting what it means to hurt, by album's end he's found a spiritual resting place in "I Believe in Miracles."

After years of misfortune, the 53-year-old Alexander shows no trace of old bitterness (for that, check out 1972's exploitation tale "Rainbow Road"). Instead, he sounds relaxed and confident, an elder statesman turning to his muse with affection and for the same reason he began: to give a sympathetic voice to things that deserve our sympathies. —Rob O'Connor



GURU

Jazzmatazz Volume One
(CHRYSALIS)

IT WAS INDEED A PRIVILEGE AND A blessing to have worked on this project with such amazing people." East- [cont'd on page 95]

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NEW RELEASES

JUNE

ROCK

BY J. D. CONSIDINE

WYNONNA JUDD

Tell Me Why

(CURB/MCA)

A COUNTRY CROSSOVER in the truest sense, *Tell Me Why* skews pop the old-fashioned way, with soulful singing, funky rhythm work and conventionally catchy melodies. Listen to the way Wynonna powers through "Tell Me Why" or growls over the gospel groove of "Let's Make a Baby King," and there's no doubt she belongs alongside Mariah Carey or Vanessa Williams. Yet her pop appeal does nothing to undercut the down-home delivery on "Girls with Guitars" or the mournful murmur she applies to "I Just Drove By."

APACHE INDIAN

No Reservations

(MANGO)

IT'S HARD TO say which is goofier—that dancehall's first Asian-Indian star straight-facedly calls himself Apache Indian, or that the stone-Jamaican groove of "Chok There" is fleshed out with percolating tablas. As silly as his shtick seems on paper, Apache Indian is wholly convincing on record, whether working with reggae greats like Maxi Priest or playing off his Indian roots in *bhangra*-flavored tunes like "Arranged Marriage."

WARREN ZEVON

Learning to Flinch

(GIANT)

IF THE TRUEST test of a song is how good it sounds with just an acoustic guitar or piano, this is where Warren Zevon shows what his hits are made of. Working live and without a band, he ranges from oldies to his current stuff, and it all holds up nicely, from the acoustic quaver of "Hasten Down the Wind" to the slash-and-churn of "Jungle Work." And he's not averse to instrumental elaboration, as the boogie piano of "Excitable Boy" or the slide guitar on "Worrier King" make plain.

DAVID BOWIE

Black Tie White Noise

(SAVAGE)

WITH ITS EMPHASIS on instrumental improvisation and personal circumstances, you wouldn't expect this to be a very commercial offering. Yet its



PRIMUS, PORK SODA (INTERSCOPE)

SO THE SONGWRITING *sucks*. So what? Primus's strength is playing—Les Claypool's slap-happy bass, Larry Lalonde's note-splattering guitar, Tim Alexander's slow-churning drums—and that's what this album emphasizes, from the string-popping "The Ol' Diamond Back Sturgeon" to the bristling throb of "Hamburger Train." They do make an occasional attempt at melody (as with the semi-catchy "Welcome to This World"), but if it's pure pop you thirst for, you'll have a hard time swallowing Pork Soda.

hooks effortlessly snare the listener—in part because they're so offhand, mostly because they so gracefully avoid the obvious. And isn't that what Bowie always did best?

WENDY JAMES

Now Ain't the Time for Your Tears

(GEPHEN)

ABSOLUTELY RIGHT, WENDY. Laughter would be more fitting.

THE POSIES

Frosting on the Beater

(DGC)

TIRED OF THE way "Beatlesque" too often translates as "wimpy guitar pop"? *Frosting* doesn't waste time on pointlessly pretty sounds, nor does it indulge the self-consciousness that usually mars power pop. Rather, it backs bittersweet vocal harmonies with full-on drumming and grungy, garage-schooled guitar work that keep the focus on the Posies' intricate, idiosyncratic tunes.

SUGAR

Beaster

(RYKO)

BOB MOULD DESCRIBES this as Sugar's dark side, and it's true that the six songs collected here are less upbeat and accessible than the group's debut. But because *Beaster* is more demanding than *Copper Blue* doesn't mean it isn't as much fun; anyone who doesn't get off on the vertiginous tumble of "Tilted" or the howling rage of "Judas Cradle" takes the band's name far too seriously.

RAGING SLAB

Dynamite Monster Boogie Concert

(DEF AMERICAN)

WHAT MARKS RAGING Slab as a genuine boogie band isn't the omnipresent slide guitar or the drawling, shit-kicker vocals; it's the way this crew slam-dunks every riff it gets ahold of, from the semi-acoustic stomp of "Weatherman" to the steamroller groove of "National Dust." And while that doesn't

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stop the Slab from including a pretty tune or two ("Take a Hold" suggests the sort of sentimental ballad the new Skynyrd can't seem to write), it never lets those gentle moments get in the way.

JAZZ

BY CHIP STERN

JOSHUA REDMAN

Joshua Redman

(WARNER BROS.)

FROM THE OPENING notes of "Blues on Sunday" to the byways and myways of Monk's "Trinkle Trinkle," it's clear that tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman has the harmonic conception and class timbre to travel in whatever circles his muse moves him. Redman's tone is intoxicating, recalling the burnished machismo of Ben Webster and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis (and father Dewey Redman), while his rhythmic command is such that he sounds relaxed and in control on jumping features like "Echoes," and positively Ellingtonian on test-of-manhood ballads like "Body & Soul." Melodic ideas and blues cries inhabit each phrase. And as good as *Joshua Redman* gets, surely the best is yet to come. A major new force.

AHMAD JAMAL

Chicago Revisited/Live at Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase

(TELARC)

JAMAL'S WAY OF approaching an improvisation turns standards like "All the Things You Are" into a series of graceful variations, distinguished by sly melodic asides, dynamic understatement and metamorphoses of orchestral colors and themes. John Heard and Yoron Israel offer strength and sensitivity as the moment demands, which is good, because while Jamal can bring plenty of heat to bear on a tune such as "Bellows," with its long flowing runs and gospelish interludes, he is really a virtuoso of space and dynamic contrast. Thanks to Telarc's 20-bit digital technology, this is as fine a piano recording as I've heard in this chilly digital age.

THE THELONIOUS MONK QUARTET

Live at the Five Spot—Discovery!

(BLUE NOTE)

JOHN COLTRANE

Dear Old Stockholm

(IMPULSE/GRP)

MAN, IT'S LIKE they discovered a couple of extra chapters from *Ulysses*. The 1957 Five Spot date is a tactile experience; you can practically smell the bathroom through the smoky low-fi gloom, as Coltrane plays the edges off of Monk's compositions in triplicate, finding a way out of his chordal

labyrinth in Monk's crisscrossing thematic harmonics. Monk's sense of space is so sublime, you can feel him dancing even when he lays out, especially in Roy Haynes' exuberant, triplet-happy solo variations to "In Walked Bud" and "I Mean You." *Dear Old Stockholm* generates a unified portrait of Coltrane in the spring of '63 and '65, collecting Haynes' studio excursions with Garrison and Tyner on one disc, and does it swing. Where Elvin Jones has a long legato gait and orchestrates the rhythm with tumbling promenades of rolling thunder, Haynes has Sugar Ray's footwork, and his staccato syncopations shatter and regroup like bursts of firecrackers. You've probably heard "After the Rain" and "Dear Lord" on some other compilations, but with the title tune (from '63) "One Down, One Up" and "After the Crescent" ('65) you get a good idea about how inside Trane's outside really was.

CHICO HAMILTON

Trio!

(SOUL NOTE)

SOMEHOW WHEN THEY get around to talking about the great jazz drummers, Chico Hamilton is an afterthought. Perhaps because of his identification with the early West Coast jazz scene or his late-'50s chamber jazz ensembles, people lump him with a lot of odorless-colorless timekeepers. Wrong. Hamilton is a superb stylist, with a tempered ear for color and contrast, and on this bass-less trio with saxophonist Eric Person and guitarist Cary DeNigris, he takes a page out of Paul Motian's book and exposes the drums as a melodic force. Few drummers would have the panache to take on a distorted guitar in a free dialogue with brushes as he does on "Sound Rising" or bring out the swing in a funk beat as on "C & C." That tension between force and delicacy makes *Trio!* work.

JOHN SURMAN

Adventure Playground

(ECM)

BRITISH REEDMAN SURMAN finds himself in heady company: drum innovator Tony Oxley, a polyrhythmic juggler who has helped liberate the trap set from the snare-kick cadence; bass virtuoso Gary Peacock, who has played with everyone from Albert Ayler to Keith Jarrett; and pianist Paul Bley, who was a major influence on Jarrett and an early collaborator of Ornette Coleman's in Los Angeles. Bley's moody, minor modes and probing voicings set the tone here, and Surman responds with rich lyricism on baritone, soprano and bass clarinet. Oxley's tempest-in-a-teapot accents and Peacock's springy, resilient lines elicit more vigor from this fine reedman than on previous ECM

dates, making for varied moods, from the sunny pseudo-funk of "Figfoot" and the brash exchanges on "Just for Now," to the shifting emotional canvas of "Quadrophonic Question."

JOHN SCOFIELD QUARTET

What We Do

(BLUE NOTE)

HO-HUM, ANOTHER FIRST-RATE modern jazz album from guitarist Scofield. His latest rhythm section of Dennis Irwin and Bill Stewart plays with taut, uncluttered urgency, and Joe Lovano is an elegant tenor master, with wonderful control of timbre and a fresh ear for harmonic displacements. Scofield's writing seems to feed off of his uncanny ear for boppish lines and curlicue melodic twists, and the echoes of Charlie Parker peek out of many a tune. Still, I find myself wishing he'd turn off his effects on a few tunes so we could hear more of his touch and picking dynamics. Just a thought.

FREDDIE HUBBARD

Live at Fat Tuesday's

(MUSICMASTERS/BMG)

STANLEY TURRENTINE

More Than a Mood

(MUSICMASTERS/BMG)

SO OFTEN CRITICIZED for emphasizing the bravura aspects of his commanding technique at the expense of harmonic and melodic invention (i.e., I wish I could play like that), Hubbard's mature vigor and brash authority (plus the superb support of his youthful collaborators Tony Reedus, Benny Green, Javon Jackson and Christian McBride) pleases like a brass tonic in an era when so many tadpoles sound like carbons of Miles. As for Mr. T, having suckled so many quiet-storm saxophonists on the mother's milk of his soulful romanticism, Turrentine journeys where they cannot follow, delineating his magisterial jazz roots and bluesy ballad mastery in the company of rhythm titans Cedar Walton, Ron Carter and Billy Higgins.

INDIES

GRAM PARSONS

Gram Parsons & the Fallen Angels—Live 1973

(SIERRA)

RECORDED FOR A New York radio broadcast, Parsons' performance of heart-breaking originals and unusual covers demonstrates his rousing spontaneity and emotional purity. "Drug Store Truck Drivin' Man," which he wrote while with the Byrds, is given a slower gospel-tinged rendition highlighted by Neil Flanz's mournful steel guitar. Parsons wails on "Big Mouth Blues" as lead guitarist Jock Bartley weaves and twists some nasty

fills. Then-unknown Emmylou Harris offers strong vocal accompaniment, particularly on an unedited, digitally remastered recording of "Love Hurts," as the classic duo's quivering vocals blend and intertwine in forlorn romantic abandon. (Box 5853, Pasadena, CA 91117-0853)—*Rick Petreyck*

MIRANDA SEX GARDEN

Suspiria

(MUTE)

BRINGING NEW MEANING to the term "gothic rock," Miranda Sex Garden has gone beyond the a cappella madrigals of its debut and added bass, drums, violins and acres of fuzzy guitar. The three vocalists weave spookily around the inventive instrumental support, while time shifts and tape loops create an edgy unpredictability. A rich, challenging collection of polyrhythmic folk-rock dirges and off-the-wall ballads, including a relatively straight reading of "My Funny Valentine."

—*Geoffrey Welchman*

STEVE FERGUSON & THE MID-WEST CREOLE ENSEMBLE

Jack Salmon & Derby Sauce

(SCHOOLKIDS' RECORDS)

THE "ORIGINAL" GUITARIST in the most obscure Best Band in the World—is that cult status or what? Most stunning about NRBQ's long-lost axeman's comeback is how *complete* a picture it paints: nine great songs snazzily arranged by Fergie, performed by an "ensemble" playing every instrument there is and some ("assimilated flute, chime & violin") that aren't. Ferguson hasn't been *totally* MIA—he played a major role in Johnnie Johnson's out-of-the-blue *Johnnie B. Bad* on Elektra in '91—but considering the level of professionalism, polish and skilled picking displayed here, that he even stepped away for a moment (let alone 20 years) is a crime. You've got to hear this. (523 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor, MI 48104)—*Dave DiMartino*

THOMAS ANDERSON

Blues for the Flying Dutchman

(BLUE MILLION MILES)

ANDERSON'S SECOND ALBUM—on a German label, no less—is earnest, literate and maybe even as namedroppy as *Elliott Murphy's Aquashow* was. Which is fine—I mean, if you're a good songwriter, you write about things that mean a lot to you, right? And if you've been a rock critic—as Anderson has been and still is—that means writing songs plugging '70s stalwarts like Armand Schaubroeck and the New York Dolls that are called "Whatever Happened to Nash the Slash." Answer: He's doing film scores in Toronto under his real name, Jeff Plewman. And maybe *his* records sell in Germany, too.—*Dave DiMartino*

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Excursions in Ambience

(CARDLINE)

TECHNOPHOBES, TAKE NOTE. This lite anthology eases the stress of future shock by lending a warm, cuddly aura to machines that would ordinarily frighten decent citizens. An anonymous gurgling ooze dominates the proceedings, although the flow isn't entirely generic. 777's "Mia," co-produced by ancient hippie Steve Hillage, injects an unexpected note of tension. Meanwhile, Psychedelic Research Lab's "Tarenah" blends enticing hints of African and Indian sounds to create something verging on an actual song. Or is that just the electronic pod people, seeking to enslave new subjects by pretending to be normal? Soothing and spooky at once.—*Jon Young*

JOHN SEBASTIAN

Tar Beach

(SHANACHIE)

YES, HE'S BACK, and—no surprise—as winning as always. Low-key production puts Sebastian's voice front and center, where it still works its magic. His songs acknowledge nostalgia ("Night Owl Cafe," "Smokey Don't Go") without being trapped by it. But most of them are glad to be right here, right now.—*Scott Isler*

SHEILA CHANDRA

Weaving My Ancestors' Voices

(REALWORLD/CARDLINE)

NO ENYA COMPARISONS, please. Chandra not only sings British and Irish folk tunes (one apiece) but also a Spanish lullaby and Indian vocalise, not to mention Gregorian and Hindi chant. Didactic, maybe, but soothing and smoothly produced. She also makes her point: A drone isn't always a bore.

—*Scott Isler*

ORQUESTA ORIGINAL DE MANZANILLO

Puros

(QBADISC)

MOST FOLKS DON'T usually associate flutes and violins with hip dance music. Unless, of course, they have swung their hips to a great Cuban *charanga*. *Puros*, one of the four initial offerings from Qbadisc (a new label specializing in Cuban tuneage), collects a dozen *sons*, *congas*, *rumbas* and other socialist-island sounds from the popular masters of this instrumental configuration, Orquesta Original de Manzanillo. The 30-year-old, 13-piece band excels at the beautiful collision of second-line strings, lithe wind instruments, funky Latin-stride piano, chunky electric bass and mondo percussion. Lead singer Candido Fabr e's syncopated exhortations cheer on the communal

efforts of his bandmates. Smooth and full-bodied, with a pleasantly lingering aftertaste, Manzanillo is one of the finest non-tobacco Cuban products, available for the first time to discerning Yanqui imperialists. (Box 1256, Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10011)—*Tom Cheyney*

CALVIN RUSSELL

Soldier

(NEW ROSE)

WITH HIS SWEAT-STAINED fedora, scarred mug and washed-out eyes, Calvin Russell looks like the guy down at the end of every bar, stirring his bones to hobble out at last call. Jim Dickinson produced this record, a bestseller in Europe; it's electric blues-rock with an acoustic sparseness, the lead guitar and drums crunching against the silence. An unemployed plumber and ex-con from Austin, Russell contemplates heaven from Death Row, from a flophouse cot. He expects nothing and recommends that you do the same. (25, rue du General Leclerc, 94270 Le Kremlin-Bicetre, France)

—*Tony Scherman*

MARTIN CARTHY & DAVE SWARBRICK

Skin & Bone

(GREEN LINNET)

WHEN THESE BRITISH folk-rock avatars deliver bare-bone readings of trad material, the results sound so timeless that you wonder if it's because the artists sound as ancient as their centuries-old set list or that the songs somehow manage to be contemporary. Either way it's a marvel, from the have and have-not tales of "The Poacher" and "The Sheep Stealer" to the sunny hedonism of "The New Mown Hay."—*Thomas Anderson*

REISSUES

THE SOFT BOYS

A Can of Bees

Underwater Moonlight

Invisible Hits

(RYKODISC)

BEFORE ROBYN HITCHCOCK became Robyn Hitchcock, he was leader of the Soft Boys. These three albums, recorded between 1978 and 1980, constitute the Boys' entire official recorded legacy; together they make a serious claim for the band as one of the most inspired of that era. Many of the Hitchcock trademarks are already on display—the delirious lyrical imagery, the repeated references to fish, crabs, prawns and other underwater inhabitants, the musical tips of the hat to Lennon, Barrett and McGuinn. Yet the Soft Boys rocked harder than the Egyptians ever have; though Hitchcock's style has grown subtler over the years, it's also lost much

of the savage abandon (and gorgeously sinewy guitar tone) that's so evident here.—*Mac Randall*

DAVE BARTHOLOMEW
Spirit of New Orleans

(EMI)

AS IMPERIAL RECORDS' producer/A&R man in New Orleans throughout the 1950s, Bartholomew pretty much was the sound of the city to rock 'n' roll fans. His hand-picked backing musicians are commonly associated with Fats Domino but imparted the same elegant swing to a number of singers—even, rarely, Bartholomew himself. This double CD (50 tracks) is a long-overdue tribute to his expertise. Caveat: It also provides the genealogy to Chuck Berry's "My Ding-a-Ling."

—*Scott Isler*

CURTIS MAYFIELD & THE IMPRESSIONS

The Anthology 1961-1977

(MCA)

APART FROM JAMES BROWN, the great Curtis Mayfield may have exerted the broadest influence of any R&B auteur. Consider: Young Bob Marley paid close heed to his elegant Impressions, whose

sweet Chicago vocals built a bridge between doo-wop and soul in the early '60s, while Mayfield's stunning '72 soundtrack for *Superfly* charted the urban war zone now being revisited by countless rappers. Even if you already know the big hits, this deeply satisfying two-CD feast holds wondrous delights, from the gorgeous "Sad Sad Girl and Boy" to the future-shock funk of "(Don't Worry) If There's a Hell Below, We're All Going to Go." Mayfield has recently reissued many of his solo works; now it's time for MCA to do the same with those classic Impressions albums. Please!

—*Jon Young*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Capricorn Presents the Cobra Records Story

(CAPRICORN)

COBRA, FOUNDED IN Chicago in 1956 by entrepreneur/gambler Eli Toscano (who, legend has it, was fitted with a pair of cement Oxfords after piling up some mob debts), was the crucible of the high-burning West Side guitar style. Otis Rush, Magic Sam and Buddy Guy did their earliest, and some believe best, work there, and much of it is

included on this two-CD, 54-track compilation. Beyond the blazing excitement of numbers like Rush's "Double Trouble," Sam's "All Your Love" and Guy's "You Sure Can't Do," there are excellent entries by such stablemates as harp master "Shakey" Walter Horton, R&B singer Harold Burrage, soulstress Betty Everett and Ike Turner's churning band the Kings of Rhythm. Another very welcome boxed set in Capricorn's continuing look at important postwar independent labels.

—*Chris Morris*

LOWELL FULSON
One More Blues

(EVIDENCE)

LARRY DAVIS
I Ain't Beggin' Nobody

(EVIDENCE)

THE EVIDENCE LABEL, which has been conscientiously reissuing Sun Ra's great Saturn recordings, has also picked up a few blues gems originally issued only in Europe. The Fulson set, from 1984, is a hot affair, with the L.A. singer/guitarist receiving hard-hitting support on a selection of originals and sturdy covers by guitarist Philip Walker and his band. Singer/guitarist Davis, best known for his 1958 Duke classic "Texas Flood," is paired with saxophonist/keyboardist Oliver Sain, who also contributes songs well-suited to Davis's sensitive vocal style. Both albums are pleasing works by still-effective veteran performers.

—*Chris Morris*

MILES DAVIS
Kind of Blue

(COLUMBIA)

DAVE BRUBECK
Time Out

(COLUMBIA)

SONY CHOSE TO introduce their 20-bit "Super Bit Mapping" process with a series of limited-edition, gold-foil compact discs, including these two classics. I cannot comment about whose competing 20-bit technology is the best, but using my LPs and 30 years of listening as a reference point, I can report that I'm hearing many palpable subtleties in these newly remastered masterpieces I never suspected were there. For instance, cymbals come out remarkably transparent and clear—you can hear Jimmy Cobb and Joe Morello adjust their touch, and it's all airy and open. Also, the bass is chewy and warm, without that hyped-up, in-your-face boom of many early CDs. Mostly, I'm impressed by a sense of space and imaging—an enhanced room environment—so that each bell tone by Miles and Paul Desmond has depth and warmth. Now please go back and do this to the entire Miles and Ellington catalogs.—*Chip Stern*

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MUS06

[cont'd from page 89] wood at the Oscars? Clapton on Grammy night? Nope, it's Gang Starr's Guru, kicking off *Jazzmatazz* by praising his collaborators. Billed as an experimental fusion of live jazz and hip-hop, this all-star schmoozefest doesn't make the groundbreaking strides he envisioned. (Digable Planets did more to evoke a hipster vibe on their debut.) But that doesn't stop the ace MC from devising sharp rhymes or keep his pals from uncorking tasty riffs.

Guru clarifies his priorities up front, looking to "mellow out," of all things, as Donald Byrd blows pretty trumpet on "Loungin'." In fact, rap's familiar function as a vehicle for lethal putdowns gets only passing attention, and the slams seem half-hearted at that. Instead, Guru celebrates a happier, opposing tradition, offering respect to elders and peers. Despite his somber voice—one of the most striking instruments in hip-hop—he's obviously delighted to share space with worthy vets like vibeman Roy Ayers and pianist Lonnie Liston Smith. Whatever else it accomplishes, *Jazzmatazz* offers his audience a chance to hear some talented players as artists in their own right, not just fodder for somebody else's samples.

Displaying serious ingenuity, Guru scores with topics already done to death, namely, love and the urban jungle. Blowing kisses to singer N'Dea Davenport on "When You're Near" and "Trust Me," he plays the tender suitor without a hint of misogyny, refreshing the hoariest romantic clichés. Elsewhere, Branford Marsalis adds muscular sax to the loping beat of "Transit Ride," an alarming guide to subway etiquette ("Don't smile at anyone/'Cause people out here, they like to travel with handguns"). Even this spirited interlude, however, doesn't suggest a new frontier; if anything, Guru's willingness to accommodate the melodic gifts of his mates brings him closer to conventional pop music than Gang Starr ever did. *Jazzmatazz* contains genuine pleasures, but don't junk those turntables yet. —Jon Young

JANET JACKSON

Janet
(VIRGIN)

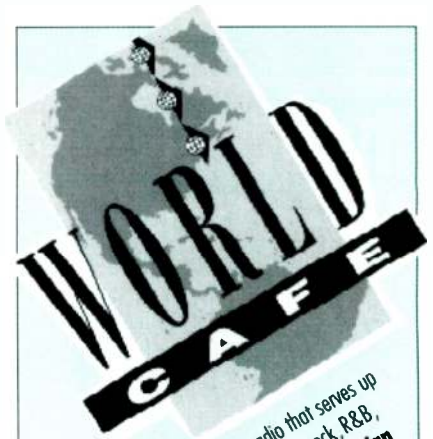
IF PEOPLE GET THE GOVERNMENTS THEY deserve, as the saying goes, they probably get the pop stars they deserve as well. It's a humbling angle from which to observe the triumph of America's most famous dysfunctional family, the Jacksons, who have not merely produced the erstwhile King of Pop but a sister whose latest opus, *Janet*, will almost certainly cement a

claim to her being its queen. What puzzles me is that Michael Jackson, despite his obsession to out-sell every other artist on earth, manages records of surprising originality and quirky revelation, while the relatively "normal" Janet, who casts each album around a theme of personal growth with all the subtlety of a 12-step program, makes dance-happy pop that rarely gives a sense of what's really below either her surface or yours.

Janet is the best/worst case in point, once more produced with that eminent duo Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. This is the marriage Berry Gordy only dreamed about—mating Janet's sunny Motown melodies and entertainment ethic to the sleek, sophisticated Minneapolis sound as defined by Jam, Lewis and Prince. You can hear that mix to its best advantage on "That's the Way Love Goes," with Janet sounding not a little like her bro (and in one humorous aside, like Barry White) over a sinuous R&B groove performed by the Flow; on "Funky Big Band," a Stevie Wonder-like tribute to Harlem nightlife enriched by Jimmy and Terry's jazzy melange of saxophone, trumpet and piano solos; the modern disco "Throb"; and the melodramatic "This Time," replete with string orchestra and an "opera solo" by Kathleen Battle that would make Procol Harum drool. All help mitigate the numbing effects of a 70-minute CD that never met a drum it couldn't program. But then records like this aren't meant to be listened to: They are to be absorbed, video by video, for several years. Trust me, it's better that way.

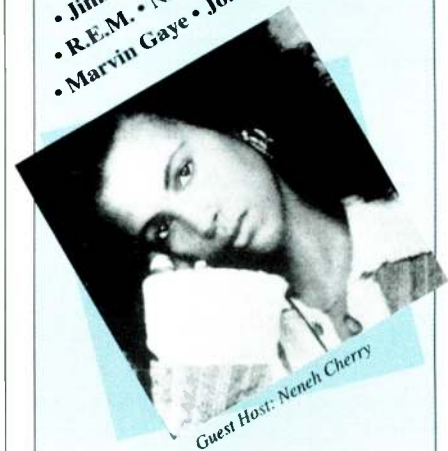
As *Control* marked Janet's declaration of womanly independence, and *Rhythm Nation 1814* her debut as a social idealist, *Janet* finds her four-square in favor of sensuous love-making (perhaps next time she'll address the controversy surrounding apple pie). What this means is a sheaf of songs with lyrics to make Donna Summer blush, though Janet's voice remains curiously entombed by the arrangements; on the faux-Caribbean ballad "The Body That Loves You" she sounds like she's crooning from inside an aquarium. The contradiction arises, I suspect, from the contemporary need to earnestly proclaim *something*, while Janet's natural dignity holds her back from turning into the second coming of Cher. It's also telling that "Whoops Now," the terrific confection that closes her album, is not even credited, yet, like the rainbow at the end of a storm, joyfully eclipses much of the thundering pop which precedes it. Guess that's the problem with being royalty these days; you're so busy justifying your status you forget it's okay to have fun.

—Mark Rowland



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MUSICIAN

Mr. Ted Turner
 Turner Broadcasting
 1000 Turner Boulevard
 Atlanta, GA 30319
 April 1, 1993

Dear Mr. Turner,

We here at Musician magazine have noted with great enthusiasm your noble efforts to bring old movie classics to new audiences by "colorizing" the film. As you have pointed out, young people today won't enjoy a motion picture that is not in color.

May we suggest to you a way to take your vision a step further. Young people today also expect a movie to have a soundtrack full of big loud rock songs. Many perfectly good old films are ruined for young audiences by the corny background music. Kids feel that a movie without a blasting rock ballad (preferably accompanied by a long shot of a convertible racing down a desert highway) is like a movie without popcorn. So we have taken the liberty of preparing for you some suggestions for rock songs that could be added to the soundtracks of old movies.

For the farewell scene in Casablanca: "Every Time You Go Away" by Paul Young

For the shower scene in Psycho: "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me" by Culture Club

For Liz and Dick's brawl in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf: "Love Is a Battlefield" by Pat Benatar

When Cary Grant and Grace Kelly drive through the French Riviera in To Catch a Thief: "Paradise by the Dashboard Lights" by Meat Loaf

The old priest is reunited with his ancient mother on Christmas Eve in Going My Way: "Living on a Prayer" by Bon Jovi

The construction scene in The Fountainhead: "We Built This City" by Starship

For the siege of Atlanta in Gone with the Wind: "Civil War" by Guns N' Roses

We believe that such minor technical adjustments would (a.) allow you to get a finger in the lucrative CD market, (b.) greatly increase video rentals of your vintage pictures, and (c.) get clips from those films on MTV.

All that and exposing new generations to our rich cinematic history! Please let us know if we might assist you by consulting in this valuable enterprise.

Sincerely,



S. Glick Jr.
 Special Projects Coordinator
 Musician Magazine

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