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MUSICIAN

OCTOBER 1993 $2.95

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Woody Allen Talks Music ◆ The New MIDI: An Easy Way In

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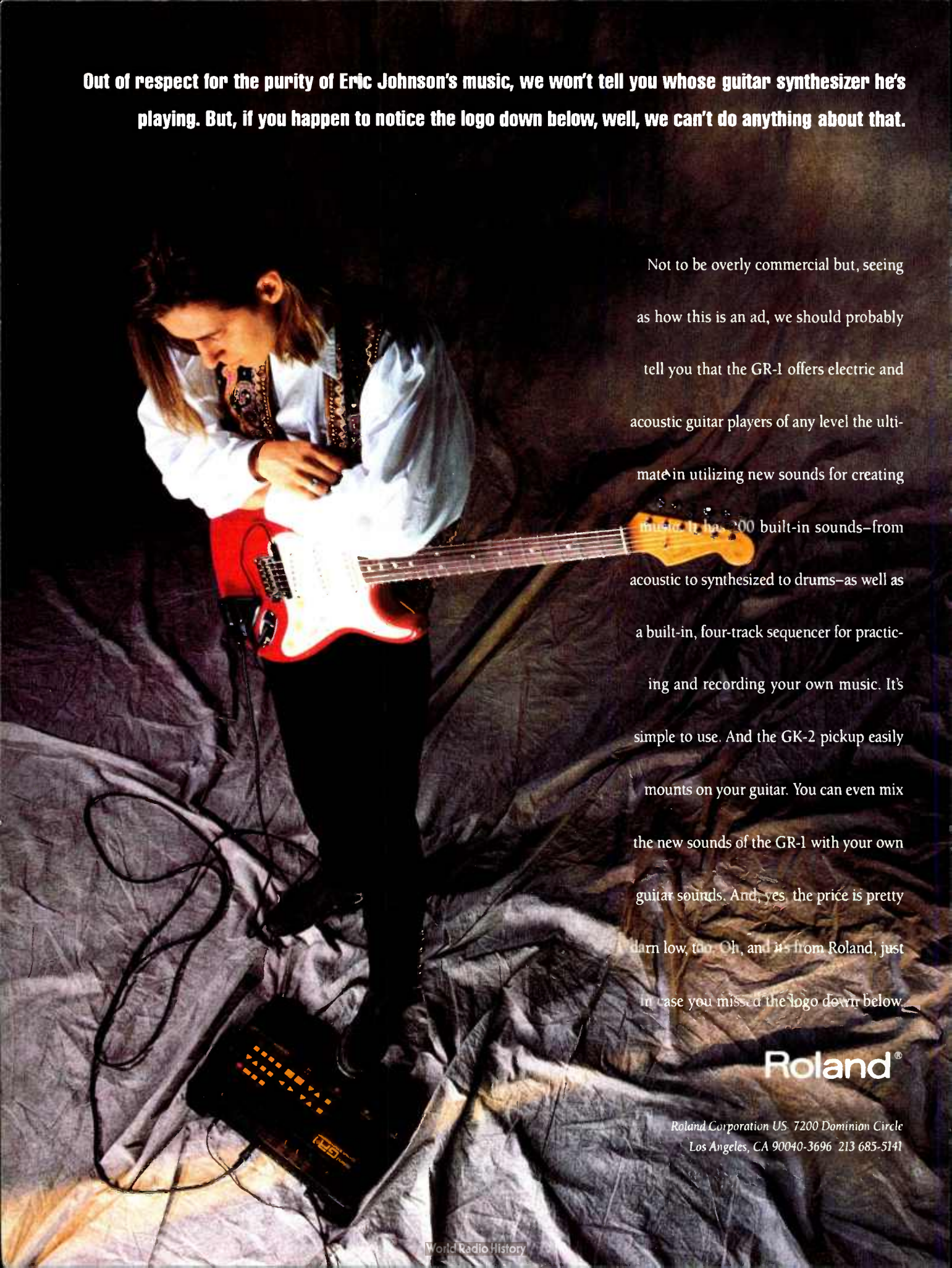
Out of respect for the purity of Eric Johnson's music, we won't tell you whose guitar synthesizer he's playing. But, if you happen to notice the logo down below, well, we can't do anything about that.



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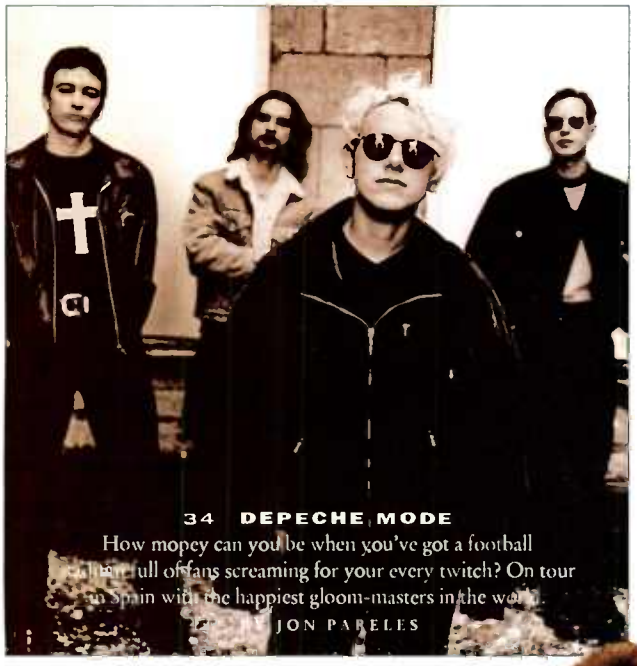


WORKING MUSICIAN

DEPARTMENTS

COVER
Photograph by Charles Peterson

patti scialfa

Rumble doll

Patti scialfa's debut album presents 12 songs by a singer and songwriter with a richly emotional voice and intensely personal vision.

featuring:

as long as i (can be with you), come tomorrow, and lucky girl.

"Sturdy, shimmering pop" –Newsweek

"Scialfa definitely has her own voice–and it's most assuredly a woman's voice...dealing with the tough transition between an extended girlhood and a harder-fought maturity. Her writing unabashedly lays bare the hopes and dreams of everyday existence...It's an old-fashioned, traditional rock world." –L.A. Times

"An album that celebrates innocent love, brain-twisting desire, and the cause of the fever..." –Newsday

COLUMBIA

FRONT MAN

RAY CHARLES

Among other things, you're regarded as one of America's great masters of the blues, a musical idiom that's essentially about loss, particularly the loss of romantic love. Why does love die?

People often get into love affairs because they have unrealistic expectations about somebody, then when the person don't turn out to be who they thought he or she was, they start thinking maybe I can change him or her. That kind of thinking is a mistake, babe, because when the dust settles people are gonna be pretty much what they are. It's a rare thing for anybody to be able to change who they really are deep down inside and this creates a lot of problems in the romantic love department.

Do you ever make yourself cry when you sing?

No, not at this stage—I'm an old man, darlin'. But the songs can still get through to me.

What songwriters are currently exciting you?

I don't know about songwriters per se. Once in a while I'll listen to the radio to see what they're putting out, but it's not too often I hear something I like. As far as rap music goes, I've been reciting poetry since I was three years old and as a musician I want the music to do something to me. Somebody like Art Tatum can make me sit up and take notice, but rap music isn't very musical and I can't learn anything from it. You gotta do something more than talk to me.

What's the most difficult kind of music to sing?

I know this sounds egotistical, but if I like something I can sing it. I did *Porgy and Bess* and that's said to be a complicated piece of music, and I can do country music, blues and love songs. On the other hand, I can't sing something I don't like, and that's one of my defects.

Can you perform music that's out of sync with the mood you might be in on a given night?

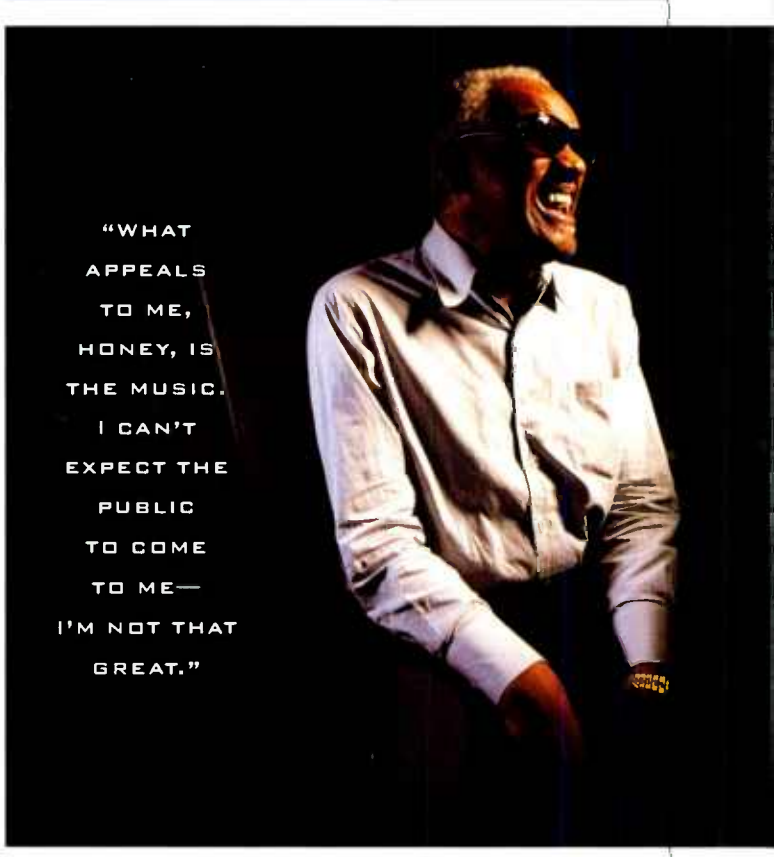
Yes, because when you sing you're like an actor performing a part. Once you get out there you become that part, only you're using music instead of dialogue. I'm the kind of a person that if my personal life is hurting, I can go to work and the music will take over. It's like a guy who goes to a bar and drinks—for those few hours I can wrap myself up in my music.

Can you also be transported that way as a listener?

No. Listening is a different experience because when you're performing you set the mood, and when you listen the mood's already created for you. But as a listener I've loved many performers. Muddy Waters, Big Boy Crudup, Tampa Red, Nat King Cole, Al Hibler, Charles Brown, Frank Sinatra, Little Jimmy Scott—I've heard many very great performers.

At 62, you continue to spend a large percentage of your life touring. What appeals to you about life on the road?

What appeals to me, honey, is the music. I can't expect the public to come to me—I'm not that great. I don't especially love life on the road, but I figure if you're lucky enough to be able to do what you truly love doing and you can make a living at it, you've got the ultimate in life. Every good thing involves some kind of sacrifice, and staying in a hotel ain't too big a sacrifice in exchange for what I get from music. It can be a hassle dealing with airlines and hotels, but you have to keep reminding yourself: Hey, yesterday I had a beautiful day. Today isn't so hot, but as long as I keep the percentage in my favor I'm doing okay. I've accepted that I'm gonna have days where I run into nuts and people who don't know anything about nothing, and they can be in positions of authority too. But you gotta deal with them, so what can you do?



What's the most widely held misconception about the life of a famous musician?

That it's all glamor. People think famous people don't have the same trouble they do, but we do. Playing music don't mean life treats you any better.

How do you feel about being recognized everywhere you go?

You'd think I'd be used to it by now, but I still find it fascinating. You go to a little town in Japan where nobody speaks English, yet they know you on sight and know all your music. I'm not a head of state or nothing—I don't do nothing but play music—and I'm still amazed by the love people express for me and my music.

What do you think it is in your music that elicits such a strong response?

I hope it's the honesty. I don't lie with my music or try to bull people or feed them anything phony. I don't give them plastic. If something ain't right when I'm performing, the audience knows it because I go crazy. I'm ultra-sensitive when it comes to music, and I think the audience knows I'm genuine and that I don't give them the cheap stuff.

KRISTINE MCKENNA

PHOTOGRAPH BY PATRICK HARBRON

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LETTERS

GETTING SIGNED

I had always thought someone should write a book entitled *Bands That Coulda Been Contenders*. It would teach us what *not* to do. Your article "Getting Signed, the Day After" (July '93) is pretty close. Keep up the good work.

John Ivan
Big Guitars from Memphis
Memphis, TN

I have just finished reading "The Day After the Day You Get Signed," and now know I did the right thing. After meeting major labels and publishers, trying to survive various contracts—my attorney's bill was much larger than my advance—my manager and I started our own label. Is it a business headache? Sometimes. Do I own my own product? Yes. Do we sell upwards of 20,000 units a year all by our little selves? You bet.

The reality is this: Our industry is sadly lacking in visionaries. The "majors" are run by attorneys, merchandisers and marketeers who may think they know the next "big thing," but may as well be pulling names out of a hat. Music means nothing to them, artistry even less. Thanks for the reassurance.

Ann Reed
A Major Label, Inc.
Minneapolis, MN

Thanks for your terrific articles for aspiring musicians. The sidebar on the 10 Most Indefensible Recording Contract Provisions was especially informative.

I find that artists have very little information about standard practices of the recording industry. They often don't know what rights of ownership they have, and so have no idea of what they stand to lose by signing a standard contract. (Sadly, this is sometimes the case with managers, too.) I often tell them to check out the books at their local library; now, I'll be able to refer them to your series as well.

(By the way, our standard contract has none of the provisions you listed. We also don't touch publishing income, and we guarantee promotion. On the downside, our artists pay their own recording costs up front, which does allow them complete control over the recording process. I tried to create a contract that I would feel comfortable signing if I were the artist, and overall, I think I succeeded.)

Kristi Wachter
Racer Records
San Francisco, CA

TOWNSHEND

Your interview with Peter Townshend (July '93) was an exciting and informative journey into the mind of a true genius. As one of the music industry's most provocative and accurate critics, Townshend remains more than just rock 'n' roll's greatest songwriter. The man who once hoped to die before he got old has proven to be ageless.

Jordan Kurland
Glencoe, IL

In the '60s I had a concrete list of ways that the Who, the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix (along with massive doses of LSD) were changing my life. As a 41-year-old college sophomore, all I can ask is "whatever happened to all that lovely hippie shit?" I think Pete wants it to be a rhetorical question, and I couldn't agree more.

Dave Farrell
Lancaster, PA

I was thoroughly impressed with the Pete Townshend article by Thom Duffy. His writings, as well as Bill Flanagan's and Matt Resnicoff's, have re-established my perspective on magazine interviews with concise, intelligent questions.

Sue Ryan
Owings Mills, MD

The day I went searching the newsstands, I would have bought any magazine featuring Pete Townshend; fortunately, what I found was *your* July issue. Thanks.

Victoria Rowan
Granville, NY

THE BUSINESS

I was happy to see the article on repairing amplifiers in your June '93 edition. I know Gene Andre and the guys who work there, because I always bring my amps, guitars, etc. to them to be repaired. These guys give "down-home" customer service and always are trying to please; most important, their prices are fair. I'd love to see a regular column on amps featuring Andre electronics. These guys deserve it.

Lorrie Keith
New York, NY

Enough industry/advertising–driven pieces on personalities and gear! How about a couple of pieces on rehearsal technique, road-tour prep and other facets of a working band?

Chris Alastair
Washington, DC

Thanks for the view on royalties from Lipsky & Lipsky in the June '93 issue. I am quite curious, however, about why you printed the article and its attendant pie graph with no alternative perspectives.

At the recent NAIRD Convention, the most fascinating piece of information going around was about the pieces of this "pie" as it relates to major-label sales versus independent-label sales. In 1993 the percentage of record sales from indie labels is estimated at over 14 percent. This is not a figure major labels would readily let you believe, but it is the truth.

It is indeed a very small number of artists who are enjoying the profit of major-label status. So what happens to all those artists that don't make the cut? They most likely pursue their careers on indie labels.

My main point is that *Musician*'s readers deserve a broader perspective on how these kinds of issues come to bear on the careers of artists of all types. Your readers are people like me who buy this mag to get big-picture info and drool at the ads. We don't need a couple of lawyers promoting a vision of the biz that is purely clichéd and not just a little cynical as well.

Chuck Gross
Urban Resource
Tucson, AZ

ROBERT PLANT

I just read Robert Plant/Frontman in the July '93 issue. I never liked the band, but from this column I will go out and buy *Fate of Nations* immediately.

Jordan Dyas
Ridgewood, NJ

I think Robert Plant is absolutely right when he says: "People are fed up with pop idols who don't mean it." Maybe other readers who wrote about their support and adoration of U2 and Prince should keep that in mind. Van Morrison is one artist who is still alive and kicking and has never stooped to MTV for any reason. He does not claim to be a "sexy m...f" like Prince, but it *is* what's *inside* the physical package that matters the most.

Rosemary Maguire
Washingtonville, NY

Send letters to: **Musician,** ***1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036.***

1500 SERIES

WHATEVER YOU DO — DON'T BUY THE WRONG MIXER.

Especially if you're doing multitrack recording — whether digital or analog. Fact is, a mixer that's not specifically configured with the features essential for multitrack recording just isn't a recording mixer. Bottom line is, general purpose mixers make multitrack recording a nightmare.

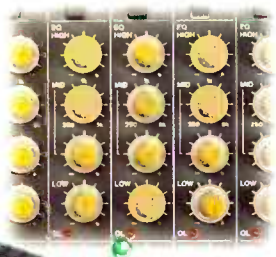
You see, mixers that aren't designed and engineered for multitrack recording will torture you with the endless hassle of patching and repatching — every time you track, overdub or mixdown. It's frustrating, wastes valuable time and leaves you tangled in cable.

So before you choose a mixer for your studio — be sure it has the features of a dedicated recording mixer.

IT'S NOT A RECORDING MIXER IF IT DOESN'T HAVE THESE FEATURES.

MULTITRACK DECK CONFIGURATION

If you don't have dedicated inputs and outputs for your 8-track deck, where do you plug it in? Without this basic recording configuration you'll be repatching day and night and you won't be able to record on 8 tracks at once. With these inputs, tape monitoring is as simple as pressing a switch. Also, because the TASCAM M1500 is a true 4-buss mixer, you can mix any combination of your input signals to any of the 4 output busses directly to tape.

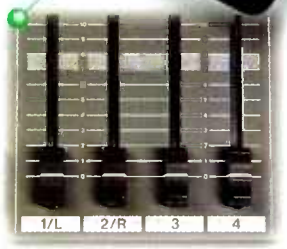


SWEEPABLE MIDRANGE EQ

Ask for it. Because when it comes time to tailor your sound, you need the flexibility where the action is — in the midrange. The M1500's sweepable midrange lets you isolate specific mid frequencies allowing you to make the subtle tonal corrections you want.

DIRECT OUT AND GROUP OUT ASSIGNMENT SWITCHES

You gotta have these. Because without them you can't directly send a single input to tape, or record several inputs to one track. But with them, assign your inputs anywhere by pressing a few switches. Best part is, you'll never have to refer to any complex patch diagrams.



ELABORATE MONITORING

In a recording environment you need to hear what's going through your board at all times. With the M1500's comprehensive monitoring matrix you are able to hear any sound source at any time — inputs, tape, AUX sends, anything — it's your choice, just press a switch.

IN-LINE MONITORING

A sure sign of a recording mixer. This lets you monitor your tape tracks at any time without sacrificing an input channel. Just press a switch. With the M1500's dual section not only can you monitor tape tracks, it can be used for additional effects sends, or to double your inputs for virtual tracking at mixdown. And do any of this by flipping a switch.

TRUE TRANSPARENCY AND LOW NOISE

In recording, your signal goes through the mixer several times. And each time it goes through, it is important not to lose or gain anything. Especially an identifiable "mixer sound." Test any mixer for its transparency. Take any signal and bounce it 3 or 4 times on your favorite digital recorder. With the truly transparent M1500, you'd be hard pressed to differentiate between the bounced tracks and the original signal.

At TASCAM, we've been making multitrack recording equipment for more than 20 years. We pack that experience into every mixer we make — and we make more recording mixers than any other company in the world.

For our M1500 Series of recording mixers, the result is an affordable mixing console configured for 8-track recording. A truly transparent mixer that makes tracking, overdubbing, and mixdowns easy. An extraordinarily flexible console loaded with the features and specs you'd expect on consoles costing thousands more.

But the M1500 Series of recording mixers are priced less than many general purpose mixers on the market. They're available in a 16-channel/32-input tabletop version (M1516) and a compact rack mountable 8-channel/16-input version (M1508). So if you're involved in digital or analog 8-track recording, you've just found the best recording console value in the industry.

Get your hands on a true recording mixer today: the TASCAM M1500 Series. There's one waiting for you at your authorized TASCAM dealer. Go ahead — test it and play with it. It's your next recording mixer.

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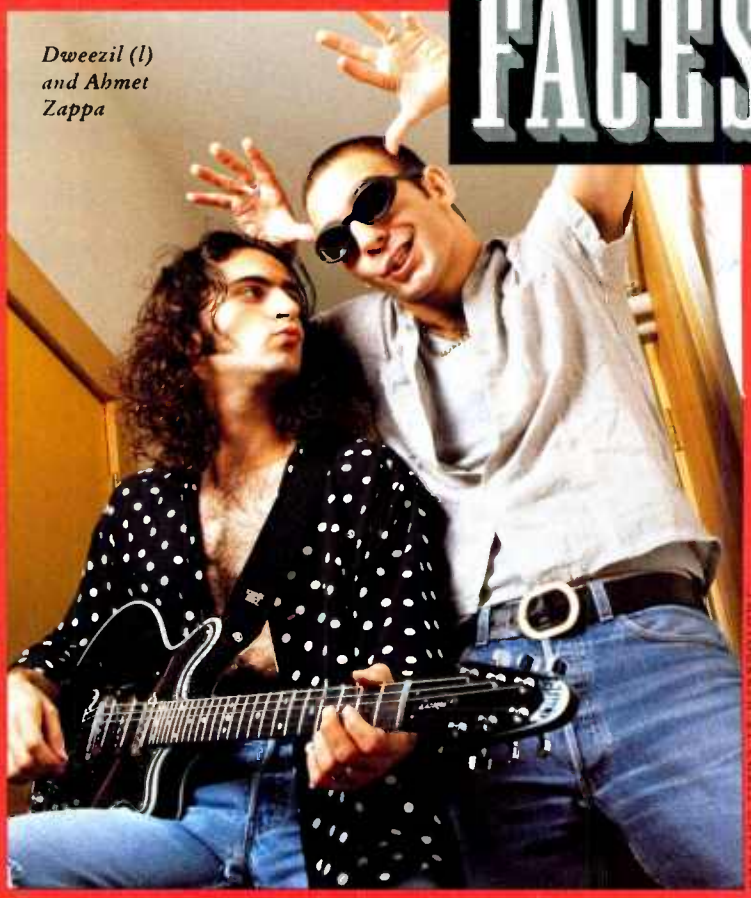
FACES

Debbie Davies

DEBBIE DAVIES is an anomaly: a fair-skinned, fair-haired female blues guitarist. "A lot of people have never even *seen* a woman play an electric guitar," she points out. Her more formidable distinction is that blues giant Albert Collins thinks she's terrific; she led his backup band, the Icebreakers, for three years. "It was my big break. I was dreaming of getting to play with one of my blues idols, and that's the way to learn: to apprentice with one of the masters." Davies, who started playing acoustic guitar when she was 12, also counts Stevie Ray and Jimmie Vaughan, T-Bone Walker and Eric Clapton among her influences. Their spectres are in evidence on Davies' solo debut for Blind Pig Records, *Picture This*, whose sound ranges from traditional blues to Cream-y blues rock. "Most of the musicians, especially the black musicians, have been very receptive and supportive," she says of her career. "There was more opposition early on when I was working on my playing. Once you can really play, it speaks for itself." KAREN BENNETT

PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK SCHRAMM



Dweezil (l) and Ahmet Zappa

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS CUFFARO

Z: BROTHERLY LOVE

"WE PLAY rock music. He plays the devil's music." That's how vocalist Ahmet Zappa sums up the difference between the sounds he's currently making with his guitar-brandishing brother Dweezil in their new band, Z, and the sounds made by their esteemed dad, Frank. "You can definitely hear his influence," adds Dweezil. "We have some similar takes on things. But we'd like to be heard without any preconceived notions. It's a drag when someone says, 'Oh yeah, *them*' before they hear what we've done."

There's plenty to be heard on *Shampoo Horn*, their band's debut opus. Borrowing its title from what Dweezil describes as "a very important family bathing ritual," the album addresses such topics as belly buttons, children's cereals and bloody dismemberment. In what is apparently a Zappa tradition, the brothers' freshly skewed world view is presented by way of challenging music that remains deceptively catchy. "We don't know if people are going to hate us, or if they'll just be perplexed," says Dweezil, "but we'd like to think that at least they'll be entertained."

Entertainment value erupts at Z's live shows, wherein Dweezil's formidable chops are augmented by his younger sibling's demented showmanship. Ahmet might introduce a tune with an analysis of ranch dressing vs. body secretions, a foreboding reference to the evil, fabled "Cyber-piñata" or a dissertation on his favorite cartoon character ("Napalm Death Smurf"). He sings, too.

"Ahmet has an out-of-body experience every time he opens his mouth onstage," Dweezil explains. "That's what's so nice about being in a band with him." CHUCK CRISAFULLI

FACES

Manic Street Preachers

Any Guns N' Roses fan would weep: (l to r) Richey James, Sean Moore, James Dean Bradfield and Nicky Wire.

THE SONGS of the Manic Street Preachers are awash in images of despair and drugs, broken dreams and loss, and the ever-fresh discovery that, hey, growin' up is a bitch. But the British band's second album *Gold Against the Soul* belies its adolescent angst with the kind of guitar-sharpened rock that would make any Guns N' Roses fan weep.

"The title song was basically about the loss of innocence; that was sort of a theme for the album," says rhythm guitarist Richey James, who shares lyric writing with bassist Nicky Wire; frontman and lead guitarist James Dean Bradfield and drummer Sean Moore pen the music. They grew up together in the south Wales town of Blackwood, provincial origins which James blames for an often brooding outlook. Together, they rejected the rave-of-the-week tastes of the U.K. music press in favor of hunting down used copies of *Exile on Main Street* or *London Calling*.

After two indie singles in Britain, the Preachers released their U.S. debut *Generation Terrorists* in early 1992, highlighted by such existential delights as "Motorcycle Emptiness." Despite its facile sense of gloom, *Gold Against the Soul* is a savvy collection of hard-rock songwriting, echoing the Faces, Thin Lizzy and, particularly, Queen—but then moving from influence to originality.

"When we first went to London, we had guitar reference points from all these London-based bands from the 1970s—Mott the Hoople, Bowie, the Clash—and so many journalists were saying, 'That's so out of date,'" recalls James. "And in the last year, within the British media, it's become the most fashionable thing you can have."

THOM DUFFY

Paw


JAY BLAKESBERG

Paw (l to r): Charles Bryan, Peter Fitch, Mark Hennessy and Grant Fitch.

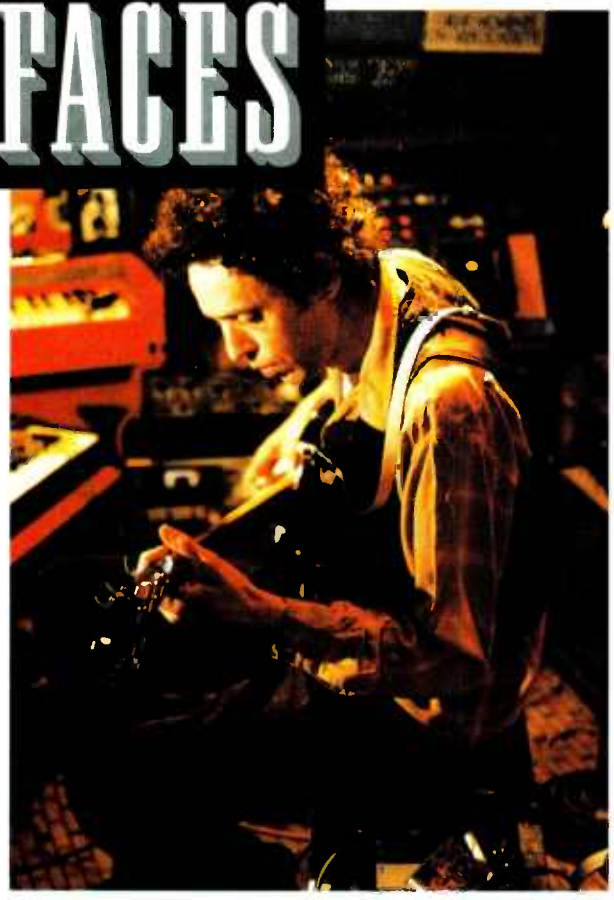
MARK HENNESSY has glimpsed the complications of fame, and doesn't like what he sees. "The idea of stardom freaks me out, actually," says the singer for Paw. "Any time you're in a band, some people think you must have a hotline to God. That's kind of gross."

Of course, the prospect of success is what prompted a scramble among record companies when the Lawrence, Kansas quartet shopped its demo after Nirvana's breakthrough. "I thought we made a good tape, but we were definitely in the right place at the right time," he agrees. Otherwise, he dismisses comparisons to Cobain and Co. "Yeah, it bugs me. There are elements in common, but that doesn't tell the whole story."

Dragline proves his point. A deceptive display of power, Paw's debut echoes everything from thrash metal to confessional folk. While Grant Fitch coaxes a surprising variety of noises from his buzzing guitar, Hennessy shouts tales of lust, regret and general torment, not to mention an emotional ode to the family dog. If these dramatic outbursts seem spontaneous, guess again.

"I had a hard time making the record," he reveals. "I kept thinking, 'This will be still around after I'm dead.' I freaked out and had to take a week off to get my shit together. I finally realized it doesn't matter if it's vocally right, as long as it's emotionally right."

But there's more than one way to spill your guts, says Hennessy, whose listening runs to Kate Bush and Tori Amos. "After living with this album, which is so angry and lonely, it's natural to want something different, so the next one will be more relaxed, more complex"—even, he dares to predict, "a couple of notches mellower. We're all burned out on hard rock." JON YOUNG



Slim Dunlap

THE LAST of the Replacements to issue a solo record, guitarist Slim Dunlap says he deliberately avoided the big-budget, months-in-the-studio approach preferred by his former bandmates. "Everybody spent over $200,000 on theirs; mine was under $10,000. I think it's gotta cost under that to be a real rock 'n' roll record. I don't mind a few mistakes. It feels real, at least. People are so afraid to reveal they're not perfect. To me a solo record is hardcore you, your personality to the extreme. Take it or leave it."

The Old New Me reveals Dunlap to be one gritty soul—it's full of barroom rock shouts, recycled Muddy Waters scatology and wiseass, Keith Richards–inspired guitar. It celebrates the absurdity of the rock industry ("Ballad of the Opening Band") while paying tribute to the music's brazen fury ("From the Git Go," "Just for the Hell of It").

Says Dunlap, "It's about hearing riffs I've played my entire life and working them into a little different hodge-podge. It's not cutting-edge—I wouldn't be honest if I made a record that didn't have Keith in there, because his way of playing rhythm guitar like it's lead guitar is very important to me. Lead guitar is completely clichéd, and boring—the next Jimi Hendrix probably isn't gonna be a guitar player."

Dunlap says he and the other ex-'Mats are happy to be doing other projects: "The whole curse of that band was, even if we were good, people didn't like it as much as when we completely fell apart. We got away with murder. Which is why I'm glad we're not alive anymore."

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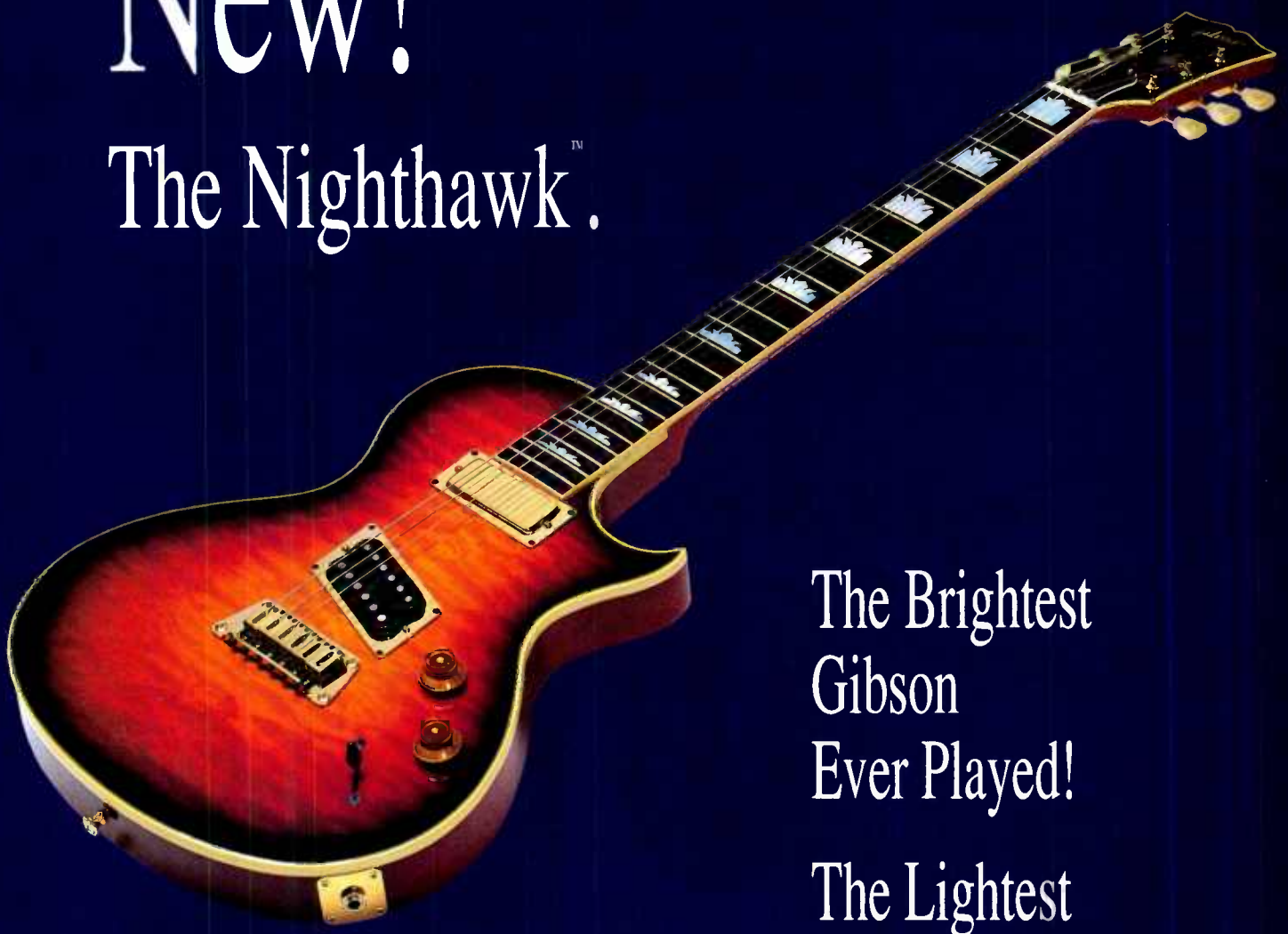

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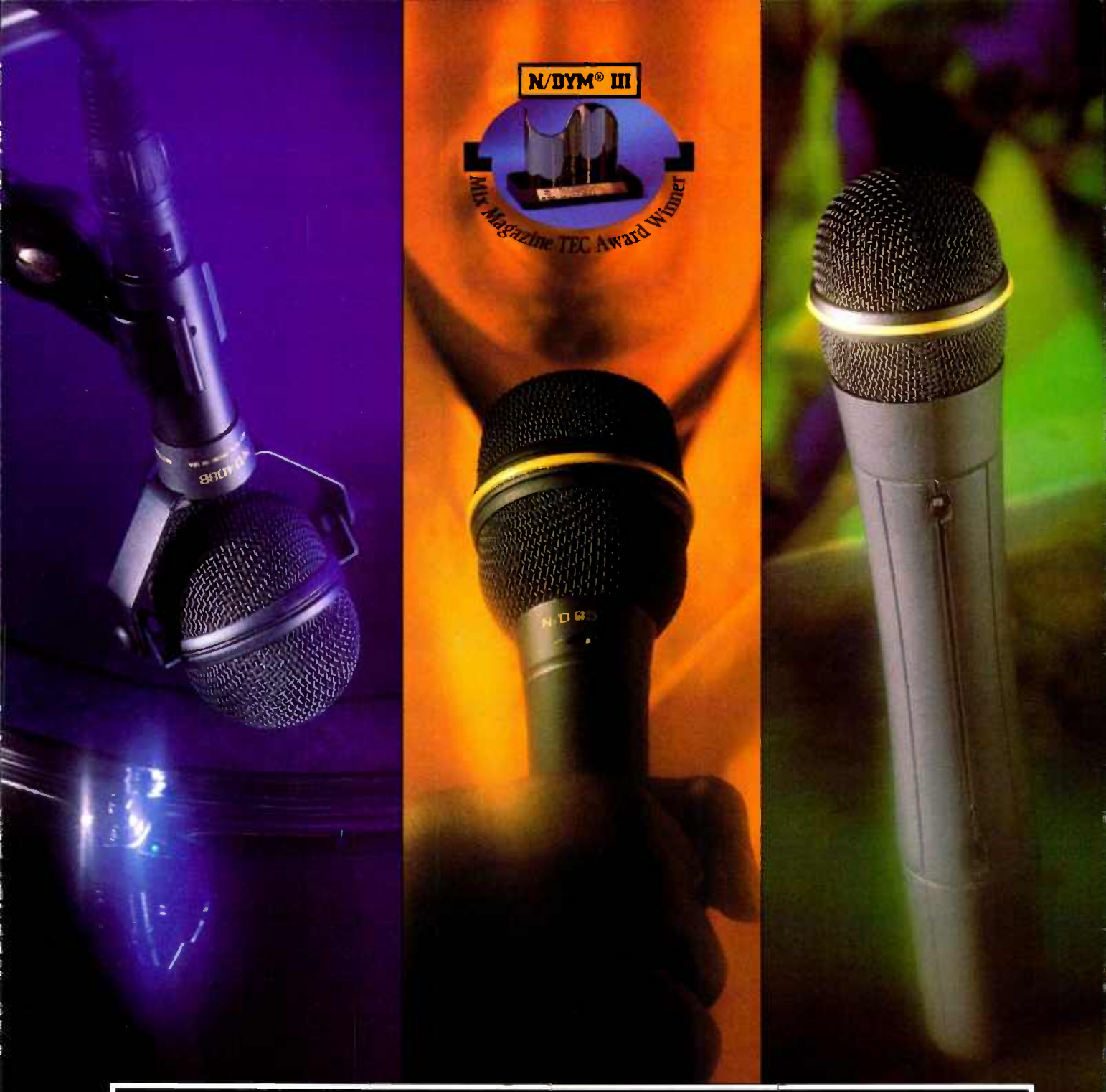

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ON STAGE

PAUL WESTERBERG

PAUL WESTERBERG WENT straight from Next Big Thing to Beloved Living Legend without making the usual stop at Really Successful Rock Star. Yet on his first tour since the breakup of the Replacements—a series of summer club dates preceding theater shows in the fall—he confirmed his place on the top floor of the tower of song. After nearly two hours of rampaging rock 'n' roll at New York's Irving Plaza, Westerberg pulled out his acoustic guitar and sang "Sadly Beautiful" and "Here Comes a Regular," songs so powerful that whether your idea of the king of that particular hill is Hank Williams in '52 or Dylan in '65 or Neil Young in '73, your heart would tell you that in 1993 Paul Westerberg is at the top.

Westerberg dared comparisons to his old band by sticking with the Replacements' format—bass, drums and two guitars. His new team (Neighborhoods guitarist David Minehan, Raindogs bassist Darren Hill and drummer Josh Freese) set the Mats' legend on fire and held it aloft. The advantage the new guys had was probably less musical than psychological—the Replacements were so emotionally entwined that if one of them started screwing up during a show, they all went over like a row of dominoes. They could be great or mediocre, so at the first indication of mediocrity they'd dive straight for the third option: deliberately horrible. Unfortunately there were too many shows where one member would pull the "horrible" cord while the other three were still shooting for great. At Irving Plaza there were several moments when things went wrong and Westerberg got that "Let's parachute!" look in his eyes, but each time the new band kept rocking like bastards, laughing it off, and before long Paul would find a place to climb back up and continue. Which is a great thing because Paul Westerberg sailing through "Left of the Dial," "Mannequin Shop," "Achin' to Be," "Things," "Can't Hardly Wait," "If Only You Were Lonely," "First Glimmer," "Answering Machine," "Dyslexic Heart," "Merry Go Round" and "Alex Chilton" is as satisfying as rock 'n' roll gets. In the audience smelly, sweat-soaked strangers jumped up and hugged each other.

What at first seemed to be Westerberg's worst song choice turned out to be the best: When the band kicked into "I'll Be You," it felt as if that one song should have been left to the Replace- [*cont'd on page 25*]

PETER WOLF

YOU GO CRAZY, AND I'll go twice as crazy, you go three times as crazy, I'll go four times as crazy, you go five times as crazy, I'llgosixtimesascrazy, yougoseventimesascrazyI'llgoeighttimesahhhhh!!!!" Whether that's a promise or a threat is debatable, but at the recently reopened Lupo's Heartbreak Hotel in Providence, Peter Wolf—ex–J. Geils frontman and guy you'd most want to MC your bachelor party—certainly lived up to it. During a manic two-and-a-half-hour, four-encore show, the singer combined commotion, commitment and groove to reinvigorate a slew of rock's hoariest performance clichés. It was great.

Wolf had been in the studio working on his fourth post-Geils record, and booked a handful of mid-August club dates around New England to get a change of scenery. After a decade away from the stage, there were legit questions as to whether or not the singer could achieve, or would even want to achieve, the brand of patented [*cont'd on page 25*]

PHOTOGRAPHS BY (TOP) JOHN MOTTERN; LINDA COVELLO

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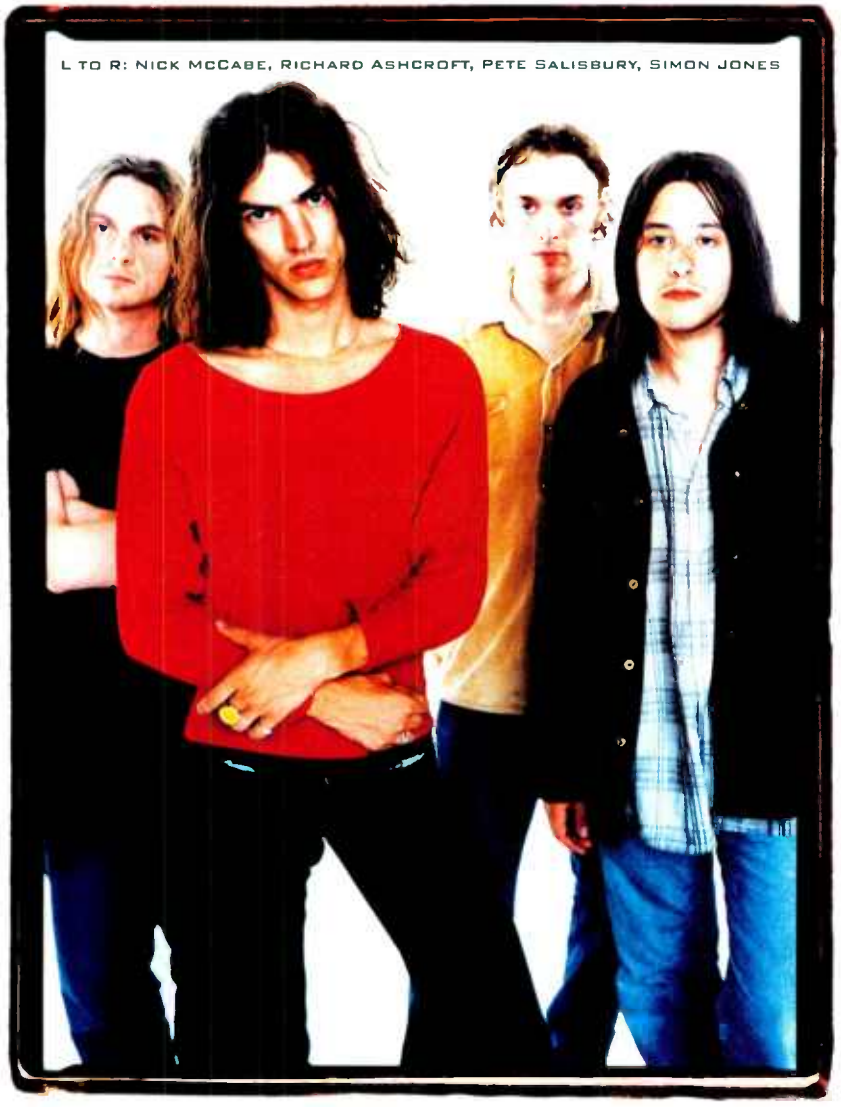
VERVE: INTO THE MYSTIC



L TO R: NICK MCCABE, RICHARD ASHCROFT, PETE SALISBURY, SIMON JONES

HIPSTERS WEARING BELL BOTTOMS AND CENTER-PART HAIR ARE SWAYING ecstatically to Verve's electric trance music while snake-hipped, pouty-lipped singer Richard Ashcroft writhes under the colored lights on the stage of Hollywood's Whiskey-A-Go-Go. Welcome to the '90s?

In any event, England's latest darlings are living up to the hype of this sold-out event, along with the critical accolades surrounding their mellifluous American LP debut, *A Storm in Heaven*. From the dreamy, feedback-tinged "Star Sail" to the airy, hypnotic "Slide Away," Verve's live show underscores that album's gently psychedelic cacophony, the aural equivalent of sleepwalking. Guitarist Nick McCabe alternates between spacy well-placed notes and chordal washes of sound. Bassist Simon Jones and drummer Pete Salisbury provide the steady backdrop for Ashcroft's otherworldly stage presence, as his ecstatic ardor all but turns his audience into Peeping Toms. Not to mention Ashcroft himself.

"When it was all going on, I was in a corner of the room, looking down and sort of laughing at myself," he explains the next day, sitting cross-legged on a couch in the Virgin Records artist lounge. "It's such a surreal setting you can't help but get a kick out of being involved with it. It's like being involved in this ridiculous movie."

Mystically couched phrases permeate Ashcroft's conversation as well as his music, a sensibility some might find precious but which seems to spring from a genuinely spiritual point of view. The death of his father when Ashcroft was 11 prompted what he calls a "live life to the fullest" epiphany, while his stepfather is a Rosicrucian—"an adherent of a 17th- and 18th-century movement devoted to esoteric wisdom with emphasis on psychic and spiritual enlightenment," according to Webster's. Ashcroft's worldview includes offhand references to astral travel and seeing auras. "I've done all those things," he says. "You've got to concentrate but not be aware of any of your preconditioning, not listen to what your mind says.

> *"At the end of one gig I freaked out and started rolling on the floor."*

"I've been daydreaming since I was 12 or 13 about music, and I treat daydreams as important as visualizations, which is an important part of meditation. If you want something, you visualize it, see it, smell it, touch it, walk around it. Before Verve, I played with Nick, and at the end of one gig, for some reason, I just completely freaked out and started rolling on the floor. All these kids were staring at me, going, 'What a wanker—what the fuck is he doing?' But I couldn't help it."

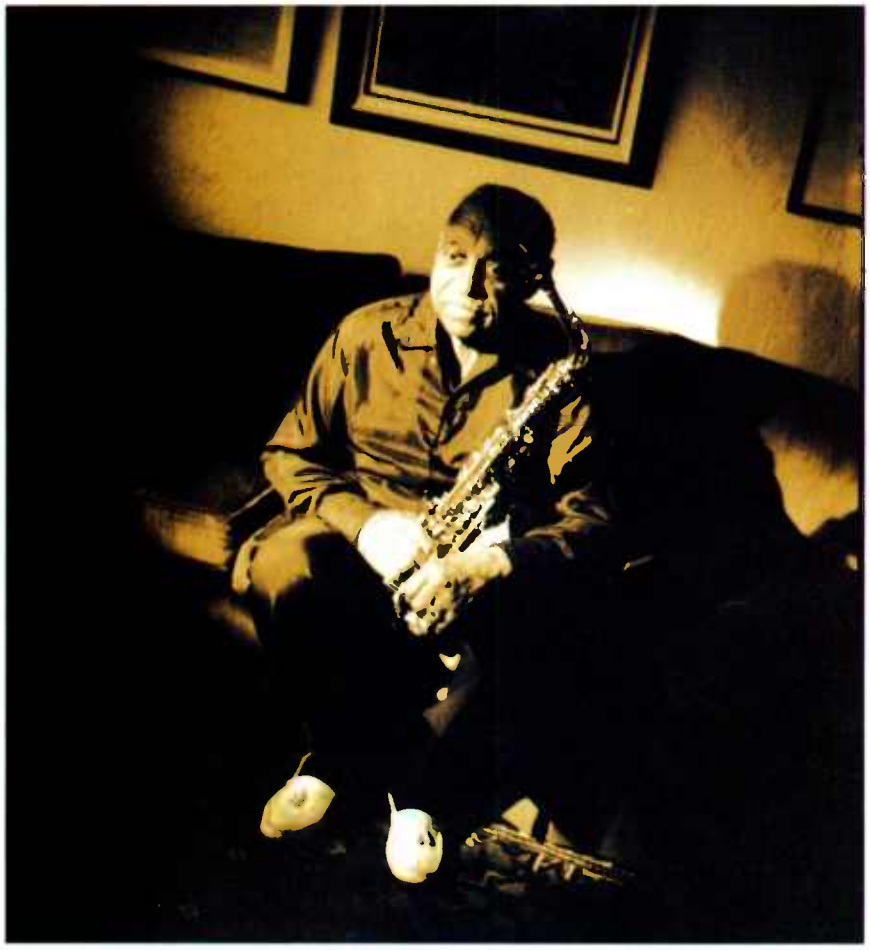
And a star was born, albeit one from the unlikely incubatory of Wigan, a smallish burg in the vicinity of more famous musical hotbeds Manchester and Liverpool. "It's not that small, but it's small in terms of having any social nightlife or gathering," Ashcroft explains. "It's great if you wear patent leather shoes and drink 19 pints of lager; you'll have the time of your life."

The members of Verve eschew the shoes, but do indulge in social drinking and the benefits of other non-prescription drugs, which seem to have some bearing on the group's swirling, hypnotic sound. "We are really [*cont'd on page 24*]

BY KATHERINE TURMAN

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOSEPH CULTICE

BENNY CARTER'S EIGHT DECADES



SOME FACTS ABOUT BENNY CARTER:

He was leading a band before Louis Armstrong recorded with King Oliver.

A group he led in the '40s included Max Roach, Miles Davis, J.J. Johnson and Art Pepper.

He won a Grammy *after* he won a NARAS Lifetime Achievement Award.

He has a new CD, aptly titled *Legends* (on MusicMasters), on which he plays alto sax to Hank Jones' piano. The bassist, Christian McBride, is in his early 20s. On trumpet is Doc Cheatham, Carter's first great influence. He is two years older than Benny, who was born in 1907.

If you didn't know that, you would think he was in his 60s. Slim, erect, gracious, dignified, Carter carries an air of uncrackable if friendly reserve, one that doesn't quite jibe with what Miles wrote in his autobiography about Carter and Billy Eckstine: "B was tough. So was Benny Carter. They would both drop anybody they thought was disrespecting them in a minute."

BY JOE GOLDBERG

He lives just off of Mulholland Drive in Los Angeles. His Rolls Royce is parked in his carport. He has often been called the man who opened up movie and TV studio work to black musicians, but he rejects the idea that race was an impediment: "I don't deal with that. It's been difficult for many white musicians more talented than I was. It's just a matter of luck. There were other black musicians—Phil Moore, Calvin Jackson, Will Vodery. To me, it's irrelevant."

Carter has a large, spacious study in the rear of his house. The walls are adorned with concert posters and photographs, which include pictures of Carter with three U.S. presidents. There's an assortment of handsome leather bags and briefcases, which Carter loves to collect, and a number of tape recorders and microphones, which, surprisingly, he isn't sure how to operate. There is a Bible. Wall shelves are lined with records. One of them may or may not be

Tooting a horn for a jazz legend

the 1952 recording of *Funky Blues*, when Norman Granz got Carter, Johnny Hodges and Charlie Parker in the studio at the same time to set down what amounts to a brief history of jazz alto saxophone. "I think I have it in my library," Carter says. "I'm going to pull it out and listen to it one of these days. I must do that."

Perhaps Carter considers it unseemly to appear prideful of his life and its accomplishments. Besides, the critics do it so well for him. To Gary Giddins, Carter ranks with Parker, Hodges and Sidney Bechet for "claiming the saxophone as a key instrument in contemporary music." For KPFK jazz host John Brekow, Carter is merely "the greatest living jazz musician. The breadth of his talent is amazing."

Which is flattering, except that "jazz" is not a word Carter likes: "There are too many different kinds of music they call jazz. When you listen to Louis Armstrong or you listen to Dizzy Gillespie, you're listening to two different things. Wonderful and good as the music is today, why call it jazz? Does it sound good, does it move you, does it say something to you? Call it what you like."

It was a jazz ensemble Carter was leading when he came to Hollywood in 1942. "I came here to play the Swing Club, on Las Palmas and Hollywood Boulevard. It was run by Billy Berg

PHOTOGRAPH BY F. SCOTT SCHAFER

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[later, Berg would operate the club where Parker and Gillespie first played in California]. I brought a big band out. I was invited to do something on *Stormy Weather* [Lena Horne's film debut]. I never made any money off the big band, and the musicians that were with me never made any money, but they were content to work for what I could pay them, which was certainly much less than they were worth."

In his career, Carter has scored 40 films and performed on more than 100. Another 100 sessions were recorded and released on which Carter was the bandleader. He's among the very exclusive group of musicians who have recorded in each of the last eight decades.

Carter's views on current pop trends are unpredictable. He has kind words for traditionalist big bands like Doc Severinson's and Harry Connick Jr.'s, while also praising Miles Davis for incorporating rap into his last recordings. "You'll have to admit that the beat is very infectious," he says of rap. "I think that if the beat were used in jazz, or so-called jazz—the music we play—I think the music would be found much more accessible."

He is always on the lookout for what is new, and was on the panel that voted young tenor whiz Joshua Redman the winner in the Thelonious Monk Jazz Institute competition, thus launching Redman's career. Still, he says, "I'm impressed with the fact that no great strides have been made since Charlie Parker. He was an original."

What is Carter doing now? A prolific composer, whose "When Lights Are Low" is probably his best-known piece, he also wrote the lovely "Blues in My Heart" and "People Time," which was on the last album Stan Getz released. "I'm attempting to be selective, and in so doing, I'm giving myself more time to write," he says. "I'm kind of loath to have professional writers write with me, because I can't guarantee a performance. I don't mind spending my own time, and in the process, I'm learning a lot about lyric writing. I don't know if I can write for 'today'—quote, unquote—but I hope that what I'm writing today might come back into vogue."

Is there anything he hasn't done that he'd still like to do?

"I've never been 86 years old," Carter points out, a few weeks shy of the mark. "That's something I want to do. And we'll take it from there."

REQUIRED REEDING

BENNY CARTER plays a Selmer Mark VI alto saxophone and K-modified Selmer and Dentzen trumpets, the latter horns with a mouthpiece gifted by Doc Cheatham in 1932: "It's the only mouthpiece I've ever played on." He uses an Arnold Bilhart mouthpiece for the alto sax. "And I've never needed a microphone, because I play so hard."

VERVE

[*cont'd from page 21*] serious about the band, but we're also relaxed. We don't have set practice times, we just get together and jam and try to mold a song out of it. The actual construction of the songs is really natural. It rolls."

It's an approach that's met with success since Verve released their initial EPs in England in 1992. (*Melody Maker* has since written about the band so much it might as well be their official house organ.) Before their record deal, however, Verve's members spent several years on the dole. "I got my flat repossessed about five months ago," Ashcroft recalls. "I owe the landlord about 3000 pounds and my phone was turned off before that. I'm terrible with finances."

Now a mature 21, and in the throes of fan rapture, he can still cast a sober look at the future. "What the hell do you do when it all ends?" he ruminates. "We've got another 10

years only, probably. Once a song hasn't gone a bit further than the last, once we've hit a plateau and can't go any further up the mountain..." He manages a wry grin. "That's when we'll sledge back down into obscurity."

DREAM WEAVERS

NICK MCCABE plays a Gibson 335 and a Fender Strat with Jim Dunlop picks. SIMON JONES plays Fender Jazz basses with Fender medium picks. Both use Ernie Ball strings. Amps include an Ampeg SVT 11 bass head and an 8x10 bass cabinet, a MESA/Boogie MR3 and Marshall 4x12 JCM 800, with a Yamaha SPX90 delay. Effects include a Quadraverb, a Roland GP-8 with FC100 foot control, Boss Super Overdrive, Ibanez flanger, DOD programmable distortion and a Ruschweller vocal pedal. Drummer PETE SALISBURY plays a Premier kit with Remo Ambassador coated heads and a Ludwig 6½" free-floating snare, with Sabian cymbals.

WOLF

[*cont'd from page 19*] frenzy that has been his stock in trade since blasting out of the Boston blues scene in the early '70s. With a tight, emphatic backup band of juke-joint journeymen, the uncertainty was squashed almost immediately. Wolf has only one speed, full-on.

All the classic rock staples of the Geils Band flew by, hyphenated by a few tunes from Wolf's solo records. As the set played out, it became easy to see why the solo albums stiffed. Not a great singer, only an adequate writer, it's in the realm of performance that Wolf thrives. You need to *see* him to dig his truest talents, and at Lupo's, display was the operative word.

That kind of entertainment principle is somewhat at odds with the current post-punk aesthetic of performance. Cobain and company may wreak impressive havoc with their smart-assed wallop, but there's a fair amount of implicit shrugging onstage at a Nirvana gig, a Dino Jr onslaught or a Royal Trux "concert." Slacker rock doesn't go out of its way to woo an audience. Even older guys like Los Lobos just do their thing (quite wonderfully) and leave it at that.

So Wolf's "c'mon everybody" attitude had a bit of an anachronistic feel. Factor in the notion that the Geils material is literally dated, the beer-soaked audience had a Beavis and Butthead vibe, and the general boyness of the evening's fare, and you have an ever more stunning victory for Wolf. Sheer power of personality got him out of more than a few shticky situations.

Like David Johansen, Wolf can straddle the thin line between show-biz fanfare and genuine rock 'n' roll frolic without forfeiting any credibility. "I want me a suit/An El Dorado car/I've *already* had me a Hollywood star," he bellowed. All the stock moves were there. All seemed pretty damn vital. Crazy.

JIM MACNIE

WESTERBERG

[*cont'd from page 19*] ments. It was the closest they ever came to a hit single and the song's sentiment ("A dream too tired to come true left a rebel without a clue...If it's just a game then let's hold hands just the same") spoke for the special circumstance of those four friends united against the world. Yet when Minehan and Hill moved forward and howled the words along with Westerberg, "I'll Be You" became an anthem not just for the Replacements, but for the Neighborhoods, the Raindogs and every other great band that did not get the success they deserved. And for every other person in that overcrowded bar who had not given up on youthful dreams. And for those too far gone to ever get back.

BILL FLANAGAN

THE POLITICS OF "MTV UNPLUGGED"

RECENTLY MTV INTERVIEWED NEIL YOUNG ABOUT HIS DECISION TO follow Eric Clapton, Rod Stewart, Paul McCartney and other '60s legends into the world of "MTV Unplugged"—a TV show/album release double whammy that has become the blood transfusion of choice for rock 'n' roll graybeards. "Hey, you know," Young smiled, "it's a huge haywagon going by—either get on and check out what's happening up there or...watch it go by."

Since its humble start on October 31, 1989, "MTV Unplugged" has grown from an occasionally tasty Halloween treat into the Beast that Devoured the Music Industry. "In the beginning we'd book pretty much anyone who said yes," recalls the show's producer, Alex Coletti. "I felt it was quite a coup to get Difford & Tilbrook for that first show, because I'm a big Squeeze fan and we were a little scared of being perceived as a folk show." At that point "Unplugged" was hosted by Jules Shear and featured two or three different acts—"singer/songwriters sitting around jamming," in the words of Coletti.

BY KEVIN ZIMMERMAN

Pairings such as the Indigo Girls/Michelle Shocked and Sinéad O'Connor/the Church followed, leading to the show's first-ever solo act, Don Henley, on April 18, 1991. "At the beginning," says John Cannelli, the network's senior VP of music and talent, who helps book the show, "we had to do a lot of convincing to get people involved. Once we got people like Don Henley, it started being looked upon as a good thing and as a fun thing." Henley's appearance led to bigger and bigger acts: Sting, Elton John, Paul McCartney.

According to McCartney publicist Geoff Baker, "Paul liked the idea of getting away from the stadium and in a situation where you can see the people in the back. Paul was into doing it but wanted to do it really properly, really unplugged."

The show was filmed in North London in January '91, Baker says, recalling that the next step marked a significant evolution in "Unplugged": "Paul asked somebody on the production team if they had a cassette he could listen to on the ride home. He thought it was great. Macca also realized that every bright spark under the sun would be taping the thing and bootlegging it, so he just thought, 'Well, we'll do our own bootlegging.'"

Who gets on and what do they give up?

The resulting *Unplugged—The Official Bootleg*, pressed as a limited edition of 500,000 copies, sold out quickly. "I'm sure there are quite a few people at Capitol who wish we'd done a few more, especially in light of what's happened with Eric and Rod Stewart," Baker laughs.

What happened with Eric Clapton is already the stuff of legend. "Neither Eric nor I were keen on doing it at first," says Clapton's manager Roger Forrester. "It just didn't appeal to us."

After watching some of the other shows, however, Forrester began to come around to MTV's thinking. "I sent tapes and tapes to Eric of other people doing it, and he wouldn't watch them." Uninterested in either the show or an accompanying album at the start, Clapton has now sold 6 million copies of *Unplugged* and won six Grammy awards.

"We actually put off release of the album three times" until Clapton finally agreed, according to Forrester. "Eric was convinced it would never sell."

ILLUSTRATION BY GARY BASEMAN

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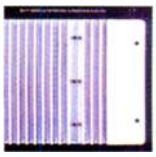

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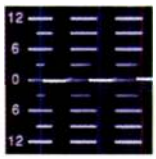

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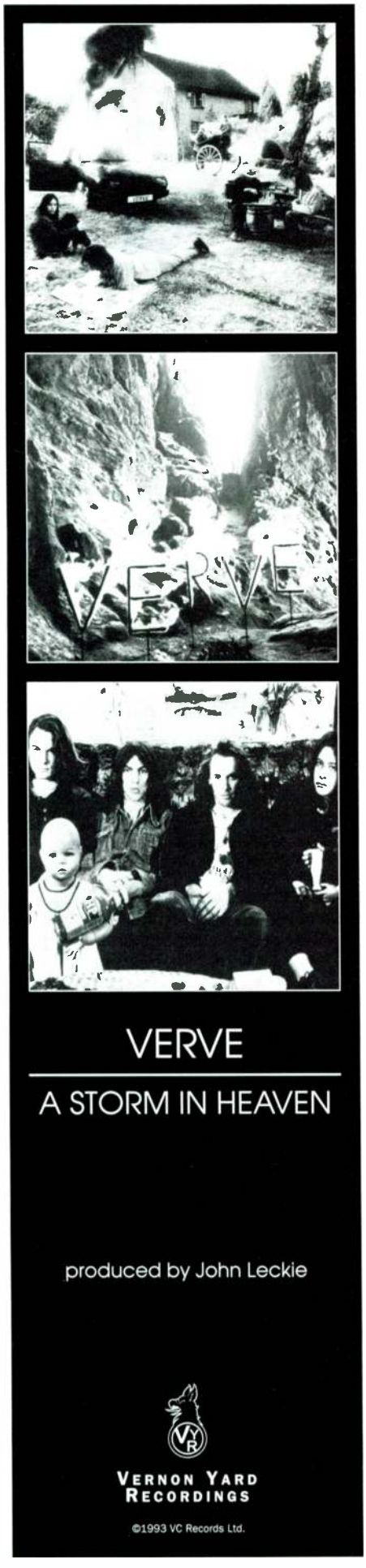

The Clapton success has created a virtual *Unplugged* micro-industry, with succeeding albums by Mariah Carey, Rod Stewart, Neil Young, Bruce Springsteen (Europe only) and Arrested Development.

Arrested Development manager Burt Phillips says A.D. had something of a run-in with MTV over the show's content. "MTV was battling us a little bit creatively, but we felt that we had to have total creative control over the production. They wanted to hear some of the pop stuff, and we wanted a forum to take it to the next level. We just had the one album, so what do you do? Just record something that's close to the album? No way a group like Arrested Development is going to do that. We didn't do 'Tennessee,' which a few people were upset about."

"We ask that the act include some familiar music in the show," counters MTV's Cannelli. "It's not a hit-driven vehicle, but we like to make sure that they have a couple of songs from the current record or previous hits."

While MTV senior VP Van Toffler says the network "generally" pays for the production, occasionally the artist helps underwrite the show as a way of maintaining some degree of artistic control. Phillips describes the A.D. program as a "joint venture" between MTV and the group's label. (Clapton's manager says the artist split the cost with the network. Nevertheless, MTV retains copyright on all the programs. "It is, after all, their show," says Phillips.)

When an *Unplugged* album is released, MTV shares in the royalties. "We do participate in the earnings from the record," states Toffler. Declining to give an actual figure, Toffler acknowledges that the math is done on a percentage basis. "It's pretty much standard, though it changes depending on the act's deal with the label." Some sources hint that MTV's cut might be as large as 10 percent, a not-insignificant number.

"It's first and foremost a television show," maintains Toffler. "In 95 percent of the cases that's all it is. In light of the success of some of the *Unplugged* products, we now usually have discussions around the taping for a potential release. In most cases it's the cheapest album the labels will ever get from these artists. When was the last time Rod Stewart gave somebody a fully produced album that was basically done in a day?

"MTV's not in the record industry. We're concerned about making a great show. We don't help sell records, outside of the fact that we're MTV."

Ah, but that is not a point to be taken lightly. Once MTV airs the appropriate "Unplugged," and fans become aware that an album exists, they theoretically will start to buy the album. The label identifies an emphasis track, and MTV begins to play the one track. As album sales increase and the song becomes a hit, MTV will play the track all the more. By playing clips from albums they own a piece of, MTV is dancing very close to what, in the golden days of rock 'n' roll radio, was called *payola*.

Payola is a misdemeanor, defined specifically as taking money for playing records. The statute is written in so precise a manner as to not be applicable in court to videos.

Music business attorney Peter Thall, pointing out that the payola statutes are "very sporadically and inconsistently enforced," adds that the law is written so that a company could lose its assets if it loses the case, "which is a very, very threatening penalty."

Should the rules be changed to include videos, MTV could find itself in a very sticky situation. Or maybe not: "Programming decisions are completely independent of an associated record or video product," maintains MTV's Toffler, "and they're based on what our audience responds to, as far as the right time of day or week for the show. Clips work the same way—we're primarily interested in promoting the airing of the show. That's done in a vacuum apart from whether we're talking to the label about making a recording."

A more serious threat might be burning out viewer interest by overdoing the shows. MTV currently produces between 12 and 14 of the programs a year.

"I do think they're overcooking it a bit," says Clapton's manager Forrester. "Look at the Neil Young album. It's terrific, but I don't think it's really selling anything. They've overdone it. They should pace it better."

Still, the exposure afforded by an "Unplugged" appearance far outweighs the potential pitfalls in many acts' eyes. MTV's Cannelli estimates that on average "we have about 10 artists under serious consideration for each program."

And there is very much an "Unplugged" wish list. "We have tried with Prince," Cannelli says. "At times he has been interested but something's always happened with his schedule that's prevented it." Other dream guests include the Rolling Stones, U2, the Grateful Dead and what Cannelli says would be "the ultimate."

"Speaking for everyone who's involved with the show, I think our greatest coup would be a Jimmy Page and Robert Plant reunion, if that could ever happen. We have had conversations over the years, so who knows?" Only God and MTV—and these days they look a lot alike.

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WOODY ALLEN, MUSICIAN

"I'M NOT SAYING THIS IN ANY FALSE MODEST WAY," WOODY ALLEN announces within moments of entering his Manhattan office. "I don't consider myself even a passable musician. I think I'm quite terrible and if I was not well known in another field I don't think anyone would want to play with me, particularly."

All of which *might* be true, but after 25 years of playing New Orleans jazz clarinet every Monday night at Michael's Pub in New York, Allen has built a reputation as a jazz lover of the first order. Were his own standards not so high, Allen might even admit that he is as good a player as many who have no qualms about calling themselves pros. Allen has agreed to talk about his hobby in order to promote *The Bunk Project*, an album assembled and recorded by Allen's bandmate at Michael's, banjo player Eddie Davis.

"We did a couple of sessions at the Harkness House in town here," Allen explains. "[Davis] brought in his recorder and recorded them. And then months later, without any doctoring of it or anything, he said, 'Do you want to put this out?' I said, 'If you want to put it out, put it out. But don't put it out as *my* band or anything. If I'm on it as a musician, fine, if I don't drag everybody down.' I've never gotten any money for playing in all the years I've played. I strictly play for fun."

But Allen takes his fun seriously. He still sticks by an old statement that the first time he saw Sidney Bechet perform was the most satisfying artistic experience of his life (this from a playwright, actor, author and Academy Award–winning film director). As a 15-year-old kid he hired jazzman Gene Sedric to come out to his home in Brooklyn and give him clarinet lessons.

Davis and Allen are the only two musicians who play on every track of *The Bunk Project* (they are abetted by studio ringers such as Greg Cohen), and if the recording sounds homemade, there is an innocence to Allen's playing on old chestnuts such as "Weary Blues" that evokes a time when jazz and simplicity were not contradictory terms.

"My favorite kind of jazz is traditional New Orleans music," Allen says. "And from a popular music point of view I really go up to the '50s: Cole Porter, Gershwin, Kern and all those people. I'm not much on contemporary popular music, I've never been interested in it, but I have heard and loved a lot of modern jazz. I loved Coltrane, Monk, Dizzy, Charlie Parker, the Modern Jazz Quartet. I love them all, I think they're beautiful—but my main love is New Orleans music."

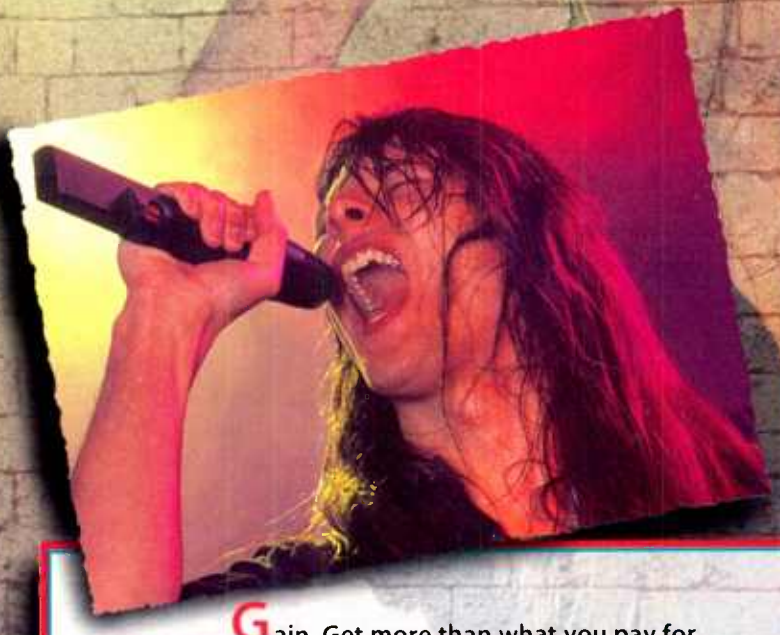
On movie music and trad jazz

The scores of Allen's films have introduced new generations to the music he loves. Gershwin songs suggested sophistication and élan in *Manhattan*, New Orleans rags (played partly by Allen himself) brought pure joy to *Sleeper*, and the Prokofiev score trudging along under *Love & Death* (a last-minute substitute after a Stravinsky soundtrack killed all the jokes) added to Allen's deadpan comic suffering. Allen the director has strict rules about what a movie score should and should not do: "It should support the picture as opposed to jump out and be something on its own. That's why I have never used Sidney Bechet or George Lewis or Johnny Dodds or the people that I really feel so deeply about behind scenes. It always distracts me and I feel it will distract the audience. You want a certain kind of music behind there that's not too demanding on the audience. I use a lot of Djan-

BY BILL FLANAGAN

PHOTOGRAPH BY TED THAI/TIME

Gain



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go Reinhardt 'cause it's guitar and it's rhythm and it doesn't distract so much. And I've used a lot of Erroll Garner, because it's half jazz, half cocktail piano. I would not want to use Bud Powell. I once, in *Alice*, used Thelonious Monk but I wouldn't use him much.

"On my very first picture, *Take the Money and Run*, where I'm dressing to go out on a date with Janet Margolin, originally I had a sad piece of Chaplinesque music in there. The scene didn't work. Then we took it out and put in a Eubie Blake thing and the scene suddenly worked. That was very instructive to me. And it's happened any number of times."

Allen visibly cringes at Hollywood's penchant for shoving inappropriate pop songs into movie scenes: "Oh, it's the worst, it's the worst. I don't know if they still do it, I don't see those kind of movies anymore, but in the '50s and '60s they used to do it all the time—the producers would force them to get a *song* for the picture."

Informed that these days the trend is bigger than ever—with Robin Hood romancing Maid Marian to the strains of Bryan Adams—Allen shakes his head. "Like 'Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head,'" he smiles. "They squeeze it in somehow and it's very, very wrong."

Allen often writes his own musical taste into the mouths of his characters, who have praised Sinatra, Louis Armstrong, the *Jupiter* Symphony, John Coltrane and Bobby Short—while mocking all things to do with rock 'n' roll.

"It's probably my shortcoming," Allen says with somewhat dubious conviction. "Everyone I know likes some rock 'n' roll, so I can't believe that all these people, many of them knowledgeable musically, many of them with great taste, could all be wrong and that I'm right. Isaac Asimov once said he found it to be an eardrum-splitting waste of time, and I kind of feel that way myself. If I go into a store and they're playing rock music, I can't even shop there. And there were times when I resented having to tune through MTV to get to another station." He laughs. "Now, I'm sure it's me. It's just the shortcomings of my ear, the way my ear formed. I don't even have a particularly good ear for music. But I am amazed how people whose opinion I'm crazy about, like Diane Keaton and many friends of mine, will *love* much of rock 'n' roll. I keep thinking, What am I not seeing? What am I missing? I love classical music, I love modern jazz, I loved Ornette Coleman when he came on the scene, I have those abstract albums of John Coltrane's where they play freeform jazz and I loved it. I loved Cecil Taylor, I loved all the modern musicians and all the old musicians and the swing musicians. I just never have been able to get past contemporary music, and I know it's got to be my fault."

By using music from the first half of the century to score contemporary stories, Allen imbues movies such as *Manhattan* with a sense of good times just about to fade away. It's the same feeling of *We'll never be this young or happy again* that Richard Lester brought to *A Hard Day's Night*.

"I can see that in Richard Lester, certainly," Allen nods. "He really caught an era in some of the movies he did that nobody else had captured. Certainly the Beatles movie, but also *Petulia*. A movie like *Manhattan* is so *about* the vanishing of New York as I knew it, that you can't help but get that out of the music. The music supports that completely. It's very important that the music in *Manhattan* is nostalgic and gives you that sense of saying goodbye to New York as you know it or knew it, the last strains of it."

That same sense of music waving goodbye to a happier time carries Allen the musician's best moment on *The Bunk Project*, a wistful reading of "Burgundy Street Blues" that manages to be genuinely bluesy and genuinely innocent at the same time.

"Have you heard George Lewis play it?" Allen asks. "I can only say this: Go back to George Lewis, he wrote the song and played it all the time. Hopefully my version of it will stimulate you to go back and hear the real version of it, because when you hear it played by him it's really, really beautiful. When I went to New Orleans some years back, everybody in the world was imitating George Lewis. There was a Swedish George Lewis and a French George Lewis and a Japanese George Lewis and a Jewish George Lewis. It was really funny. George had died and everybody was playing like him. There are a number of recordings of 'Burgundy Street Blues' and everybody imitates him for better or worse." Allen smiles and adds, "I think I'm one of the worse."

STARDUST MELODIES

All of WOODY ALLEN's clarinets are Albert System. He has a Selmer, a Buffet, a Müller—but he almost always chooses to play the Rampone he bought at a pawn shop for 12 bucks. "For some reason this cheap one is the best one," Woody says. "Once a year I'll have the urge to pick up my soprano sax, but the problem is I always end up imitating Sidney Bechet. And while I can be a third-rate George Lewis, I'm a tenth-rate Sidney Bechet." His reeds are Rico Royal #5s, the size of diving boards.

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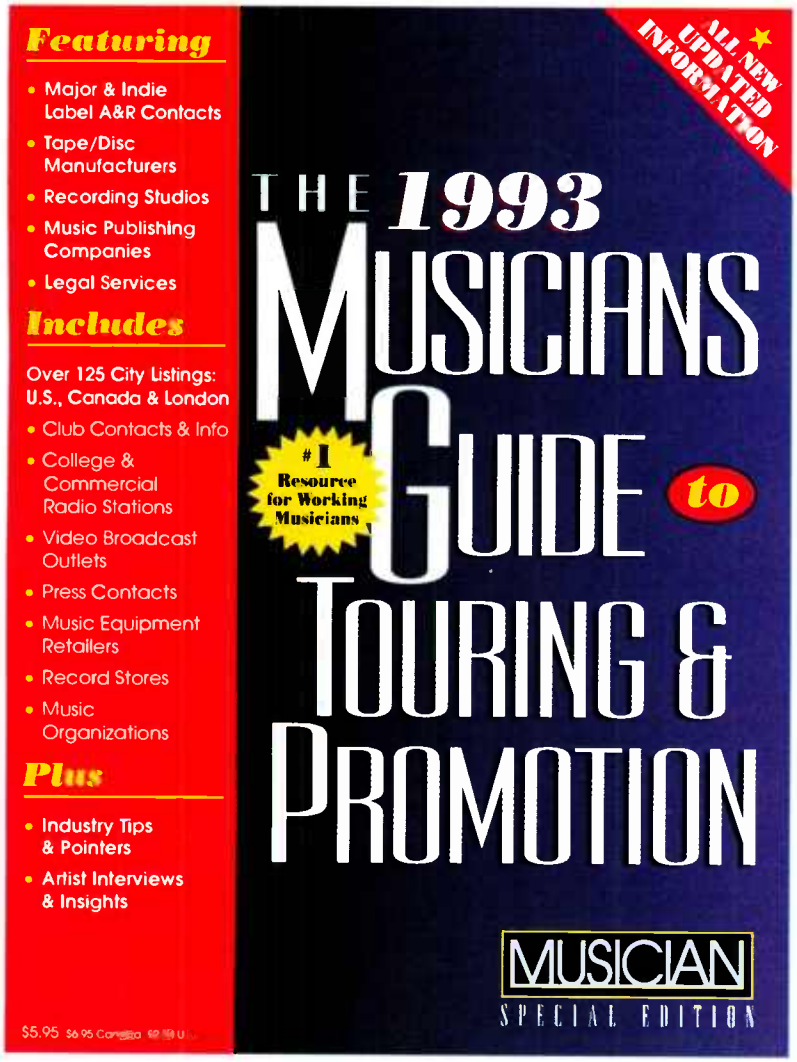

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depeche mode

MOPE NOW PARTY LATER

BY JON PARELES

It's quarter to three in Barcelona; the night is young. A few hours earlier, Depeche Mode performed at the Sant Jordi sports palace, a shiny new arena built for the 1992 Olympics. As somber, penitential images floated above him on video screens, Dave Gahan crooned and intoned Martin Gore's lyrics about fear, longing, obsession. "Death," he proclaimed to the arena full of black-clad, undulating Spanish youth, "is everywhere." ■ Where is Gore now? Could he be in some hermit's cell, contemplating the fate of mankind, brooding over mortality? Could he be in

LEFT TO RIGHT: MARTIN GORE, ANDREW FLETCHER, DAVID GAHAN, ALAN WILDER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTON CORBIJN

some private retreat, offering himself to someone as "Your favorite passion/Your favorite game/Your favorite mirror/Your favorite slave"?

Well, no. Actually, he is at Barcelona's Studio 54, a blatant copy of the long-gone New York disco, where he has been holding court on the VIP balcony as techno music pounds away and lasers trace phantom tunnels in the air. And at this precise moment, Martin Gore, idol to brooding youth everywhere, is limbo-dancing backwards between the legs of a backup singer, a broad grin on his face. The band may not have recorded a fast song, or a light-hearted one, in years. But nobody mopes full-time.

DEPECHE MODE has turned itself inside out during its 12-year career. It started out as a standard English rock story: students trying music as a lark. Gore and Andy Fletcher played guitars; Vince Clarke played synthesizer and soon Dave Gahan joined as singer. Notions of pop disposability were featured on the art-school curriculum; Depeche Mode, a name plucked out of a French magazine, meant "fast fashion."

In the heady days of post-punk, the new technology of synthesizers and drum machines looked like perfect toys for musical amateurs. Soon, all three instrumentalists had switched to keyboards. Clarke, then the group's main songwriter, came up with percolating songs like "Dreaming of Me" and "Just Can't Get Enough," a Top 10 British single. In 1981, the group released its first album, *Speak and Spell.*

But after that album, Clarke quit Depeche Mode. Alan Wilder, another keyboardist, joined the group and Gore quietly picked up the songwriting franchise. While Clarke grew campier and campier leading Yazoo (Yaz in America) and then Erasure, Gore's songs turned increasingly plaintive, exploring murkier emotional zones: the dominance and submission of "Master and Servant," the desperation of "Fly on the Windscreen," the heresy of "Personal Jesus," the obsessive desire of "Rush."

And the group that had expected to be disposable inexorably became an institution: filling arenas, selling millions of albums (*Violator*, released in 1990, sold 5 million copies worldwide, and the 1993 *Songs of Faith and Devotion* has sold 3 million and counting), even touching off a window-smashing stampede when thousands of fans descended on a Los Angeles record store for what should have been a simple autographing session.

"Our career has been a dream career," says Fletcher. "It's been a gradual rise up, without too many down periods, so we haven't been through a real crisis. You can say our first record was a bit naive, our second record wasn't very good, we've made some embarrassing videos and there are some embarrassing photos around. But I wouldn't change anything."

Songs of Faith and Devotion, and the tour that comes to the United States this fall, do mark a change for Depeche Mode. From *Speak and Spell* to *Violator*, the band's trajectory was inward, away from the dance floor and into the private space of ballads made for headphones. The sound of four musicians playing together melted into eerie, sustained counterpoint, with quiet and ominous tones ticking away behind organ-like synthesizers; the music grew hermetic, with few discernibly natural sounds beyond Gahan's voice.

Songs takes a different tack, using more live sounds. "One Caress" was made with a string section, and was finished in three hours of takes rather than three days of tinkering and sequencing. "We felt that what was lacking in our music was that we were still sounding quite mechanical," Fletcher says. "We wanted to loosen up a bit. And our producer, Flood, was going on and on, trying to get us less narrow-minded, turning the screw all the time till we said, 'Yes, let's give it a go.'"

On the current tour, the band's shift gets acted out spatially. For the first hour of the show, Gahan has the stage's lower level to himself while the other three band members look down on him from their keyboards. "They're more separate from me than they've ever been before," Gahan says. He works hard, defying the songs' earnestness to shake his hips and hair like a Bono wannabe. "I love to be a showman—that's obvious," Gahan says. "I come off it as high as a kite."

Gradually, one by one, the other band members join him: Gore with a guitar, Fletcher on a second keyboard and Wilder settled behind a drum kit, where he socks out the beat of "I Feel You." It's as if Depeche Mode has descended from the ether to the earth.

"OUR FIRST RECORD WAS NAIVE, OUR SECOND WASN'T VERY GOOD, THERE ARE SOME EMBARRASSING VIDEOS AND PHOTOS AROUND—BUT I WOULDN'T CHANGE ANYTHING."

FOR THE MOMENT, Depeche Mode is sequestered. Although the warm Barcelona sun pours down benevolently outside, the band is holed up in its hotel attending to business, recording radio station IDs and submitting to interviews. Across the street a dozen teenagers, in the inevitable black, watch the hotel doors intently, patiently awaiting the appearance of a band member and thus, ironically, deterring any casual exits.

But it doesn't take too much convincing to pry Gore out of the hotel for a stroll, accompanied by a genial bodyguard. Only one eager teenager dares approach, asking an unperturbed Gore to autograph a CD for "José," on the way to Barcelona's somber Gothic cathedral—just the place for a songwriter so concerned with belief, truth, transcendence and redemption. "I think I'm probably obsessive in those areas," he says with the hint of a smile. "I probably think about it too much. But I've never belonged to or followed any church or anything at all. I think there's just something inbred in me.

"I don't condone Christianity in any way. I'm in a lot of ways very anti–organized religion. I just think that those symbols are handy and are there for me to use in a very different way. The songs are often not about plain religion. They're more about love and sex and religion all tied into one. For me, love and sex are like a religion."

Is this blasphemy? "I do believe there must be some form of higher being," Gore says. "Otherwise I find the whole meaning of life very futile. I just hate the way that man twists religion, twists this higher being. I am fascinated by religion, and I've always liked the idea of

faith. Whenever I write a song, that just naturally comes out. But because I can't really comprehend this higher being I believe in totally, I have to find that faith somewhere else."

One touchstone is the craft of songwriting. Gore, according to Fletcher, is familiar with "every song known to mankind." "Music is the only thing that's ever really interested me," Gore says. "A lot of people get into films, but I go out to cinema only once or twice a year. I can't feel the same enthusiasm for anything other than music."

While Gore seems to keep up with everything, Depeche Mode's music is a world away from the speed and aggression of most current pop. "Even as a young kid," he says, "on every album I bought, the slow track was my favorite. I find it hard to write fast songs these days. Somehow they don't create the right sort of emotion for the words I'm writing. The songs are realistic, and love isn't always the smooth ride that it's made out to be. I find it also really boring to write happy love songs. Yet a lot of the songs end on an optimistic note, even if they start off bleakly. And I find that the realism is optimistic. I think a lot of people miss that point, and I think that's why we get wrongly accused of being doomy."

Gore, who is 32 years old, started out as a child of 1970s pop. "The first music that I really got into seriously, when I was 12 or 13, was Gary Glitter. As unserious as that may sound, Glitter and [Mike] Leander wrote great pop songs. As I got older, I got into people like Neil Young, John Lennon and Leonard Cohen, and I used to really like Jonathan Richman at one point. I think Neil Young feels every word he writes."

Is it the same for his own songs? "Yes, yes, yes," he says. "That's why I think I'm not very prolific at all. I don't understand how people can churn out song after song and mean every word, and for every one of the songs to be important."

It's easy to read gay or bisexual meanings into some of Gore's songs, like "Never Let Me Down Again," which ruminates, "I'm safe as houses/As long as I remember who's wearing the trousers." Gore, who has a longtime girlfriend and a child, rules nothing out in the songs. "I've always liked the idea of the songs being ambiguous," he says. "It really doesn't mean very much to me if people think I'm gay or I'm straight. I've always really detested the macho image in rock music. At some points I think I probably took it too far. When I used to wear skirts onstage and things like that, I think it made the band suffer. We're still not respected in a lot of circles, and a lot of it is down to that image. But when I look back at it, it still makes me laugh.

"When I write songs, I try to move people," he says. "It's as simple as that. I don't have any great master plan, to shake up the world. All I want to do is capture passion with words and music."

WITH GORE'S SONGWRITING at its core, Depeche Mode is a highly efficient organism; each responsibility has been neatly delegated. Gore writes the songs, Wilder arranges them, Gahan sings them and Fletcher takes care of business. Visuals have been handed over to Anton Corbijn, the photographer and video director; he designed the band's current stage show and is making a video documentary of the tour. Flood, who has also worked with U2 and Nitzer Ebb, co-produced *Violator* and *Songs of Faith and Devotion* with the band.

Depeche Mode doesn't have a manager. "The primary purpose of a manager is to give you some clout, to get a contract, to be someone with influence," Fletcher says. "We managed to do without, and we never took one on." Fletcher also reveals that until its latest album, Depeche Mode's contract with Mute Records was a handshake; now, it's a simple one-album deal.

Before joining Depeche Mode, Fletcher worked as a pensions quotations clerk, crunching investment numbers. With the band, he says, "My whole life is dealing with numbers." He doesn't mind.

"I don't find it very stimulating making music," he says. "I'm a useless musician. When I played bass, I never had any ambitions to be a great bass player, and when I took up keyboards, I never had any ambitions to be a great keyboard player.

"I don't really find music that stimulating. I do listen to it, and it's been such a part of my life the last 10, 12 years, but I find I get more pleasure from other things. With the band, I still find the whole job challenging and rewarding, the fact of creating something and releasing it, the marketing, the promotion side of things. That's quite interesting, selling our products."

The product itself, however, isn't a simple business proposition; it evolves from teamwork. Melodies, harmonies and lyrics are on the demos that Gore makes in his home studio.

"From *Violator* onwards," Gore says, "the others asked me to keep demos as simple as I possibly could, so that we didn't get too many preconceived ideas, and so that the songs were open to all kinds of possible interpretations before we got to a studio. Sometimes I've kept the demos as simple as an organ pad and the vocal, and then we've tried out different approaches in the studio. With every record it gets more and more difficult, because we have to experiment more and more to come up with something new that we haven't tried before."

"It's a long, painful process, I can assure you," says Alan Wilder. "It's a lot of trial and error, mostly error. We've discovered that the best way to work is to get those that have a low boredom threshold, which is everyone apart from me, to throw ideas at a song really quickly. Then myself and Flood will take those ideas, adding any ideas we have, and refine them to the point that they start to work for us. Which can be a very long process of sampling, bits of performance, whatever.

"On this last record, our approach was to try and perform as much as we humanly could. Drum things, guitar bits and pieces, anything that we could perform we would. If we try and perform a [*cont'd on page 95*]

GEAR À LA MODE

DEPECHE MODE keeps things simple onstage: no amplifiers. Every sound, from keyboards to guitar to drums, runs through the P.A. system: a Brittania Pow Flashlight System. DAVE GAHAN and the backup singers use Samson Synth radio microphones with EU 757 capsules.

MARTIN GORE plays a Roland A-50 and ALAN WILDER plays an Akai MX1000, each controlling two Emulator Emax II samplers: ANDREW FLETCHER has another pair of Emaxes. Each pair is hooked up in parallel, so that if one were to malfunction, the other is ready. But "I don't remember an instance when we had to go to a spare," says Wob Roberts, the keyboard technician. Samples come from strange and sundry sources, including old analog equipment.

The piano onstage is a Korg 01/W Pro X transplanted into a grand-piano body. For downstage keyboards, Fletcher and Wilder use Philip Reese MIDI line drivers. A MicroLynx sends SMPTE time code to the video and film setups.

Away from the keyboards, Gore plays either a Gretsch Country Gentleman or a copy of a Gretsch Anniversary guitar, strung with Gibson strings, from .010 to .046 gauge. Dick Knight copied Gore's original Gretsch for stage use, using Gretsch parts but adding more wood in the body to cut down feedback. The guitars run through a MESA/Boogie Tri-Axis preamp and a Zoom 9002 effects processor, with a Sennheiser UHF transmitter.

Wilder's drums are mostly Yamahas: a 22" bass drum and 12", 13", 14" and 16" tom-toms. He uses Noble and Cooley piccolo and 7" snare drums and Zildjian K cymbals: a 22" ride, an 18" China, 16" and 18" crashes, a 6" splash and 13" hi-hats.

And don't forget the tapes: two Sony 3324s, one of them a spare. Of the 24 tracks, Depeche Mode only uses 14, because many of the songs were dubbed from a 16-track Tascam that used 12 tracks for sound and four for sync. "As soon as anyone sees the size of the machines, they think the whole show is on tape," says Roberts. "But it's just bass and drum parts and a couple of sequences. This band does not mime."

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BY MATT RESNICOFF

Ernest and Ralph have a task, and his name is Jeffrey. As he's handed his peppermint tea this gray London morning, Jeffrey jokes with Ralph about gold watches, some warm gibe about how being 21 years along in their relationship makes it seem fairly pointless to switch now. "Twenty-one years—and 23 with Ernie," Jeffrey Beck smiles. "Whether it's good,

JEFF

UNLOCKS H

BECK IS SECRET

I don't know. I suppose it's good." This hardly seems like an exchange between a major star and his manager. "It's gotten to be too much of a business, *that's* the trouble," Ralph shrugs. "It is," Beck says immediately. "It's like wrapping french fries."

There are no platinum record awards adorning this flat. There is nothing to distinguish it as Beck's office of 20 years except the tousled presence of Beck himself, a welcome sight, straight from the garage. Ralph Baker quietly administers Jeffrey's business from an unassuming desk here in the central city; several miles north, jovial Ernest Chapman

serves as the civilized world's only other direct line to the guitarist. All others seeking an audience or a guitar solo for their record can only hope to raise him from his basement. To summon Jeffrey one must chase and harangue, sell him wholly and completely. It probably takes all the strength of two managers just to drag him to an airport.

That much hasn't ever changed for this most agreeably contrary icon, the archetype dabbler whose every effort and experiment—from the Yardbirds to commercial rock/jazz (!) to a note-for-note tribute to Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps guitarist Cliff Gallup called *Crazy Legs* with the Big Town Playboys ("showing kids today what triplets are about, and they weren't Eddie Van Halen") to the spare TV soundtrack *Frankie's House* with keyboardist Jed Leiber—suggests utter boredom with the rock form. At his best Jeff Beck sounds impulsive and appears transcendent; at his worst he simply goes unchallenged. Like the demands of industry, his music has to harass him, burrow its way into his brain as recurrent motifs just to get his attention. One can only imagine what gets thrown out.

Beck has in every sense survived a crippling business—he says he still grieves friends like Hendrix and the Who's Keith Moon—but remains unsentimental. Rock 'n' roll for him seems to have paused in the late '50s, scuffled and dropped dead somewhere in the '80s: "It upsets me to hear the mechanical fakery on the radio and see that things have deteriorated to that level," he says; his not-so-effortless attempts to push past the blues align him more with a '70s association like "McLaughlin/Beck/Di Meola" than the neophyte public's '60s trinity "Clapton/Beck/Page." And quite unlike many of his rock colleagues, Beck surrounds himself with very considerate people, which only stresses the distance he keeps between music and career concerns.

BECK AS YARDBIRD, 1966

"I DON'T EXPECT TO BE REVERED BY THE

The historical patterns make sense even in 1993. Beck is friendly, frank and clever, repulsed by stories of rock-industry venom, perplexed by the high American demand for caffeine. His contentment discredits the myth that preferring to stay home is a symptom of eccentricity. On an earlier occasion he professed a fascination with the choir Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares, so I gave him my advance copy of their latest record.

MUSICIAN: *How did you first hear the Bulgarian women's choir?*

BECK: I think Tony Hymas gave me a tape. I thought I was going to hear some outrageous sax—he's into this wild, avant-garde jazz—and to my amazement these cascading, *brilliant* swirling voices came across, and I was very, very deeply moved. It took me five minutes to rewind the tape. I was just completely wiped by the harmony, the colors, the voice control, the volume control; it's like on a *board*, like sliding up these different sections of 50 voices—I don't know how many voices there are, but they sound like 50. [*laughs*] And I heard sort of semi–Beach Boys barbershop disappearing into blues, all in one chord. More than the average ear can take, I suspect. I got to figuring out one chord sequence, took me about half a day, and before I got to the end, I'd already got my song, you know?

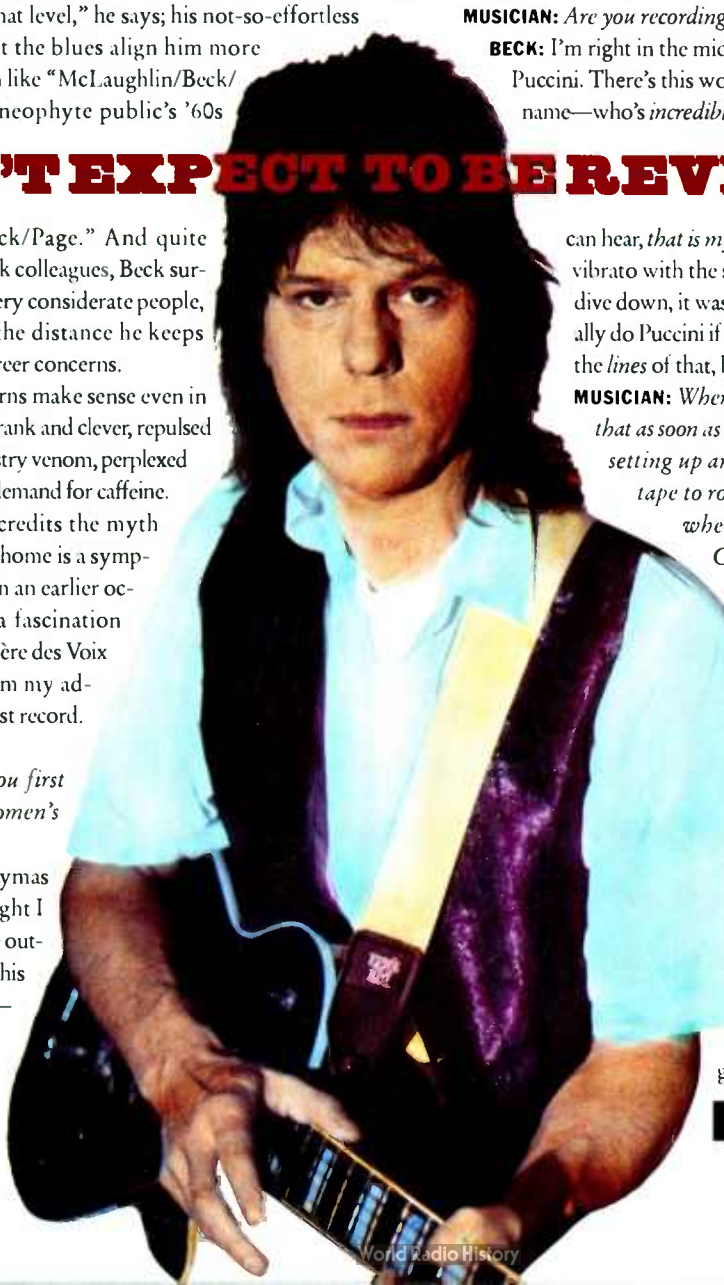
I wanted to do a note-for-note guitar version of one of their songs. I thought, "First I have to work out a basic chord structure for the singing." I got to five, six chords, and I didn't need to go any further. It made the cycle complete for a Western-style song. Whereas if I continued I'd be going *down* and down, or up and around, going to something that didn't have a repeat pattern, which I wanted. I had enough by scooping half a handful rather than going for the whole bagful, and that's great, because now I've got impetus to carry on.

MUSICIAN: *Are you recording it?*

BECK: I'm right in the middle of writing it. I also got a line on some Puccini. There's this woman—I can't even remember her bloody name—who's *incredible*, she sang in '57 on a Puccini opera, and I can hear, *that is my guitar*, you know? All the quavering, the vibrato with the speed-up towards the end of the note, the dive down, it was just whammy-bar supreme. I won't actually do Puccini if I could get inspired to do something along the *lines* of that, but if I can't I'll do Puccini.

MUSICIAN: *When we talked about* Guitar Shop, *you said that as soon as things started to happen—when you were setting up and jamming—that's when you wanted tape to roll. Which is why I thought it surprising when you first told me you were learning Cliff's solos; as if it were an attempt to reclaim some of the fire that made you begin playing.*

BECK: Oh, that's right. I knew I had a backlog of solos I'd learned that were not fun to play because they would have been wedged into new songs they didn't fit. And also, it wasn't *me*—I discovered me at that time, around the 20, 23 mark. I fortunately had enough behind me then to make up some nonsense in the studio that impressed people, but didn't know enough to say, "I want the song to go like this or that"—I just knew my job



AS CLIFF GALLUP, 1993

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEAN FREEMAN

was to come up with something surprising, and which lent something to the record that wouldn't be there with a normal guitar player.

MUSICIAN: *Gallup's reputation is unique, eh? He'd leave a group in the middle of a tour because of the discomforts of travel...*

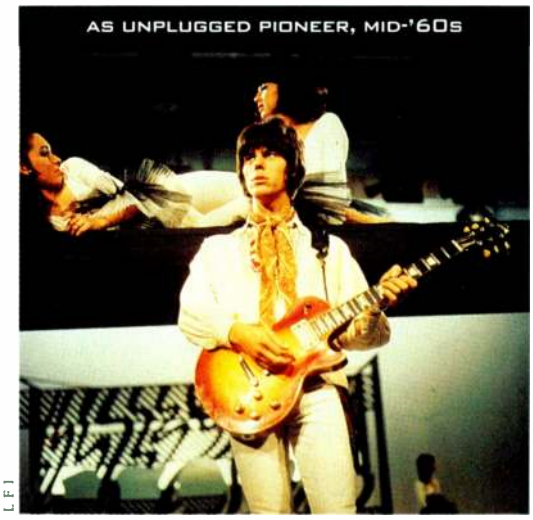
BECK: Yeah, it must have been so much worse for him touring *only* in the States, which meant long distances many times a week. And I suppose once you got into that kind of music business in the '50s, you were on long trips from the first minute you had a hit record. But we were touring England, which is a lot easier 'cause you jump in a van and you're back in your own bed, you know? But out there you could be gone, God knows, months on end. And if you're a home-lover, that's not a good thing.

MUSICIAN: *I can't imagine being nauseous and having to get up on a stage and be great.*

BECK: Yeah, we're superhuman, you *know* that? [*laughs*]

MUSICIAN: *Well, it certainly takes the humanity out of being an artist.*

BECK: I suppose back in the '40s, you opened the box, got the band out and they all had to be shiny-new and happening, playing inspired solos. There are inbuilt energies released when you start on a professional scale, and when that wears down, you're left with yourself and start feeling more vulnerable to the illness or tiredness, and you've got to put on an act rather than do what we did in the early days, which



AS UNPLUGGED PIONEER, MID-'60S

LFI

or Scotty Moore?" And when I started playing like Paul Burlison and went into the original "The Train Kept A-Rollin'," they were *right* behind me, the bass player goin' [*mimes upright walking line*], and there was an album sitting on our doorstep. I realized with those quality players you can have fun acoustically with one electric guitar and yet it still sounds like the whole place is blowing apart.

MUSICIAN: *Cliff used two fingerpicks and his thumb, didn't he? So how do you...*

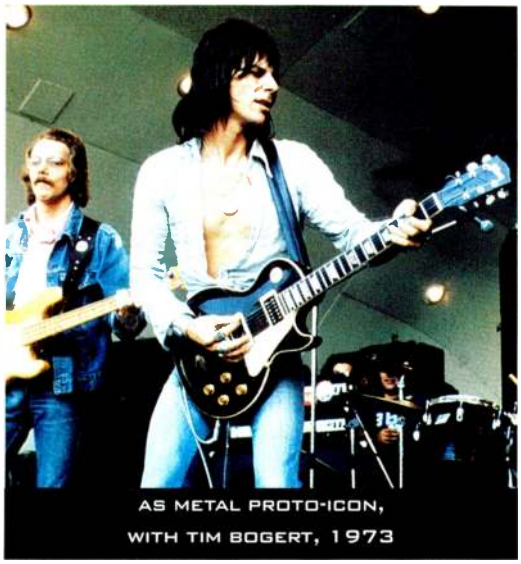
BECK: I used fingerpicks—one on my thumb, one on my first finger and one on the second, but he used a straight pick between the thumb and first finger and used fingerpicks on the ring and middle fingers. So in other words, his thumb and first finger were taken up with use of a flatpick, and I tried that and there's *no* way I could play like that.

MUSICIAN: *Because you weren't accustomed to playing with a pick after the last few years of playing with only fingers?*

BECK: That, coupled with these two other picks hanging out in the breeze, you know? [*laughs*] But I was still using the same

P-BUYING PUBLIC, AND I DON'T WANT IT."

was, "Get me on that stage, I wanna kill!" And then, as you say, it becomes like a box of chocolates: You're unwrapped and got out for display, you've gotta look and sound good. Terrible. You can keep that. [*laughs*]



AS METAL PROTO-ICON, WITH TIM BOGERT, 1973

LFI

MUSICIAN: *During the sessions you admitted you were getting into the mindset of when you were still untried as a player. I don't mean to imply you're bored, but making music does mean different things at different times in your life. Because you vaulted to great success, you might now have financial or emotional obligations that aren't as rewarding.*

BECK: Yeah. I start to panic when I hear the radio, just...despair. So when you get a close friend raving about a band like the Big Town Playboys, you go see 'em quick. That took me out of a hole. And this friend, he's very pushy. "Why don't you play with them?" I did when everybody'd gone; I'd had too much to drink and it was a disaster. We organized a rehearsal and that didn't happen as well, because I had long forgotten how to play proper controlled music, you know? The less volume I had, the better it sounded. [*laughs*] To the point where I might as well have shut the amp off. And I had to *quickly* flip back millions of pages in my head and go, "Can I still play like Cliff Gallup

action with the first two fingers and the thumb—with the thumbpick clipped on independently from the others. It was a pretty easy transition, although it was a nightmare for the first couple of weeks, because the picks were much more articulate than the flesh of the fingers. There would be a lot of clanking when you hit the pickups and stuff; I had to reposition, and play in between the bridge pickup and the neck pickup. But I got it pretty good.

And the *sound* was automatically 90 percent more like Gallup because of the picks. I couldn't figure out why I wasn't sounding like him, and I thought, "Well, if you don't *mechanically* have the basic technical requirements, which are the metal picks or some form of a hard pick, you won't get that amazingly sharp clarity that he has." And the instant I picked up the picks the sound was there, and it gave me a lot more inspiration to carry on with that style because the sound was so accurate.

MUSICIAN: *So you used metal picks?*

BECK: I've got two metal and a plastic one on the thumb. The metal one on the thumb was too hard, you know.

MUSICIAN: *It must have been more difficult not just because of the attack, but because you're not really feeling the string, so you're not as close to the source.*

BECK: Exactly! You have to play that much further away because the picks protrude further than your finger would, so you're constantly adjusting and finding the right angle for them to hit the string. [*laughs*] It'd be like playing with a pair of gloves on.

MUSICIAN: *Gallup used his pinky on the whammy bar; are you...*

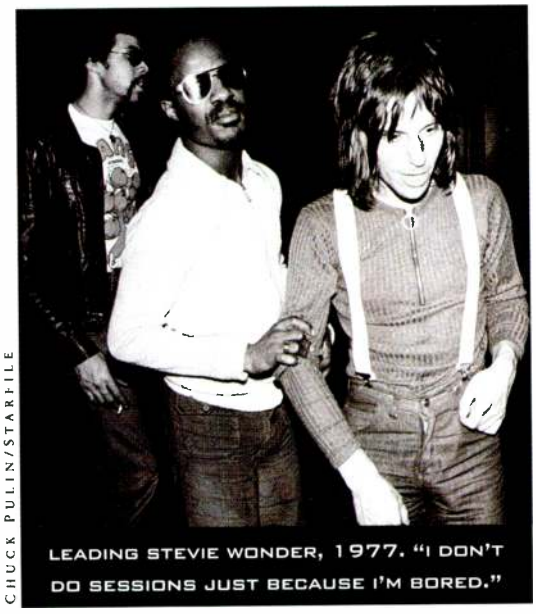
BECK: Yeah, the same thing. In fact, you have to adopt a right-hand attitude; when you find yourself playing really fluently, you look in the mirror or at a reflection in the glass and your hand automatically looks exactly like Gallup's! [*laughs*] From the few pictures I've seen, they're spread like a bunch of bananas over the strings.

MUSICIAN: *Do you dread people yelling "Freeway Jam" while you're...*

BECK: Yeah. [*laughs*] Let's hope we can play "Freeway Jam," but I don't know whether that would work with this arrangement.

MUSICIAN: *It could, as a shuffle.*

BECK: I know damn well if we toured, say, in three months, they're not going to be household numbers, so if you stick in a number like "Freeway Jam" there will be some reaction, I hope, but we don't want this hiccup in the middle of our set. We're still finding our feet with it. It doesn't *feel* as though we're radiating the energy we're putting in: We looked around and our respective girlfriends were talking amongst themselves. [*laughs*] I went, "Uh-oh. If this is not gonna go any further than the edge of this platform we're playing, maybe we should put it on ice."



CHUCK PULIN/STARFILE

LEADING STEVIE WONDER, 1977. "I DON'T DO SESSIONS JUST BECAUSE I'M BORED."

MUSICIAN: *That must be strange. You're caught between standards applied by your audience and what you really want. Is it difficult to get inspired?*

BECK: It sure is. Yeah. The only way I can seem to crank up anything is to sit there and *sit* there, with nothing more than the Strat, or a Tele. I have a beautiful Tele which talks to me sometimes—sometimes it doesn't say anything. But on the Strat, every day I'll come up with something I've never played before, and I won't even record it, I'll just wait and see if anything brews up. I guess that's how...I'm unlocking the secret, you see, I've never done that before. But I've never been asked the question which has triggered that thought, and I suppose that's what it is—I sit there with the guitar and *wait* until I have put enough information back here, in the back of the head, that it comes out, you know? So I don't use a tape recorder. If I can't remember it, and I have to play it back...obviously, when I get to the stage of wanting to record a piece, there's no way you can't. But what I'm looking for is the ingredient of movement towards something special, and that has to be up here in my head before I'll commit anything to tape. If I *recall* what I did last week enough times—I go, "Yeah, that's really something special"—then I'll put that on tape. And I haven't got many tapes! [*laughs*]

MUSICIAN: *You need a recurring theme, not just a flash.*

BECK: Yeah. I don't sit there thinking, "How am I going to gas 'em out now?" That comes afterwards. If I've done anything which I think is reasonably good then I'll wonder what credibility it has, or what it'll get. But I try not to think of anybody else until I please me. I won't write for anybody else. Of course, if I was...sometimes I play heavy metal stuff, just for the fun of it, and I just wish that people could see me. [*laughs*] But I'd never play it outside my own studio.

MUSICIAN: *Why is that?*

BECK: I don't know. I just get whipped up into a rage and go down and plug in, dial up a good sound...just to console myself that I can do it, and do it much more *evil* than the guys that are doing it. [*laughs*] And I think, "Better keep that under wraps." But had there been a drummer around, we'd've had some of the wickedest metal on tape. I've got some metal somewhere on tape. I must tidy those up. And burn them. [*laughter*] Lest I should die and leave them for someone to...

MUSICIAN: *You're ashamed of metal.*

BECK: No, no, it's *wonderful*; it's the most satisfying. It's a nice feeling to have somebody scratch the right itch, and that does the trick. But it's *so* easy to play badly that there are a plethora of bands doing it, and I'm not even saying they're playing it badly—they've molded themselves a little easy street by playing power E, power A, a little bit of this [*mimics two-handed tapping*] on a simple riff, and it sounds impressive. But if you take that distortion pedal off, it doesn't sound very good! [*laughs*]

MUSICIAN: *So what other things do you do when you're off in that exploratory mode?*

BECK: Oh God, I would not like it to be known exactly what goes on in that music room.

MUSICIAN: *It doesn't involve nudity, does it?*

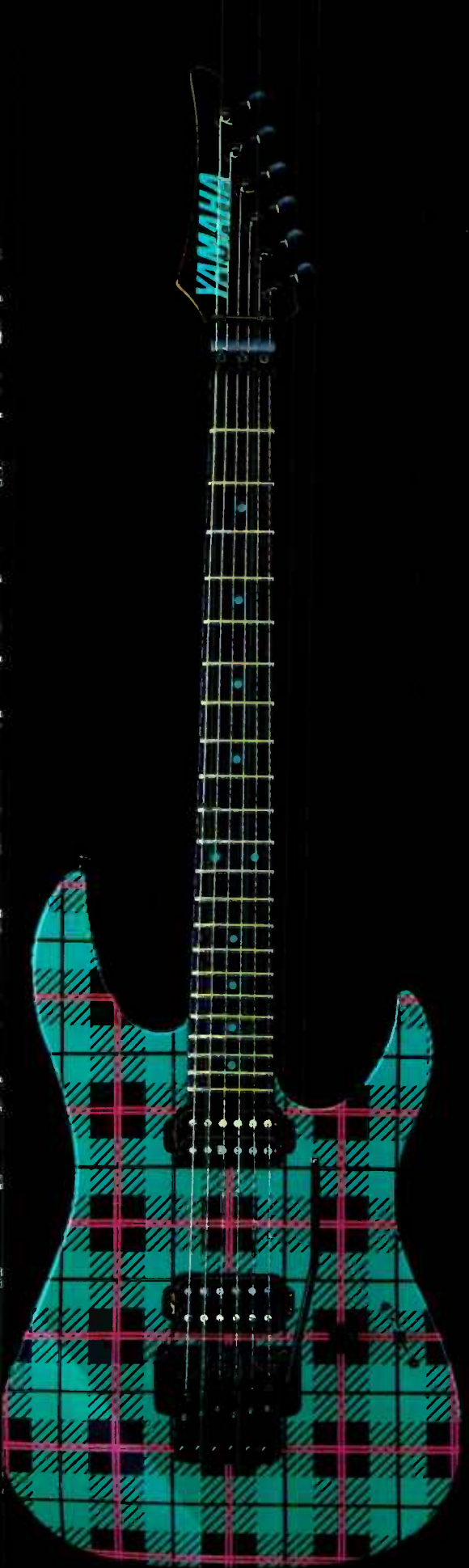
BECK: Nudity? Oh, no! Well, maybe, if I came down and forgot my pajamas. No, there's no logic to what I do. I don't sit down and go, "Right, I'm gonna finish this piece." Forget that. I just sit and watch TV and flip the channels and I play along with it. And I try to put the most ridiculously unsuitable backing to a soap opera! [*laughs*] I probably have gotten a fair way to film music inadvertently by providing a backdrop to crap television. I don't want the people to go away thinking that I sit watching TV all day—if, after a hard day *slogging* somewhere else, I happen to be there with my feet up, nine times out of 10 the guitar is there, and I grab it and play it, and if I feel particularly amazing some days I shut the TV off altogether and plug in and play. But I won't even have an amp; I'll just listen to the sound coming straight off the guitar, play a series of chords and see if anything clicks. Usually chords rather than single lines.

MUSICIAN: *Must be hard to hear the chords' detail without an amp.*

BECK: The amp is a distraction: Once you plug in everything sounds wonderful. It's gotta sound good without an amp. Then I really get on a roll. I think, "Listen to these three chords—*now* we get the amp." And then you're off, and the amp will inspire you to continue and let you write some more chords. And that's pretty much how I work: very, very erratic. I wish it wasn't. I sometimes play something that is amazing, then I put the guitar down, make a cup of tea and go out for a walk and forget about it. And I enjoy having the freedom to do that, [*laughs*] before they take me away in a straitjacket.

MUSICIAN: *I don't know how tight you are with Jed Leiber or how premeditated your score for* Frankie's House *was, but it's in line with parts of* Guitar Shop.

BECK: Yeah. Jed tended to sound like that because he's a high-tech keyboard whiz. But most of the inspiration was taken off the screen: Just sit there and watch the scene four or five times, and then slot something in, even just "Yankee Doodle Dandy" to make a scratch, and then gradually work around on it. That's the only way I work. I



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know the director wanted fierce rock 'n' roll when people were getting shot, and I wouldn't do that; I just didn't want this obscene, *thrashing* rock when this horrible death scene was there. I wanted to underscore it, which I did much to the director's annoyance, but I think everybody else liked it. It gets you right *there*.

MUSICIAN: *How does the music strike you now?*

BECK: I began to loathe synthesizers a lot more because of Jed, bless his heart; it was just because he had so many sounds, I found it too tiresome to wait for them to come up. I was patient and we got through it. But six of the seven weeks were probably spent looking for the sounds. [*laughs*] Jed wanted everything just so, and I won't stop him doing that. We got a fairly good-quality soundtrack. We wrote right from here [*holds chest*]; Jed loves all that, his father being a real street soul man from the '50s, and Jed's no slouch when it comes to absorbing his father's quality.

MUSICIAN: *The only prior connection was that you'd recorded "Hound Dog," his dad's song?*

BECK: No, my manager's wife is in with the Leibers since childhood. So I was fortunate to meet Jerry some 10 years ago. I wanted to do a rock 'n' roll album and didn't want to do any covers; I wanted him to write a dozen brilliant songs, for *me*, so I could be a hero; "Look out, I sing as well." He said, "Jeff, I can't. I'm not a young man, I don't write angry young lyrics anymore." I admired him on one hand for being so outspoken and honest, but was devastated as well. I thought I was sitting in the right seat. [*laughs*] A rare opportunity to get the guy to *see* you, in those days. And he said, "*There's* the guy you need," and a young Jed flashed past the door. And it was when Jed came to see me play on the *There and Back* tour that he woke up that I was the guy talking to his father earlier. I understand that he gave up his career in astrophysics to become a keyboard player after that. He's one cat who really does believe in me, and I turn to him when I get down, I ring him. He's like a brother.

MUSICIAN: *You do session work on occasion.*

BECK: I wouldn't say "session work." It's "someone else's project." I would never do sessions where you take money and nobody ever hears why. [*laughs*] I'm not doing it just because I'm bored. If there's any germ of excitement that can be had, great: The track is made, you don't got to worry about session fees and putting a drum program together. Widen the horizons. Within reason. With Roger Waters the material was very impressive, and I'd been meaning to meet with him a long time going. It was a nice time of the year to do it as well. I drove his car around Richmond Park. He has an old Maserati and an M1 BMW. I didn't get a chance to get out of first gear; it was a public holiday and there were kids with ice creams all across the road. [*laughs*] He's an amazing guy. Anyone who can stuff a five-pound note in the pocket of their coat and go on a hike around the world...I just felt like I've been insignificant against that, you know? I wouldn't go to the end of my road with a five-pound note! [*laughs*]

MUSICIAN: *You were once intrigued by stardom; at what point did you start hating it?*

BECK: When you can't go into your local pub without somebody making a snide remark. [*laughs*]

MUSICIAN: *Snide remarks? I'd think in America you'd get roses tossed.*

BECK: Yeah, well, you get that in small villages. Jealousy creeps in.

MUSICIAN: *Oh, people you know from a long time ago?*

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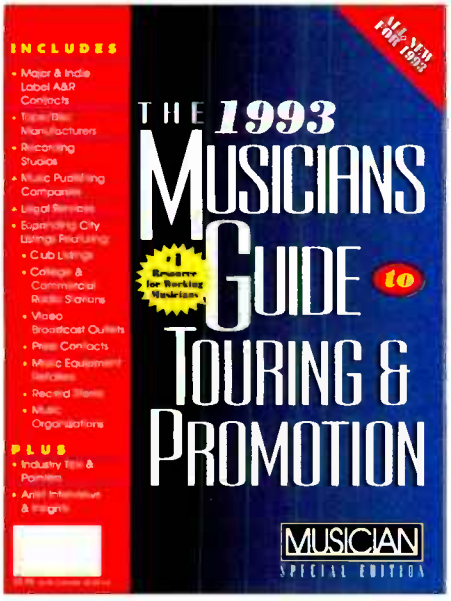

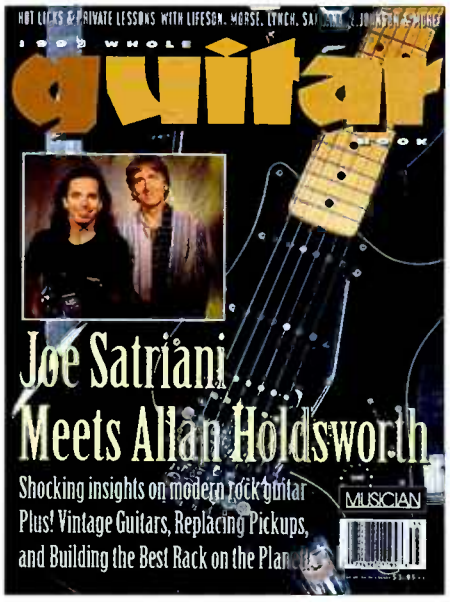

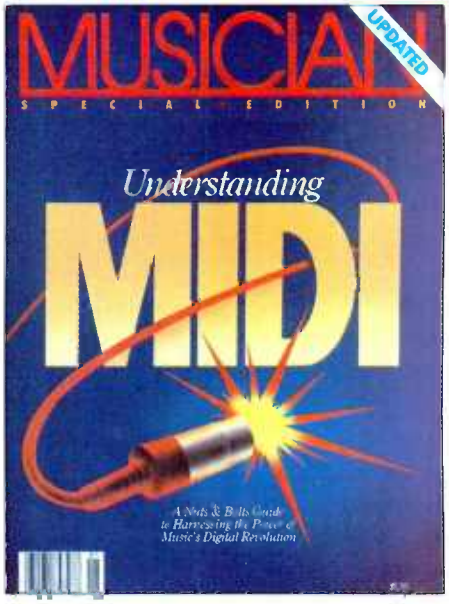

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BECK: No, no, no. People I've never even met. When you are in the public eye, people home in on you like you got a shining domo strapped to your head that lights up. It's almost as though they look at you as if you come from another planet. Or they don't really know who you are, but they know that you're wealthy, and they treat you differently. The old curse of English people being reserved still ranks, but there's times when they get a little loose and had something to drink. I don't have any trouble, but I have heard remarks made. Somebody would single out a record that I made, "Hi Ho Silver Lining," and sing it...you probably wouldn't interpret it as anything more than a friendly jake, but I happen to know it isn't [*chuckles*] because of the types of people.

MUSICIAN: *And you hate the song so much.*

BECK: Yeah. I don't know if they *know* I hate it, but they hang that noose around your neck because it's *kind* of a compliment and kind of an insult at the same time. But where I live, I've chosen to live there because it's beautiful, and it would take a hell of a lot of hounds to get me out. I get recognized in New York and L.A. and it's a great feeling, because they're great compliments, and you feel 10 feet tall, you know? I don't look for that here, and I seldom get weirdos in the streets. I could enjoy a life of seclusion. Not that I would say no to a big album here and there. I just mess with guitars, and I don't expect what I do to be revered by the pop-buying public. I don't really want it; I don't want to be suddenly liked by a bunch of people that never liked me before, just because of one song.

MUSICIAN: *So as you look back on this sprawling, auspicious career, do any personal or musical moments leap to mind that made all the hotel rooms and annoying people seem worthwhile?*

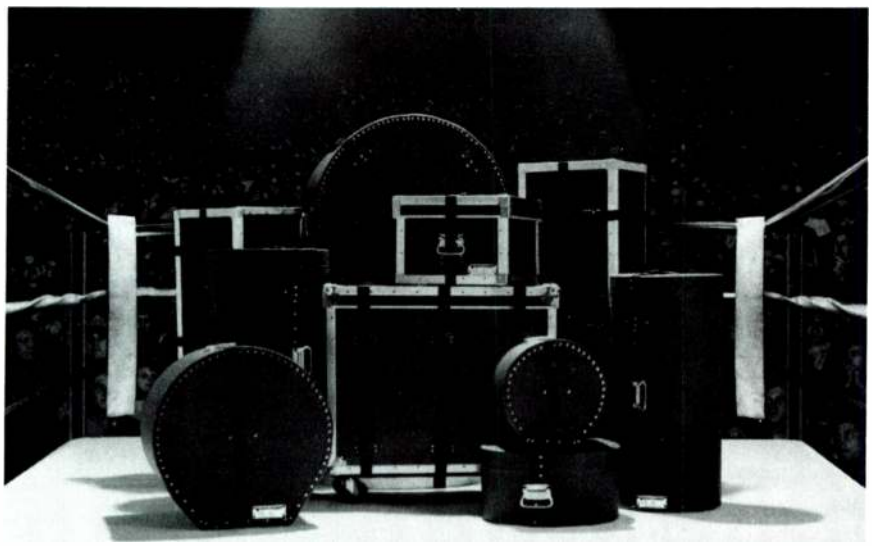
BECK: Precious little. Precious little. Moments you like, I guess, are when you see some genuine appreciation. You know, when kids come up and mean what they say. That is worth a million quid. Also, when you know you've genuinely impressed someone who's already a good player. That's the ultimate.

MUSICIAN: *Give me an example.*

BECK: Oh, gosh. John McLaughlin. That I couldn't fathom for one minute. Jennifer Batten; I thought, "She wouldn't know me from a bar of soap, playing for Michael Jackson." But she knew all my licks. So we might do something together. It's amusing, isn't it? All the macho heavy metalisms, she's got it down. [*mimes two-handed tapping*] I won't do anything on that line. But there's no substitute for thrashing, one-to-one. She's very dedicated. [*laughs*] Embarrassing. I just see her playing away in her little house somewhere, doing nothing else. Because you can't get that good unless you do.

MUSICIAN: *You used two-handed tapping for a while there.*

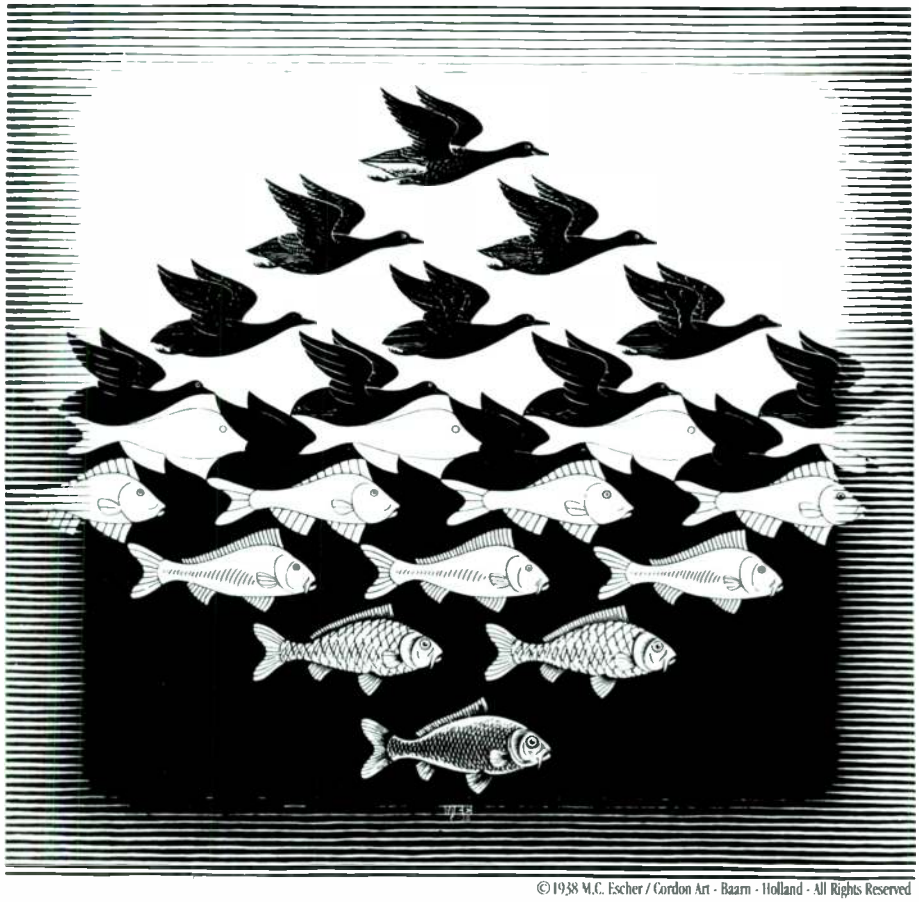
BECK: Sometimes. I'm getting tired of it. There are times when it sounds outrageously effective: In small doses you can turn someone's head 360 degrees, but when the ear latches onto what's happening, then the trick's out. It's like some guy pulling a rabbit out of a hat: You go, "Wow!" He does it 50 times, [*laughter*] "Okay, *fuck* the rabbit!



JEFFREY'S HOUSE

For *Crazy Legs*, BECK set aside his signature Stratocaster and used a Gretsch Duo Jet similar to Cliff Gallup's. His amp is an autographed Fender Bassman given him by Buddy Guy. A Roland echo unit was his only effect.

If you think only your eyes can play tricks on you...



Study the illustration. Are the geese becoming fish, the fish becoming geese, or perhaps both? Seasoned recording engineers will agree that your eyes *and* your ears can play tricks on you. In the studio, sometimes what you think you hear isn't there. Other times, things you don't hear at all end up on tape. And the longer you spend listening, the more likely these aural illusions will occur.

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This is exactly why our engineers strive to produce studio monitors that deliver sound with unfailing accuracy. And, why they create components designed to work in perfect harmony with each other. In the laboratory, they work with quantifiable parameters that do have a definite impact on what you may or may not hear. *Distortion*, which effects clarity, articulation, imaging and, most importantly, listener fatigue. *Frequency Response*, which measures a loudspeaker's ability to uniformly reproduce sound. *Power Handling*, the ability of a loudspeaker system to handle the wide dynamic range typical of the digital domain. And, finally, *Dispersion*, which determines how the system's energy balance changes as your listening position moves off axis.

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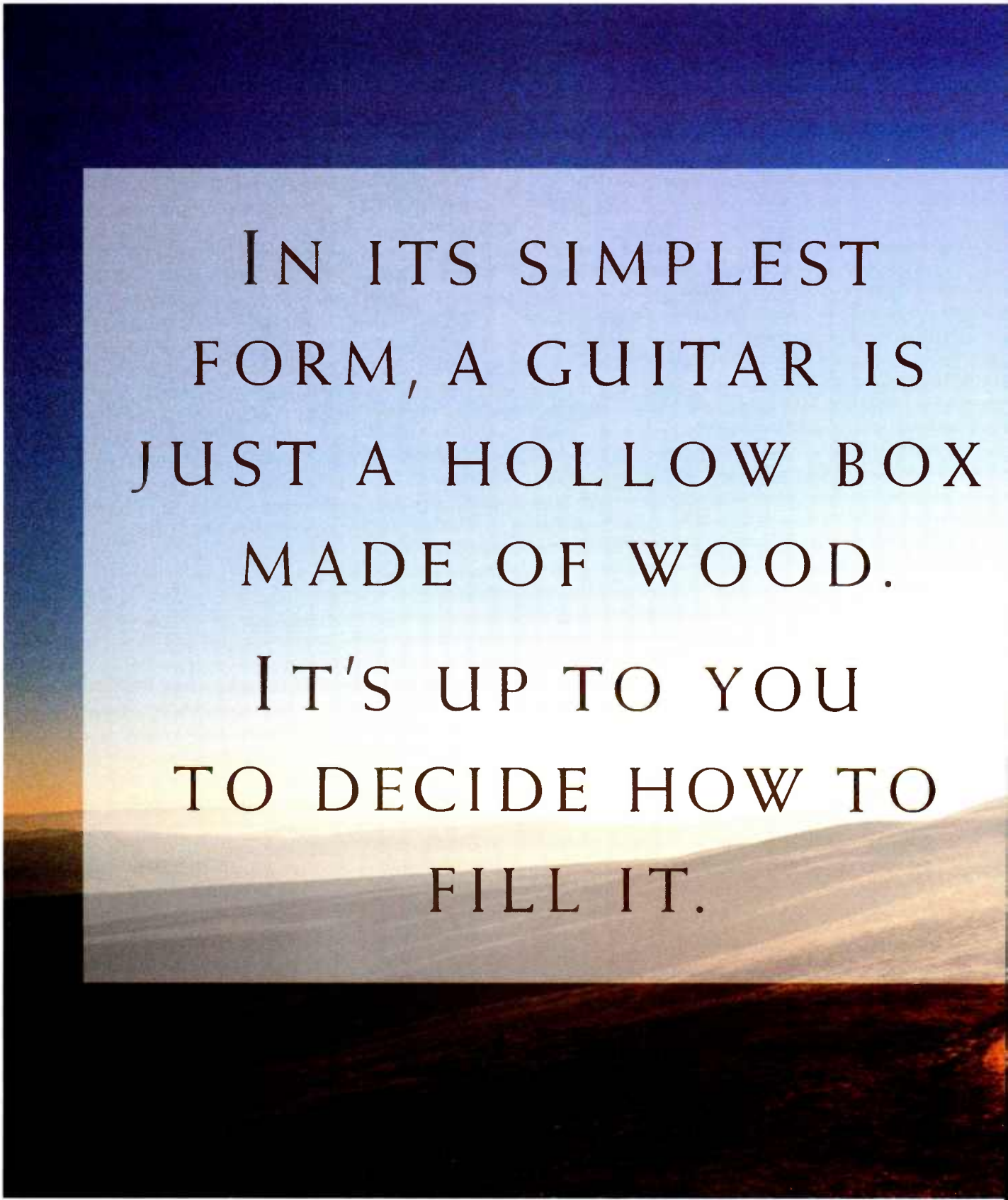

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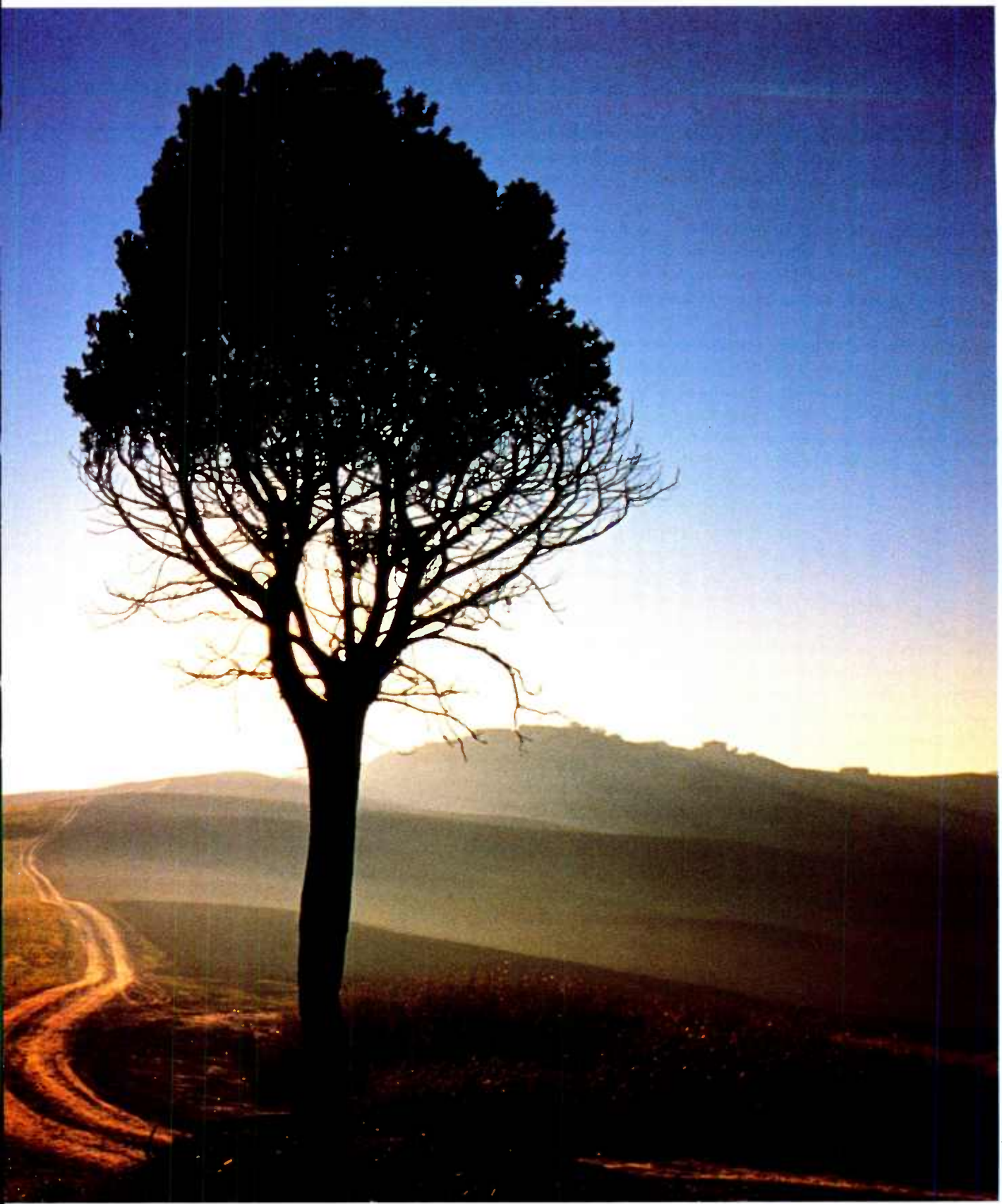

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TERRITORIA

THE BATTLES BEHIND NIRVANA'S N

PHOTOGRAPH ON THIS PAGE BY ED SIRRS/RETNA

KURT COBAIN HAS FOUND THAT BEING a professional rock musician is not quite what he imagined back when he was banging out his raunchy punk rock songs all alone in his bedroom in Aberdeen, Washington. "It's become a job, whether I like it or not," he says. "It's something that I love doing and would always want to do, but I have to be honest—I don't enjoy it nearly as much as I used to when I was practicing every night, imagining what it would be like. It's nothing like what it was like the first couple of years of actually playing in

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHARLES PETERSON

AL PISSINGS

EW ALBUM BY MICHAEL AZERRAD

front of a few people, loading up the van and going to a rock show to actually *play*. The privilege of that just can't be reproduced after doing it for 10 years. The same feeling is not there."

The first round of more than 25 hours of interviews with Kurt took place in February. They began very late at night, after Kurt would return from rehearsals for Nirvana's new album, *In Utero*, lasting until four or five in the morning.

Our conversations were extremely frank. "I'm caught," Kurt says, referring to his widely publicized problems with heroin, "so I may as well 'fess up to it and try to put it in a little bit more perspective. Everyone thinks I've been a junkie for years. I was a junkie for a really small amount of time."

Kurt is eager to set the record straight. There have been so many rumors about him, his wife Courtney Love and even his infant daughter Frances Bean Cobain that he figures the best way he can cut his losses is just to tell exactly what happened. His tales are sometimes self-serving, full of rationalization and self-contradiction, but even his distortions are revealing about his life, his art and the connections between the two.

BELOW: Chris Novoselic, Kurt Cobain and Dave Grohl, 1993. **AT RIGHT:** "The highlight of my appreciation of the band was watching Dave play the drums." **BOTTOM:** New Year's Day 1992. Kurt was just beginning his romance with heroin. "I decided, 'I'm going to do this for a whole year.'"

Kurt and Courtney, then his girlfriend, began doing heroin together in Amsterdam for two days around Thanksgiving of 1991 during the tumultuous *Nevermind* tour. "It was *my* idea," says Kurt. "*I* was the one that instigated it. But I didn't really know how to get it, so Courtney would take me to the place where we might have a chance of being able to find it. We only did it twice on the whole tour."

Ongoing, unexplained stomach pain had been driving Kurt insane on the European tour, making him chronically irritable and antisocial. "I was so angry with my body that I couldn't deal with anyone socially," he says. "I was just totally neurotic because I was in pain all the time. People had no idea I was in pain and I couldn't complain about it 24 hours a day."

He says the pain made him suicidal, so he chose his poison. "If I'm going to kill myself," he says, "I'm going to kill myself for a reason instead of some stupid stomach problem. So I decided to take everything in excess all at once."

In early December, Kurt returned to Seattle after the tour and Courtney was still in Europe with her band Hole. "I was determined to get a habit," he says. "I *wanted* to. It was *my* choice. I said, 'This is the only thing that's saving me from blowing my head off right now. I've been to 10 doctors and nothing they can do about it. I've got to do something to stop this pain.'" He also admits there was the simple pleasure of getting high, but that wasn't the point.

"It started with three days in a row of doing heroin and I don't have a stomach pain," he says. "That was such a relief. I decided, 'Fuck, I'm going to do this for a whole year. I'll eventually stop. I can't do it forever because I'll die.' I don't regret it at all because it was such a relief from not having stomach pain every day. My mental state just went totally up. I healed myself." Except for a long and profound relapse when he detoxed, the mysterious stomach pain has largely disappeared.

When Courtney came home to Los Angeles from her tour with

"THERE WAS A BUNCH OF BIGWIG MUSIC INDUSTRY SCUM WHOSE FORTUN

MICHAEL LAVINE

At the photo session at TOP, Chris and Dave were appalled to find Kurt nodding out. "Chris would rant at Dave, 'Kurt is a junkie and I hate him!'"
MIDDLE LEFT: Courtney and Kurt in love. "It just felt like so many powerful people were out to get us that it just seemed hopeless."
MIDDLE RIGHT: Former drummer Chadd Channing with Chris and Kurt, 1989.
BOTTOM: Chris Novoselic. "If Kurt doesn't know how to plug in his guitar and tune it, Chris will just run in there and take care of it."

Hole later in December, Kurt called and said, "Let's live together." They bounced from hotel to hotel, doing what Courtney calls "bad Mexican L.A. heroin." Kurt would do the lion's share of the drugs. Courtney never quite got the hang of injecting drugs, so Kurt would often shoot her up "whenever she'd beg me hard enough." She already had a dark little scar on the inside of her elbow from when other people had botched injections.

Just after Christmas, Nirvana set off on a brief tour with Pearl Jam and the Red Hot Chili Peppers. That tour is when Nirvana bassist Chris Novoselic finally admitted to himself that Kurt was heavily into heroin. "He looked like shit," Chris says. "He looked like a ghoul." Chris knew he couldn't do anything about it. "I just figured it's his fucking trip, it's his life, he can do whatever he wants."

The first press to acknowledge the heroin rumors was a January 1992 profile in *BAM* magazine which claimed that Kurt was "nodding off in mid-sentence," adding that "the pinned pupils, sunken cheeks, and scabbed, sallow skin suggest something more serious than fatigue." Soon, an item in the industry tip sheet *Hits* was hinting that Kurt was "slam-dancing with Mr. Brownstone," Guns N' Roses slang for doing heroin.

A lot of people around them struggled to understand why Kurt and Courtney were doing this to themselves. "It's like this," says Courtney. "'Hey, you know what? I just sold a million fuckin' records and I got a million bucks and I'm going to share it with you and let's get high!'"

So there *was* an element of just wanting to get high. "There might have been in *her* eyes," says Kurt, who still maintains that he basically did heroin for its analgesic properties.

In the midst of all this, the unthinkable happened. *Nevermind* hit number one on the *Billboard* album charts the week of January 11, 1992. *Nevermind* also topped the charts in Belgium, France, Ireland, Israel, Spain, Sweden and Canada. Meanwhile, the band was being wooed by Guns N' Roses and Metallica to appear on their joint U.S. tour that summer. Despite some very high-level pressure, Kurt and the band refused. They'd never be caught dead playing with Guns N' Roses.

The band went to New York to tape a live set for MTV and to play "Saturday Night Live" on January 11. By then, Kurt and Courtney had been doing heroin long enough to begin to get addicted. "I remember walking into their hotel room and for the first time, really realizing that these two are fucked up," says drummer Dave Grohl. "They were just nodding out in bed, just wasted. It was disgusting and gross. It doesn't make me angry at *them*, it makes me angry that they would be so pathetic as to do something like that. I think it's pathetic for anyone to do something to make themselves that functionless and a drooling fucking baby. It's like, 'Hey, let's do a drug that knocks us out and makes us look stupid.'"

"I went up to his room and Kurt came to the door in his underwear and Courtney, all I saw was a little piece of hair sticking out from underneath the covers," says Kurt's mother. "There were five deli trays, room carts with old food. I said, 'Kurt, why don't you get a maid in here?' And Courtney says, 'He can't. They steal his underwear.'"

DEPENDED ON NIRVANA MAKING HIT RECORDS." PRODUCER STEVE ALBINI

There was at least one thing to be grateful about. "Thank God those two didn't do cocaine," says Dave, "because they'd be the biggest fucking assholes in the world."

Courtney found out she was pregnant sometime around "Saturday Night Live"—whether before or after is unclear. Kurt and Courtney hadn't been using birth control, even though Courtney was mainlining heroin. Courtney calls that "a morality issue" and insists that she knew she'd quit if she discovered she was pregnant. "I was an idiot—what can I say?" she says now. "But I'm not immoral."

They had wanted to have a baby, but sometime in 1993, and certainly after they had finished with their dalliance with heroin. In the meantime, they thought maybe they'd get a little capuchin monkey. When they found out Courtney was pregnant, Kurt was ready to insist on an abortion because he assumed, like everyone else, that the baby would be born retarded or deformed. Courtney never even considered it. "We should breed," she thought. "It's better than buying a monkey."

They consulted a birth defects specialist who informed them that heroin use, especially if confined to the first trimester, was virtually harmless to the fetus if the mother's withdrawal wasn't too traumatic (there is a slight chance that the child may experience mild learning disabilities later on in life, however). Amazing but true. "But tell that to a middle-American housewife," says Kurt. "You can't expect anyone to believe it."

"I didn't have a baby to stop doing drugs," says Courtney, "but I knew that if I would continue to do drugs my career would go to hell and I wouldn't give a shit and I'd be one of those junkies that I've seen at N.A. meetings with track marks on their hands and neck."

They entered the strange world of chemical dependency medicine. Various doctors competed for their business, as if they were another celebrity trophy to put on their wall. It was just like a bidding war.

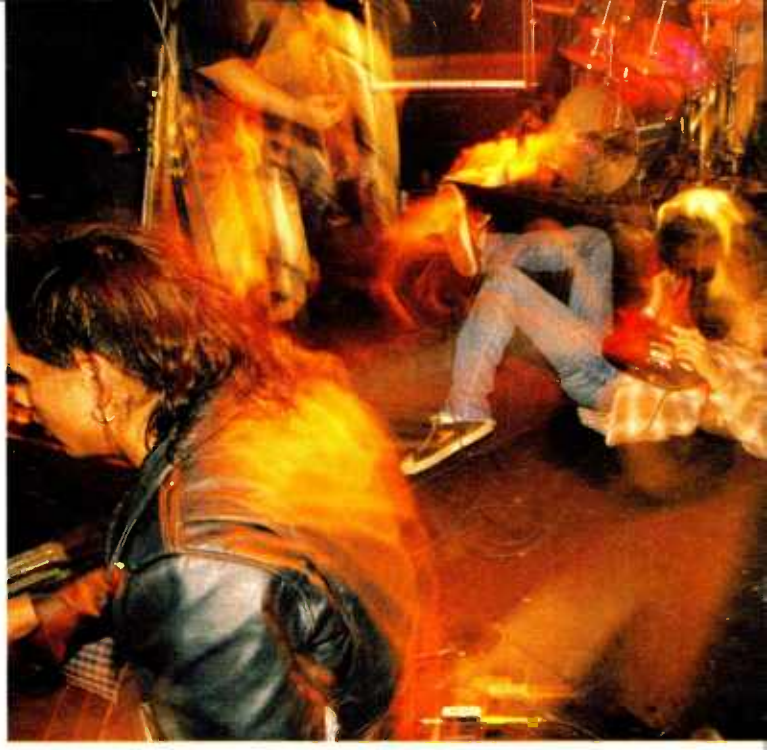
Kurt knew he had to detox for Nirvana's Australian tour, so he and Courtney decided to detox together. A doctor checked them into a Holiday Inn and prescribed them various drugs to tide them through the three-day withdrawal period.

Kurt says detoxing was easy. "It wasn't a heavy drug addiction at all," Kurt says. "I'd only been doing it for a month straight and I'd just started to get addicted, probably that week that I got off of them. Withdrawals were nothing. I just slept for three days and woke up."

But Courtney has a different take. "That was a sick scene because you get diarrhea and lots of sleeping pills and it was just vomiting," she says. "That was gross. That was a sick scene if ever there was a sick scene." As Kurt admits, "The bathroom didn't smell very good."

By the time of the "Come as You Are" video shoot, Chris and Dave hadn't seen Kurt since "Saturday Night Live." They had heard secondhand that Kurt was going through detox. In Dave's words, "It was not something to be talked about." It was just two days before they were to leave for Australia.

People in the band's inner circle began wonder-



"EVER SINCE THE BEGINNING OF ROCK 'N' ROLL THERE'S BEEN AN AXL R

ing if going on tour at that point was the right thing to do. "Everybody knew that it wasn't," says Dave. "Kurt knew that it wasn't, I knew that it wasn't, Chris knew that it wasn't. Maybe we didn't know within the first two days of the tour, but after a week and a half, sure, everybody knew."

During the Australian tour, Kurt's stomach problem flared up worse than it had in years. The first few days, Kurt felt fine. Then suddenly, he was in intense pain. He was vomiting constantly and couldn't eat.

One day, Kurt says he was sitting on the steps of a hotel, wincing with pain, and Chris' wife Shelli walked up to him and said, "Kurt, I just hate to see you doing this to yourself. I can't stand to see you hurting your body like this."

"I just wanted to fucking punch her in the face because, like everyone else, she just assumed that I was doing drugs," he says. "I was thinking, 'You fucking people have no clue how much pain I'm in all the time. It's from a natural thing that's in my body.' I couldn't believe it. I'll never forget those words because it just defined everyone's attitude toward me. Every time that I wasn't even doing drugs, they suspected that I was. They still do."

He finally went to a "rock doctor" who had a picture of himself with the Rolling Stones on his office wall. Kurt told the doctor his stomach history and the doctor replied, "I know what your problem is." "I think I'm going to get some kind of stomach medicine and the doctor just assumes that I'd just recently gotten off of heroin and I'm going through detox and I'm on tour," says Kurt, "so I'd better do what Keith Richards would have done and take methadone. It's called Physeptone in Australia, so I thought they were just stomach pills."

The Physeptone miraculously took away the stomach pain. Kurt couldn't wait to tell his doctor about these great new pills.

JAERGEN TELLER

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
1. Nirvana onstage in Seattle, February 1991, when it was still fun.
2. Backstage at 1992 Mudhoney show in Washington where Nirvana was surprise opening act.
3. Nirvana performs at *Nevermind* release party at Beehive record store in Seattle.
4. Chris standing outside Sonic Youth signing.
5. Kurt and Dave grab a bite.
6. Kurt playing to the rumors gets wheeled onstage at Reading festival summer of '92.
7. Courtney Love: band leader, guitar player, singer/songwriter and mom.

Kurt and Courtney got married in Waikiki, Hawaii, on February 24, 1992. At Courtney's insistence, the couple had already worked out a prenuptial agreement. "I didn't want Kurt running away with all my money," Courtney jokes (presumably).

Dave and his friend and drum tech Barrett Jones had both brought girlfriends to Hawaii, but Kurt and Courtney didn't want them there. "They all came from Seattle and they were all going to come back and say, 'We were at Kurt and Courtney's wedding!' and lie about things," says Courtney. Besides, Kurt thought he might cry at the ceremony and wanted it to be as private and small as possible.

"Shelli and Chris were being really shitty to us and they thought I was doing all these drugs and I'm in Japan—how could I be doing any drugs?" says Courtney (then again, Kurt did have some Physeptone). Kurt had a crew member summon Chris up to his hotel room, where Kurt informed Chris that he didn't want anyone at the wedding who didn't want them to get married—meaning Shelli. Chris said if his wife wasn't going, he wasn't going either.

By the time they got to Hawaii, Kurt had run out of Physeptone and convinced a friend to bring him some heroin so he wouldn't start detoxing while he was there. Kurt was even high on heroin at his own wedding. "I wasn't *very* high, though," he explains. "I just did a little teeny bit just so I didn't get sick."

E AND IT'S TOTALLY BORING TO ME." KURT COBAIN ON HIS ARCH-ENEMY

Back home in their Los Angeles apartment, Kurt did his best to avoid tempting Courtney by shooting in a locked closet in an extra room down the hallway where he kept his heroin and his needles and his spoons and his rubbing alcohol.

"I didn't find myself just sitting in the house and nodding off and sleeping," Kurt says. "I was always doing something artistic. I got a lot of paintings done and wrote a lot of songs." Artistically, it was a fertile time for Kurt—he painted a lot and wrote many of the songs which appear on *In Utero*. "I did all my best songs on heroin this year," he says. But he was falling out of touch with the band.

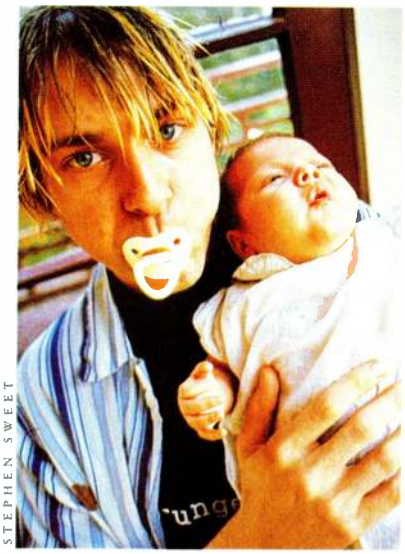
They barely spoke for five months, even at rehearsals. Chris would rant at Dave or Shelli, "Kurt's a fucking junkie asshole and I hate him!" Chris was angry with Kurt, he says, "probably because I felt like he left me. I was really concerned and worried about him and there was nothing I could do about it.

"I don't know how much heroin Kurt was doing because I never saw him," Chris says. "I never went to his house. I saw him high a few times, but never really a fuckin' mess. I never saw that. That's just what I heard or what I assumed. He was down in L.A. I'd never go down to L.A., I'd never go to his house. I didn't want to go. Because I was afraid of what I might see. A lot of my perspective was secondhand."

Dave wasn't as affected as Chris was by it all. "We do depend on each other for certain things, but for the most part, we're really removed from each other—far removed," Dave says. "As close as we may seem sometimes, it's not like bosom buddies. We're friends but we're not best friends or even great friends. As far as us getting together and playing music, it never really affected the band. When it started affecting the band's reputation, I got a little more upset.

"It's weird, because there are so many people that work with the band that don't really have anything to do with me," Dave says. "Basically, all I do is I walk up onstage and I play drums. And then afterward, I go home. There's just so much that goes on that I don't even know about. In a lot of ways that can be a blessing, but on the other hand it makes you wonder about your importance."

Kurt didn't want to go out on tour again and have his stomach act up, and besides, he wanted to be with Courtney throughout her pregnancy. Chris, for one, didn't care. "We toured for three years," he says. "The tour just seemed like a lot more pressure, anyway. Before, we were just vagabonds in a van, doing our thing. Now you've got a tour manager and a crew and it's a production. You've got schedules and shit. It used to be an adventure. And now it's a circus."



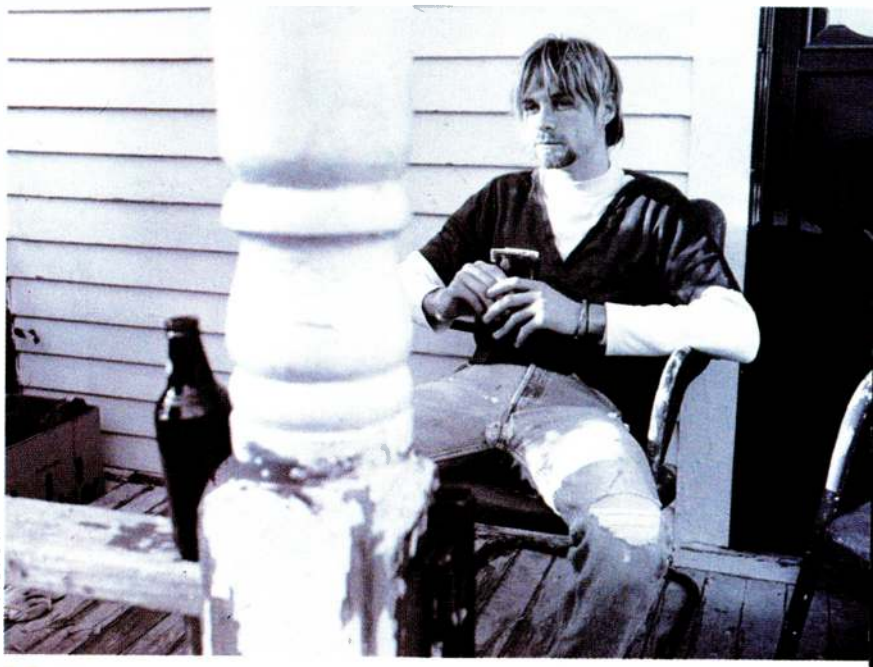
STEPHEN SWEET

Gradually, the ice broke between Kurt and Chris. "Kurt and I would have these cool talks," says Chris. "Every once in a while we'd call and talk and I'd really feel better about a lot of things. You don't talk for a while and you just sit around and all these ideas pop into your head and you start believing them."

Later, a video sonogram revealed a normally developing baby (a picture of Frances in utero graces the insert of the "Lithium" single). "Oh God, it was incredible," Kurt says, suddenly aglow. "It was one of the most amazing things. It wasn't just a picture—it was a video, so you could see her moving around. It was the first time we realized she was a living thing. You could see her heart beating." While he was watching the footage, Kurt swears he saw Frances give heavy metal's familiar forefinger-and-pinky Satan salute.

TOP: Kurt Cobain—the king of grunge surveys his domain. BOTTOM: Kurt and Frances Bean Cobain, post-utero. For all the grief they went through, Kurt does not regret: "Frances wouldn't be Frances if we'd had her later."

Then came a bitter dispute over publishing royalties that came the closest to breaking up the band that anything ever has. Like everyone else, Kurt didn't expect that Nirvana would sell millions of records. To avoid a potentially divisive situation in which he would have gotten an overwhelming slice of a very small pie, leaving the other two rather poor, he agreed to split royalties for music writing equally with Chris and Dave, even though he writes, by his estimate, 90 percent of the music. "I write the songs. I come up with the basic idea, and then we work on it as a band," says Kurt. "Most of the time that I'm asking Chris and Dave their opinion, it's just to make them feel a part of the band. I always have the ultimate decision."

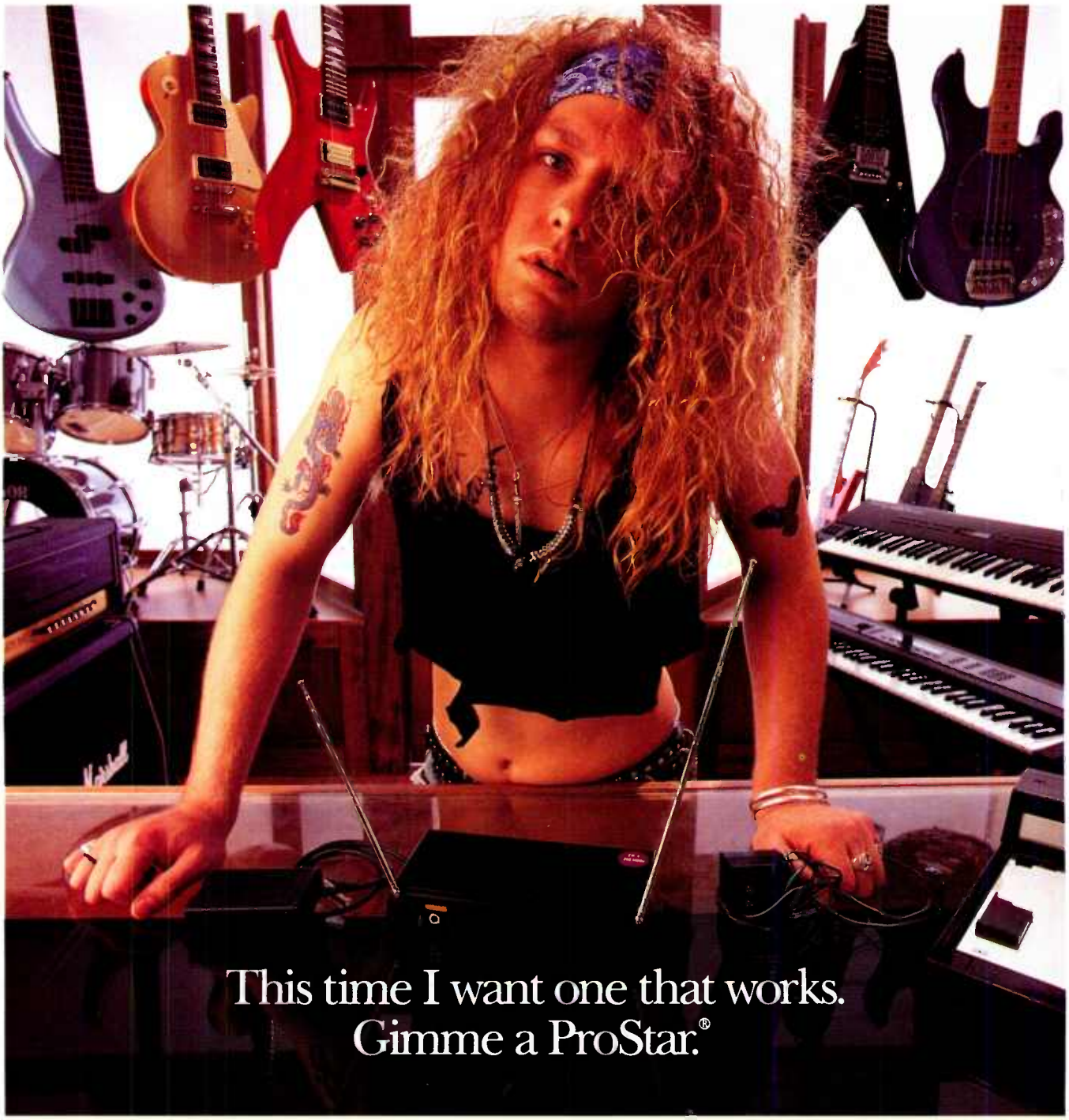


IAN TILTON

But once the album took off so phenomenally, Kurt changed his mind and asked for a more representative publishing split—not, he says, because of the money, which is relatively negligible (Kurt says the difference comes to about $150,000). "I realized how much more pressures are on me and how I deserve a little bit more because I'm the lead singer, all these perspectives are being written about me, I have to take all that pressure," says Kurt. "And I have to deal with the pressure of writing the songs. I don't care if someone else gets the credit for it but I should at least be financially compensated for it."

Dave and Chris had no qualms with that, and it does seem reason-

"WE SHOULD BREED—IT'S BETTER THAN BUYING A MONKEY." COURTNEY LOVE



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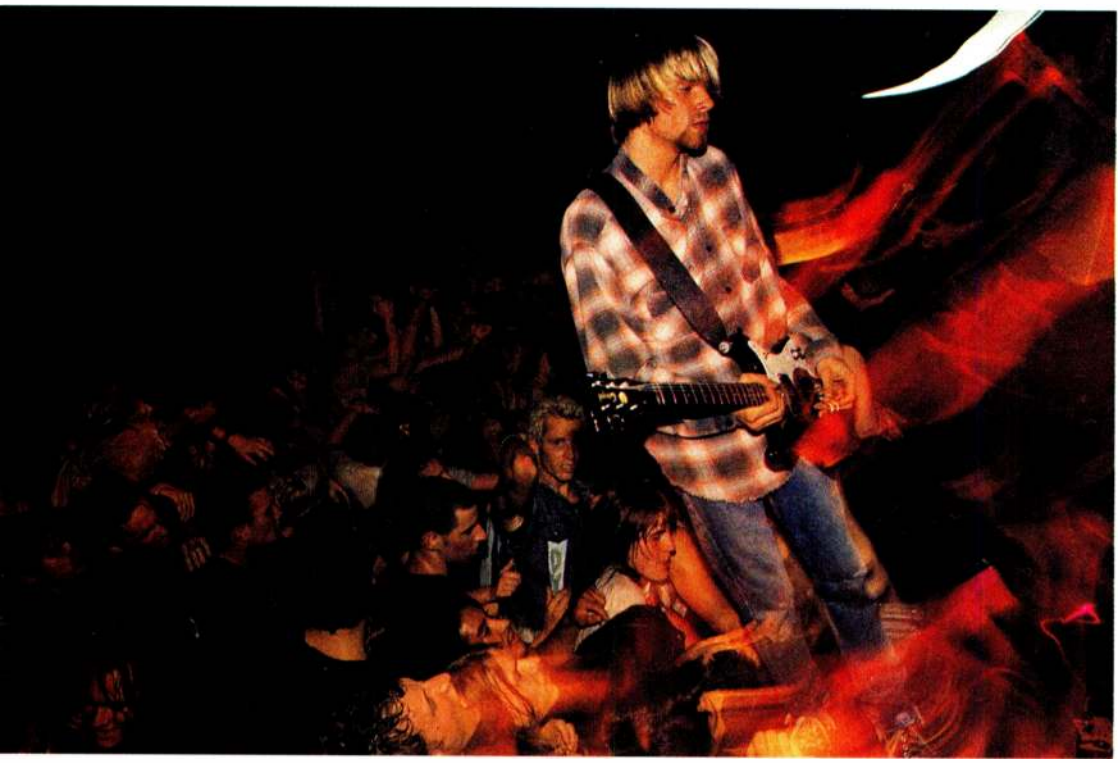
able—Chris and Dave would still make plenty of money. But when Kurt asked for the new arrangement to be retroactive to the release of *Nevermind*, they erupted. Kurt, they argued, was virtually taking money out of their pockets. The uproar lasted only one week in March, but it nearly split the band.

"Chris and I were just like, 'If this is any indication of how much of a dick Kurt is going to be, then I don't want to be in a band with someone like that,'" Dave says. Meanwhile, everyone with a vested interest in the band was urging Chris and Dave to back down.



"Everybody was saying, 'Let him have this one because the band will break up. You guys could make 15 million dollars next year. Just let him have this one,'" Dave says.

On the phone one day, Kurt said to Dave, "I can't believe you guys are being so greedy."

"Whatever," Dave replied disgustedly, and Kurt hung up on him.

"At the time, I was ready to fucking quit the band over it," says Kurt. "I couldn't believe that [they were] giving me so much shit about this." Kurt eventually got his retroactive split—75 percent of the music writing royalties. The bad feelings still simmer.

Except for the methadone he took on the summer tour, Kurt did heroin for months, for almost the entire pregnancy. Meanwhile, he was having to do more and more just to get the same kick, eventually working up to a $400-a-day habit. He couldn't get up any higher because that was the maximum his bank's cash machine would dispense in one day. With the baby imminent, Kurt checked into Cedars-Sinai on August 4 to detox, spending a total of 25 days there.

Courtney spent more time with her guitarist Eric Erlandson in order to stay away from Kurt. She would occasionally go to the nursery at Cedars-Sinai and look at the babies to strengthen her resolve to stay clean. While Kurt was detoxing and Courtney was waiting for the baby to be born, a profile of Courtney appeared in *Vanity Fair*.

The piece described Courtney as a "train-wreck personality" who "isn't particularly interested in the consequences of her actions." It strongly hinted that she had introduced Kurt to heroin, although that was not the case. Writer Lynn Hirschberg quoted various unnamed "industry insiders" who "fear for the health of the child," without mentioning whether these industry insiders had done any studies in teratogenic medicine.

But far more damaging was one quote in the piece. After a description of how she and Kurt went to Manhattan's Alphabet City to score during the "Saturday Night Live" visit, Courtney added, "After that, I did heroin for a couple of months," which meant that she had done heroin long after she knew she was pregnant. Courtney vigorously protested that she had been misquoted; Hirschberg maintained that she had the tapes.

If *Nevermind* was a success because the band was in the right place at the right time, the *Vanity Fair* piece found the Cobains at the wrong place at the wrong time. "I wouldn't have thought that I could be dwarfed or squashed or raped or incredibly hurt by a story in that magazine," Courtney says. "But the power of it was so intense. It was unbelievable. I read a fax of it and my bones shook. I knew that my world was over."

Meanwhile, Kurt was detoxing and, once again, in enormous pain. Unable to eat, he was placed on an IV and got weaker and weaker for a time, then rallied. His rehabilitation was slowed by the fact that he was occasionally given morphine to kill the stomach pain. He saw a battalion of gastrointestinal specialists who took X-rays, upper GIs, lower GIs, CAT scans, etc. He was weak. He was ready to snap. "He'd been crying for weeks," says Courtney. "It was nothing *but* crying. All we *did* was cry. It was horrible."

Gradually, it dawned on Kurt what the *Vanity Fair* story was doing to his and Courtney's reputation. "One day I snapped out of it and realized how awful it was," he says. "It was definitely affecting our livelihood and our image and everything to a real extreme." And since the *Vanity Fair* piece was based largely on unnamed "inside sources," they had to deal with the profound disappointment and paranoia that arose from the fact that some of their most trusted friends and associates had betrayed them.

"We'd already been turned into cartoon characters by then and it justified everything—all the lies and rumors that had been going around," says Kurt. "I just found it amazing that someone could get away with something like that, that she couldn't go to jail for it or get busted somehow or sued. I thought we'd be able to sue her, but it's a matter of having the millions of dollars to fight in court with [*Vanity Fair* publisher] Condé Nast, who would support her.

"I just decided, 'Fuck this, I don't want to be in a band anymore. It just isn't worth it. I want to kill [Hirschberg],'" Kurt says. "'As soon as I get out of this fucking hospital, I'm going to kill this woman with my bare hands. I'm going to stab her to death. First I'm going to take her dog and slit its guts out in front of her and then shit all over her

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and stab her to death.'" He was too weak to do that so he says he considered hiring a hit man, then calmed down a bit and thought about asking David Geffen to pull some strings to get Hirschberg fired or else he'd quit the band. None of this ever happened.

Kurt still gets scarily angry when the subject of Hirschberg's story comes up. "She'd better hope to God that someday I don't find myself destitute without a wife and a baby," he says. "Because I'll fucking get revenge on her. Before I leave this earth, she's going out with me."

On the morning of August 18, 1992, Courtney began to go into labor. She stunned her doctors by picking up her IV and slamming out of the room. She marched over to Kurt's room, clear across the hospital, and screamed, "You get out of this bed and you come down now! You are not leaving me to do this by myself, fuck you!" She came back to find that the hospital security force had "gone apeshit." Kurt was still groggy from a dose of sleeping pills and in extreme pain, but managed to get himself down to the delivery room.

At 7:48 in the morning, Frances Bean Cobain was born. She weighed seven pounds, one ounce and according to the Cobains she was perfectly healthy.

Kurt didn't witness his own daughter's birth. He had passed out. "I'm having the baby, it's coming out, he's puking, he's passing out, and I'm holding his hand and rubbing his stomach while the baby's coming out of me," says Courtney. "It was pretty weird," she says, laughing darkly.

"I was so fucking scared—it was probably a classic case of what the typical father goes through," says Kurt, who was still hooked up to an IV and in the midst of rehab. "I was just so weak and sick and afraid that something was going to happen to Courtney or the baby."

A press release from Gold Mountain, Nirvana's management company, a few days later aimed to refute all the speculation about Frances. "The infant is in good condition, is feeding well and growing at the normal rate expected for a newborn," the statement said, adding, "The vicious rumors that Frances was suffering any withdrawals at the time of birth are completely false, and in fact, she has not suffered any discomfort since delivery."

Tarnished reputations turned out to be only the beginning of the *Vanity Fair* controversy.

Even Kurt and Courtney's lawyer, Rosemary Carroll, believes that the *Vanity Fair* article prompted the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services to begin taking action against them. The agency must have seen the *Vanity Fair* piece (both Carroll and the Cobains claim it was stapled to the top of the report on them). The story was so well publicized that the agency could not ignore it, even though Courtney had allegedly detoxed almost immediately after learning she was pregnant.

Two weeks after their daughter was born, Kurt and Courtney were forced to surrender custody of Frances to Courtney's sister Jamie. For a month after that Kurt and Courtney were not allowed to be alone with their own daughter.

Kurt genuinely believes it was a conspiracy. "It was all a total scam," he says. "It was an attempt to use us as an example because we stand for everything that goes against the grain of conformist American entertainment. It was a witch hunt. Social Services literally took the *Vanity Fair* article and Xeroxed it and then took that pee test that

Courtney took in the first trimester of her pregnancy and used that as an excuse to take our baby away."

No one knew this was happening except for a very close inner circle of the Nirvana organization. It seemed hopeless—doctors, government agencies, the press all were against them. At one dark moment, Kurt and Courtney took out Kurt's handgun and considered taking their own lives.

"It was just so humiliating and it just felt like so many powerful people were out to get us that it just seemed hopeless," says Kurt. "It didn't seem like we'd ever win. It was amazing. We were totally suicidal. It's not the right time for a woman trying to get rid of the hormonal problems of just having a baby and me just getting off of drugs and just being bombarded with this. It was just too much." But in the end, they put down the gun.

The next day, the band flew to England to headline the closing night of the 1992 Reading Festival. The English press was running with rumors that the band was breaking up because of Kurt's health. Kurt says the rumors were completely unfounded. "No, it was classic, typical English journalism," he says wearily. "Sensationalism. I have absolutely no respect for the English press. They make me sick. I thought I'd never say anything racist in my life, but those people are the most snooty, cocksure, anal people and they have absolutely no regard for people's emotions. They don't think of other people as humans at all. They're the coldest people I've ever met."

Days later, Nirvana played the 1992 MTV Video Music Awards show. The band didn't want to go onstage to accept the award for Best Alternative Music Video, so it was Kurt's idea to have a Michael Jackson impersonator come up and accept for them. "I wanted it to be used as a reminder that I'm dealing with the same thing," says Kurt. "All rock stars have to deal with it. It's the fault of the fans and the media."

The band didn't have any other celebrity impersonators prepared when they won their second award, for Best New Artist, and Kurt initially refused to go up to the podium, but friends and associates convinced him that if he didn't go up, people would talk. "I was just kind of nervous up there," Kurt says. "When we played, I didn't look out in the audience and realize how big it was. And once I got up there, I realized millions of people are watching and it's a really big place and these lights are really bright and I don't want to be here, this is really stupid. I just wanted to leave right away."

Kurt managed to thank his family, his label and the band's "true fans." Then he paused a moment, fixed the camera with a soulful gaze, smiled and said, "You know, it's really hard to believe everything you read." Chris spoiled the moment by bellowing into the microphone, "Remember Joseph Goebbels!" but Kurt had made his point, even though most people in the audience had no idea how much it meant to him.

But the day was far from over. Also on the bill was Pearl Jam, whom Kurt had been skewering in the press for months, although he jokingly denies there had been a full-blown feud. "No, I just happened to express my feelings toward their music, that's all," he says with a little smirk.

But it wasn't just their music—Kurt felt that the band was a bunch of hypocritical sellouts. Two members of Pearl Jam—Stone Gossard and Jeff Ament—had been in Green River, the first band to put out a

record on Sub Pop. Kurt's friend Mark Arm had quit the band and formed Mudhoney because he felt that it was going in an overtly commercial direction, largely because of Ament, who was among the first of the early Sub Poppers to openly declare he wanted to be a professional musician.

"I know for a fact that at the very least, if not Stoney, then Jeff is a definite careerist—a person who will kiss ass to make sure his band gets popular so he can become rich," Kurt claims.

And Jeff Ament was also a jock, an all-state basketball player in his native Montana. "Jocks have completely taken over music," carps Kurt. "That's all there is nowadays, muscular bicep Marky Mark clones. It's pretty scary. And just to get back at them, I'm going to start playing basketball."

Pearl Jam had assumed the look and some of the sound of "grunge rock," or just enough to ride the commercial wave. In the January 1992 issue of *Musician*, Kurt had declared that the members of Pearl Jam were going to be "the ones responsible for this corporate, alternative and cock-rock fusion." "I would love to be erased from my association with that band," Kurt said of Pearl Jam in *Rolling Stone*. "I do feel a duty to warn the kids about false music that's claiming to be underground or alternative. They're just jumping on the alternative bandwagon."

But by that time, he had decided to at least forgive Pearl Jam's fey but immensely likable singer, Eddie Vedder. "I later found out that Eddie basically found himself in this position," says Kurt. "He never claimed to be anybody who supports any kind of punk ideals in the first place."

Vedder was standing around the backstage area at the MTV Awards show when out of the blue, Courtney walked up to him and slow-danced with him as Eric Clapton played the elegiac "Tears in Heaven." Kurt walked over and butted in. "I stared into his eyes and told him that I thought he was a respectable human," Kurt says. "And I did tell him straight out that I still think his band sucks. I said, 'After watching you perform, I realized that you are a person that does have some passion.' It's not a fully contrived thing. There are plenty of other more evil people out in the world than him and he doesn't deserve to be scapegoated like that."

Which is where Axl Rose comes in.

Backstage, Courtney spotted Rose and called him over to where they were sitting with Frances. "Axl, Axl!" she said. "Will you be the godfather of our child?" With several bodyguards looming behind him, Rose leaned over, his face reddening beneath a thick layer of makeup, and pointed his finger in Kurt's face. "You shut your bitch up or I'm taking you down to the pavement!" he screeched. The Nirvana entourage exploded in laughter, except for Kurt, who made as if he was about to hand Frances to Courtney so he could stand up to Rose. But instead he glared at Courtney and said, "Shut up, bitch!" and they all exploded some more.

Rose's then-girlfriend Stephanie Seymour broke an awkward silence by innocently asking Courtney, "Are you a model?"

"No," replied Courtney. "Are you a brain surgeon?"

When the band returned to their trailer, waiting for them was the formidable Guns N' Roses entourage, veritable sides of beef. Kurt dashed into the trailer to make sure Frances was all right while Chris was surrounded. They started pushing him around. Guns bassist Duff McKagan wanted to personally beat Chris up, but a crowd began to gather and the confrontation dissolved.

Perhaps the enmity comes from the fact that the two bands are competing for roughly the

same vast audience of frustrated, damaged kids. "I don't feel like I'm competing at all," Kurt says. "I've said in public enough times that I don't give a fuck about his audience." But Kurt and Rose hate each other with an almost brotherly intensity, as if they're flip sides of the same coin. "We do come from the same kind of background," Kurt says. "We come from small towns and we've been surrounded by a lot of sexism and racism most of our lives. But our internal struggles are pretty different. I feel like I've allowed myself to open my mind to a lot more things than he has.

"His role has been played for years," says Kurt. "Ever since the beginning of rock 'n' roll, there's been an Axl Rose. And it's just boring, it's totally boring to me. Why it's such a fresh and new thing in his eyes is obviously because it's happening to *him* personally and he's such an egotistical person that he thinks that the whole world owes him something."

Still, Kurt admits Nirvana could learn a thing or two from Guns N' Roses. "They fuck things up and then they sit back and look at what they fucked up and then try to figure out how they can fix it," he says, "whereas we fuck things up and just dwell on it and make it even worse."

The Nirvana hype machine managed to get a story in *Spin* magazine, a fluffy interview with Kurt and Courtney by Sub Pop's Jonathan Poneman which neglected to reveal that Poneman had a substantial financial stake in his subject's latest release (as the last remnant of the buyout deal, Sub Pop got a cut of the Nirvana compilation *Incesticide*). Of course, the real point of the story was the cover shot. Although the headline trumpeted "Nirvana: Artist of the Year," the cover featured a heavily airbrushed Cobain family portrait with Mom and Dad proudly cradling a perfectly normal-looking baby. It was aimed directly at Children's Services.

The public didn't know it, but the battle to have free and clear custody of Frances still raged on. Frances now lived with Kurt and Courtney, but the couple had to submit to regular urine tests and a social worker had to check up on them periodically to make sure they were raising their child in an acceptable manner.

On March 23, 1993 came good news. After months of legal battles, it was finally decided that none of the allegations made against Kurt and Courtney in Family Court were legally valid. The Cobains had already won legal custody of their daughter, but now, the Department of Children's Services would not supervise Kurt and Courtney's care of Frances any longer—no more humiliating urine tests, no more checkup visits from social workers, no more costly legal fights. The nightmare was over.

Kurt says he and Courtney spent a million dollars in 1992—$80,000 went to personal expenses, $380,000 went to the taxman; they also bought a relatively modest house for $300,000. "The rest of it was because of Lynn Hirschberg," he says, referring to the legal bills they piled up in their efforts to keep Frances and defend their name. "That bitch owes me something."

At the start of the third week in February, the band traveled to Minnesota to record their new album with producer Steve Albini. Kurt had wanted to record with Albini ever since he first heard Big Black, an incendiary, tremendously influential Chicago trio on Touch & Go Records that combined nasty guitar textures, bilious, nasal vocals and the incessant pounding of a drum machine to induce visions of urban rage and paranoia. Albini went on to a thriving, even legendary, career recording various bands like Helmet, Superchunk, PJ Harvey and even EMF, as

well as countless underground heroes, such as the Jesus Lizard and Tar.

But Kurt was particularly after the drum sound he had heard on two Albini projects—the Pixies' epochal 1988 album *Surfer Rosa* and the Breeders' excellent 1990 album *Pod*. It's a natural, powerful sound produced with canny microphone placement rather than phony-sounding effects boxes. It reminded Kurt of the drum sound on Aerosmith's 1976 *Rocks* album.

This was the man who once told a friend that he thought Nirvana was just "R.E.M. with a fuzzbox." "I thought they were an unremarkable version of the Seattle sound," Albini admits. "I thought they were typical of the bands of this era and of that locale."

It's an opinion he still holds, so one wonders why Albini would take the assignment. The way he puts it, it was a mission of mercy. "This is going to sound kind of stupid," he says, "but in a way, I felt sorry for them. The position they were in, there was a bunch of big-wig music-industry scum whose fortunes depended on Nirvana making hit records. It seemed obvious to me that fundamentally they were the same sort of people as all the small-fry bands I deal with. They were basically punk rock fans, they came up from an independent scene and it was sort of a fluke that they got famous.

"It seemed that they understood doing things the way I do them and would appreciate making a record like that," Albini continues. "But if I didn't do it, they weren't going to be allowed to make a record like that by the record company or by anyone else who worked with them. Any other producer that would work with Nirvana, for a start, would rob them, would want to get a lot of money out of them. And they'd probably be banking on making a hit record, in which case he would be making a record that he thought fit the mold of the hit singles record, not a powerful, personal punk rock record, which is the sort of record I got the impression they wanted to make."

In addition to a $24,000 studio bill, Albini's fee was $100,000, but unlike virtually any other producer, Albini refused to take points (a percentage of sales) on the album. "I just think that taking points on an album is an immoral position—I cannot do it, I think it's almost criminal," says Albini. "Anyone who takes a royalty off a band's record—other than someone who actually writes music or plays on the record—is a thief."

Albini didn't want the album to sound anything like *Nevermind*. "It sounds like that not because that's the way the band sounds," he says, "but because that's the way the producer and the remix guy and the record company *wanted* it to sound."

Kurt finished writing most of the lyrics within days of recording his vocals, culling most of them from notebooks full of poetry. Booking themselves in as "The Simon Ritchie Group" (Sid Vicious' real name), Nirvana recorded and mixed the entire album in two weeks at Pachyderm Studios, located about 50 miles south of Minneapolis in the middle of the Minnesota tundra. The spacious wood-paneled main room where they set up the drums had a large window that looked out onto the snowy Minnesotan winter. The Neve mixing board had been used to make AC/DC's *Back in Black*.

The band had made it abundantly clear to their label and managers that they didn't want any interference with the recording. Nirvana now had enough clout that Geffen wouldn't dare reject the album—or would they? "If they do, they know we'll break up," says Kurt. "Fuck, we made them 50 million dollars last year."

Although it was ostensibly a low-budget project, Albini says Nirvana was not above typical indulged rock star behavior. Albini says that when Kurt began having trouble tuning his guitar, they wanted to fly in their guitar tech Ernie Bailey. "When you've got millions of dollars, maybe you go a little crazy and start doing stuff like that," says Albini.

But once they actually started recording, it went very quickly and they completed all the recording—basic drum, bass and guitar tracks, guitar solos and vocals—in about six days. Kurt says they could have done the whole album in a week if they had really wanted to. They recorded bass, drums and guitar all at once and kept virtually everything they laid down. Kurt added another guitar track to about half of the songs, then added guitar solos, then vocals.

Albini was pleasantly surprised by all three band members. "Kurt is actually quite normal," Albini says. "He's been through a lot and you can tell that it's beaten up on him. He's kind of sallow and a little bit somber and melancholy but I think he's melancholy because he's in a situation that he thinks is not as pleasant as it should be, considering all the attributes—he's got a lot of money, he's famous, he's in a successful, popular rock band, so things should be going fairly easily for him and they're not. That's a dichotomy that he's uncomfortable with and I think he's coming to accept it.

"He is an intelligent guy—he doesn't come off that way. He plays dumb occasion-

ally to try to get people to trip themselves up. Also I think he thinks it cool to be naive and dumb. But I think he's an intelligent guy and he's handled it better than most people. I think he recognizes that most of the players and movers and shakers in the music scene are real pieces of shit.

"Probably the easiest guy to deal with of them all was Dave Grohl. For one, he's an excellent drummer, so there's never any worry whether he's going to be able to play. His playing was rock solid and probably the highlight of my appreciation of the band was watching Dave play the drums. He's also a very pleasant, very goofy guy to be around."

Albini respected Chris as well. "If he listens to something and he doesn't like it, he will say that he doesn't like it but he's adult enough that he can say, 'Well, this is the sort of thing that might grow on me. I'll let it sit there for a while before I veto it.'" Albini also feels that Chris has to do a fair amount of "mopping up." "Like if Kurt doesn't know how to plug in his guitar and tune it, for example, and Chris does, he doesn't make a big deal about it," Albini says. "Chris will just run in there and take care of it."

The idea was to go for a natural sound. "The last Nirvana album, to my ears, is sort of a standard hack recording that has then been turned into a very, very controlled, compressed radio-friendly mix," says Albini. "That is not, in my opinion, very flattering to a rock band."

The all-important drum sound was achieved with virtually no electronic chicanery—just a lot of microphones placed around the room to pick up the room's natural reverberance. "Dave Grohl's an amazing drummer," says Albini. "If you take a good drummer and put him in front of a drum kit that sounds good acoustically and just record it, you've done the job."

Kurt's vocals also had few effects. "On the last album, there was a lot of double-tracked vocals and stuff, which is a hack production technique to make vocals sound 'special,'" Albini says. "It's been done so much over the last 10 years that to me, that now sounds ordinary. That's now a standard production trick. To hear just the sound of a guy singing in a room—which is on the new album, it's just one take of Kurt singing in a room—that sounds so different from what else is out there that it sounds like a special effect."

In Utero gets back to basics in a way that isn't as forced and obvious as the "Unplugged" trend. Nirvana recorded the follow-up to a quadruple platinum album in two weeks on a vintage 24-track analog board. "We didn't

make a raw record to make a statement at all, to prove that we can do whatever we want," Kurt insists. "That's exactly what we've always wanted to sound like." Kurt covers himself, though, because even the most "new wave" songs have hooks—the spiraling ascending riff on "Scentless Apprentice," the wrenching, Zeppelinesque breaks in "Milk It."

A little over a week into the recording, Courtney flew in, basically because she missed Kurt. Albini says she tried to butt in on the proceedings, but he won't say exactly what the problem was. "I don't feel like embarrassing Kurt by talking about what a psycho hose-beast his wife is," says Albini, "especially because he knows it already."

"The only way Steve Albini would think I was a perfect girlfriend," Courtney replies, "would be if I was from the East Coast, played the cello, had big tits and small hoop earrings, wore black turtlenecks, had all matching luggage and never said a *word*."

Eventually, Courtney and Dave got into a huge spat, but no one will talk about it.

During the recording, Kurt drew a simple but evocative caricature of the band on a drum head. "When you see Kurt do something like that, you think about the way Kurt writes songs," Dave says. "They're so simple and so to the point and so right. Something that would take me an hour to explain, Kurt would sum up in two words. That's something he has that I've never seen in anyone else."

They also used their spare time to make prank phone calls and record them for later delectation. Albini called Eddie Vedder and pretended to be legendary producer Tony Visconti (David Bowie, T. Rex, etc.). "Your voice really speaks to me," said Albini, who offered to get Vedder in with "a real band" to do some recording. Vedder bought it, but said he'd rather just make a home recording and sell it for five bucks a throw.

They called Evan Dando of the Lemonheads on tour in Australia and told him that Madonna was on the line, and to please hold. Dando bought it hook, line and sinker, growing more and more anxious the longer he waited on hold. "I'm going to start beating off!" he says at one point on the tape. Finally Albini, saying he's Madonna's assistant, tells Dando that Madonna will have to call back.

The capper was a call Dave made to Nirvana's manager John Silva to fill him in on how the project was going—"Things are going really bad," Dave says solemnly. "Chris was throwing up blood last night..."

To celebrate the completion of the record, they had a listening party and sat around and

smoked cigars, except for Kurt, who stuck to his trusty Winston Lights.

So what does Albini think of *In Utero*? "I like it far more than I thought I was going to," he allows. "I like this record way more than I've ever liked a Nirvana record. I find myself listening to it of my own free will, occasionally. I think it's a far better record than they could have made under any other circumstances. Is it one of my top 10 favorite albums of all time? No. Is it in my top 100 albums? Maybe."

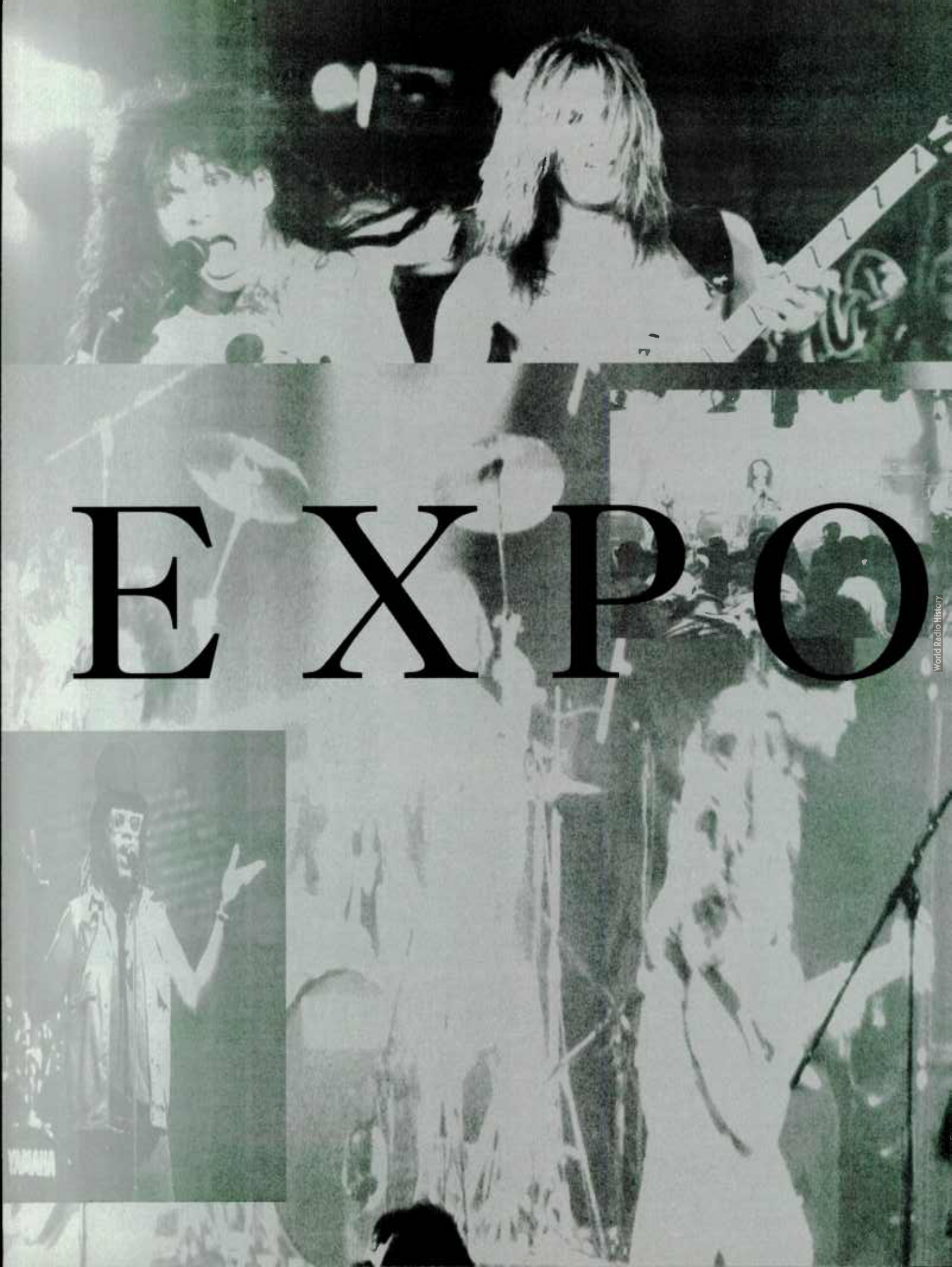
But Kurt's expressions of pain, which once tapped into the mass consciousness so perfectly, may now be less relevant. Just when the country is starting to feel optimistic again, here comes Kurt with a huge sack of woe. And the cause of his pain is no longer something that everyone can relate to. Most people are not familiar with the sensation of being publicly pilloried because of their drug use. It remains to be seen if Kurt has translated his personal experience into a universal feeling, as he has done in the past.

The lyrics aren't as impressionistic this time—they're more straightforward. Virtually every song contains some image of sickness and disease. Over the course of the album, Kurt alludes to: sunburn, acne, cancer, bad posture, open sores, growing pains, hangovers, anemia, insomnia, constipation, indigestion. He finds this litany hilarious. "I'm always the last to realize things like that, like the way I used guns in the last record," he says. "I didn't mean to turn it into a concept album."

The music reflects some powerful opposing forces in Kurt's life: the rage, frustration and fear caused by his and Courtney's various predicaments and the equally powerful feelings of love and optimism inspired by his wife and child. *In Utero* takes the manic-depressive musical mode of *Nevermind* to a whole new extreme. The Beatlesque "Dumb" happily coexists beside the all-out frenzied punk graffiti of "Milk It," while "All Apologies" is worlds away from the apoplectic "Scentless Apprentice." It's as if Kurt has given up trying to meld his punk and pop instincts into one harmonious whole. Forget it. This is war.

Amazingly, Kurt denies it to the bitter end. "I don't think of it as any harsher or any more emotional than the other two records," Kurt says. "I'm still equally as pissed off about the things that made me pissed off a few years ago. It's people doing evil things to other people for no reason. And I just want to beat the shit out of them. That's the bottom line.

"And all I can do is scream into a microphone instead," he adds, laughing at the futility of it all.



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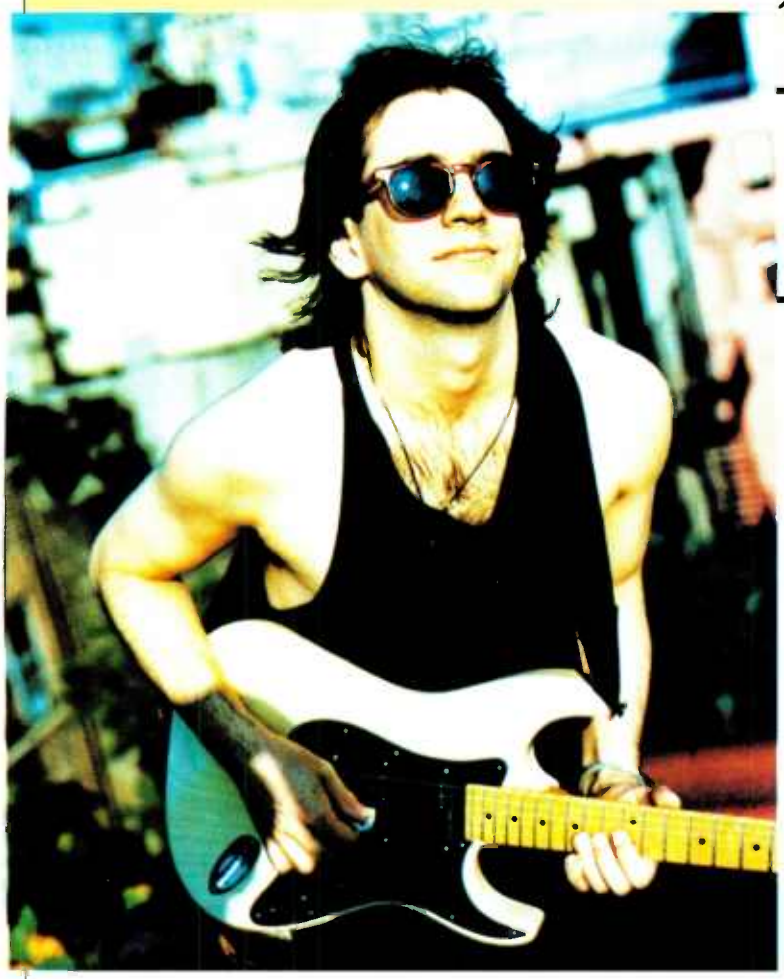

Freedom fighting for fusillade fugitives

by MATT RESNICOFF

In the perfect world occupied by a very thoughtful Wayne Krantz, music exists relative to silence, not relative to other music. Strange thing is, to play the guitar as he does—with that indefinable, unfettered excellence—it took him a long, discerning while to pick apart everything else being offered out there just so he could come up with something this world really needed to hear. Krantz is thinking of the pointillistic jazz on his new *Long to Be Loose* as alternative music.

"I question it on its most fundamental level when I'm making it," he says. "I did accept the guitar/bass/drum idea, because I was interested in the limitation of trying to do something different in a really stock format. But on all other levels I asked, 'Is it gonna be a blowing vehicle like most trio records?' 'Will it have a mondo distortion sound like most of the guys playing this music?'"

So drink deep from the second effort by the unaffected, uneffected Krantz, who just summarily turned down a *very* big sideman gig and turned off all his fancy equipment, so serious is he about going the distance with this intimately funky, unusually melodic music. Wayne's pure-toned guitar dances through meticulous bass and drum parts he composed for Lincoln Goines and Zach Danziger, forming highly detailed pieces that could just as easily be an extension of the pianistic solo guitar concept he explored on tunes from 1990's *Signals*. His playing now ties directly into his writing; even though it's a tight trio, *Long to Be Loose* lays him bare to the world. "It's not like I write a melody, we play that and then I solo all the stuff I'm practicing," he says. "That's why it was so challenging to figure out how to play on this new stuff, because I wanted that connection, but I'm so used to just getting up and blowing my brains out."

Which is likely what he'd been doing in the late '80s with Carla Bley, when Leni and Mike Stern heard Wayne and referred him to Michael Brecker—an unwitting recipient of Krantz demos 10 years earlier—though not before Leni signed him on as her lead guitarist and producer. "That was a really important time for me," Wayne remembers, "because I started dealing with the melodic side of soloing instead of just burning. Suddenly I had difficult harmony and songs that were fundamentally so melodic that you *couldn't* just burn over them, and that broadened what I could do."

Krantz's work with leaders like Mike Formanek, Victor Bailey and Harvie Swartz had already sensitized him to the challenge of writing for bass; his own deconstructive work on guitar as chord theorist, fingerstylist and madman soloist allows him to cross an entire range of harmony, making whimsical leaps between ideas and registers and tones. "I like limiting practicing to a specific thing, like chord superimposition or the use of a scale, approach notes, whatever. It's more challenging to make music out of that kind of practicing. But the best practicing is learning [*cont'd on page 80*]

PHOTOGRAPH BY RAFAEL FUCHS

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WORKING MUSICIAN

Ian McLagan: Face the Face

On the finer points of three-chord karate

by ALAN DI PERNA

Ian McLagan likes to tell how his self-taught piano style was an endless source of mystification for the late Rolling Stones pianist Ian Stewart. "Stew would look over my shoulder and say, 'I don't know what the fuck you're doing.'" McLagan laughs as he impersonates his old friend's lantern-jawed, clenched-teeth delivery: "'What the fuck are you using *that* finger for?'"

Silver-haired but still quite modishly coiffed, McLagan belongs to the fraternity of British pianists—Stewart, Nicky Hopkins, John Mayall—who took their cue from American blues masters like Otis Spann, Johnnie Johnson, Lafayette Leake, Roosevelt Sykes and Pine Top Smith. McLagan has one of the best resumes in rock: Small Faces, Faces, Rod Stewart, Dylan, Stones, Springsteen, Bonnie Raitt, Chuck Berry.... He keeps up with the new generation of rockers as well, and can be heard on recent discs by Izzy Stradlin and Paul Westerberg.

A cup of good English tea in hand, I follow McLagan into a small side-room of his house, where he keeps the weathered black upright he bought from Richard Manuel of the Band. Ian kicks into a shuffle in C buoyed by the boozy amiability that is his stylistic trademark. McLagan can also play a fine ballad: His Hammond work on "Itchycoo Park" and "Maggie May" set the standard for ethereal rock organ. But his exuberant identity comes across most clearly when he's pummelling the ivories on some three-chord rocker.

McLagan is forever "rippling" inverted thirds. His right pinky generally plays the top note, but he'll grab the bottom one with his thumb, second or even third finger. Chromaticism also has a big role—the guy *loves* to linger over passing tones. As he reaches the V chord (G), he holds the G with his left hand while his right hand rolls B♭ and G♭ dramatically. He milks this dissonant interval for all it's worth before finally moving on to A and F—common extensions of the V7 chord.

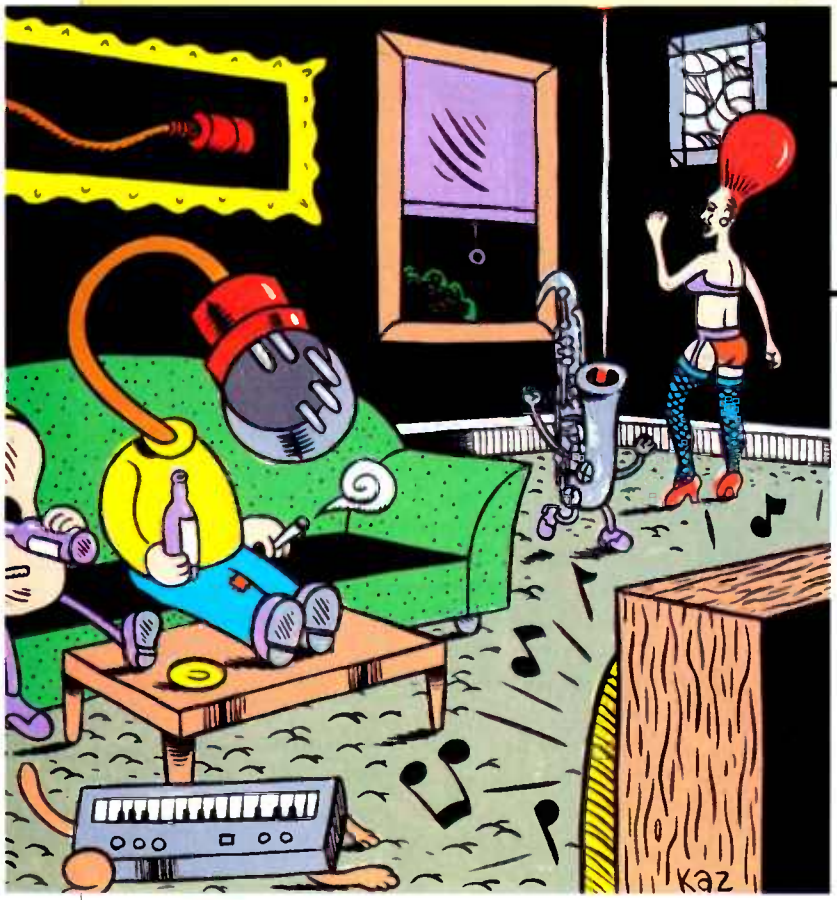
Springsteen's producer Jon Landau once complained that McLagan's playing on a particular track was too genre-ish: "I told him, 'Well, you hired *me*, didn't you?'" Based on McLagan's rhythmic sense alone, one might classify him as a one-man blues subgenre. For a turnaround, he might play octaves in both hands—just four consecutive Gs (if the song's in C). Harmonically, it couldn't be simpler, but the syncopated way he divides the rhythm between both hands drives the shuffle forward like a crisp snare roll.

"I keep my left-hand figures simple," McLagan offers. "My left hand has been lacking these many years, mainly because as a kid I learned that Chuck Berry rhythm riff on guitar." He plays the familiar root-and-fifth to -sixth pattern. "I just transferred it to piano. Sometimes I'll play the root in octaves. I was never much good at this...." He plays a walking boogie-woogie. "That was more Stew's line. He was more into the Meade Lux Lewis/Albert Ammons/Peter Johnson thing."

When Ian's left hand does come to prominence, it's often to play a nimble little lead-in figure that introduces a big hook or chorus. The pick-up phrase on [*cont'd on page 80*]

PHOTOGRAPH BY KAREN MILLER

A Synthesizer in Every Living Room



Better living through General MIDI

by WARREN SIROTA

Synthesizers have been around since the late '60s, but it took MIDI to bring them into the mainstream. Still, to some extent MIDI itself remains the domain of wire-heads and techno-dweebs. For better or worse, a recent extension of the MIDI specification, General MIDI (GM), promises to democratize MIDI once and for all.

Essentially, the General MIDI spec is a list of 128 instrument sounds and 48 drum and percussion sounds that can be found in any GM-compatible synth (keyboard, module or computer add-on card), as well as the locations of these sounds in the synth (that is, the patch numbers in which the sounds are stored). Theoretically, if you play a GM sequence on a sequencer that's connected to a GM synth, the result will sound pretty much as the producer of the sequence intended: MIDI patch-change messages set the synth to play the proper sounds on the proper MIDI channels, so the piano track triggers the piano sound, the string track triggers the string sound, and so on.

The most immediate benefit of General MIDI is that every GM synth offers a reasonably complete set of reasonably realistic instrument sounds. (If you're synth-savvy, you know that "reasonably realistic" varies. Many synthesized/sampled pianos, vibes and percussion instruments are excellent. Most electric guitars stink. Some boxes do good trumpets, others do better saxes.) If you want to sequence a song for acoustic bass, jazz drums, electric piano, sax and flügelhorn, you'll find what you need right there, in pre-defined, consistent patch locations. Probably, you won't even need to look up the patch numbers in the manual—you'll select the instruments by name from a pop-up list in your sequencer.

But what's it good for? New applications seem to crop up every month. Basically, GM is handy any time you want a conventional set of sounds that can be accessed in a standardized way. If you're a cover act using pre-programmed sequences, GM makes it a plug-and-play proposition. For producers of low-budget films, presentations and the like, GM offers an easy way to customize library music for the production at hand. If you upload a sequence onto a computer bulletin board, people are more likely to hear it as you intended—indeed, to hear it at all—if it conforms to the GM spec. Computer games pump out their dramatic scoring in GM. Likewise, CD-ROM presentations use GM to store music as MIDI rather than data-hungry audio.

Here's a rundown of the GM spec:

The *patch map* guarantees that MIDI patch-change messages call up similar sounds on different synths. The 128 patch-change numbers are divided into 16 groups of eight, covering the range of conventional instruments: 1–8 call up piano sounds, 33–40 basses, 65–72 reeds and so on. Need a recorder? Try patch 75. A slap bass? Two varieties are provided, patches 37 and 38.

There's still room for variation among synths. First, each unit uses its own samples or synthesis algorithms. Second, GM doesn't define standard volume lev- [*cont'd on page 81*]

ILLUSTRATION BY KAZ

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Toby Myers' Low-Down Melodies

Thumbing it with Mellencamp's bassist

by RICK MATTINGLY

Sitting on a stool in his home in the woods near Bloomington, Indiana, Toby Myers loads a cassette of John Mellencamp's forthcoming album, *Human Wheels*, into his tape deck and fast-forwards to "Suzanne and the Jewels." As the song begins, Myers' bass stays simple behind the lyrics, playing mostly whole-note roots with an occasional embellishment. But in the instrumental breaks between verses, the bass sets up a counter melody to the guitar, still landing on a root note whenever the chord changes.

"The basic concept is to establish the chord and then embellish the hell out of it," Myers says, picking up an old Teisco Del Rey bass ("A great little bass," he says with affection) and playing the part. "I have to move around a little with my parts or else they bore me. But John gives me a lot of room, and he's patient enough to give me a couple of passes to lock the part in. Obviously I have to stay out of the way of the words, so I try to pick my spots to embellish what John has just sung."

Myers says that the way Mellencamp records has a lot to do with his ability to create melodic basslines. "Usually, we put the bass on last. When everyone else goes on before me, I can see where I can go and what I can do. Also, since the track is being built on the drums, the bass isn't required to be that rhythmic, so instead I try to be as melodic as I can."

Toby can, however, be extremely rhythmic when the situation warrants it. "My part on 'Rooty Toot Toot' [from *The Lonesome Jubilee*] was pretty poppin', and on the new album I played a rhythmic part on 'When Jesus Left Birmingham,'" he says, playing a funky Bo Diddley rhythm in which he hits fat low notes on the fourth string with his thumb, syncopating the rhythm with octaves pulled with his first finger on the second string. "You could almost pop the whole part," he says, demonstrating, "but then you have all that slap sound. This does the same thing, but it's rounder."

While Myers strives to function as a traditional bassist in the midst of his melodic lines, he doesn't limit himself to always landing on the root every time the chord changes. "I did this really wild line on 'Melting Pot' on the *Whenever We Wanted* album, and I ended up on a D while the rest of the band was playing a C chord. It made it sound like some jazzy-ass chord, but it worked."

Much of Myers' concept for melodic bass playing developed when he was a member of Roadmaster during the '70s. "Roadmaster's writing was heavily influenced by Laura Nyro," Toby says, "and she'd have the bass note moving against the chord. Roadmaster made three albums for Mercury, and I took the melodic thing as far as I could without going over the top."

Born in 1949, Myers acquired his first bass in '65. Most of his instruction came from listening to records. "Norm Sundholm from the Kingsmen was a big influence," Toby recalls. "The bass was so loud on those records that it was easy for me to play along until I had it right. And I learned the cycle

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARC HAUSER

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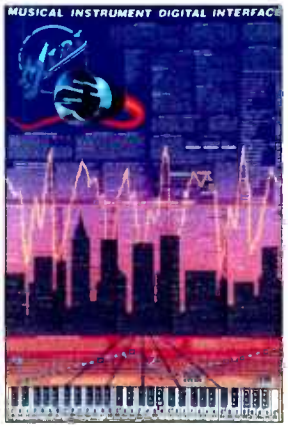

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of fifths from a song called 'Blues in F,' which was on the flip side of 'Gimme Some Lovin' ' by the Spencer Davis Group.

"But Paul McCartney had the biggest effect on me. His basslines were really inventive, and when the Beatles put out 'Rain,' I don't think bass had ever been that loud on a record before. When you're a fledgling bass player and you hear a line like that, it's like, JEEEEEE-sus Christ! And it's such an easy lick. I used that lick in every song I played for the next month.

"That carried over to Chris Squire with Yes. He was playing great melodic lines, playing the fifth against the root a lot. I'd never heard anybody do that, but when he refered to Stravinsky in an interview, I picked up everything I could by Stravinsky, and then it was, 'Of *course* he's playing the five against the one!'

"I was playing in this bar band in Bloomington at the time," Myers laughs, "and we did a 30-minute Yes medley. Of course I had a Rickenbacker 4001 and a million amps, and I had the treble turned up so high that a guy came up to me one night and said, 'They call that thing a BASS. Turn that fuckin' treble off.' "

Myers has since come to appreciate the boomier aspects of his instrument, to the extent that he has altered its tuning. "I have to give credit for this idea to Dean Lozow, who runs September Recording Studio in Indianapolis. I use a four-string bass, but on the bottom I've got a B string from a five-string bass tuned to D, my third string is an E string tuned to G, my second is an A string tuned to C, and my highest is a D tuned to F.

"John writes a lot of songs in D and G, so it's great to have that open D on the bottom. It enables me to get lower, but not obnoxiously low. Sometimes with a five-string, the note is so low it flaps and you don't hear it. That doesn't work so well in the kind of rock 'n' roll context we have with John. But this way, I can get a little deeper in the mix and be closer to where the bass drum is."

Myers finds that he gets the best sound from those large strings by picking with his right-hand thumb. "When I'm striking with the biggest appendage I've got on my body, except of course for my..." Toby smiles modestly, finishing the sentence by looking down at his jeans. "Anyway, it's a nice, fat sound. And when you use a little bit of thumbnail you add some click to the sound. Some speed things dictate that you use your fingers, but picking with my thumb works best on most of John's stuff."

Toby has learned to accept the fact that much of what he plays can't be heard on car radios and cassette players. "When we entered the era of BIG DRUMS it was kind of over for bass. I guess I get my rocks off listening to playbacks when it's still loud in the mix, and having David Grissom or Kenny Aronoff turn to me and go, 'Yeah!' In the end, I'm just support for John. But after 11 years in the band, I've got to do a little bit for my heart, too."

THE BOTTOM LINE

"I don't see why equipment has to be a huge, complicated deal," TOBY MYERS says. "A bass is just a big, low thing that goes boom, so give me a nice bass, clean power and speakers that don't distort." He uses a Guild Pilot bass with active pickups. "I love the bass, but it had the ugliest headstock I'd ever seen, so I put it on a bandsaw and made it look like an old Tele headstock," Myers says. "Then I laminated part of an old Monet calendar onto it so it looks like a swath of flowers." His Martin strings are .065, .080, .105 and .130. "Those are some big-ass strings; they're not for the faint-fingered." Myers uses two Hartke 7000 amplifiers and three Hartke cabinets: one with four 10s and two with two 15s each. His wireless unit is a Nady.

KRANTZ

[*cont'd from page 73*] where everything *is*, because that's what gets in the way most, like when we're stuck in segments of the guitar to deal with certain chords. That always bugged me. If you're interested in improvising, then to think of Cmaj7 as just an arpeggio shape, which is generally how it's taught, makes it harder to be free with the information. I'm into deciphering guitar as a bunch of notes we can put together without relying on patterns our fingers remember in a certain order."

One excellent Krantz method involves confining a practice zone to a fretboard location, a finger to a fret, and playing only the notes in a scale or chord, say, D7♭9—D, F♯, A, C, E♭. After time, shift around the neck and continue the exercise until the structure melts into an array of defining notes. "They exist in those frets in locations that don't coincide with the two shapes you might know," he says, "and exist as information which can be accessed in any order, with big or small intervals, arpeggiated, melodically, rhythmically—we can make *music* out of them. What about leaving out the fifth if it's too much of a stretch? Why not imply D7♭9 with only three of the notes? That's where soloing and comping meet: You're dealing with the same information, it's just that one you deal with linearly, the other simultaneously. Piano players don't have two places to play that chord; they can put notes together in any way they care to, and that's what I want to do on guitar. *Anywhere* on a guitar.

"But ultimately it comes down to, 'Now you know the notes, *then* what do you do?' That's where it gets complicated—or easy, depending on your frame of reference," he says, smiling. "The next step is what we're playing *about*, what the message is. The difference between a *really* good player and a really good player is moot; we've expanded the 'ability' part. The guitar is a means of expression of the greater thing music represents. And that's what the voyage is about, to more deeply understand and articulate what that greater thing is. I'm concise with verbal language, and that doesn't get it. Because if it were a concise, verbal thing, we wouldn't need music to describe it."

NICE PIECES, GOOD SOUNDS

WAYNE recorded *Long to Be Loose* with a Pensa Strat-style with Fender strings (.011, .014, .018, .028, .034, .044) through a Fender blackface Deluxe, Alesis' MicroVerb and Boss' digital delay and Super Overdrive.

MCLAGAN

[*cont'd from page 75*] Rod Stewart's recording of "(I Know) I'm Losing You" was of course copped from the Motown original. But McLagan made the D-natural riff his own by adding an E grace note. "That was a mistake! Now I always have to play it," laughs the pianist, who has just reunited with Stewart for the latter's "Unplugged" tour.

Then there's that great left-hand figure that sets up the choruses on Stewart's version of "It's All Over Now." The song is in G and the first chord of the chorus is D. To get there, McLagan does a chromatic lurch from B up to D, then a quick drop down to the D an octave below. Hearing him play the tune solo brings home just how much his syncopated piano work is responsible for the jaunty rhythmic feel of the choruses on the record. Ian staggers his "Chuck Berry" bass pattern with minor and major thirds, while his right hand ripples and roams freely. But for the verses he cuts back to a bare minimum. His three-note right-hand verse figure, he says, was meant as a "tribute to Brian Jones" and his riff on the Rolling Stones' recording of the song.

McLagan can remember lining up outside a

pub in Richmond to see the Stones for the first time, over 30 years ago. He recalls being less interested in Ian Stewart—"you couldn't hear him anyway"—than in Jones. If only more rock keyboardists were as keen on listening to the guitarist; down through the years Mac's perfected the art of enhancing guitars, while staying out of their way harmonically.

"What a guitar ain't got is this," he says, clanging a fifth in the piano's top octave. McLagan's a master of high and fast 16th-note triplets. Just listen to his bruising solo on "Silver Naked Ladies" from Westerberg's *14 Songs*. What's his approach to this difficult maneuver?

"Violence. It's a form of karate, actually." He demonstrates his "stiff-arm" playing posture. "See, the correct way to play them would be lightly, from the wrist. That's how Nicky Hopkins does it. But I do it from the shoulder, and occasionally from the crotch and sometimes even the foot."

No wonder Stew was mystified.

McGEAR

On the road, IAN MCLAGAN plays a Hammond B-3 through a custom Leslie setup that includes Gauss speakers and JBL drivers with Crown and Cerwin Vega amplification. His piano is a Korg SG1-D digital. His sole effect is a Korg A-3.

GENERAL MIDI

[*cont'd from page 76*] els, so it's likely that sequences will need to be balanced (using MIDI volume messages). Third, several GM patch names are alarmingly vague. Take patch 89: "pad 1 (new age)." What does that sound like?

Such questions are usually answered by looking at the Roland Sound Canvas, the first GM synth, which arrived even before specification itself. Because Roland was there first—and met with considerable success—other manufacturers tend to resolve GM's ambiguities by aping this device.

GM drum and percussion sounds, specified by the *percussion key map*, are accessible only on MIDI channel 10 and mapped across the keyboard in a specific way. For instance, "acoustic snare" responds to MIDI note 38, the D an octave above middle C. As with the patch map, the relative volumes among drums aren't standardized. But because they're all on the same MIDI channel, MIDI volume messages affect all sounds equally. The only way to balance them is to tweak the velocity of each note.

If you're thinking ahead, you might be wondering how to choose between several acoustic piano sounds or different drum kits in a GM synth (if, indeed, it offers them). Alternate instrument selections are usually made from a synth's front panel. When it comes to remote control via MIDI, a sensible convention has evolved for changing drum kits: Send a patch-change message on channel 10. For other instrument sounds, the closest thing to a standard method is the one devised by Roland for their GS standard (a slightly more extensive precursor to, and superset of, GM). This is actually a continuous-controller 0 message; the value is the number of the desired bank. With a Sound Canvas, sending controller 0 with a value of 1 followed by patch change 22 calls up "French accordion," whereas a controller 0 with a value of 9 followed by a patch change 22 gets you "Italian accordion."

A GM synth must be able to play 24 notes at once, on any MIDI channel. Voices are allocated dynamically, so you don't have to pre-assign voices to channels; the synth can allocate any or all voices to any channels at any moment.

As for MIDI continuous controllers, GM synths are supposed to respond to pitch-bend and after-touch (channel pressure), as well as mod wheel (controller 1), volume (7), pan (10), expression (11), sustain (64), reset-all-controllers (121) and all-notes-off (123).

What? You thought *all* MIDI synths were supposed to respond to these messages? Silly you. Those controller assignments were only *suggested* in the original MIDI spec. Now they're actually supposed to *work*! It's about time—although I still wonder what "expression" is supposed to sound like. (Incidentally, GM also specifies "registered parameter" controllers for setting pitch-bend ranges and tuning of receiving synths.)

Some manufacturers and musicians have complained that General MIDI is limiting, and that they won't compromise their designs or music by bowing to a consumer-oriented standard. Likewise, including GM compatibility may divert resources that would be better spent on less standardized, more forward-looking capabilities. Still, GM itself doesn't inherently restrict manufacturers from providing whatever sounds they see fit in addition to the GM palette. General MIDI isn't without flaws—such as lack of support for multi-patch "performances," complete with effects settings and keyboard split points—but the concept already is proving useful to those making conventional music, and seems unlikely to pose significant dangers to musicians who live a little closer to the edge.

DIGITAL RECORDING FOR THE MASSES

THE ANALOG CASSETTE is dead. At least, that's what the consumer-electronics industry would have you believe. Perhaps they're right: In terms of hi-fi audio, cassette tapes have always been compromised by slow speed and narrow width. On the other hand, as recordable formats go, cassettes are user-friendly and convenient, and they're enormously popular. Still, ever since CDs virtually replaced LPs, we've been living in the digital age. Shouldn't we be able to enjoy the benefits of digital recording in a package that's just as convenient as the old-fashioned cassette?

That's the reasoning behind two new consumer-grade recording formats, Sony's MiniDisc (MD) and Philips' Digital Compact Cassette (DCC). (A few years back, it was also the reasoning behind DAT, which never caught on with the general public.) MiniDisc is like a 2.5-inch recordable CD. What's more, at any given moment, an MD player holds the next 10 seconds of music in a special buffer. If the machine is jostled and the head loses its place, the buffer can supply the music until the machine rights itself. This makes MD ideal for listening in a car or while jogging. On the other hand, DCC is a digital version of the cassette. Unlike MD, which allows you to locate songs instantly, DCC requires rewinding or fast-forwarding. DCC's strength is that, although it records digitally, it's also capable of playing analog cassettes.

The technology behind MD and DCC is entirely different from that of CD or even DAT. MD crams 74 minutes of music into a space much smaller than a CD. Meanwhile, DCC's tape speed is no faster than that of analog cassettes. As a result, both formats need to "thin out" the data that make up the music without sacrificing too much fidelity.

As it happens, the human ear doesn't hear sounds that fall below a certain level. Also, it hears some frequency ranges more accurately than others, and if two sounds occur at nearly the same frequency, you tend to hear only the louder one. By discarding components of the sound that you aren't likely to hear and recording less important ones less accurately, MD and DCC fit more music into less space—in fact, over 75 percent less space. This isn't "perfect digital sound." It's a compromise designed to sound as good as possible under the circumstances.

I don't have my nose buried in specs, and most of my knowledge of recording comes from hands-on experience. So when it comes to MD or DCC, the real question is: What does it sound like? To find out, I entered Ocean Way Studios with a Philips DCC900 table-top model ($795) and a Sony MZ-1 portable MiniDisc recorder ($750).

For comparing pre-recorded music, I used Paul McCartney's *Off the Ground*, the only title I could find in both formats (annoying shades of the early days of CD). I also recorded a number of selections myself. The two formats sounded surprisingly good, and very, very similar. As for the difference between the new formats and analog cassettes, it's night and day. Cassettes sound thin and lifeless by comparison.

Playing dubs (from CD) of an R.E.M. record that I worked on, DCC delivered a good sound with a warm, full low end. MD was brighter, with a wider stereo field and great clarity—but sometimes it was a bit too much and sounded harsh, much like early CDs. DCC sounded truer to the original. Another plus is that my analog cassettes sounded great on the DCC machine—better than on my Denon deck!

Both units are limited when it comes to punching into record on the fly, but MD has a slight edge here. When you start rolling from record/pause, MD begins recording instantly, while DCC takes a moment to kick in—but this isn't likely to create a problem except in situations requiring very tight segues. Also, recording a MiniDisc is like writing to a floppy disk in that it looks for empty space rather than writing over previously recorded material. DCC is linear, so if you record over Song A with a longer piece of music, you'll record over Song B.

In either format, you can encode a song's name, take number, date and other text information with the music. I was enthralled with this capability. Text shows up on an LCD screen as the music plays, and allows you to search for a piece of music by entering part of the title or date, instead of having to remember the index number. It's fantastic to be able to search for a song by name rather than number.

Both MD and DCC deliver sound that's significantly better than cassettes. MD is a sexy package, but to my ear it doesn't sound as true. On the other hand, DCC sounds great, and allows me to listen to my cassettes without transferring them to another format. Between the two, DCC is my preference, and a viable option for musicians looking for an inexpensive digital mastering format.

SCOTT LITT

Scott Litt produced the last four R.E.M. releases, as well as albums by the Replacements, Patti Smith, Indigo Girls, That Petrol Emotion and the Juliana Hatfield Three. He also contributed mixes to the new Nirvana release. Scott is currently building a studio based on vintage equipment at Ocean Way Recording Studios in Los Angeles.

• **Sony**, One Sony Dr., Park Ridge, NJ 07656; (800) 222-SONY. • **Philips**, 2001 Gateway Pl., Suite 650 W., San Jose, CA 95110; (408) 453-7373.

LEXICON ALEX EFFECTS PROCESSOR

YEARS AGO, if someone had told me that one day I'd be able to buy a Lexicon processor for under $400, I would've told 'em they were nuts. Yet here I am, face-to-face with the 16-bit Alex ($399). In dropping the price point so drastically, are the undisputed leaders in digital reverb slumming? Unequivocally not: This unit packs Lexicon's legendary studio-quality effects into a stage-savvy box that'll knock your socks off!

Based on the algorithms in the LXP series, Alex provides reverb (hall, room, plate, chamber, gated and inverse programs), six-voice stereo chorus and chorused delay, stereo flange, mono echo and four-tap stereo ping-pong delay in 32 patches. Only 16 are user-programmable, which may be the unit's greatest weakness.

One of Alex's greatest strengths is that each patch offers only three programmable parameters, making for supremely simple operation. Mostly, the editable parameters are just the ones you'd want, and their ranges and increments are nicely tailored. All patches feature programmable effect level, handy for switching among presets designed for comping and soloing. Reverb algorithms provide adjustable pre-delay and decay time. Multi-tap delays offer programmable delay time and regeneration amount. I do wish that, in chorus programs, the parameters were modulation depth and rate rather than regeneration and effect level. Another nit: You can't exit from the save routine once you've initiated it, which is fairly easy to do by accident.

The unit doesn't respond to MIDI—a possible shortcoming in the studio—but it does offer exceptional, albeit limited, flexibility for changing patches onstage. You can use a footswitch to advance (but not to reverse) through the 16 RAM locations (but not the ROM), and you can pre-program the unit to skip patches (although you can't reorder them). You can also loop through a few contiguous patches and skip the rest. As for audio interfacing, Alex's no-fuss quarter-inch phone jacks send and receive unbalanced signals at both instrument and line levels.

All in all, Alex is an impressive bit of design, matching a well-thought-out feature set with great sound and a rock-bottom price. Quibbles aside, this box slays all competing effects devices in its price range. Alex is awesome. MICHAEL COOPER

• **Lexicon,** 100 Beaver St., Waltham, MA 02154-8425; (617) 736-0300.

ROLAND ELECTRONIC DRUM SYSTEM

THE COURTSHIP of high tech and the elemental art of drumming has left many drummers in doubt that a marriage will ever take place. From the first Simmons kits during the '70s to present-day MIDI rigs, few drummers have found electronic pads as expressive as acoustic drums. Although we appreciate the sounds afforded by today's sampling technology, there's been precious little progress when it comes to controlling them.

Simply put, Roland's new drum system is a big step forward. The TD-7 sound module ($795), PD-7 pads ($125 each) and FD-7 hi-hat pedal ($210) can be bought separately, or bundled with stands, cables and such into the TDB-7K and TDE-7K kits ($1749 and $2640).

The TD-7 includes 256 killer samples and a host of useful features: 32 "kits"; two effects processors; 12 trigger inputs that accept MIDI, CV and microphone signals; and four quarter-inch outputs (a stereo pair plus two individual outs). But on the drum riser, it's the control interfaces that are going to create the most excitement. The PD-7 provides either of two sounds, depending on how hard you hit it, plus three unique features: First, each pad has a separate rim sensor that allows you to play a rim shot exactly as you would on an acoustic drum. Second, if either the rim or the pad is assigned to a long sound such as a cymbal, you can grab it after striking and choke the sound, just like a real cymbal. Third, the TD-7 senses strikes that hit both head and rim, producing a different sound (assignable, of course). Like the pad, the hi-hat pedal is something of a breakthrough. It allows continuous, real-time control of the hat's decay, making for a much more natural hi-hat ride than I've encountered elsewhere.

In the TD-7, studio folks will find a compact percussion module with a variety of distinctive sounds and excellent MIDI-velocity response. They may wish for more outputs or the ability to import samples, but, sound for sound, it's worthy competition for the popular E-mu Procussion and Alesis D4. Meanwhile, drummers will find that Roland's system finally weds the advantages of high tech with a truly responsive instrument. It may well be the watershed we've been waiting for. SCOTT MARSHALL

• **Roland,** 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90040; (213) 685-5141.

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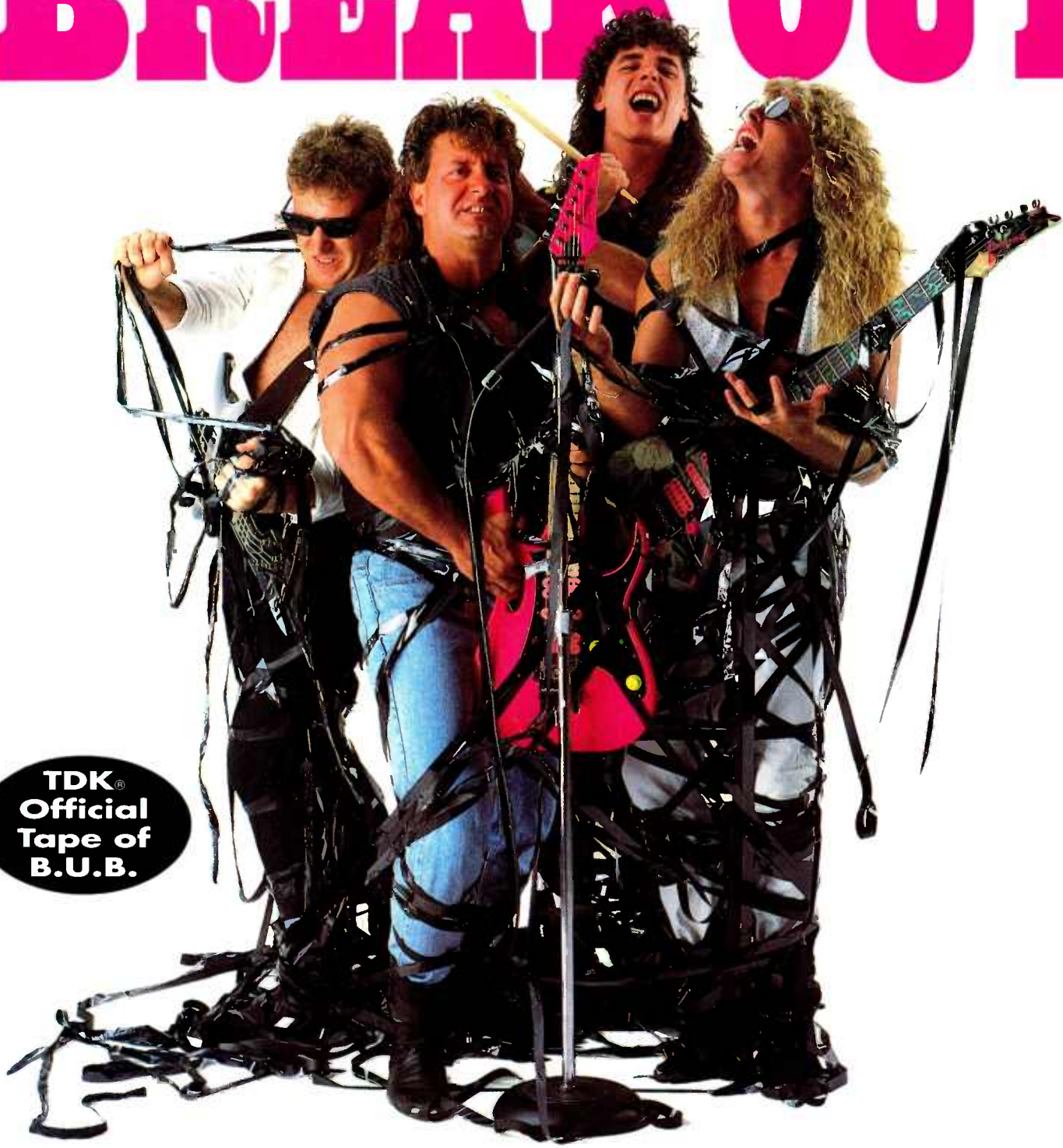

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LEAVE THE FAMILY

JOHN HIATT
PERFECTLY GOOD
GUITAR
(A&M)
JOHN MELLENCAMP
HUMAN WHEELS
(MERCURY)

It's hard to know what was in the corn those years, but John Hiatt and John Mellencamp are both products of the Indiana of the early 1950s. While their writing styles and personal dispositions may be about a continent apart, these sons of the Midwest have had comparable career trajectories belying their boomer backgrounds. Both started weak out of the gate in their 20s as semi-bad-boy rockers before finding more rewarding second winds in their mature 30s extolling separate but equal sets of traditional virtues. For Hiatt, it was True Love; for Mellencamp, The Land. Now both face the question of where you go after you've grown up. Answer: a little middle-aged crazy, without making too ostentatious a noise about it.

Hiatt's *Perfectly Good Guitar* eschews the contented, balladic approach of recent records in favor of (yes) a guitar-driven, band-fueled album that's mostly about turning out to be the restless kind after all. The pace is set straight away with "Something Wild," a tune Hiatt previously gave wild guy Iggy Pop but which really makes a much more appropriate overture for his own repressed soulman persona. "Now I'm hungry for the love/That doesn't know what it's dreamin' of," he sings, evoking that unnameable starvation like he hasn't since before the recovery trilogy that began with *Bring the Family* in '86.

In his comforting, been-there-done-that bedside manner, Hiatt still empathizes with wounded

ILLUSTRATION BY HANOCH PIVEN

lovers in songs like "Permanent Hurt," "Angel" and "Old Habits" like he was the Sympathizer General. But there's a return to first-person heartbreak too, with plenty of love lost in the aching icescape of "Blue Telescope." No treacle treads upon this emotionally fraught territory, thanks to the fully cranked, bare-bones production of Matt Wallace (Faith No More, Replacements) that makes this Hiatt's most fun album in ages, and to the inherent wit that underlies his songwriting even in its most earnest and truthful turns. Stay hungry, John.

It seems that Mellencamp, too, is having a tough time putting a name on just what it is that ails him, but he doesn't have Hiatt's sense of humor or polished craftsman's way with words to filter or mask his own discontent. So as he nakedly spins his *Human Wheels*, it sometimes sounds like the former Cougar hasn't quite gotten completely in touch with himself, as they say in the trade. Still, if the album seems severely scattershot and lacks personal focus, it's often quite brave, as much for what it isn't as for what it is.

What it isn't is Mellencamp's broad, '80s-style message music. (Although he includes semi-topical allusions to conformity, the poor, the earth's divinity and false family values to keep in practice.) Listen to "What If I Came Knocking," probably the most tentative-sounding rock come-on ever directed to a girl, and ask yourself if the singer's warning that he may not be able to commit farther down the line is unusually forthright self-knowledge, a failure of courage, or both. What *Human Wheels* also isn't is musically melodramatic, which is the more remarkable shift. Always heretofore a forceful singer, Mellencamp turns in a remarkably muted vocal performance here, as if there were a baby in the next room he dared not awaken. The gentle deliberateness of his voice creates a good tension that draws you in. Same for the subdued but sufficiently funky arrangements, co-produced by Malcolm Burn, David Leonard and band member Michael Wanchic.

Meanwhile, what is it in the zeitgeist that prompts both Hiatt and Mellencamp to write narrative songs on their new albums about men who brutally slaughter their wives and/or families (Hiatt's funny/scary "Wreck of the Barbie Ferrari," Mellencamp's courtroom commentary "Case 795")? Just a mutual need to editorialize on how far this modern frustration they feel glimmers of can go, no doubt. Still, it wouldn't hurt to have an extra ambulance parked outside Farm Aid this year.

—Chris Willman

NIRVANA

In Utero

(GEFFEN)

WELL, DROP A TEEN IN BLEACH—what was all that godawful fuss about? That talk of Nirvana using their *Nevermind* follow-up to give us all the big F.U. Of Steve Albi-

ni, Rasputin-like, turning our depressed heroes into noise-puking haters of everything. That Geffen accountants were developing ulcers over unsettling, unlistenable, unmarketable tracks.

Now the big album's here, and if fans of *Nevermind* can't handle it, it will be their loss. While Nirvana's major-label debut was an addictive Whitman's sampler of post-punk pop, *In Utero* is a living, breathing, crapping beast of a record that eats expectations for breakfast. The opening track, "Serve the Servants," kicks in with an awkward, unpleasant sprawl of guitar. But then the tune picks itself up; instead of offering some Big Black-ened raspberry of contempt, it chugs into an honest-to-goodness monster rock riff, the kind of noisy, hard-punching stomp that would make Crazy Horse pull up and salute.

Nirvana powers its way through a dozen more unglossed tracks full of frayed nerves, primal yowls and those implausibly sweet Cobain hooks. The first words out of Kurt's mouth ("Teenage angst has paid off well/Now I'm bored and old") buy him a fresh start with a chuckle, and on the inverted "Teen Spirit" riff of "Rape Me," and the creepy "Frances Farmer," he sings like he's fighting collapsed lungs one moment and gargling with battery acid the next. The trademark harmonies on "Pennyroyal Tea" are as catchy and disturbing as a blast of Turtles in the middle of a traffic accident. Those hoping to have Cobain dissected by now will be disappointed; even with a lyric sheet, his songs are as inscrutable as they are powerful. Nonetheless, he's probably the only singer who can croon "I wish I could eat your cancer" sounding like the tenderest of lovers.

Of course, it's a three-man show. On "Heart-Shaped Box," Chris Novoselic's muscular bass waggles around like a python digesting a wild pig. And Dave Grohl's drums are still an explosive, slap-happy treat to behold—he pushes the song, never just the beat. Cobain's guitar work is deceptively raw and accomplished, forsaking the "right" notes for the interesting ones. The A&R folk must have been chilled by "Radio Friendly Unit Shifter," with its baby elephant–through-the–sausage-grinder guitar intro. But despite that unpolished approach, this is a finely nuanced album, brimming with dynamics and depth.

In Utero needn't be heard as a kiss-off or a challenge. It's a generous gift from a band in its prime. Albini hasn't turned Nirvana into some kind of hideous anti-Nirvana or raging über-Nirvana, he's just managed to capture them at their honest, vital, plug-ugly best. Geffen may still be sweating it out over fickle teen dollars. But the scariest thing about *In Utero* is that it sets up about an inch in front of your face and hollers that, despite the packaging and hyping, pimping and primping that we've all gotten used to, rock 'n' roll, or some bastardly offspring thereof, can still matter. —**Chuck Crisafulli**

CHARLIE PARKER

The Complete Dial Sessions
(STASH)
The Charlie Parker Story
The Genius of Charlie Parker
The Immortal Charlie Parker
Charlie Parker Memorial Vol. 2
The Bird Returns
An Evening at Home with the Bird
(SAVOY)

THE MARKET FOR BEBOP ALTO SAXOphone colossus Charlie Parker is booming at the moment. Stash Records has issued a complete collection of Bird's seminal 1946–47 works for Dial Records, while Denon Records, which owns the Savoy catalog, is reissuing Parker's original Savoy albums with high-kitsch covers intact. It's hard to imagine a more essential purchase than the four-CD Dial set; the Savoys are a mixed blessing.

The Dial sessions were cut during a period of creative inspiration and personal tumult in Parker's life and sometimes suggest autobiography. Leading off with an inspired March '46 session that produced such durable bop classics as "Moose the Mooche," "Yardbird Suite," "Ornithology" and "A Night in Tunisia," the set careens into the abyss with the horrific "Lover Man" session (cut just four months later), which found Bird unraveling in front of a studio mike.

Nothing else quite matches the '46 material in sustained brilliance or drama, but there are other great performances here—the "Relaxin' at Camarillo" session, with a revitalized Parker blowing warmly; the dazzling balladry of "Bird of Paradise" and "Embraceable You"; the swing of "Klact-oveeseds-tene" and "Scrapple from the Apple." Almost all the tracks on *The Complete Dial Sessions* are complete takes, offering a full-scale depiction of Parker's consistent inventiveness and the depth of his rhythmic and harmonic comprehension.

The Savoys, most recently heard on a two-CD compilation of masters and a comprehensive three-CD box issued before Denon purchased the catalog, have been restored to discographical confusion. *The Charlie Parker Story*, which offers the complete November 26, 1945 session that produced "Koko," "Now's the Time" and "Billie's Bounce" (masterworks all), is the album to buy. The other records should be approached with caution. *Genius* offers all of Parker and Dizzy Gillespie's '45 recordings with hipster vocalist Slim Gaillard, but the "Koko" heard here is annoyingly mismastered. *Immortal* and *Memorial* are mixed bags of multiple takes; *Returns* and *At Home* are poorly documented live [*cont'd on page 94*]

NEW RELEASES

ROCK

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

JANE SIBERRY
When I Was a Boy
(REPRISE)

WHEN SHE WANTS to, Siberry can be delightfully tuneful, and the most pop-savvy tracks here—like "Sail Across the Water," with its heartbeat bass and ear-catching chorus—are as inventive as any recent Peter Gabriel tune. But because Siberry is more interested in emotional engagement than entertainment, she applies that melodic acumen to a saga of love and death that, at its most harrowing, surpasses even the intensity of Lou Reed's *Magic and Loss*. Not an easy listen, but surely a rewarding one.

IGGY POP
American Caesar
(VIRGIN)

SURE, THERE ARE flashes of genius—the poetic longing of "Fucking Alone," or his nervy, name-dropping rewrite of "Louie Louie"—but there are also long stretches of self-indulgence like the what's-on-my-mind rant of "Wild America" or the half-baked poesy of "Social Life." Though there's more brilliance than banality overall, this is hardly the masterpiece it pretends to be.

SARA DEBELL
Grunge Lite
(C/Z)

SINCE SEATTLE'S BEST-KNOWN musical exports are Muzak and grunge, it was inevitable that some demented soul would combine the two. But this is more than just a genre-jumping in-joke, for between her whitebread resetting of "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and the perky Latin-lite rendition granted "Evenflow," DeBell has spun a sly, smart homage to Muzak's calculatedly reductive arrangements.

HUNTERS & COLLECTORS
Cut
(WHITE LABEL IMPORT)

FIGURES, NOW THAT the Hunters no longer have a U.S. deal, here comes their best album in ages. Not only does the groove handily bridge the gap between hip-hop currency and the band's traditional tribal intensity, but the songs accommodate that rhythmic energy without relinquishing their melodic ingenuity.

DARYL HALL, SOUL ALONE (EPIC)

WHAT KEEPS HALL from coming across as a soul pretender is that there's nothing ersatz about his vocal style—his mastery of R&B mannerisms is unaffected and unassailable. How else could he rewrite Marvin Gaye's "When Did You Stop Loving Me" without seeming presumptuous? Or manage such an affectionate evocation of the Gamble & Huff groove on "I'm in a Philly Mood"? But Hall remains in touch with his pop instincts, too, and Soul Alone *leaves plenty of room for effervescent melodies along the lines of "Borderline" and "Wildfire."*

MICHAEL MCDONALD
Blink of an Eye
(REPRISE)

ALTHOUGH IT'S HARD to find fault with the tasteful musicality of McDonald's funk-inflected pop, it's equally difficult to be much moved by it. Entertained, sure—but engaged? Though McDonald's manly moans occasionally offer a reasonable simulacrum of soul singing, there's no grit in his delivery and no edge to this album's overpolished arrangements.

SYLVIAN/FRIPP
The First Day
(VIRGIN)

PUT TWO OF prog-rock's most adventurous iconoclasts together, and what ought to result is brilliant, boundary-breaking music. But all David Sylvian and Robert Fripp generate from this promisingly eclectic congress is empty posturing and well-crafted atmospherics. Particularly disappointing is "Darshan," a 17-minute ramble that manages to include nearly every cliché in the Frippian repertoire.

TAG TEAM
Whoomp! (There It Is)
(LIFE/BELLMARK)

ANYONE WHO DOESN'T believe that beats count for more than words probably hasn't spent time with "Whoomp! (There It Is)," an irresistibly empty-headed tribute to rump-shakin'. And anybody who doubts that Tag Team's multi-platinum success with that tune was anything but a fluke deserves to get stuck with the dozen B-sides that flesh this album out.

PAUL SHAFFER & THE PARTY BOYS OF ROCK 'N' ROLL
The World's Most Dangerous Party
(SBK)

SHUT UP AND PLAY.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GAVIN EVANS

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VARIOUS ARTISTS
Seattle... The Dark Side
(DEF AMERICAN)

TAKE THE TITLE as a sly dig at Seattle's grunge-only image, and the contents as Sir Mix-a-Lot's attempt to prove that there really is a Northwestern rap scene. None of the other acts quite match his blend of pop sense and tough-guy swagger—Jay-Skee comes closest with "Menace Crook." But E Dawg and Kid Sensation talk it like they walk it, while Jazz Lee Alston's anti-abuse "Love...Never That" is both scary and believable.

JAZZ

BY CHIP STERN

MILES DAVIS/QUINCY JONES
Miles & Quincy Live at Montreux
(WARNER BROS.)

SOME OF YOU may have seen these performances of the Gil Evans charts on PBS, but the impact of Miles' last recorded hurrah is even more overwhelming on disc. Because he clearly realized he didn't have much time left, the sense of purpose and courage he brings to these difficult charts is overwhelming. As the concert progresses you can hear Miles' confidence grow, as that magnificent tone blossoms and cuts with subtle, painterly authority; surely not with the strength and vigor of youth remembered, but like Hemingway's old man and the sea—just to accept the challenge is enough. But Miles does much more than that. Picking his spots through the dense, lush charts, Miles navigates these harmonic steeplechases with an authority which transcends technique alone—there is more pleasure in hearing Miles miss one note than in hearing most players hit a hundred. Long may he wave.

JOHN COLTRANE
A Coltrane Anthology
(RHINO/ATLANTIC)

THE FOLKS AT Rhino Records are the undisputed heavyweight champions of the hip compilation, lovingly packaged, researched and remastered. Which is why it pains me to report that *The John Coltrane Anthology* is a bloody wank. Oh, sure, there are neat details, like the rarities which illustrate Coltrane's early progression from an itinerant Parkerphile, his Dexter Gordon period, his flowering with Miles and Monk. But the magnificent Atlantic selections are well-documented on a number of discs; a 25-minute live "My Favorite Things" has neither the fidelity nor the impact to warrant inclusion; and the complete absence of post-bop Coltrane after 1961 is a disservice to the neophyte listeners this set is presumably aimed at, and an insult to Coltrane the artist, though well in keeping with the suffocating neo-conservatism which is currently burying the exploratory impulse in jazz. From 1961 to 1967, Coltrane pushed the envelope of group improvisation to its limits, and expanded his instrumental resources to an incredible degree. So how does Joel Dorn document that heroic quest? With nary a single sound from Trane's Impulse! recordings, and a live excerpt of "Ogunde" from Trane's last concert at Olatunji's African Center in Harlem, which fades out after only 1:30! Why? Because annotator Ira Gitler didn't like Pharoah Sanders, Alice Coltrane and Rashied Ali? Hell, you'd think Amiri Baraka would be outraged at having *his* notes and poem in a collection which denigrates Coltrane's whole "freedom period" by omission. Everyone involved with this project should be ashamed of themselves.

NICKY SKOPELITIS
Ekstasis
(AXIOM)

ALI FARKA TOURE
The Source
(HANNIBAL)

GUITARIST NICKY SKOPELITIS manages to bring a third-world sensibility to play inside a rock/funk groove without patronizing any of the musicians or sounds he loves so dearly. What makes this record work is the leader's canny string colors and screaming distortion guitar, the rhythm section's modernist funk and Skopelitis' true dedication to an ensemble sound, putting his ego on hold and allowing the likes of Simon Shaheen, Bachir Attar, Foday Musa Suso and organist Amina Claudine Myers to shine. Much of guitarist Ali Farka Toure's charm rests in how he reconnects the delta blues with some of its African antecedents. The presence of Taj Mahal on a couple of cuts reinforces that image, although the charm of this album is that it's probably the most African of Toure's recordings. The lightly chorused shimmer of his chords and the simple grace of his singsong melodies and vocals make this as peaceful and beautiful a guitar record as you're likely to hear.

MICHEL CAMILO
Rendezvous
(COLUMBIA)

HORACE SILVER
It's Got to Be Funky
(COLUMBIA)

DESPITE CAMILO'S PIANISTIC virtuosity, there's always been a glib hotcha about his music (*Hey gang, piña coladas for everyone—I'm buying*) that made me feel like smoking a carton of Newports and listening to Machito for a month. But while *Rendezvous* is surely upbeat, it is thankfully not "happy jazz." The vigor and muscularity of Camilo's slamming, salsa-inflected piano stylings and the rollicking proto-jazzfunk of Anthony Jackson's contrabass guitar and Dave Weckl's drumming are rhythmically irresistible and full of fireworks. Silver's return to the limelight is in the pleasingly corny manner of his '70s holistic jazz-funk, with soulful vocalist Andy Bey again doing honors. The song sections of the recital are a triumph of form over content. But the music is full of stunning little harmonic twists and turns, and Silver the composer is well-served by some splendid examples of the jazz waltz ("The Lunceford Legacy" and "When You're in Love"), a fresh look at a classic ("Song for My Father") and the bluesy expressionism and lovely voice leading of "Put Me in the Basement" and "Basically Blue." Silver's brass writing is fine, and the soloists play with something like old-time religion.

JAMES BROWN
Soul Pride: The Instrumentals—1960–1969
(POLYDOR)

PEE WEE ELLIS
Blues Mission
(GRAMAVISION)

THE INSTRUMENTAL SIDE of the James Brown repertoire evolves from shuffles, through boogaloo and soul jazz, to the kind of hyperdrive horn-inflected funk which became his trademark. Some of the music here is surprisingly middle-of-the-road jukebox fare, but most of the cuts feature riveting grooves and breaks by mainstays like Maceo Parker, Jimmy Nolen, Bernard Odum and Clyde Stubblefield. Pee Wee Ellis, Brown's chief arranger (and musical director for Van Morrison), has put his own stamp on soul music, and his engaging debut as a leader, *Blues Mission*, encapsulates it all with a modern vision of jazz a little north of funk and well south of fusion. His sax solos are laid back, fingersnappin' and robust in the tradition of Gene Ammons and Lockjaw Davis. But it's his themes and vamps, which lend color and locale to every solo turn, that make *Blues Mission* more than just soul jazz nostalgia. Ditto drummer Clyde "Funky Drummer" Stubblefield, whose crisp, authoritative crackle and pop have finally made it to the '90s—live and unsampled.

BOOKS

INCREDIBLY STRANGE MUSIC, VOLUME I
V. Vale/Andrea Juno, eds.
(RE/SEARCH)

THE LATEST TOME from cultural pathfinders Vale and Juno proves that one person's "incredibly strange music" is another person's Muzak. Musicians—among them the Cramps, Martin Denny and Eartha Kitt—and collectors discuss the shadow world of easy-listening regional rock, exotica, celebrity cash-ins and other recorded esoterica, mainly from the '50s and '60s. If the manic gushing

doesn't convince, the album-cover reproductions should. You'll never hear elevator music the same way again. (20 Romolo #B, San Francisco, CA 94133)—*Scott Isler*

RHYTHM AND THE BLUES
Jerry Wexler and David Ritz
(ALFRED A. KNOPF)

ATLANTIC RECORDS CO-OWNER/PRODUCER Wexler not only witnessed profound changes in '50s and '60s popular music—he helped make them. Specializing in soulful sounds, Wexler was there at ground zero for Ray Charles, Solomon Burke, Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding and—indelibly—Aretha Franklin. Later he had to content himself with the likes of Dire Straits and Bob Dylan. *Rhythm and the Blues* is skillfully edited; other voices besides Wexler's amplify points throughout his smooth narrative. For anyone who cares about this country's pop heritage, it's an engrossing page-turner.—*Scott Isler*

THE BEATLES COMPLETE SCORES
Transcribed by Tetsuya Fujita, Yuji Hagino, Hajime Kubo and Goro Sato
(HAL LEONARD PUBLISHING)

EVEN A QUICK perusal yields misquoted lyrics, misinterpreted sounds, oversimplifications, outright omissions and failures to come to terms with the band's unorthodox recording techniques (as in "Strawberry Fields Forever"). Still, there's sheer delight in leafing through note-for-note transcriptions of every song recorded by the Fabs, including such unlikely candidates as "Dig It"—and is anyone likely to take on the task again? College professors dealing with the Beatles in conventional terms will deem this volume invaluable, as will any guitarist who finds tab easier to deal with than the recordings themselves. A useful, if imperfect, companion to the growing body of moptop scholarship.

—*Ted Greenwald*

REISSUES

DUANE EDDY
Twang Thang/The Duane Eddy Anthology
(RHINO)

THAT TWANGY GUITAR, those cotton-candy melodies, the cinematic grandeur... It ought to be a recipe for mind-numbing slush, but Duane Eddy's elegant instrumentals contain a fascinating kernel of weirdness, often found in seemingly innocuous pop trash. More recent tracks, guest-starring Ry Cooder, Paul McCartney, George Harrison et al., are agreeable enough; the cream of this two-disc history, however, is the early (pre-Beatles) stuff, where Eddy transcends blandness with his stylish, ultra-cool presence. Titles alone conjure an exotic parallel universe: Like, who could resist "Rebel Rouser," "Yep!" or "Forty Miles of Bad Road"? Totally awesome.—*Jon Young*

HANK WILLIAMS
Health & Happiness Shows
(MERCURY)

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF THESE eight radio shows from 1949 follow a familiar pattern, with "Happy Rovin' Cowboy" and "Sally Goodin" bookending each program of four songs, including one spiritual number. Though no substitute for his later studio recordings, these live tapes often find Hank's Drifting Cowboys playing standards-to-be in a looser, more lively style, while Williams' singing is typically heartfelt, particularly on religious selections like "Thy Burdens Are Greater Than Mine." The occasional between-song patter and some scratchy but unobtrusive surface noise help set the place and atmosphere for this utterly timeless music. For fans of Hank—and who isn't?—it's irresistible.—*Mark Rowland*

THE GERMS
MIA
(SLASH)

THE GERMS' LEAD singer Darby Crash OD'd on china white in December 1980, within days of John Lennon's assassination; in a way, each defined an era. The Germs were as well-known for creating havoc in L.A.'s punk clubs as they were for their music; Crash, a self-styled "puzzled panther" who forged his wasted, post-suburban persona out of Iggy Pop and Sid Vicious, posthumously became an icon of high nihilism among his worshipful fans. But the best of the music collected on this compilation—the blaring singles "Forming" and "Lexicon Devil," the 1979 Joan Jett–produced album *GI*—backs up the stagey threat in Crash's smacked-up, flamed-out image. Word-drunk, frantic and cacophonous, the Germs were the apex of punk madness in Southern California, in the days before Black Flag took chaos to an even more fulsome level.—*Chris Morris*

CHARLES MINGUS
The Complete 1959 CBS Charles Mingus Sessions
(MOSAIC)

THE MUSIC CHARLES MINGUS made for Columbia in 1959 was originally released on two LPs, *Mingus Ah Um* and *Mingus Dynasty*. Then it was rereleased as a twofer, *Better Git It in Your Soul*. Finally, around the time of Mingus' death in 1979, another two-record set was released, *Nostalgia in Times Square*, which not only included unreleased tracks but longer versions of those that had come out. (Producer Teo Macero, who apparently believes that jazz, like film, is made in the editing room, had cut out entire solos, making room for more and tighter tracks.) So this set makes the first time the complete sessions have been issued in unedited form. (The set is available only on LP.) This is some of Mingus' most important work, the sound and packaging are up to Mosaic's exacting standards, and Mingus, while sometimes sloppy and overwrought as a composer, was the finest bassist jazz has ever produced. (35 Melrose Place, Stamford, CT 06902)—*Joe Goldberg*

THE ISLEY BROTHERS
Twist & Shout!
(SUNDAZED)

PRODUCED IN 1962 by Bert Berns, this is the album that introduced an epochal rock anthem. The CD version also includes one unreleased track and two other classic singles, "Twistin' with Linda" and "Nobody but Me." The raucous gospel-tinged attack of the Isleys is as exciting as ever, matched by a roaring rhythm section and aggressive sax (all players uncredited). Lead brother Ronald shrieks and hollers with abandon through most of the material, yet he slows down just enough to lusciously caress "Time After Time." Like so many pre-Beatles LPs, *Twist & Shout!* is filled out with shameless rewrites of the big hit, but this is one hit where you just don't mind. (Box 85, Coxsackie, NY 12051)

—*Mac Randall*

EDDIE HINTON
Letters from Mississippi
(MFSL)

A MUSCLE SHOALS legend among fans of that fine genus of white Southern soul, Hinton is a songwriter of casually brilliant craft, a guitarist of primal pulsation and a rough-grained singer of such power and sincerity as to bear comparison, both tonally and spiritually, with Otis Redding. Every five years or so he surfaces from his backroads travels with a gem of an album, but this 1978 session, which was virtually impossible to find even when it was new, is my candidate for his masterpiece. Eleven songs with tight, fiery hooks to please a die-hard Creedence fan, cabled to that incredible voice, as arrangements alternate between the classic Muscle Shoals horn sound and a tougher, beer shack trio anchored by Hinton's reverbing rhythms. With Mobile Fidelity's typical sonic enhancements, the sound is clearer than ever and still raw as a road kill. Play this record and amaze your friends.—*Mark Rowland*

MUDDY WATERS
The Complete Plantation Recordings
(MCA)

THESE ARE FIELD RECORDINGS of Muddy Waters pre-Chicago, when he was still picking cotton in the Delta. Besides the novelty of hearing Muddy search for his voice (here he sounds like Son House, there like Robert Johnson), and the even greater novelty of hearing Muddy sound really young, is hearing him refer to himself as "Stovall's famous guitar-picker" and his loyal (and oft-

repeated) praise of Son House. The interview segments are strange stuff, but the slide guitar could make angels cry. I highly recommended.—*Thomas Anderson*

DINAH WASHINGTON
First Issue: The Dinah Washington Story (The Original Recordings)
(MERCURY)

VERSATILITY AND INTEGRITY were the touchstones of Washington's vocal art, and this two-CD, 46-track anthology, issued to coincide with a commemorative postage stamp, neatly encapsulates her achievements. Best known for such pop-oriented work as the silky ballad "What A Diff'rence a Day Makes" and the Brook Benton duet "Baby (You've Got What It Takes)," Washington was sassily at home with straight jazz sessions (where she attracted top sidemen), walloping R&B and funky big-band blues. Every style is represented here, and her force-of-nature approach is seldom less than magical.—*Chris Morris*

KATE & ANNA MCGARRIGLE
Kate & Anna McGarrigle
Dancer with Bruised Knees
(HANNIBAL)

HALFWAY BETWEEN THE Brontë sisters and a Quebecois Sara and Maybelle Carter, the McGarrigles released a series of luminously beautiful albums in the '70s and '80s to a largely indifferent world. Now on CD for the first time, their self-titled debut (with classics like "Heart Like a Wheel" and "Talk to Me of Mendocino") and *Dancer* (with the startlingly beautiful "Kitty Come Home" plus a cast ranging from Jay Ungar to John Cale) retain their wit and charm, and display a songcraft sturdy enough to outlive us all. Buy with pride.—*Thomas Anderson*

CELINA GONZALEZ
¡Que Viva Changó!
(QBADISC)

HER VOICE AN irresistible force of nature, Celina Gonzalez is a Cuban institution. She and her late husband Reutilio Dominguez turned the country on its collective ear with their late-'40s hit "Santa Barbará (¡Que Viva Changó!)." Though she's pushing 70, Gonzalez is still kickin' it at home, as this compilation culled from four '70s and '80s albums attests. The combination of marimbas, strings and brass alongside the more traditional *tres* guitar and fermenting percussion makes for a mariachi-in-Havana sound on "Aguacero Aguacerito." Whether inundated by her torrents of rolled r's or nailed by the innovative arrangements, it's obvious why aficionados often mention Gonzalez in the same breath with Celia Cruz. (Box 1256, Old Chelsea Station, NYC 10011)—*Tom Cheyney*

RECORDINGS

[*cont'd from page 89*] shots. The LP-length running times are often paltry.

Ornithologists may want to check out two non-Parker Savoy collections: Gillespie's *Groovin' High*, containing sensational '45 quintet and septet work by the alto-trumpet duo, and Miles Davis' *First Miles*, which includes a Miles-led '47 session featuring Bird on tenor.

—**Chris Morris**

JIMMY HASLIP
ARC
(GRP)

JOHN PATITUCCI
Another World
(GRP)

NEW RELEASES BY TWO WEST COAST electric bassists show that it's still possible to find creative meaning in the realm of fusion. John Patitucci is a leader in midstream, having built up a decent, stylistically varied discography highlighted by last year's *Heart of the Bass*. Jimmy Haslip, long a co-conspirator in the Yellowjackets, is just breaking out on his own.

At the risk of generalizing, one sings, the other blows. Haslip, taking off from the tender side of Jaco Pastorius' influential palette, massages gliss-y notes from his fretless bass, and embodies restraint and taste. Patitucci, while not lacking for lyricism, tends towards crisp virtuosic volleys of notes, yearning towards the guitar range in the upper end of his six-string instrument.

Another World finds Patitucci venturing into African-esque turf, settling into grooves that land in an agreeable middle ground between pop-jazz and the non-Western world. On "The Griot" and "Showtime," two of the album's better tracks, South African bassist Armand Sabal-Locco jumps into the thick rhythmic fray. Over the latter tune's "St. Thomas"–like contours, Patitucci shows what he's made of—flying fingers, clean articulation and a sure sense of what note belongs where.

ARC has the imprimatur of being Haslip's first solo outing, but an important silent partner on the job is Vince Mendoza, an undersung composer and arranger whose contributions give this record its distinctive edge. With his well-placed chordal oddities, exploratory melodies and new ways of shuffling the deck of structural possibilities, his material—five of the 10 tracks—tends to be player-specific, from the fluid resonance of Andy Narell's steel drums on "Leap" to John Scofield's unmistakable "Orange Guitars" to Haslip himself on the

dreamy "I Dreamt of You." Meanwhile, Haslip's emotional stamp is all over the place, lending *ARC* a gruff warm fuzziness. And isn't gruff warm fuzziness one of the increasing numbers of things we ask of bassists these days?

—Josef **Woodard**

Sheryl Crow

Tuesday Night Music Club
(A&M)

Sheryl Crow, a former session musician for Michael Jackson and Don Henley, among others, steps to the front with her raspy, waifish vocals on *Tuesday Night Music Club*. Named for a weekly informal jam session out of which these tunes arose, *Club* features producer and pedal steel player Bill Bottrell and the Davids of David & David both as band members and writing collaborators. It's a recording of many small pleasures, including Crow's agile and emotive vocals, frequently witty lyrics and hot Hammond organ. Crow, whose songs have been covered by Eric Clapton and Wynonna Judd, is the primary writer of this eclectic material, leaping from cool jazz to '70s pop to white funk. Relationships, the inevitable lies and the almost equally inevitable desire to believe them, are recurring themes. Echoes of the Beatles reverberate through the entire disc, especially in the "Strawberry Fields" cadence and "Hey Jude"–like chorus of "The Na-Na Song," which also features a Dylanesque orgy of wordplay. The wistful "Run, Baby, Run" suggests the price paid for rebellion and endless adolescence; it's an elegiac coda to the '60s, with a catchy chorus. Crow's sensitive side is best displayed in the softer tracks, like the jazzy "We Do What We Can," languid as a cat lolling in the afternoon sun, and the soft and gently optimistic "No One Said It Would Be Easy."

As a forum for her talents as songwriter, singer and musician, *Tuesday Night Music Club* presents a range and level of popcraft rarely on display these days. But the end result feels a little like watching the old television game show "To Tell the Truth": You're left waiting for the real Sheryl Crow to shed the genre-hopping, something-for-everyone aesthetic and stand up and declare her true self.

—Chris **Rubin**

Cypress Hill

Black Sunday
(Ruffhouse/Columbia)

In 1991, Cypress Hill beckoned hip-hop into their world of THC-laden funk and violence, and hip-hop followed. Two years later, with every other new MC puffing blunts and resurgent old-timers Run-D.M.C. copping their sound on a song or two, Cypress Hill is back, reasserting the formula that made them king of the herbstalk. Rapper B-Real's sinister nasal rhymes still grate and delight, and Sen Dog still interjects phrases like a surly version of the B-52's' Fred Schneider. The most important component, however, remains DJ Muggs' heavy, off-kilter grooves; his beats have a hazy, leaden quality that keeps the pot-raps in context and the gun-talk interesting.

Perhaps Cypress Hill's greatest strength is their ability to walk the line between loopy and hard. Originality and street credibility can be difficult to reconcile in hip-hop, as De La Soul and their progeny can attest. Cypress succeed because they assume a popular street role: They play the guy who wins the fight by acting "loco." In real life, whether or not the guy is really nuts is sometimes up to debate, but with Cypress, the method to the madness is fairly transparent—a song may detour into calliope music for 20 seconds, but the funk always comes back in time. The group reshuffles various elements of its music—high-end screeches, rump-shaking bass tones, oddball loops during the breaks—but never strays from the program.

When it works, one hears why the results changed hip-hop. Cypress Hill are the Public Enemy of hemp on a good day, and *Black Sunday* has enough strong tracks to keep any rap fan with decent woofers' head nodding. "We Ain't Going Out Like That" sports a dizzying uptempo groove, while "Live and Direct" and "I Want to Get High" affirm Muggs' place as one of rap's foremost purveyors of the slow funk. Though *Black Sunday* is weakened by a couple of already-released cuts, the trio is obviously on top of the style it created. But styles change quickly in hip-hop, as everybody knows, and if Cypress Hill don't display a little more originality on album number three, they may be going out just like that.

—Nathan **Brackett**

Depeche Mode

[*cont'd from page 38*] whole song together as a band we sound like pub-rock, so we've realized that we have to apply the technology to that performance. But to try and keep all the spontaneity, we'll sample bits of it and restructure it in a more interesting way, rather than program stuff so much. Which can then spark off different ideas."

Gahan takes the demo for private vocal study. "The first thing I do is, I'll be really nervous and I probably won't play it for a couple of days. Then, I listen to the lyrics first, before I listen to the melody. And then I try and interpret what I think Martin's feeling, but then I also like to be able to feel whatever I want to feel too, and try to marry the two. It's a bit schizophrenic."

The band struggles with arrangements. In the reject pile there is a near-reggae version of "Judas," while "In Your Room" went through three incarnations—an austere ballad, a kind of soul groove and a rock anthem—before the band decided to use a little of each in the finished version.

Twitching and glimmering in the background of Depeche Mode songs are strange noises, perhaps a highly tweaked sample of a choir from an Ennio Morricone soundtrack or a mixture of backwards and forwards piano sounds. "We're looking for different ways to approach sounds than everybody else," Wilder says. "We try and find unlikely sources. A typical sound for us would be to get something on a synthesizer, put it through a guitar effect, sample it off, create an interesting loop.

"If we want a drum sound, we'll record an entire drum kit in a space and put that through a synthesizer, distort it, compress the fuck out of it, and you might end up using that drum kit as a small percussion part rather than a drum kit. Sometimes we might go around in circles and up our own arse, but we try not to."

One trick he reveals was used, not for the first time, in "The Mercy in You." For the bridge, Gahan learned the lyrics backwards, phonetically, and sang them over a mirror image of the melody; the tape was then reversed, lending a ghostly tone to the vocal.

For stage versions of the songs, Wilder essentially does dub remixes. He goes back into the studio to remove parts that will be played live onstage and shift arrangements for maximum impact in concert. And the band doesn't mind if many of the details on those digital tapes are lost in the roar and jubilation of concert crowds.

"The record achieves one thing," says Gore, "and the concert achieves something totally different, which is always like a celebration to me. Although the songs are very intimate, and that gets lost when there are 20,000 people there, I think there is a bond that all the fans feel."

Obviously, the T-shirted crowd at the hotel door wants to feel something a little closer. "Sometimes signing autographs and having screaming kids is a bind," Fletcher says, with a modest grimace. "But the day they're not there is the day you're doing something wrong."

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PSEUDOS

The other day a pal of ours in a famous band called the office to say he was in town and let's get together. Along with the number of his hotel he left the message, "Ask for Charlie Brown." It occurred to us then that our lives are filled to overflowing with the constant embarrassment of asking for well-known musicians under the silly names they use when traveling.

If there is anything worse than having to ask a desk clerk to ring "Mr. Gonad," it is arriving at the front desk and not remembering the stupid name under which the famous person is registered. "Hi, I'm here to see Mick Jagger."

"I'm sorry, we have no one here by that name."

"Yes, you do. I just spoke to him. You know, Mick Jagger, I can't get no satisfaction, Brown Sugar, big lips."

"Sorry."

"Oh come on, you know he's here! Will you just call his room and let him know I'm down here?"

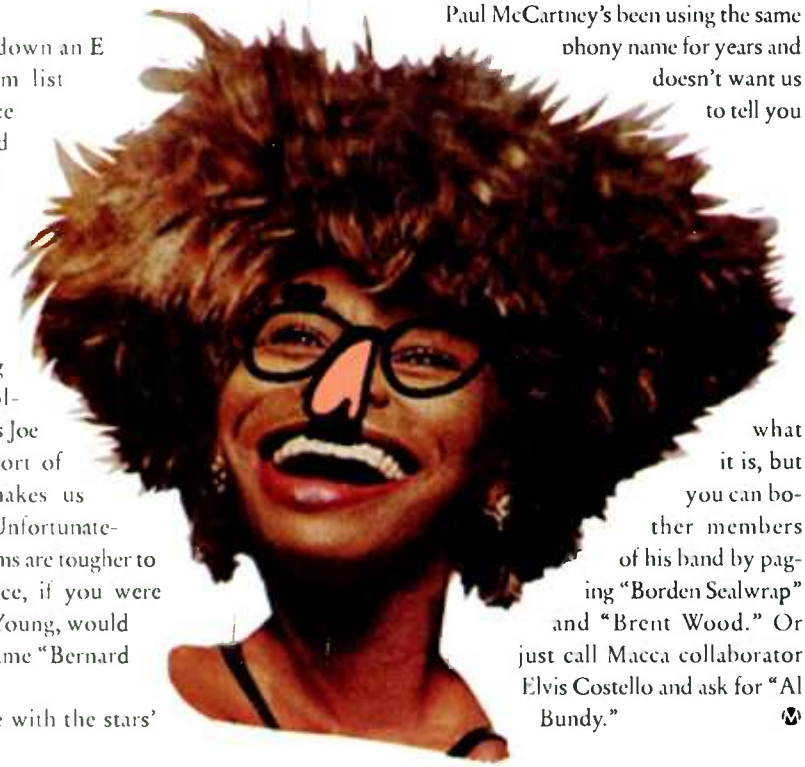
"Sorry."

We once went down an E Street Band room list looking for Bruce Springsteen and saw (right beneath "Mr. E. Train") the nondescript nomenclature, "Joe Roberts." We recalled the first line of his song "Highway Patrolman": "My name is Joe Roberts." That sort of puzzle-solving makes us feel like Batman. Unfortunately, most pseudonyms are tougher to crack. For instance, if you were looking for Neil Young, would you stop at the name "Bernard Shakey"?

We sympathize with the stars' desire to not have fans calling to ask for autographs and threaten suicide when they're trying to take a shower, but sometimes these phony names get pretty silly. Is Paul Westerberg really so famous that he needs to hide behind "Elwood Peuce" or "Thaddeus Moonbeam"? Does he think going by "Mister Moonbeam" will really get him *less* attention? Or will Squeeze fans looking for Glenn Tilbrook not be able to guess that "Patio Doors" is not a real Ramada Inn guest?

Better to take a literary bent. Bono spent U2's last tour as "Mr. Yeats," Lou Reed used to register as "Ray Chandler" and Joe Satriani has been known to go by "Henry Miller."

Some rock stars get positively Dickensian. The intellectual Natalie Merchant is "Sara Bellum." The diabolical Jimmy Page is known to concierges as "Lou Cifer." The masticating Joe Walsh is "Mr. Gumm." Terence Trent D'Arby called himself "E.G. O'Reilly" for a while, which made no sense until we looked at the initials.



Paul McCartney's been using the same phony name for years and doesn't want us to tell you what it is, but you can bother members of his band by paging "Borden Sealwrap" and "Brent Wood." Or just call Macca collaborator Elvis Costello and ask for "Al Bundy." Ⓜ

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