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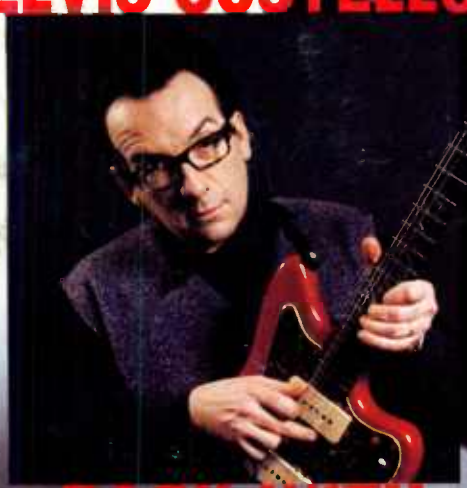

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"Love, death, murder, war, and unrequited lust are among the subjects of the ten songs here. Dylan gets inside each of them, putting flesh and blood and muscle on the skeletons the way interpreters are supposed to do, but so often don't, or can't."
-Petaluma Argus-Courier

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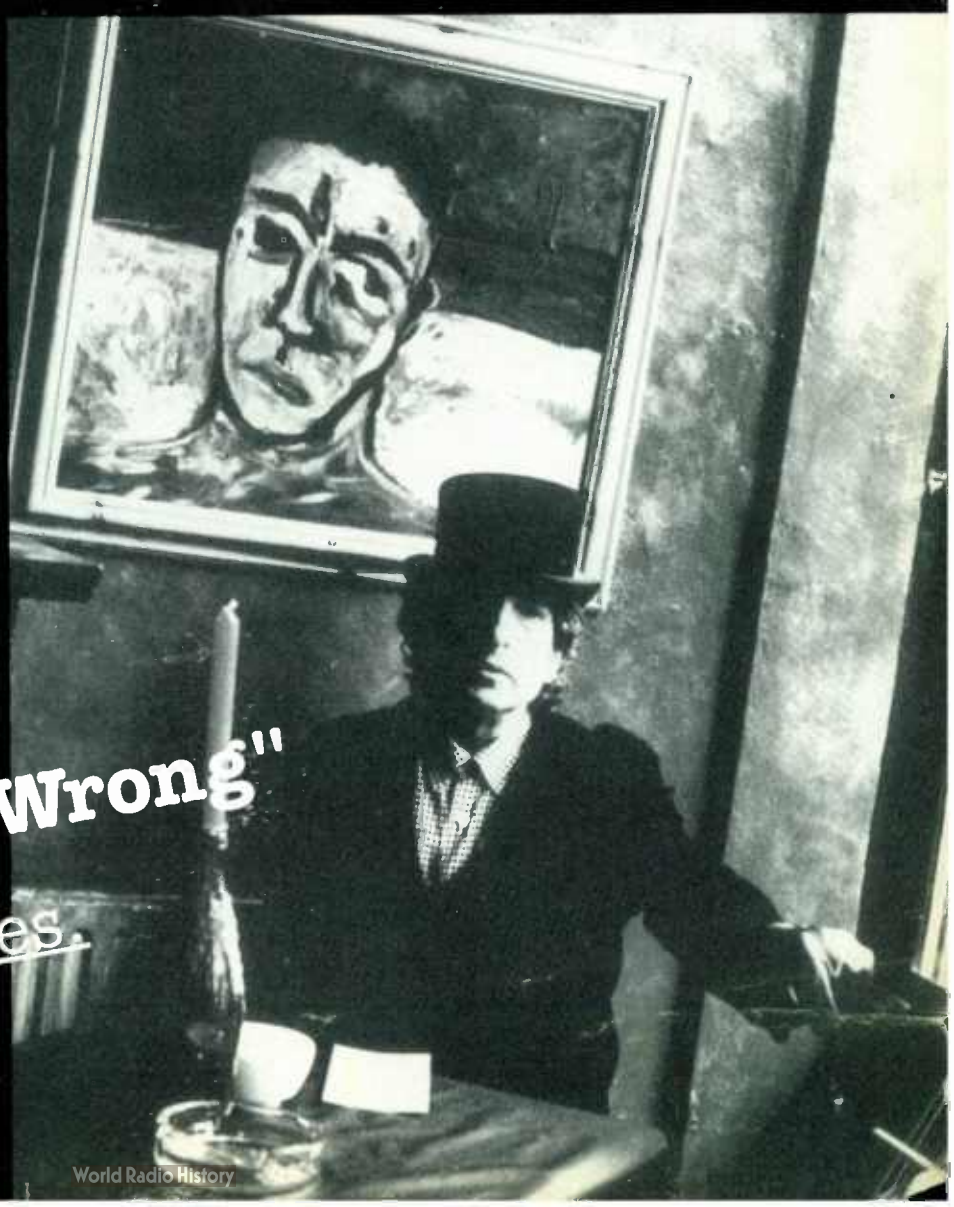
"It's lovely that in his full maturity he has achieved what had always seemed his proper fate: He's a genius blues singer, oracular and timeless."
-Rolling Stone

– Bob Dylan



"World Gone Wrong"

The new album featuring
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Produced by Bob Dylan

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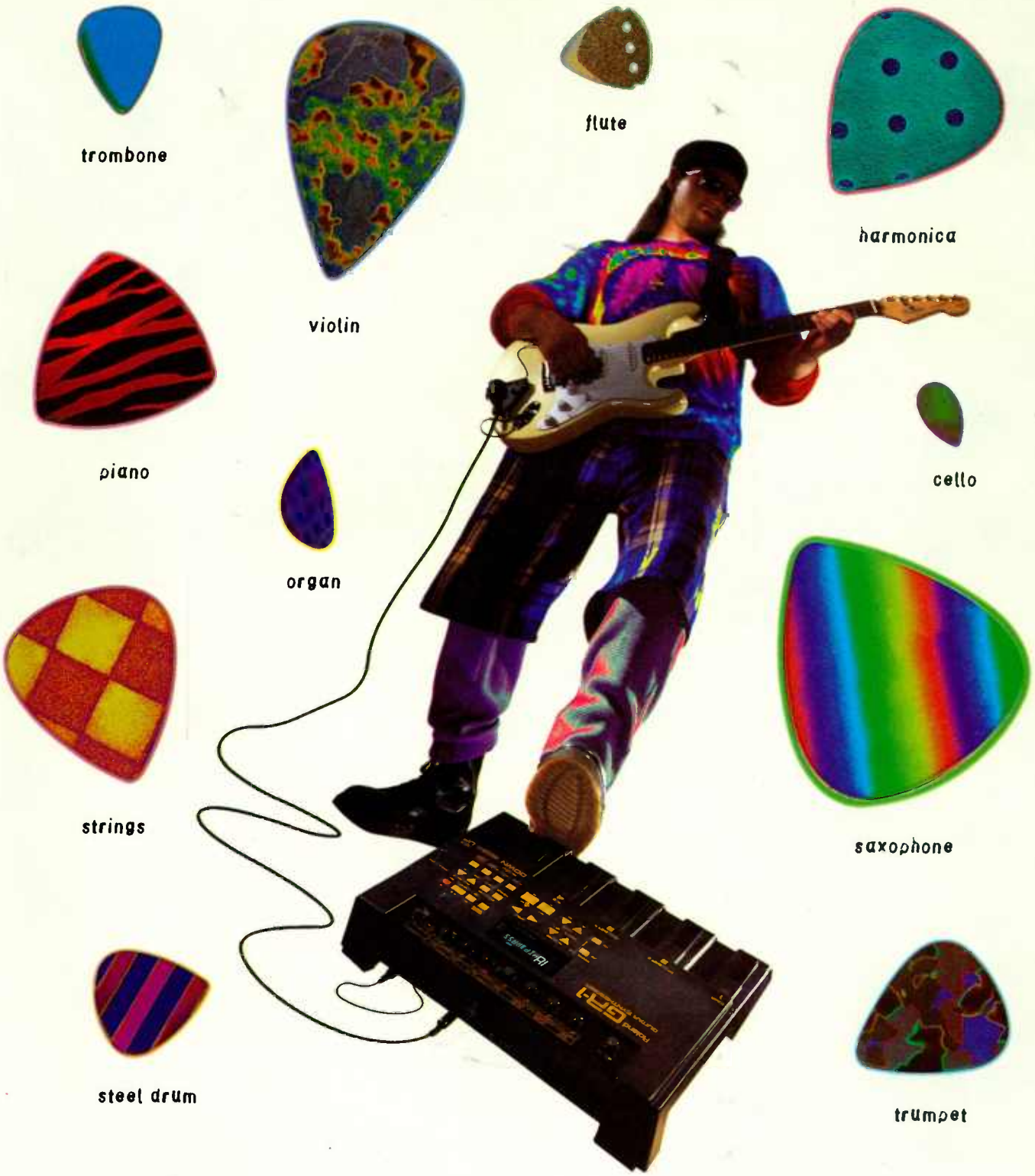

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CONTENTS

MUSICIAN MAGAZINE MARCH 1994 • ISSUE NO. 185

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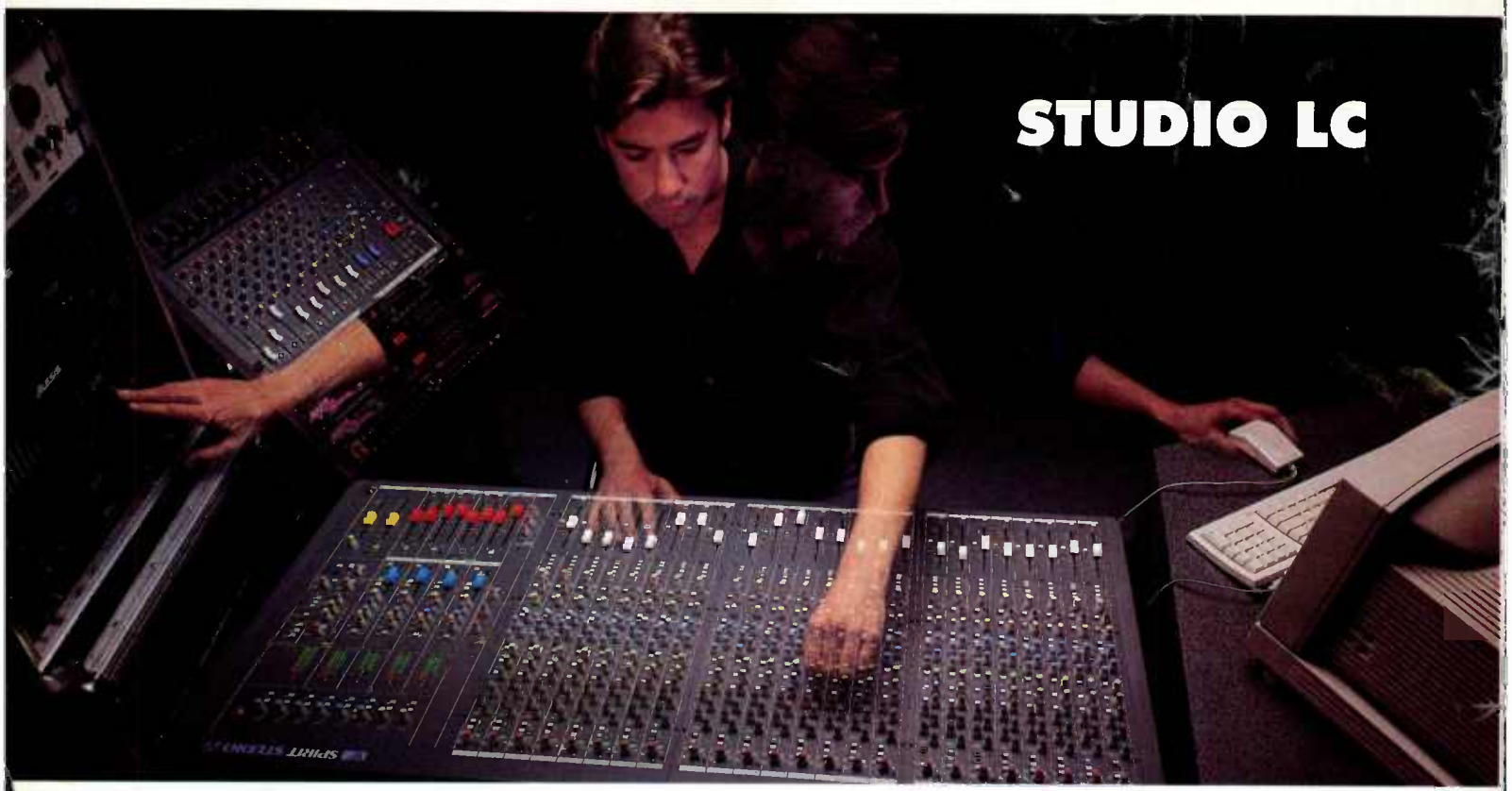

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NEW

FRONTWOMAN

KATE BUSH

***The dedication of the album to your mother and songs like "Moments of Pleasure" lend a strong sense of loss to* The Red Shoes.**

Although I had lost a couple of friends when I started the album, most of it was written before I lost my mother, so there's no reflection of that. I saw some reviews that suggested the album was negative, which I would strongly challenge. There is a feeling of loss, but it's through loss that you appreciate the value of life, of having a good time. Moments that are really important to you should be relished. I think there's a strong sense of humor throughout *The Red Shoes*.

Is that why "Rubberband Girl" comes first?

I wanted to start the album positively, which I suppose is why "Rubberband Girl" comes first. But it was hard to get an overall shape to the album. The running order was the most difficult ever! The songs are all so different musically.

Your songs seem more tied to concrete experiences this time.

I feel that too. Often my intentions don't come across, so I wanted this album to be simpler and more direct. I wanted to take the emphasis off the production and let the songs speak. I think everyone else hears things the same way I do, but that's not always so. Some people see me as this weird ethereal creature, which doesn't bother me, but I don't think it's correct. I find it odd that someone would hang onto that idea when there's not much grounds. A lot of my songs deal with the emotional world, but that's not ethereal, it's a very real thing. If people want to project their preconceptions onto me, it's not my problem.

Do you ever embarrass yourself with material that ends up seeming too emotional or too sexual?

I never do when I'm writing, but occasionally when I play a song back for someone else, I'll become aware of something that I hadn't focused on before and feel a bit uncomfortable. But you're putting your neck on the line whenever you make a statement, so it doesn't surprise me that I squirm a little sometimes. The important thing is that a song feels right.

People like to think songs are autobiographical. Do you have to go through a bitter love affair to write a song like "You're the One"?

Absolutely not! All writers must be plagued with this idea. People assume songwriting is talking from the soul, but it's not necessarily literal truth. You may be expressing your feelings, but it's not necessarily your situation or story.

How did your demos differ from the finished product?

I don't make demos anymore. When you get a good demo it can be a nightmare trying to get a master recording with the same feel. One of the reasons I built my own studio was to write directly onto tape, so if I do something spontaneous that I like, it's there. I started with an eight-track home studio, and with the success of each album I could afford to buy more equipment. Now I've got a pretty good 24-track studio just up the road from my home in southeast London. I'd be lost without it. I don't think I could make an album otherwise because it would cost too much. I like to experiment and play around with ideas, and when you're writing in the studio, the time just goes. A lot of people write their stuff before they go in to record, which is obviously the logical way.

With *The Red Shoes*, I became aware that I hadn't written a song at the piano without a lot of gear around me in a very long time. Part of me was desperate to get back to my roots and see if I still could, so for "Moments of Pleasure" and "Top of the City" I just played piano. Instead of dumping stuff from a Fairlight or DX7 directly onto tape, as I'd become accustomed to doing, I'd keep it in my head, which is very different, because each time I'd run through a song, it would subtly change.

The Red Shoes *features superstar guests.*

I was concerned they would take the emphasis away from the songs, but they were asked to play not because they were famous, but because their performances were valued in the context of the tracks. Some people have such strong personalities: You can hear immediately when it's Eric Clapton or Jeff Beck. Making their styles mesh with what you're doing can be a big challenge, but I was really pleased with the way they were used.

How well did you know Prince before recording "Why Should I Love You" with him?

We'd spoken but hadn't met. It was like working with a musical penpal. I'd send tapes over to his studio and he'd send them back. I don't feel his presence overshadows the track—it's still a song I wrote—although there is a feeling of both energies, which was really important to me.

Nice scream at the fade of "You're the One."

I wondered if I should have turned it up a bit. If you didn't miss it, that's alright. Sometimes I wonder if people are hearing the things I know are there. In that case, I probably *should* turn it up. JON YOUNG

"Some people see me as this weird ethereal creature."

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTHONY CRICKMAY

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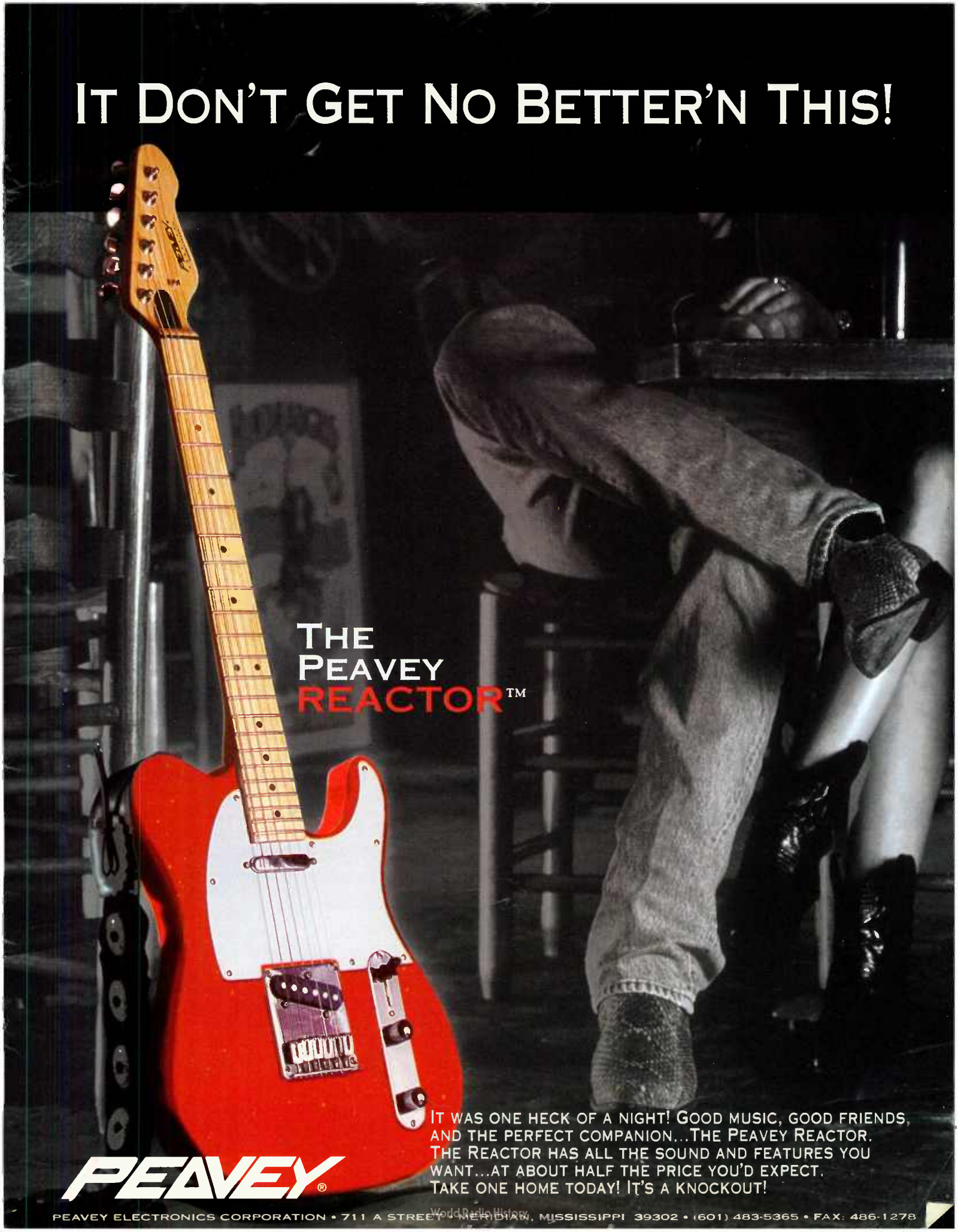

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LETTERS

FUTURE SHOCKS

I was impressed with the depth of Fred Goodman's reporting in the "Future Shocks" article in the December '93 issue. I've been an on-again/off-again subscriber to *Musician* since 1980, but it looks like it's time to subscribe again.

In November, writers from the *Village Voice* and *Mondo 2000*, John Perry Barlow (co-founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation), sundry music industry professionals and myself spoke at the CMJ Music Marathon in New York on a panel called "Surfing the Net—Music in Cyberspace." I exhorted the musicians in the crowd to "get on the Net"—or be prepared to sit on the sidelines.

An example of what's actually happening out there: One of the songs from the latest Kate Bush album *The Red Shoes* was heard all over the world, weeks before it came out as a single. How? Kate performed on British television in early September. Some clever fan in the U.K. recorded it, digitized it and then put it up on the Internet—where Kate has a massive following. Fans all over the world were able to download it minutes after it was posted. This is not the first time this has happened, and it certainly won't be the last.

The premature printing of the annual Backside section's "Rest in Peace" page missed the late-in-the-year passing of Albert Collins and Frank Zappa. I'm certain that if he had lived just a little longer, Zappa would have been one of the *first* to take advantage of distributing his music directly to consumers electronically.

Will Kreth
Online Ambassador/
Contributing Writer
Wired *magazine*

Sitting down with a bong and December's *Musician*, it's evident to me that your pages are bursting with signs of open-mindedness and the cultural resurgence that's in our midst. I welcome big political, musical and technological changes. Yes, it's the '90s, kids; let the mad rumpus begin!

Theo Cedar
The Numinous Fools
Oakland, CA

Much of your article's music-industry "experts" speak with the hollow ring of IBM executives in the early '80s trying to minimize the significance of a small upstart company called Compaq, who spawned the personal computer "clone" revolution which ate IBM's lunch. The clone industry is not run by limousine-riding, cigar-chomping deal makers; it is run by smart kids who got beat up a lot in high school. They killed IBM and now they're gunning for Sony, Columbia, Warner Bros. et al. Todd Rundgren is the only prophet of the revolution I have read from inside your industry. Listen to him and get on the train or it will run you over.

James E. Pabst
Grant, MI

As a subscriber of three years I've been informed, enlightened, confused and just plain pissed off by some of the comments and articles in your fine mag, and I wouldn't have it any other way! There seems to be a place for all viewpoints in your forum.

Mike Setterlee

"The end of the music business as we know it"? Thank God! And thank Fred Goodman for his incisive exposé of the music biz. I anxiously await the day musician and aficionado will be able to do away with the parasites that feed off both. Here's my hopeful scenario: At long last the public may have direct access to music it wants to hear. The archaic recording industry that currently pours millions into the promotion of mediocre pop stars while ignoring more talented artists will be defunct. Artists, receiving remuneration directly from their patrons, will no longer be forced to sign away creative control and accept meager royalties in exchange for possible celebrity. Hallelujah!

Claire Kugelman-Kropp
Santa Rosa, CA

Where will this lead us? Will we all sit at home and have all our news, information, education and entertainment delivered to our HDTV/music/computer/communication centers? Some will. For those who veg out in front of the tube today it will be heaven come true. The record companies could be the big losers, but there's no guarantee they won't merge with other entertainment giants and continue to wield strength. The artist and/or the consumer certainly stand to gain. The real losers will be the segments of society that are already the "information have-nots." Those of us with the money, technology and information will be able to block them out of our minds even more. We won't have to ever leave home so we'll never see them. Think about it.

Paul Malkoski
Aurora, CO

I would like to point out some obvious points you seem to have overlooked. Will digital cable (or satellite, etc.) "delivery" make the retail record industry obsolete? Did cable TV put the film industry out of business? Did fax machines kill the U.S. Postal Service? You neglected to mention that the legal owners of copyrighted material have the ultimate say over whether or not the music *can* be licensed for such use. This power would ultimately be in the hands of the music *publishers*; in fact, if the courts decide that digital transmission is a form of broadcasting (which it is), then BMI or ASCAP could kill the whole idea with a stroke of a pen. What good is the technology if you can't get the material to play on it?

Michael R. Fitzgerald
President, Independent Entertainment
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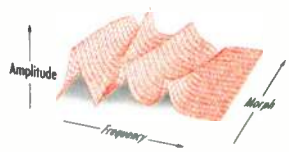

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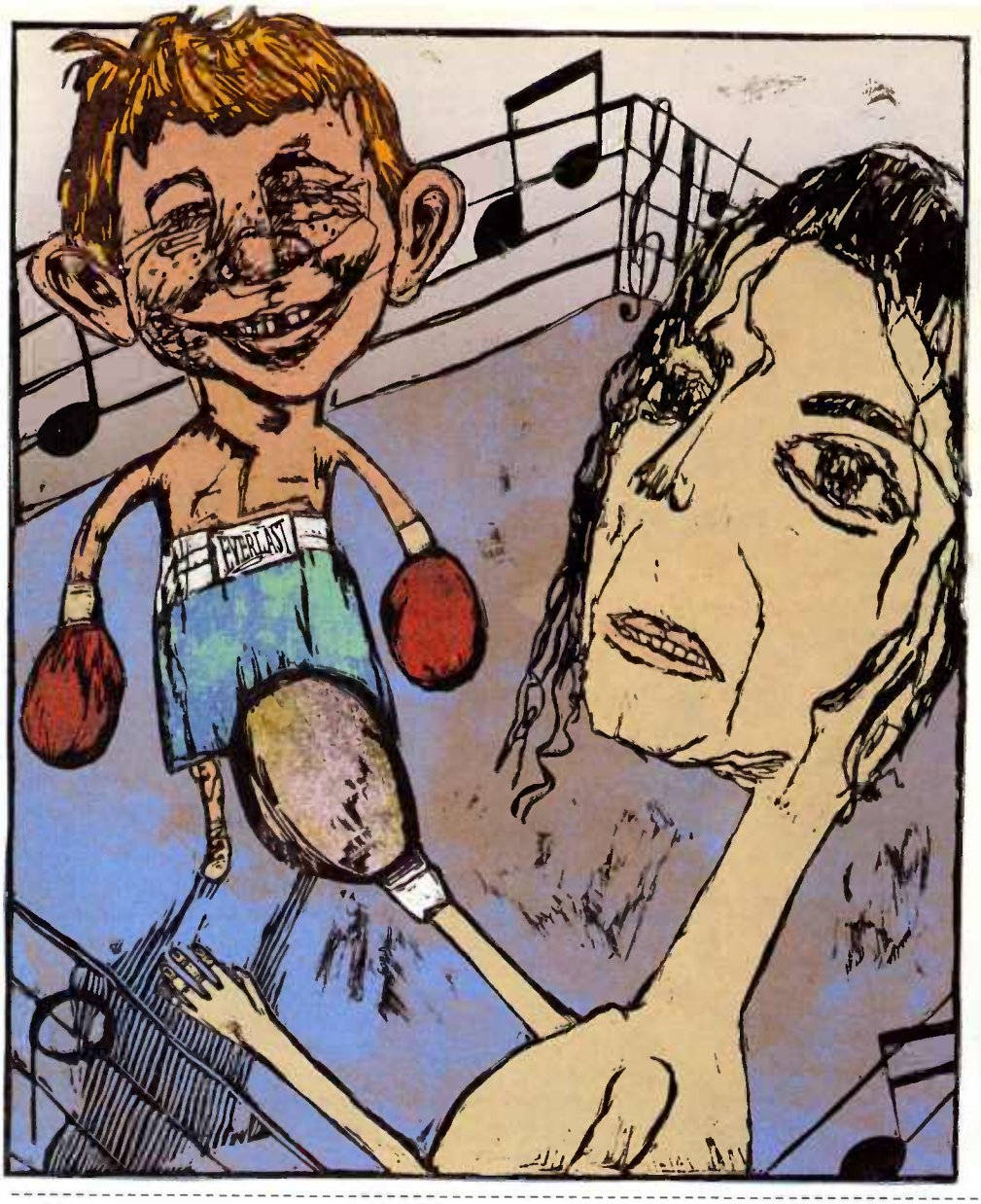
"Brian, uh...what was his last name? Jones. Brian Jones. He was the, uh, drummer?"

—Geraldo Rivera interviewing Davin Seay, who wrote a book about Mick Jagger. Moments before Rivera's penetrating question about Jones, he established his credibility by saying, "Of course, I've interviewed Jagger several times. Let's show some of those clips."

EXPERT WITNESS



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YOUR NAME IN PICKS

Is there a would-be guitar hero alive who hasn't pondered, as his pick accidentally jumped out of his hand and went flying into the front row, how cool it would be if the band's logo were printed on it? D'Addario's new pick printing process transfers even the most intricate artwork onto the pick of your choice using an epoxy-based ink that stays put gig after gig. The minimum order is 800, available only through D'Addario dealers. Prices vary from dealer to dealer, so shop around.

ROUGH

HARRY NILSSON, 1941–1994

Harry Nilsson, 52, died of heart disease at his California home on January 15th. Nilsson's first big hit was "Everybody's Talkin'" from the movie *Midnight Cowboy*, in 1969. He won a whole other audience with his 1970 soundtrack album *The Point*, and enjoyed a string of hit singles in the early '70s, including *Without You*, which was re-made by Mariah Carey last year, *Me and My Arrow*, *Coconut*, *Spaceman*, *Daybreak* and *Jump Into the Fire*, which was revived by Martin Scorsese for the climax of his film *Goodfellas*. Along with Keith Moon and Ringo Starr, Nilsson was John Lennon's partner-in-mischief dur-

What, Me Sue?

IN SIMPLE TERMS, the legal case which pits Luther Campbell and 2 Live Crew against the song-publishing giant Acuff-Rose is about whether 2 Live Crew's lewd version of the pop classic "Oh, Pretty Woman" can fairly be called a parody. If it is, then 2 Live Crew was obligated to pay a relatively small standard fee to license the song. If it isn't, then Acuff-Rose can demand a much higher fee, or to refuse to license the song at all. What's really at issue here is where to draw the line between property rights and free speech, which is why this case has gone to the Supreme Court.

For Campbell's side, friend of the court briefs have been filed by *Mad* magazine, the *Harvard Lampoon*, Dr. Demento and a team of civil liberties–minded law professors. Meanwhile, attorneys for Michael Jackson, Dolly Parton, Lieber-Stoller and the estate of George Gershwin have weighed in on behalf of Acuff-Rose. A decision is expected this spring. In the meantime, court briefs filed in the case have unearthed more than the usual odd facts and illuminating trivia. For instance:

- "The Star Spangled Banner," "My Country 'Tis of Thee," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "Yankee Doodle" were all rewritten versions of oft-parodied songs.
- Songs by George Gershwin have been licensed over the years to create advertisements for Post Raisin Bran, Peugot cars and Crest toothpaste, while a Cole Porter classic was rewritten into a paean to Vanish toilet bowl cleaner. ("I've got you...under my *rim*.")
- Irving Berlin once sued *Mad* magazine for parodying his lyrics (he lost).
- Elsmere Music once sued NBC—without success—over a "Saturday Night Live" parody of the ad jingle "I Love New York."
- A parody of Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock," retitled "Oldstock," was denied permission for use by the copyright holder, Siquomb Publishing Company.
- Even pop music's most successful contemporary parodist, Weird Al Yankovic, is frequently refused permission to record parodies by copyright holders.

TALKIN' 'BOUT A REVOLUTION

First CDs, then low-cost digital two-track formats and signal processors, and lately affordable digital multi-tracks—and at the same time cleaner, cheaper analog mixers. It all adds up to more expressive power in the hands of more musicians than ever. Anyone who doubts should check out *Mixed on a Mackie*, a promo CD from one of the leading makers of budget mixers. Over 500 customers responded to the call for DAT recordings, from which Mackie selected 21 tasty slices of smokin' rock, slammin' funk and even a commercial or three. For a copy, send $7.93 (cash or money order) to: Mackie, 20205 144th Ave. NE., Woodinville, WA 98072.

MIX

ing Lennon's notorious *Lost Weekend* in L.A. in the mid-'70s, while Lennon was producing Nilsson's *Pussycats* album. Nilsson won Grammys for "Everybody's Talkin'" in 1969, and for "Without You" in 1972, and became a vocal advocate of gun control after Lennon's death. He is survived by his wife and six children.

DIED OF THE HEAT

We caught up with Brett Myers of the Australian band **Died Pretty**, at his hometown of Sydney, surrounded by a ring of fire storms that were devastating the countryside. Naturally, they've had an effect on the normally dapper and distinguished guitarist. "It's been really bad lately, about 100 degrees every day," he says. "As far as gigs go, you get 2000 people in a room, and it doesn't take long for the swelter to begin—we've actually been wearing shorts onstage. Kind of like another Australian dresser, Angus Young. "Pretty soon I'll be hanging around with a school bag on my back."

DIED PRETTY (L to R): Brett Meyers, John Huey, Robert Warren, Ron S. Peno, Chris Welsh

STEVEN OLENBURY

ROUGH MIX

ROLL OVER HAYDN

For two short weeks in December, it looked as though six of the seven lost piano sonatas listed in Franz Joseph Haydn's own catalog had been found. Dubbed "the greatest musicological coup of the century" by H. C. Robbins Landon, the sonatas were discovered by a German woman who brought them to the attention of a local music teacher, according to Allan Kozinn in the *New York Times*.

JANE SIMON

Almost immediately scholars at the Haydn Institute in Cologne noted "technical faults as well as discrepancies in thematic construction." They cited historical anomalies in the handwriting as further evidence of forgery.

So far only incomplete photocopies of the scores have been made available, but musicologists are backing off from their initial enthusiasm. The world-premier performance by pianist Paul Badura-Skoda at Harvard University was cancelled.

EXPERT WITNESS

MICHAEL SMALLCOMBE

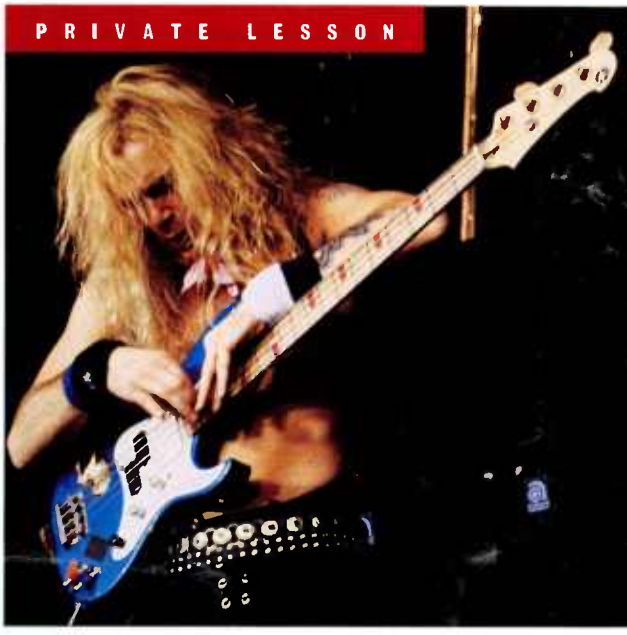
No Place for Progressive Rock Drumming?

by Bill Bruford

I'VE JUST DONE five drum clinics, the first I've done in years. I've been interested to watch what's going on in the drum community in the United States. It is evident that you can no longer go out and be weird on a drum kit and expect people to pay for it. This climate makes further drumming all but impossible. If you are an adventurous drummer you need a day job working in a bar band and maybe you'll make adventurous music on the side.

Most of the clinics I do are in small halls. You're looking at three to four hundred people on a Tuesday night in Towson, Maryland. Of course these kids think all of the name guys are rich. You can throw that right out the window. For an 18-year-old who wants to be a drummer, you have to urge him to consider himself a musician first, who may have to turn his hands to all kinds of things from sequencing drums to playing guitar. He can't expect people to throw money at him [*cont'd on page 94*]

PRIVATE LESSON



BILLY SHEEHAN

Hunkered down at Mates rehearsal studio before a Japanese tour promoting *Bump Ahead*, Mr. Big's Billy Sheehan ticked off some finer points of bassmanship. 1) "The bass drum and the bass have to hit at the same time. There are times when they flutter independent of each other, but not in the body of most songs. I saw some band the other night that clearly didn't have a clue about that, and the whole show was a train wreck."

2) When possible, lock thumb of playing hand against lower edge of pickup. "On my old Fender this spot is all worn away. If you're a finger player, you push against that ridge and it gives you a lot of power. I heard a teacher at a clinic say to always keep your wrist floating and pluck classical-guitar style—that's fine as long as you're not in a rock band, flying all over the stage.

3) Practice standing up—"it builds stamina."

4) "Don't forget heavy strings. I always urge players to use manly gauges—even women."

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ROUGH MIX

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RUSSELL MEANS IT

The 1973 uprising at Wounded Knee, South Dakota marked a coming of age for the American Indian movement and its charismatic leader, Russell Means. Now Means is producing a movie of the event, has an acting career going (he appeared in *The Last of the Mohicans*), and a debut album *Electric Warrior*, in which he dispenses philosophy, history and hard-earned wisdom in a narrative style he wryly dubs "Rap-ajo." While an admirer of gangsta-rap—"rap is the beginning of the revolution, and I definitely want to be on the cutting edge"—Means and his musical partner Tom Bee have crafted a more spacious melange of poetry, musical textures and propulsive Indian rhythms. "When I first joined the A.I.M., I was counseled, 'Always speak from your heart, and you'll never go wrong,'" says Means, who is looking forward to performing his music in public. "So that's what I figure. This can't go wrong—as long as it has a beat."

DRUM ROLL, PLEASE

The *Detroit Free Press* reporter **Gary Graff** recently interviewed Nirvana drummer **Dave Grohl** by phone; the hook was that Grohl was marrying a local girl from the Motor City. But on the day the story was laid out and ready to run, Graff received a call from a Geffen publicist informing him that he didn't speak to Grohl after all, but rather to comedian **Bobcat Goldthwaite**, who was on the road with the band. When Graff complained to label officials, he was told, "What do you expect? They're simians."

"I got my revenge, though," says Graff. "Right now, there's a Nirvana road manager who thinks he's up for a gig on the upcoming Rolling Stones tour."

DO THE LIGHTEN UP

Are the Levellers too serious? "We probably do more pot and other drugs than any other band," admits singer Mark. (No last names for these guys, please.) If you're still not convinced, consider the English band's recording of Charlie Daniels' "The Devil Went Down to Georgia." Huh? "I don't have a really good Southern accent," he laughs, "so we stuck it on the B-side of 'One Way.'" Guitarist Simon says they tried to contact Daniels when they were in Nashville, so if you're reading this, Charlie, give the lads a call.

ILLUSTRATION BY VINCENT LACAVA

MANDY'S WILD YEARS

In a recent interview, **Barry Manilow** revealed that his favorite singer was **Tom Waits.**

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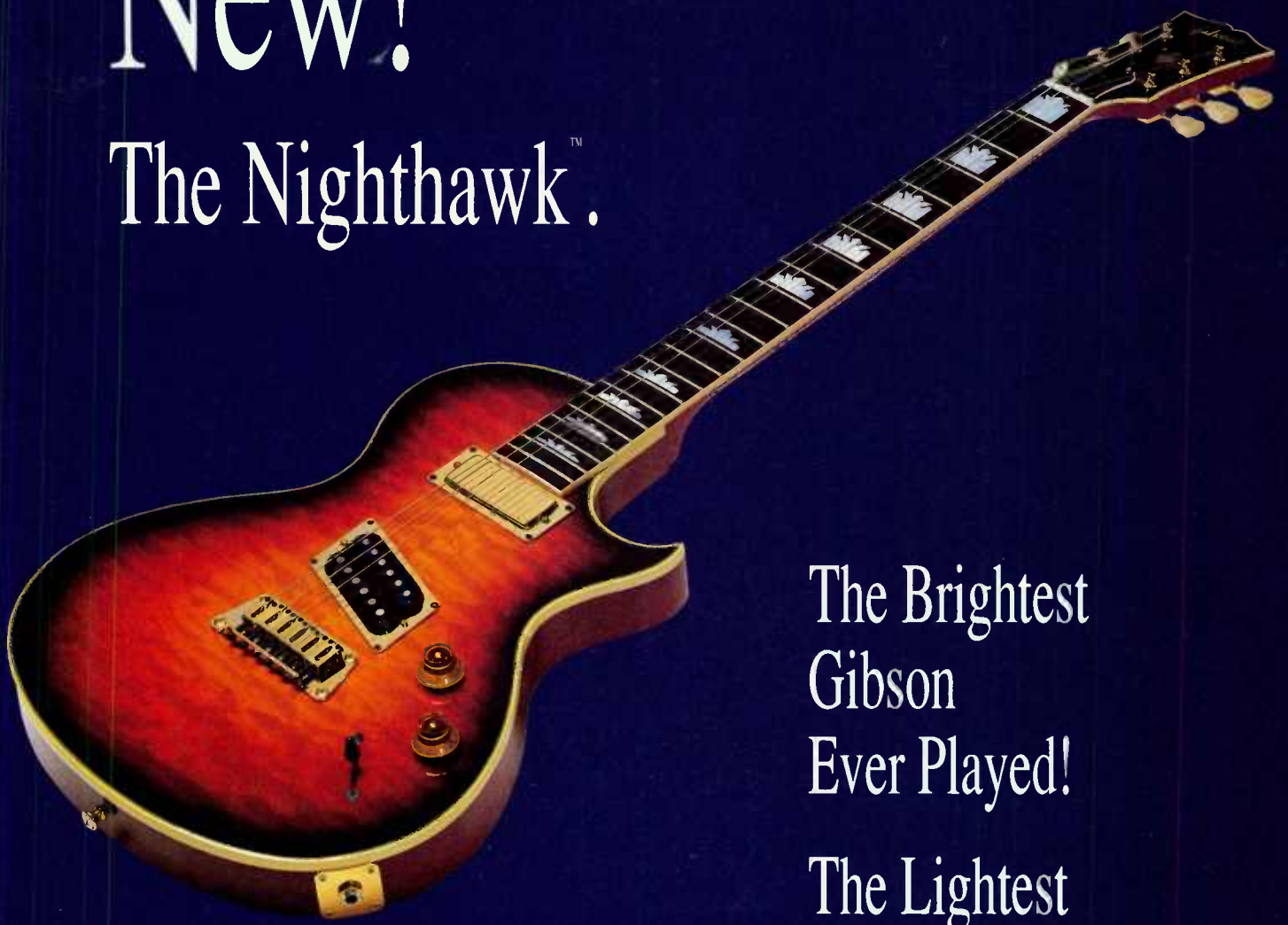

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ROUGH MIX

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Lisa Germano *Happiness* LP to be altered and reissued (4AD)

Zig Zag Hardcore/Knowledge style rapper from South Carolina (Priority)

Sunny Day Real Estate Company Anthem rock quartet from—yes—Seattle (Sub Pop)

ZIG ZAG

CHARLES PETERSON

SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE COMPANY

STUDEBAKER JOHN

SEAN COX

SWEATY NIPPLES

FUTURE SHOCKS UPDATE

As *Musician* readers know, the technology to deliver music by phone wire, cable and satellite to customers in their homes already exists—and will almost certainly be up-and-running by the end of the decade. So musicians who want to bypass record companies will be able to sell their albums on the electronic market, right? Well—maybe. From now on the ability of artists to reach their audiences electronically will depend not on science (the science is here) but on laws and legislation.

If our lawmakers allow big communications corporations to monopolize the new systems (to set up toll booths on the electronic superhighway), then musicians will just end up working in a different factory. Instead of giving 90 percent of their profits to Warner Records for pressing and distributing a CD, musicians will end up paying 90 percent of their profits to Pacific Bell for carrying their signal. [*cont'd on page 94*]

This month's Rough Mix was written by Shannon Colbert, Bill Flanagan, Ted Greenwald, Rick Mattingly, Matt Resnicoff, Mark Rowland and Roy Trakin.

GRATEFUL DUNK

This 12x7 canvas by Greg Spiers, hanging in the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass. as of December 7, is based on a design commissioned by the Grateful Dead to benefit the Lithuanian Olympic basketball team of '92.

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BETA Bio

BETA Bio

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Elvis joyfully reunited with his axe-playing chums—Steve Nieve, Pete Thomas, and Bruce Thomas.

Q: How many cranky rock legends does it take to reunite the Attractions, cut several simultaneous albums, write a play, compose and perform with a classical quartet, and learn Italian, musical notation, and how to drive a car at the same time? A: Two.

ELVIS COSTELLO AND HIS INVISIBLE TWIN

Elvis Costello is in the music room of his home in the hills overlooking Dublin, Ireland, talking about his new song "Pony Street," a pointed dialog between a mom who grew up in the '60s and her embarrassed, conservative daughter. It would make a great duet for Michelle and Chynna Phillips. "Instead of 'Eat up your greens,' the scenario is basically, 'Come on, take your barbiturates,'" Costello says. "'You've got to get into those spandex trousers and go down to the Rainbow and act like a slut and don't you come

BY BILL FLANAGAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEITH MORRIS

back here trying to marry that accountant!' I think it probably does happen quite a bit—the rock 'n' roll mom who's a little bit past the look now. Everything has become an off-the-peg fashion. You get a little bit of punk with a little bit of the '60s mixed up with a bit of bondage, but it's all had its original context surgically removed so it's no longer dangerous. If a kid wants to wear a £500 jacket with safety pins in it, it's no longer a statement of destroying that—it's just a fashion accessory. I'm not saying, *Oh, for the old days of rebellion* 'cause I never did any of that shit myself, but it's ironic.

"One of the things I got the story off was a review I read of Guns N' Roses in one of the English papers. The journalist asked this seven-year-old girl which one of Guns N' Roses she liked most and she said, 'I like Axl 'cause my mummy says he puts a cucumber down his trousers.' And I thought, well, there it is—there's rock 'n' roll neutered forever. And maybe thankfully, as well. Maybe that side of it is dead and buried—although there's some serious practitioners still around, heaven knows."

And as long as they are around, Costello will be there making fun of them. He will be 40 next summer, and he has reached the point in his prolific career where his early albums are being reissued in boxed sets, but Costello can still get as worked up as any teenager. On his new album, *Brutal Youth*, he returned to recording with his estranged band, the Attractions, with whom he will tour later this year. He has more projects underway, and more albums in the can.

"You'd think, 'Well I've written everything I've got to say now,'" he continues. "But as you get older you look farther, and you look at yourself and you change. It means there's still stuff to sing about. There's no rule that says you have to get better and better and better until you explode. Or more refined in any sense of the word. The writing doesn't have to get leaner—you could be more effusive one time and the next time it could be really sparse.

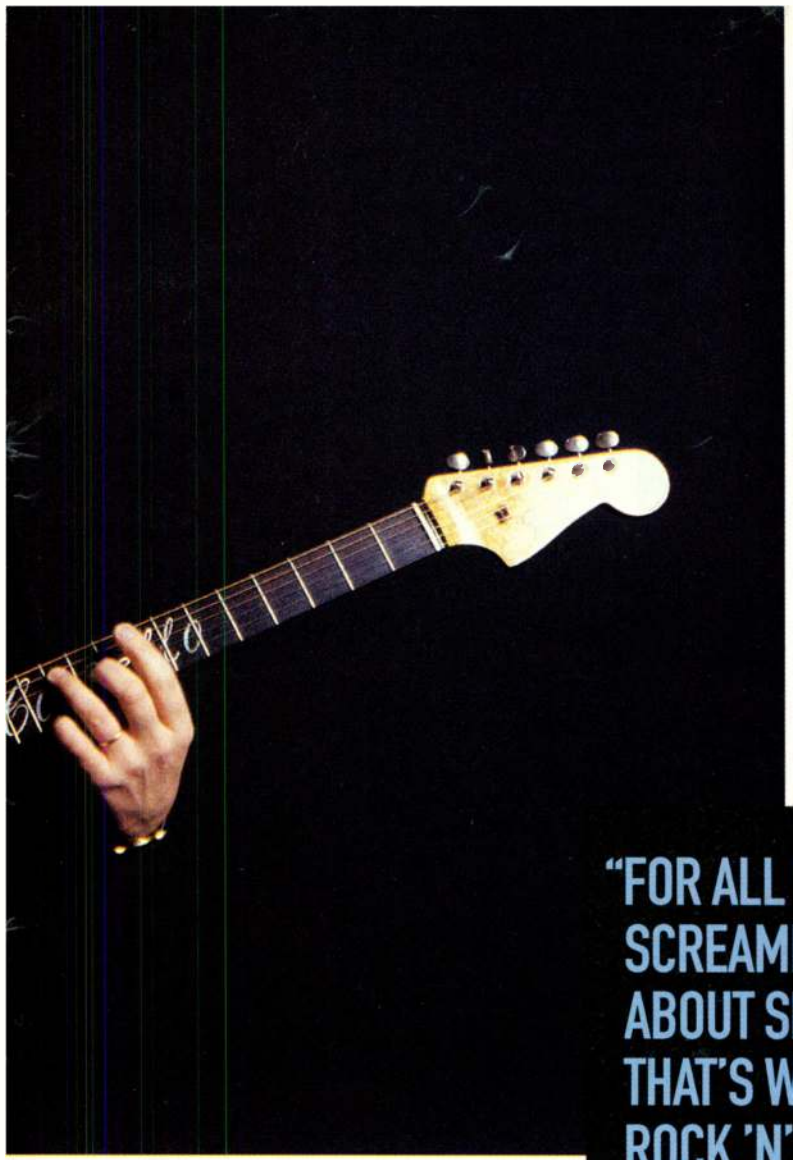
"And that's ignoring the fact that it's not just words! What's a song about? It's about music as well. For instance, 'All the Rage,' which is a much more accusative song, was originally set to the figure at the front of 'Science Fiction Twin.' It was going to be a much faster song. It didn't work at all. It was a more angry song but it didn't sound convincing. Sometimes when you have something right in your heart you don't even pause to think about it; it just comes out. It's a horrible moment when you realize it hasn't achieved the effect that you wanted, even though it's satisfied your desire to revenge yourself about whatever it is that's getting under your skin. Even if it's supposed to be aggressive or enraged, if it just sounds like hot air then that's wrong. That's why 'Beyond Belief' on *Imperial Bedroom* sounds like it does rather than a rock 'n' roll song. It's a rather odd combination of a low, very intimate vocal and an out track. Because I redubbed the vocal on it an octave lower and completely changed the melody, which gave it this unsettling thing of the band going full tilt and a voice very close up—something you couldn't possibly achieve live. Because I wasn't happy with the way the song came over being yelled over the top of the backing; it just sounded like something I'd done before."

Avoiding doing things he's done before keeps Costello on the front edge of his talent. Even his decision to reunite with the Attractions after seven years (and some hard feelings) was not, as might be supposed, because Rykodisc was re-releasing all their early albums and it was time to cash in. Nothing with Costello is ever as simple as that. Costello spent much of 1992 working on *The Juliet Letters*, a collaboration with the classical chamber group the Brodsky Quartet. During that time—and for a lark—he wrote and recorded 10 rock 'n' roll songs for

British pop singer Wendy James, knocking them off with Attractions drummer Pete Thomas in the studio where Costello had recorded his first album in 1976. The fun and ease of that side-project made him imagine that he could write and record his own next rock album with the same abandon. So he hatched the unlikely plan of cutting it in December of '92, so that the spring of '93 could see the release of the sophisticated *Juliet Letters*, the ironic Wendy James project and a new album of rocking Costello tunes which would be called *Idiophone*. Sometime around Christmas of '92 Costello closed his eyes long enough to admit to himself that some of the *Idiophone* material wasn't up to his standard. So he postponed work on his rock album until the summer of '93, after he was done touring with the Brodsky Quartet.

While he was doing those projects, Costello was also writing the book and songs for a stage musical to debut at England's Nottingham Playhouse next year, as well as composing for other singers, learning to read and write music, and even taking a one-month trip to Florence for a crash course in Italian. Costello mocks his own eclecticism in a song on *Brutal Youth* called "My Science Fiction Twin," about an Elvis Costello clone who "*filled up his purse dictating verse while painting masterpieces. His almost universal excellence is starting to disturb me. They asked how in the world he does all these things. He answered, 'Superbly.'*"

By the summer of 1993, when Costello, Pete Thomas and producer Mitchell Froom resumed work on the postponed rock album, they



"FOR ALL THE SCREAMING ABOUT SEX—THAT'S WHAT ROCK 'N' ROLL IS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT, ISN'T IT?"

knew that they wanted a stripped-down record of a small band playing live together in the studio. Attractions pianist Steve Nieve had played on some of the *Idiophone* sessions. It had gone well and he was asked back. Costello again played bass on a couple of tracks, but his ideas were ahead of his technique so he asked Nick Lowe, who produced Costello's first five albums, to take over. Half of the album was cut that way, before Lowe's attention began to wander and they had to find another bassist. Mitchell Froom finally suggested a bass player he'd used on a Suzanne Vega album—former Attraction Bruce Thomas.

At first Costello resisted. Although there had been lots of bruised feelings and petty feuds between all four musicians by the time Elvis Costello and the Attractions closed up shop in 1986, the biggest gulf was between Elvis and Bruce. It had gotten worse when Bruce published his novel *The Big Wheel*, a mocking roman à clef about life with E.C. Still, the others told Elvis that Bruce had grown up a lot, and he agreed to call him and at least talk.

"I said to Mitchell, 'I just don't think we'll get along, I don't think it will be any *fun*,'" Costello says. "But we talked and, really, we saw the very best side of Bruce; he was really funny, he played really well, he had lots of good ideas. We'd both had our respective say about stuff. It's disappointingly unlike *People* magazine. This isn't a reunion record where we sort of went, 'I love you, guy! I forgive you for every mean thing you ever said about me!' We're not like that. I just think life's really a bit too short to bother about things. Everybody's had a good scream and shout and it really doesn't matter anymore. While I don't think it would be a very good idea for us to be trapped together in a crowded lift for several years—which is similar to our first eight years together—we can play together an awful lot better than a lot of other people."

The first time in seven years that Costello and the Attractions recorded together was on August 2, 1993, at Olympic Studios in London. Steve Nieve was wearing shoulder-length hair (which he would shave off before the album was over) and everybody looked a bit droopier than they had in the grand old days of punk rock. Pete Thomas had been the center of communications between the band members during their long vacation, playing with Costello on various projects and even touring with Steve as temporary members of Squeeze. While Froom was getting set to roll tape Pete was trying to get Steve to recall road stories ("You must remember that girl on Nantucket? With the garden and the Depeche Mode tape?") but the keyboard player was denying all memory.

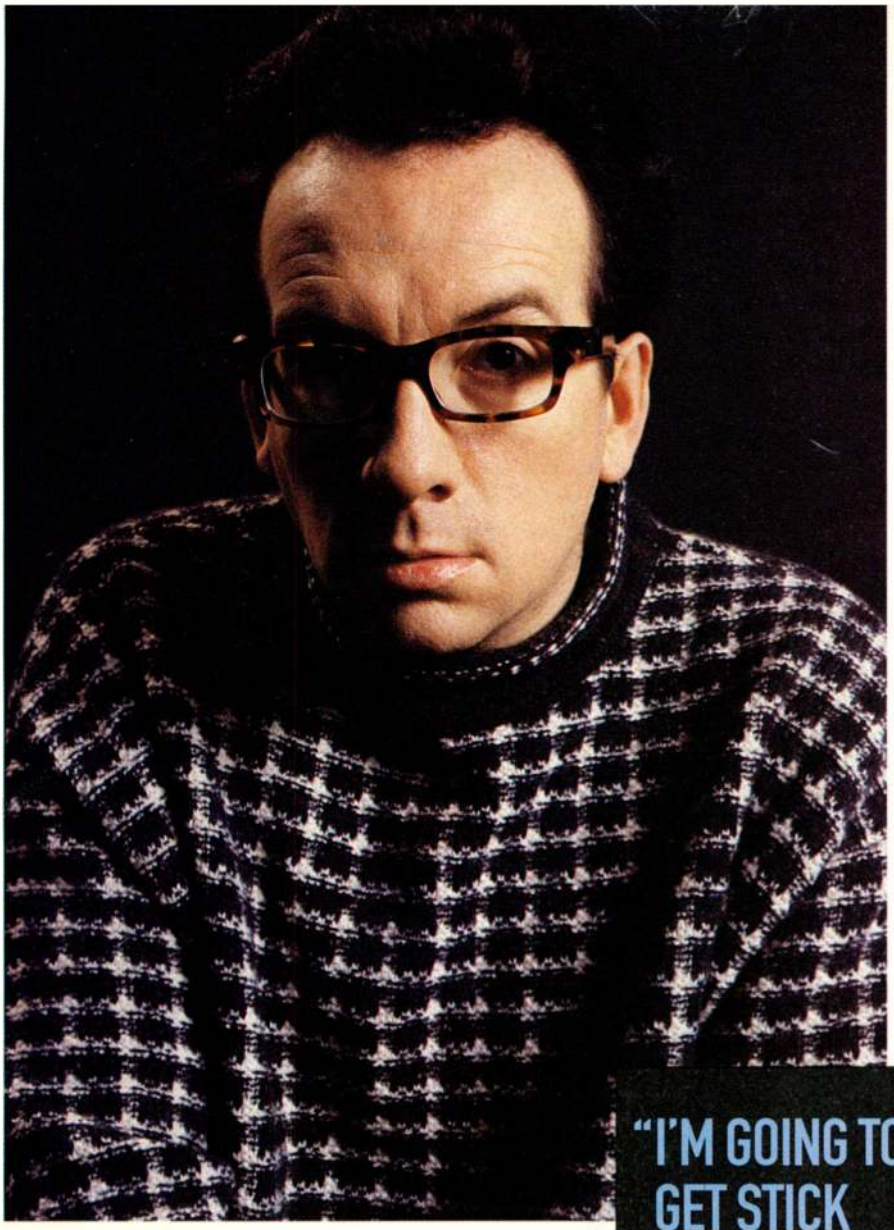
Unlike their rowdy past, the four musicians treated each other with Alphonse & Gaston courtesy. Clearly each was determined not to be the one who started the fight that broke up the group again. They went into the studio, picked up their instruments and began playing a song called "Distorted Angel." The first run-through felt tentative. Elvis expressed doubts about Steve's rather baroque piano part, so for the second take Steve moved to organ. They counted off and quickly landed on something close to their beloved *Armed Forces* style. Elvis busted a string a few bars in but they kept going.

Listening to a playback, Steve sat off in the corner silently, Bruce and Pete were very enthusiastic, and Elvis had doubts. He said he wondered if in going for a great *sound* they'd lost the song. Bruce dug a cassette demo of the tune out of his bag and they all expressed amazement at how much slower it was than what they'd been playing. The lyric (about the shame of a little boy who gets caught playing doctor with a little girl) had gone from a poignant lament to a mad jumble.

The producer conceded that the sense of the song had been lost, but that sound was so great... Elvis wondered if there wasn't a way to have both. Looking for that compromise they tried cutting a version with Elvis playing the first verse accompanied only by his acoustic guitar—to establish the story—and the Attractions crashing in on the second. They next tried that same approach with Pete drumming a sort of Egyptian pattern behind the acoustic verse. That went nowhere. Elvis asked Bruce to calm his hyper bass part; Bruce did but on each subsequent take it regained a bit of frenzy. The Attractions kept trying to bust out and Elvis kept trying to hold them down. Finally Pete said loudly, "I thought we were making a *rock* record!"

Elvis said, "It can rock without losing the meaning of the song."

Then the courtesies kicked in again—Elvis asked Steve if he was sick of playing the tune, Steve said not at all. Another take and then Elvis asked Pete if he wanted to go on to another number. Pete said no, no, it's fine. Finally they finished a take that everyone pretended to like and pronounced the day's work done. The pressure off, they started playing a tricky song called "You Tripped at Every Step," nail-



"I'M GOING TO GET STICK AGAIN THAT I HATE WOMEN. BUT I DON'T, I HATE MEN."

ing it perfectly on the first take. From there on, the recording sailed along. "Distorted Angel" was sacrificed for the sake of getting the band past its opening jitters and into their rock 'n' roll shoes.

Looking at that first day of recording now, Costello says, "We played like idiots 'cause everyone was so anxious to get it right. We were trying really hard and everybody was really, really positive and trying to keep on a really up note, but the truth is we were playing really badly because we were playing too hard. When we do that the sound just closes down. We're aware of it; the harder you hit the drum the smaller it actually sounds, and the bass gets very pointy and you hit the guitar so hard it becomes just distorted white noise—you can't hear any tone. It was just that everybody was excited."

Pete Thomas says that the fact that the band nailed "You Tripped at Every Step" on the first take was crucial to morale. "Mitchell just came on the talkback and said, 'That's it,'" Pete recalls. "When we all stood there listening to it, it couldn't have been more perfect. It was a real lift for everyone. I think everyone's little problems fell away and there were four very thrilled chaps looking at each other. That doesn't happen very often."

Having toured with Costello after the break-up of the Attractions, Pete says that now "I'm the only bloke at the rehearsals who's gonna know all the songs! Poor old Steve rang me the other day and said, 'I've come across this very odd few years of things I'm not fully conversant with. There seem to be some records here that don't appear to have me on them!'" Pete lets out a cackle. "Steve and Bruce have got to knuckle down and learn 'Brilliant Mistake' and all this other stuff."

Once those parts are learned, Pete says, formality will go out the window: "This is just like, Buy a box of fireworks, put it in the middle of the stage, throw a Molotov cocktail into it and run! I think that's what people want to see and I think at its best that's what it's going to be. It's not like, 'Okay, we'll really hold the rhythm down,' or 'Let's get the groove.' With this band we're all mad—we get by in the real world, but when we get together it's a fireworks display."

Costello stresses that beyond this year the group has no definite plans. "I have no sense of how valuable this is in a *mercenary* way," Costello says. "I think it's more in the minds of writers or record company people who somehow imagine it's going to put right everything that they think went wrong with me in between. It's not like the difference between what's-his-name, Monty from Pink Floyd...Roger Waters. It's not like the difference between going out as Roger Waters or going out as Pink Floyd. It's not a commodity, like the Who reforming. I'm not trying to demean it because this was a good group that perhaps didn't get as much credit as it might have done. And of course I get asked all the time if we're going to play together again. But equally, I get asked, 'Are you ever going to sing with John Hiatt again?' or 'Are you ever going to record those Wendy James songs?'"

THOSE WENDY James songs" are not the little sideshow Costello tries to make them. Their story starts two years ago. Costello never had a driver's license till he moved to Ireland but, unlike the chickens who assume they cannot learn anything new after age 18, Costello figured he could figure it out. So he signed up for driving lessons as soon as he got to Dublin, bought a car and got his license. Admiration for his initiative was only slightly compromised by the fact that when he pulled up at a Dublin hotel in January of 1992, he was driving a loaner to replace the car he had wrecked in a recent crash.

As he whizzed past the lampposts, walls and sheep that demark the border between Dublin city and its rural surroundings, Costello stuck in a cassette he had just recorded. He had been approached by a representative of Wendy James to write a song for her new solo album, and in a typical burst of perverse enthusiasm, he had knocked off 10. Costello said he would send the finished tape to James with instructions to cut all of them or none. The music came blasting out of the car speakers with the venom of the Clash and quickly turned that reference into a joke

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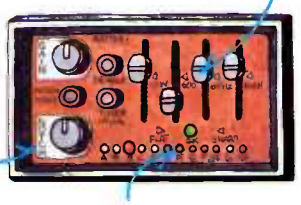

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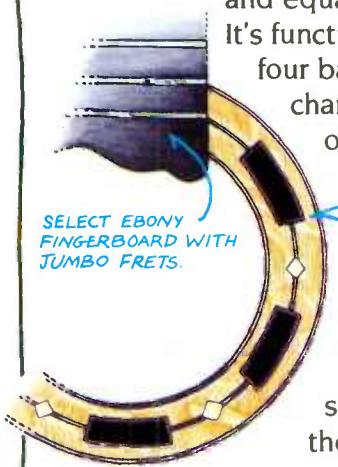

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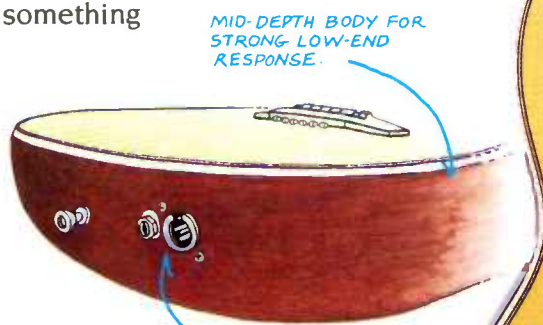

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DO YOU HAVE ELVIS COSTELLO IN THE CAN?

The Rykodisc reissues of Elvis Costello's Columbia albums demonstrate how much more Costello records than can fit on even frequent releases. The Ryko *My Aim is True*, for example, has nine bonus tracks—almost a whole second album. Here is a guide to some of Costello's *recent* unreleased work.

KOJAK VARIETY After the success of "Veronica" in 1989, Warners offered Elvis a budget to record a non-LP B-side for his next single. E.C. realized that for what it would cost to cut one song in L.A. or London, he could find a cheap studio in the Bahamas and make a whole album. Backed by the all-star Confederates, Costello tore through versions of "I Threw It All Away" by Bob Dylan, "Days" by the Kinks, "Payday" by Jesse Winchester and other songs he had loved growing up. Release of the album was to follow *Mighty Like a Rose* in 1991, but by then Costello was working on *Juliet Letters* and didn't want to come out with two oddball records in a row. Now he talks about making a companion album of covers from the post-punk world.

THE WENDY JAMES ALBUM Pete Thomas on drums, Elvis on guitar, vocals and bass, pumping like it was 1977. Beyond having the sound old fans thought they'd never hear again, the songs add up to a (probably unintentional) commentary on punk-era London.

THE GEORGE JONES ALBUM Old Possum mentioned to Elvis in passing that he'd like to hear some ideas for good songs for him to sing, so E.C. went into the studio and cut an album's worth of suggestions. The collection—intended for Jones' ears only—includes Costello singing Springsteen's "Brilliant Disguise," Gershwin's "How Long Has This Been Going On?" and Dylan's "You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go." After cutting the last of those Costello enthused about what a brilliant lyricist Dylan was, saying no one else could come up with a line like "I have been on the lanes and rambles." It was tough to tell him the actual words were "Mine have been like Verlaine's and Rimbaud's."

THE ELVIS COSTELLO SONG BOOK Elvis's original versions of songs he wrote for other people. Among the gems in the E.C. vaults are his remarkably Byrds-like version of a song written for Roger McGuinn ("You Bowed Down") and a tune offered to David Crosby ("Almost Ideal Eyes") with multilayered "Deja-Vu" vocals, *If I Could Only Remember My Name* harmonies and high "Carry On"–like eruptions (You have to wonder what Crosby's reaction was). There are also tunes written for Johnny Cash, Sam Moore, Charles Brown, Annie Ross, the Contemporary Composer's Ensemble and the W.B. Yeats Festival.

about trendies "still digging up the bones of Strummer and Jones." Further tracks found him at his most caustic, describing some unlucky singer this way: "She danced like an ambulance, talked like a cartoon mouse/She took off her clothes and it brought down the house."

Song after song sang on the car stereo as Costello played slalom with sheep and goats and the question finally had to be asked: "Elvis, are you sure you want to give this away? It's like *This Year's Model Part 2*!"

Costello laughed and said, "That's exactly why! I've done all that before, I can do it in my sleep."

So he gave the album to Wendy James and she re-recorded it all with studio musicians replaying the parts and pretty much strangled the thing in its cradle. Elvis never made any comment about James' version of his tunes, even when she cooked up a promo campaign suggesting that he had written them out of response to a soul-baring letter she had sent him about her life, art and ambitions. He just went back to work on *The Juliet Letters* and let the Wendy songs sink into the atmosphere. But hopefully the world will someday get to hear Costello's versions of "London's Brilliant," "Do You Know What I'm Saying" and "Basement Kiss," because they are great work, even if the artist who cranked them out doesn't think so.

Costello tries to brush off serious discussion of those songs, but he can't pretend there was no commitment behind the Solzhenitsyn-like (well, at least Woody Allen–like) cultural indictment of these lyrics: *Boys will be boys, blood must be spilt, and nothing like show business ever was built for letting your critical function wilt under the weight of your liberal guilt.*

"I suppose that has to do with rap," Costello says. "A lot of white writers are really deeply afraid, particularly in these days when you can't say anything that's not p.c., to say, 'It's wrong to say that about women because somebody will go and do that *because you're on TV saying it, dummy*!' To paraphrase *Network*. If I said half the things said by either the dumb ravers or some of the more obnoxious rappers they would be down on me like a witchhunt. And it's nothing to do with freedom of speech. I'm just saying it's stupid! It's stupid to say you want to shoot people or rape people. You don't need a PMRC, you don't need a sticker on a record, because I can just not listen and I have the right to say, 'This is dumb and ugly.'

"There's a lot of dumb and ugly things in the world. It could just as well apply to the lingering cucumbers-down-the-trousers boys, but they're now kind of quaint. It's funny to think they used to be thought of as a threat because now it's sort of coy. I saw country music television last night and there was some guy I never heard of doing some song with a girl in silhouette wrapping her legs around him. It looked like a Whitesnake video from the '80s. There's progress for you! They can do that in Nashville now!"

Later on, Costello returns to the subject,

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bringing his debating skills to bear on several sides of the argument: "Somehow retrospectively people like Barry White are being endowed with hipness, which they didn't have. Whereas the cucumber-down-the-trousers merchants have been drummed out of town. Or you just accept them for what they are: It's like going to the circus. Even Rod Stewart has managed somehow to sing some of his old songs. Okay, he's fessed up now—'Do Ya Think I'm Sexy' is a bit naff, but I think there's a lot of tenderness in 'You Wear It Well.' That shouldn't be overlooked just because he did 'Hot Legs.' But then again, 'Hot Legs' is a true song, too. Nobody said we all had to be redeemed at the end of it! It's not church. For all the screaming and shouting about sex—that's what rock 'n' roll is supposed to be *about* isn't it? This is the water-drinking '90s rearing its ugly head: We're not allowed to enjoy any illicit lust for drugs or bad sex. It's not on anymore. Particularly if you're older! Heaven forfend that you'd still own up!"

Costello sticks his nose back into that particular rock 'n' roll tradition on "Thirteen Steps Lead Down," the first single from *Brutal Youth*. "I suppose some people will think I'm being deliberately provocative because a lot of people get a lot of help from those 12-step plans," Costello says, "but the truth is that the way down has to be one more step. Whether or not you believe 12 steps will help you back up, 13 steps are definitely the way down.

"I wrote 'Thirteen Steps Lead Down' in Spain. I went to see where Franco is buried. It's a big tunnel under a mountain. It's such a sick mausoleum because 100,000 people are buried in this tunnel from either side of the civil war, and he's buried at the center with a sort of altar. It's a retrospective gesture of reconciliation, avoiding the fact that if not for him they wouldn't all have been dead. It was guarded by these futuristic, literally distorted angels, these fascistic gods.

"Nearby is the palace where all the Spanish kings are buried. Whereas the awful imagery of Franco's tomb is so unsubtle and so typical of fascists, at least the despots of the past really knew how to do it. You go down these green marble stairs and there they are, all in beautiful gilded coffins with death masks. And it's 13 steps. Of course it would be, to be ominous. I was looking for a phrase for obsessive and repetitive behavior; the girl is in some cheap bondage scene in the first verse and in the last she's in the bondage of luxury and nothing really much in between except unreliable lovers."

Bimbos and the men who love them often come up for disparagement in his songs. It's sometimes hard to tell whether Costello (who declined the promotionally precious *Playboy* interview in 1991 because *Playboy* is sexist) is at heart a modern feminist or an old-fashioned moralist. "I'm going to get stick again on this record that I hate women and stuff," he shrugs. "But I don't—I hate men!"

NOTHING COSTELLO has done in recent years divided his partisans as much as *The Juliet Letters*, his collaboration with the Brodsky Quartet. To some it was confirmation of Costello's genius, to others it was proof he'd lost his mind. Paul Cassidy of the Brodskys recalls his group's initial feelings as their friendship with Costello led to informal sessions playing together at his home: "Obviously we thought to ourselves, 'This guy's a bloody legend.' We never said that to each other, but the thought goes through your head. What all five of us discussed at great length was that the crossovers between rock and classical

that had gone on in the past, in our opinions, were almost entirely disasters. We were very, very wary of that. We never said, 'Hey, let's make an album,' or 'Wouldn't it be great doing a tour.' We just let the material come out. We soon realized that in fact we didn't need drums, pianos, guitars or anything. What presented itself was the possibility of actually writing a song cycle. We did not try to be a rock group and Elvis did not try to be a diva. It's not Bobby McFerrin pretending to be an opera singer or Michael Tilson-Thomas pretending he's in a rock band."

Asked what surprised him most about the whole project, Cassidy says, "Elvis. He's a very special guy. He knows more about classical music than I do. He's obviously gone into it in great depth over the last six or seven years. When we started working together he wasn't able to read or write music, so the initial workings were quite slow because he would put his ideas on tape or play them to us, and we would be busily writing these things down, which is difficult and time-consuming. His ideas were coming thick and fast, but he's not the greatest piano player in the world. Sometimes we'd just look at each other and say, 'This guy's off his rocker,' 'cause we couldn't hear what he was hearing. It was well-formed in his brain, but it wasn't coming through his fingers. So he just decided to learn how to read music—which he did in about six weeks! Elvis started turning up with his ideas written out in four staves. Absolutely amazing."

On first listening, *The Juliet Letters* sounded so unusual that some people never made it back for a second listening. They missed something good. Once you got used to hearing a rock singer swooping and crooning over a string quartet, the songs themselves started to emerge, and the songs on *Juliet Letters* were extraordinary. They came to further life during the concert tour Costello and the Brodskys undertook in the spring of '93. Onstage no one could miss the humor in some of the tunes (On "I Almost Had a Weakness" Costello rolled his eyes and gestured like Groucho) and the poignancy of others. The audiences went wild, demanding encore after encore.

Following a triumphant sell-out at New York's Town Hall, Costello greeted well-wishers at a post-show party. While he was chatting with two people and shaking hands with a third, a woman approached him and said quietly that she was Constance, a female soldier who had sent him a frightened letter from the Gulf War that he set to music in "I Thought I'd Write to Juliet." Costello has met every sort of lunatic fan and hustler, but a few words from this timid stranger convinced him she really was the woman whose letter had inspired his song. But another V.I.P. appeared in his face and by the time he'd excused himself and gone looking, Constance was gone.

"I've had a greater variety of interesting letters, good and bad, about *The Juliet Letters* than any other piece of work I've ever been involved in," Costello says. "You know, a quarter of a million people bought the record, which is a fantastic amount for a chamber music recording; there's nothing comparable. Of course, you could say, 'You're just being clever by calling it that; it's a pop record dressed up as chamber music.' But it's a fact, it is some sort of chamber music without any obvious ancestors. Even if people's invitation into it was created by my name on the credits, that's still fine. They would have taken it back to the shop if they didn't like it. Some undoubtedly did. But in the main when people gave it a little bit of time it came through to them and in fact revealed itself to be a much more open record emotionally than some other stuff I've been involved with. But then, it wasn't wholly my work. It was a collaborative effort.

"Of course, there were those people in the classical world talking very loudly about 'naive harmonies' or 'wrong harmonies.' Well, wrong harmonies compared to who? Compared to Bach? Compared to Stravinsky? Compared to Ornette Coleman? I have every confidence that once the style war that goes on about any sort of new or different piece is fought and lost in the minds of fevered criticism, people will keep returning to those songs."

COSTELLO HAS an almost touching faith in his audience to understand what he's on about in his music. With *Brutal Youth*, he figures his listeners will pick up on the fact that "London's Brilliant Parade" is a tribute to and send-up of the Kinks, on which he plays dobro as Ray Davies did on "Lola." He thinks pop fans with good ears will find it as funny as he does that the bass on the Faces-like "Just About Glad" plays the melody line of the song, because that's what Ron Wood often does. (He thinks it's a further hoot that the Faces always sang randy songs about getting laid and in his version the singer is relieved that he did not get laid.)

Costello assumes his listeners get inside musical jokes because he himself always catches such things. Costello's father was a well-known British big band singer and trumpet player, and young Declan grew up surrounded by music. The breadth of his musical vocabulary is sometimes spooky. Six years ago Costello agreed to be a judge in *Musician*'s Best Unsigned Band contest. Sitting in T-Bone Burnett's California apartment, Costello impressed his fellow judges not because after hearing one song he could point out each entrant's influences and references (any number of otherwise useless critics could do that), but because he kept correctly deducing all their *personal* situations.

"This girl sounds like she plays in little cafes by the ocean," he'd say. She did, on Cape Cod.

"This is a band of well-off college students whose parents bought them their gear when they were at school in...not New York... Boston!"

All true; it was like playing "Name That Tune" with Kreskin.

Not to claim Costello has psychic powers, but how would you feel if you took a copy of *Brutal Youth* to New Zealand, put it on in a car touring the countryside, and when it got to the song "Rocking Horse Road" told another passenger, "Oh, this song is about a street Elvis got lost on somewhere in this country," only to have the driver turn around and announce, "Rocking Horse Road? Why that's it, right over there!"

Bring that absurd coincidence up to Costello and he just says, "So now you know what I mean."

Well, maybe it could use a *little* explanation. Rocking Horse Road is a long street down the middle of a peninsula near Christchurch. Costello was drawn there because the area has the same name as the Liverpool resort where he spent summers in his youth—New Brighton. After hours wandering the beach in the hot sun, Costello stumbled, disoriented, through the suburban neighborhood nearby and found himself gripped by an unreasonable panic.

"It just became like the twilight zone," he says. "I started to think later on, when I reflected on it, that that's many people's ideal. That could have been the life I aspired to when I was a schoolboy; to have a nice house on a nice street. I didn't want to write 'Pleasant Valley Sunday': It's more personal than that. This is one way it could have gone for me and then it didn't."

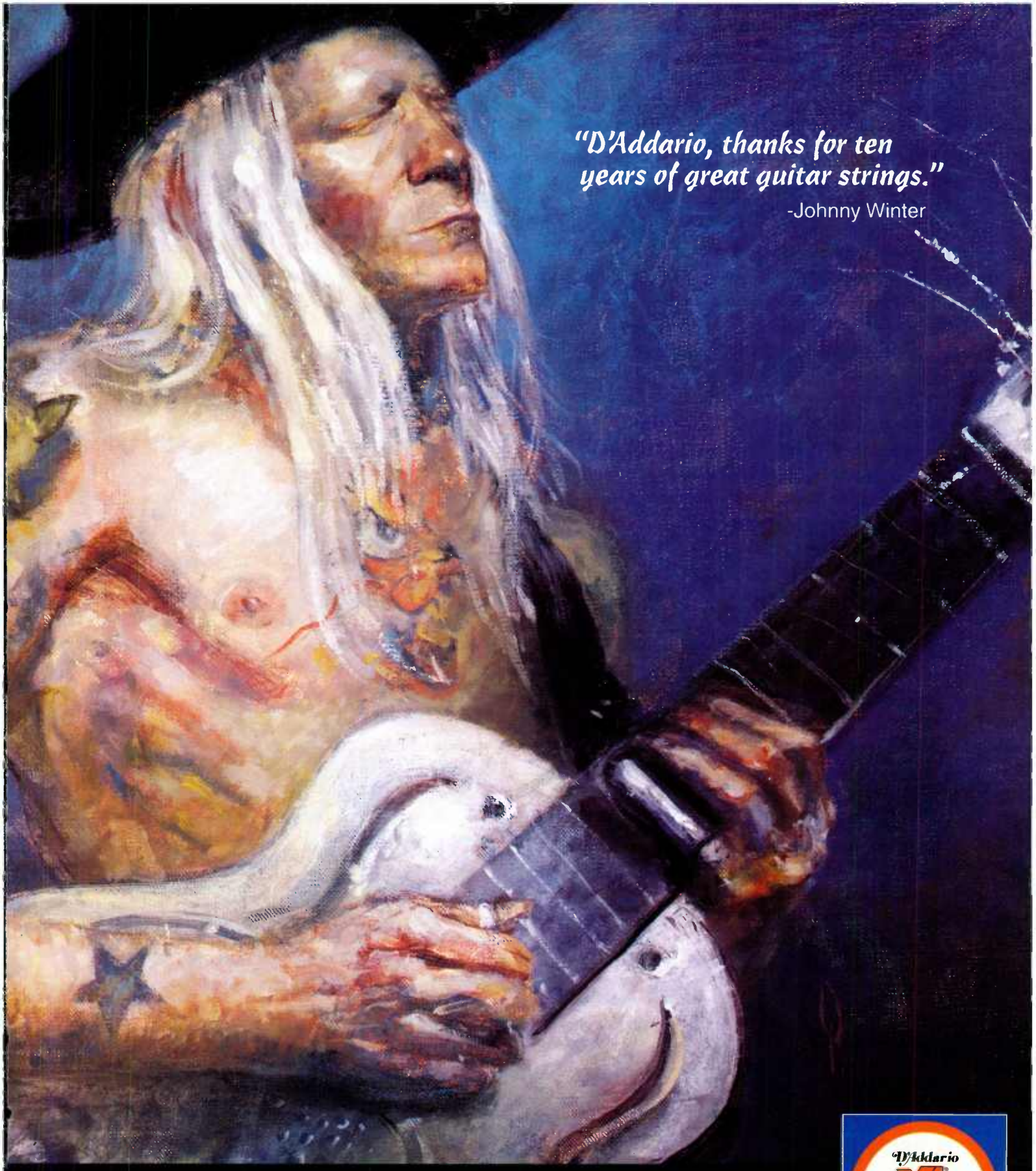
MUSICAL YOUTH

In a previous *Musician* interview Elvis Costello pleaded for the return of his stolen Telecaster. He got it back, but now prefers the Tele with which he'd replaced it. A Fender loyalist, he also has two Jazzmasters. The "magic" guitar on ***Brutal Youth***, he says, is a Gibson E160 sunburst that inspired him to write six songs (most of which made the album) on the day he got it. Elvis is still playing through two Vox AC30 amps. His acoustic guitars include a Ferrington, a Martin 12-string and a Martin D-28. "My main Martin is 00018, a prewar I'm getting fixed up." He uses D'Addario strings on his acoustics, and Ernie Balls on his electrics, "heavier than most people's—I like the sound of the strain."

Costello says it's small hands, not friendship with McCartney, that made him choose his old Hofner Beatle bass and Hofner President. Still he borrowed Pete Thomas's Precision on "Kinder Murder." Nick Lowe also played a Precision on the album. Elvis's wife Cait keeps a Precision in their living room that Elvis often plays. Bruce Thomas, however, approached this album with a Jerry Jones recreation of a Danelectro Longhorn. Pete Thomas played a Gretsch drumkit with what Elvis calls "the very bright characteristic Attractions snare. It goes *konk*," and Zildjian cymbals.

Steve Nieve played an assortment of cheap upright pianos purchased for the sessions so that he could stick tacks into the hammers and other mutilations not acceptable with studio rentals. He also arranged a little house of keyboards so that if the track called for a switch from, say, piano to organ on the chorus, he made the change live in the studio, rather than have to go back and overdub. Around him were a Hammond Organ, a Vox Continental, Wurlitzer and Roland electric pianos. Although a Chamberlain pops up once or twice on ***Brutal Youth***, the "Mitchell Froom subculture" did not appear much this time out. They used Sennheiser 441 mikes for vocals, Shure SM57s on most of the instruments, and Neumann KM-100s with binaural heads on the drums.

In the middle of E.C.'s music room sits a Roland RD-1000, MIDI'd up for his film scoring, and a Bechstein grand piano. Over in the corner are a couple of old Yamaha synths and an antique harmonium Mitchell Froom dragged into the ***Brutal Youth*** sessions and Costello liberated.



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And that is the real theme of *Brutal Youth*. The soulful "Rocking Horse Road," the goofy "My Science Fiction Twin," the biting "All the Rage" and the elegiac "Favorite Hour" all deal, in one way or another, with the notion of another self who lives the life Costello might have lived. *Brutal Youth* is full of doppelgangers, secret sharers and bizarro worlds.

"Some people have imaginary friends," Costello says. "Well, I have my imaginary friend when I'm feeling dark; it's 'My Science Fiction Twin.' The first verse of that song is the flip side of the last verse of 'Rocking Horse Road.' Even if I'd done this job I still could have ended up living in Weybridge with a creation of the plastic surgeon.

"There are all these people who live these apparently hollow lives of celebrity in *Hello* magazine and stagger from one of those appraisals to another. I wonder what the life in between is like? Perhaps it's not unlike this, perhaps I shouldn't judge them. I'm not really judging them—I'm saying I could have been that.

"Also, it's about how if you have a tabloid life and then you write about it in your songs as well, that's fair enough for as long as people are fascinated. But I've always resisted that. Certainly people know a little more about me than I'm really happy about, but I can hardly complain if I put intimate details in songs. But I use them as the material out of which to make songs which are about something else entirely. I mean, I don't think I've written too many weepy *here are my wounds* songs. Because I think in the long run they're useless beyond being cathartic for the writer.

"'All the Rage' is the other side of the coin from 'Science Fiction Twin.' You realize that the things you're saying, you're saying to yourself as well. Which is the best kind of accusative song."

On "All the Rage" Costello sings, " Don't try to touch my heart, it's darker than you think/And don't try to read my mind because it's full of disappearing ink." Coming late on the album, those lines have the effect of summoning the ghost of that young Elvis Costello Ryko is currently reissuing to tell the world, *Just because we've been on this 15-year journey together, don't think you know me any better now than you did then.*

"Yeah," Costello nods, "but I'm also saying it to myself. Maybe that's the distance, maybe that's the award that's been given to you for the journey. I don't want any long-service medals, I don't want any sympathy or special consideration because of it. But I do honestly mean what I say on the bridge. If anybody's on my back then I would say that the bridge of that song is about as close to it as I've been able to put in a song. I will just go along the way I want to and there isn't really anything that anybody can much do about it."

The bridge Costello's referring to goes:

I'll probably play along left to my own devices

Spare me the drone of your advice

The sins of garter and gin confession may delay

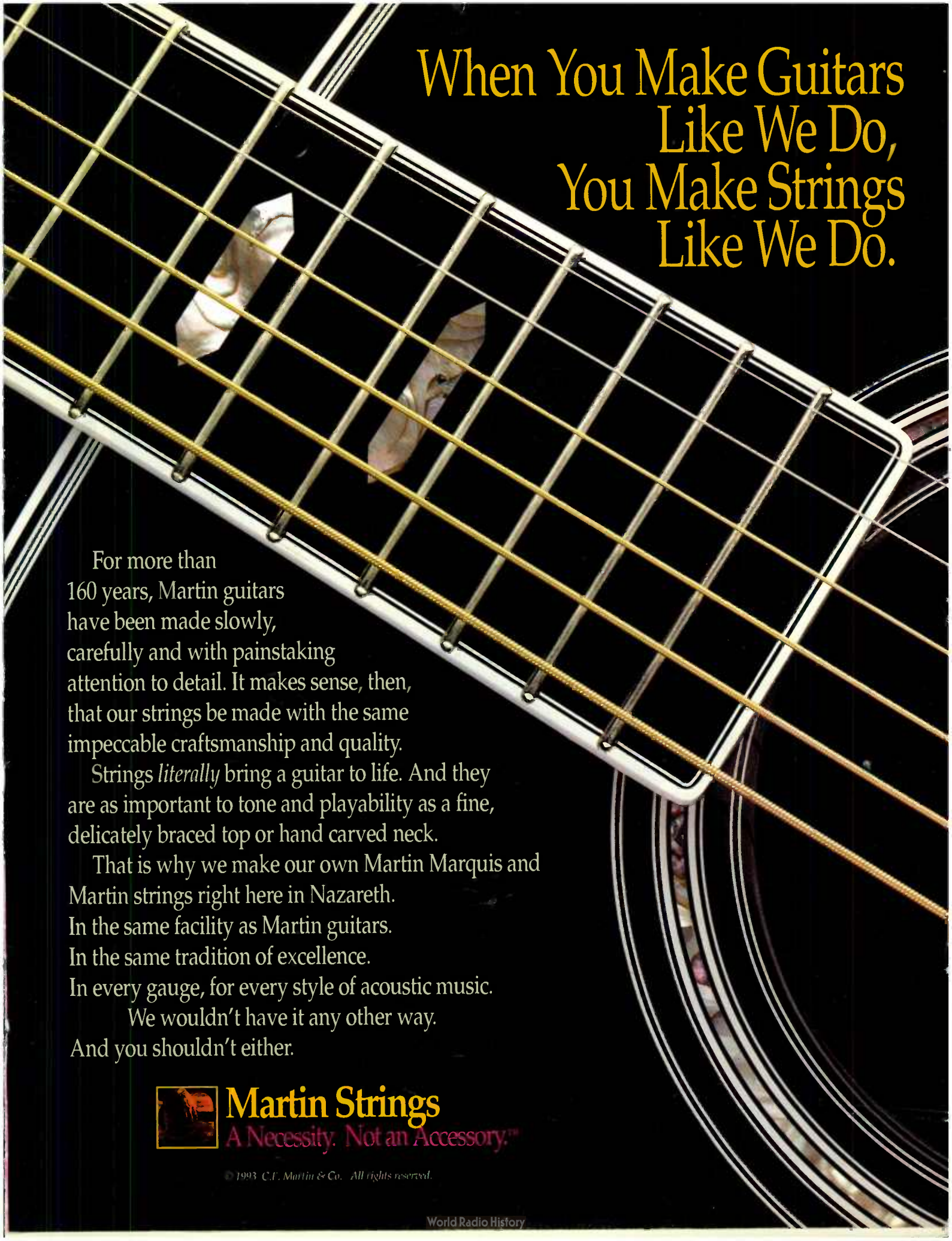
You know the measuring pole, the merry boots of clay?

I've heard it all before. You'll say it anyway.

Costello was going to close the album with "All the Rage," but thought that might seem like he was trying to be 22 again. So he added a coda, a song he wrote when he was at Dartington, a British college/music retreat, where he and the Brodsky Quartet put the finishing touches on *The Juliet Letters* in the summer of 1992. "Favorite Hour" is a gently melancholy song that implies something really sinister—perhaps a condemned man waiting for his hanging—before coming back to campus for the final verse, which contains the phrase, "Now there's a tragic waste of brutal youth."

"We were leaving Dartington when I wrote the last verse," Costello says. "It was a bit like a more reflective version of 'Science Fiction Twin' or 'Rocking Horse Road.' It is about the options that have come up and gone away. One of them was college life. Sometimes you see colleges and they look so welcoming, and I never did that. When I was down there I saw a chapel which was now a music hall, beautiful trees and gardens with Henry Moore sculptures we stumbled on in the woods. I thought, 'This could have been the life I had.' On the last verse I deliberately made all the imagery like when you read translations of German poetry and Schubert; it's all about babbling brooks and stuff. It is probably beautiful in German, but when you read the English translation it's sort of trite. Maybe it's trite in German, I don't know—but it doesn't really matter because the music carries it. So I said the waving branches are waving goodbye, and the murmuring brook had better speak up.

"Really, what it comes down to is, I don't count my blessings! So you've got 'All the Rage,' all that rage that you can't ever get free of. And then in 'Favorite Hour' it's 'blessings I don't count/Small mercies and such.' It's as simple as that. When some- [*cont'd on page 97*]



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think of as punks," Nelson says, "they're old guys like us now. *They* are having trouble getting played." No doubt about it, the country youthquake is in full swing, and nowhere is it more obvious than at country radio. Although Jones' 1992 *Walls Can Fall*, like Nelson's *Across the Borderline* collection of last year, sold between 400,000 and 500,000 copies apiece, both masters spent 1993 complaining that country radio acted like they weren't there.

"I think Steve Earle said it best once when he was talking about radio at a seminar," KMPS's Murphy says. "He said, 'What a lot of artists don't understand is that radio stations don't sell records. They sell tires.' Quite frankly, I don't think it gets any more country than Junior Brown and Jimmie Dale Gilmore. But there limitations to what programmers—and listeners—will accept at one time. I remember when I first heard Dwight Yoakam. I thought, 'What the hell is that?' A lot of people never get past that stage."

Compared to many of his peers at radio, Murphy, who sits on the board of the Country Music Association, amounts to a progressive. Currently, he praises the Mavericks, a country band from Miami whose lead singer, Raul Malo, champions the romantic tradition of country singers from Webb Pierce and Ray Price to Patsy Cline and Elvis Presley. Murphy is sold as well on Gilmore, although he readily admits that nothing from *Spinning Around the Sun*, Gilmore's Elektra debut, gets played at KMPS in anything like regular rotation.

"I've said this in front of program directions: We all think we're too cool for the room," Murphy says. "The egos in radio are just as big as the ones in the music business. We'll hear a record once and think, 'Wow, we know what that band is about.' And that's just not always true. There were people who didn't play 'Achy Breaky Heart' at first. Radio wants to be safe. But safe is really dangerous. In '86, nobody wanted Randy Travis when he came out. That was just too darn country."

Record company chiefs, who have to contend with country radio whether they like it or not, can be sanguine about the airplay demands of that business, or pretty impatient. Last year, when country radio consultants began to pronounce on the acceptability of certain stylistic traits of Nashville recordings, Liberty Records President and CEO Jimmy Bowen took the unusual step of publishing a trade editorial that said, essentially, "Leave the aesthetic decisions to us."

"In Nashville there's no alternative marketing—it's totally radio driven. If you're not going after radio, you're not country."

"If you really scour the rosters of a lot of labels in Nashville," says Asylum Records president Kyle Lehning, "you'll find many who have a pretty interesting variety of things. But we're finding is that only a small percentage seems to hit the mark. That's always the case with the record business, but there doesn't seem to be as many avenues of exposure for the variety of artists. I don't think country radio needs to care about that. We're on the same field, but in different trenches." Lehning figures his job is not to knock country radio—it's to find other ways of exposing acts. "The creative limitations of radio," he says, "are not the creative limitations of artists."

To characterize Asylum, Elektra Entertainment's almost three-year-old Nashville division, as the least mainstream label in Nashville is misleading; "Who really knows what the next thing might be?" Lehning is fond of asking. But he will say that Asylum seeks to offer the country marketplace something different rather than more of the same. Tony Brown, now president of MCA/Nashville, set the stage for so-called "left of center" Nashville signings in the early '80s with artists like Lyle Lovett, Nanci Griffith and Steve Earle. Yet Brown never deceives himself about how country remains its own domain. The genre, unlike rock or R&B, has yet to break apart into different taste sectors that can always sustain themselves financially within the big picture.

"Country artists are people who really want to be in this business," Brown says. "The ability to play the game has to come in there somewhere. Some edgier artists don't know how. To me, that's the charm of them. I just wish that country radio would let one through the gate. If they'd just say, 'Let's all go for it and see how far it goes,' then maybe you'd see a fragmen-

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INNOVATION AT WORK.

only the latter is a Nashville project signed to a Nashville label. The problem, given country radio's lack of demonstrated interest, is that aside from print accounts and the equally open-minded Country Music Television, a 24-hour cable video channel, once radio passes, there's no place for such music to go.

"In Nashville," says songwriter Matraca Berg, "there's no alternative marketing. It's totally radio-driven. And if you're not doing the do and going after radio, then you're not a country artist. Lyle Lovett stopped chasing country radio, therefore he was not a country artist. Yet Lyle is more country than 70 percent of the records I'm hearing on the radio now. In Nashville, people listen to my new record and say, 'Boy, that's not a country record.' People outside say, 'Well, that's kind of a country record.' Call it a purgatory record."

"I was talking to someone in Nashville about k.d. lang," Berg says, referring to the now L.A.–based singer who many in the national media point to as an example of an artist that "Nashville" couldn't fathom. "He said, you know, we're fully aware of what happened here. Nashville embraced k.d. lang; country radio did not. In Nashville, songwriters like Harlan Howard, John Hiatt and Bob McDill are king in the same realm. They definitely appreciate all kinds of music and wish there were other routes."

Many people who write and think about country, however, do not care much about contemporary country fusions like Berg's or Kevin Montgomery's—or Lyle Lovett's or Rosanne Cash's. (For further proof, just read Garth Brooks' mostly negative notices.) Unlike the country audience, who time and again have demonstrated their indifference to any sort of orthodox purism, self-conscious country fans worry about *the tradition*. They care that country radio appears to favor, as Brown puts it, only singers who draw from the tradition to a point. Anything else gets stuck with the field's nastiest pronouncement (after "pop")—retro.

"Country radio has now said that the tradition goes back to Merle Haggard and *stops*," Brown says. "When Haggard made it big, he drew from Lefty Frizzell; the tradition went way back. Now, country radio says, 'You can draw from Haggard forward, and that's it. If you start sounding like Faron Young or Porter Wagoner, you're out of luck. And that's sad."

Andrew McLenon, co-president with Jack Emerson of Nashville's very atypical Zoo/Praxis, the company who signed and developed Billy Joe Shaver's album, hears things differently. "I saw Porter Wagoner on the Opry recently define not just what country music was, but what it can still be today," McLenon says. "He just stood there and delivered a straight reading of 'Green, Green Grass of Home.' Garth was also on that night, and he was really good—very high-energy. But Wagoner transcended the moment, fleshing out that song as though it were written for him yesterday."

Emerson concurs. "I foresee singer/songwriters and/or bands that will merge the artistry of country's senior statesmen with a direct, less manufactured approach. Such artists would have the broad, international appeal that Roy Orbison, Johnny Cash and Elvis Presley all enjoyed in the past."

For Lehning, Alison Krauss represents an evolutionary country artist who is in some ways invisible right now. "It's interesting to have a Country Music Association and not have a way for an artist like Alison to be present," he says. "You don't see her on awards shows; you don't see a category that she qualifies for. And if what she's doing—taking the bluegrass genre and opening up its borders, fearlessly exploring new possibilities—isn't valid within the country world, I'm not sure what is."

Still, he's quick to say that traditionalism qua traditionalism isn't precisely the point. "There's all this bubbling going on under the surface, looking for some place to erupt. It keeps building up to a certain degree, then isn't able to find the pressure point that it can poke through to. Traditionalism? To me, it's deeper than that. Maybe sometimes it's taking the form of traditionalism, but there's something else that's trying to get out there. It's got more to do with the innate creative spirit that drives everything."

As for the literal splintering of country radio, Brown isn't too optimistic. "I think we'll have it," he says, "but it ain't going to be real soon. It will be during the next five years, if it happens at all." Meantime, he suggests that the Country Music Association institute an alternative country award. "They should call it the Dwight," Brown says.

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ABOVE: Cesar Rosas (electric and acoustic guitars) mans the Mackies during a session in Los Lobos' garage studio.

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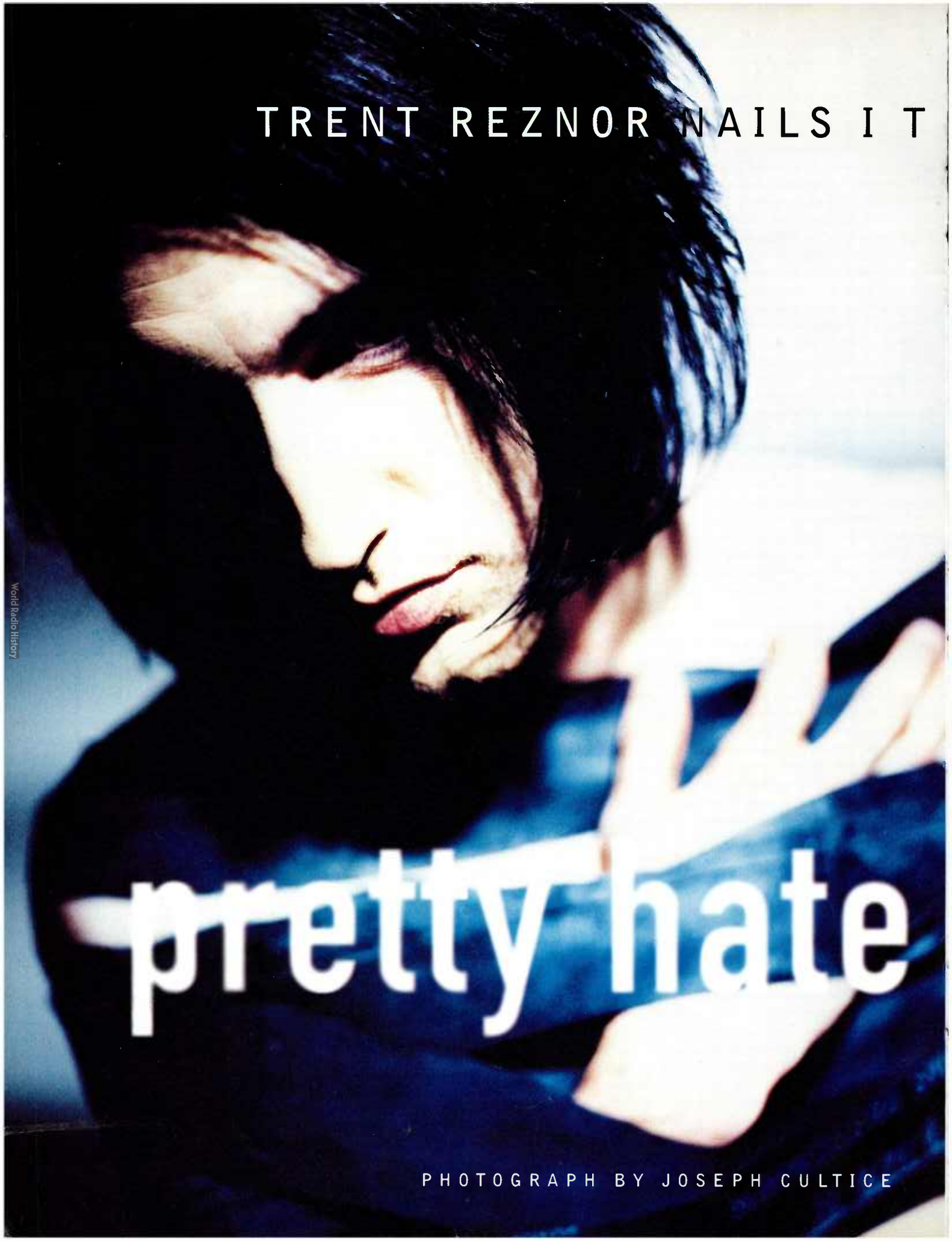
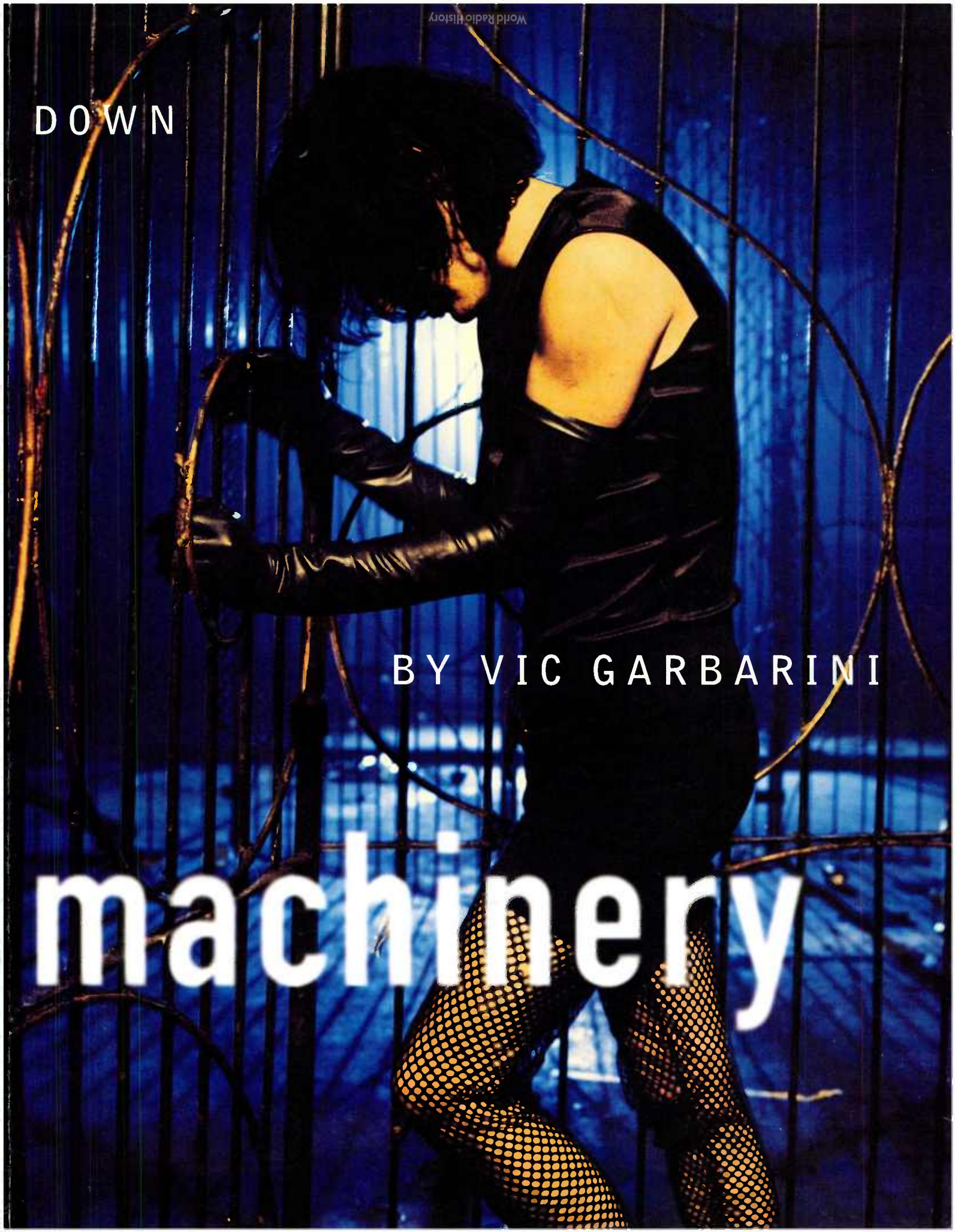




THE FIRST THING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NINE INCH NAILS, THE GUITAR/SYNTH ARMY THAT BLEW MASSIVE HOLES IN THE HEADS OF AUDIENCES ON THE FIRST LOLLAPALOOZA TOUR, THE INNOVATIVE, DARKLY INTENSE CYBORGS WHOSE BROKEN EP FOUND ITS WAY ONTO CRITICS' TOP 10 LISTS LAST YEAR VIA ITS GENRE-SHATTERING SEX PISTOLS–CRASH-THROUGH–THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON CYBER-PUNK FEROCITY, IS THAT THEY DON'T REALLY EXIST.

"It's a convenient fiction for me to work under, that's all," says Trent Reznor, the tech wizard pulling the strings from behind the curtain. We're talking in a dimly lit alcove in L.A. Record Plant, a gloomy Reznor biosphere where he sits, lotus-like, a veritable guru of gloom, relaxing between mixes of his groundbreaking new album, *The Downward Spiral*. Bathing in the eerie melancholy of new music by his friends Coil (who sound like congenitally depressed Tibetan monks from Neptune), Reznor runs his hands through his raven-black hair and murmurs, "I guess I have a real affinity for working with machines in certain ways. It's like they're my friends." He looks up, grinning. "I mean, I have *real* friends, too."

Oh, yeah, like Uncle Festus, and the Thing, and Cousin It...

Reznor chuckles, a rare event. "Actually a lot of people who meet me wonder where the cape and fangs are."

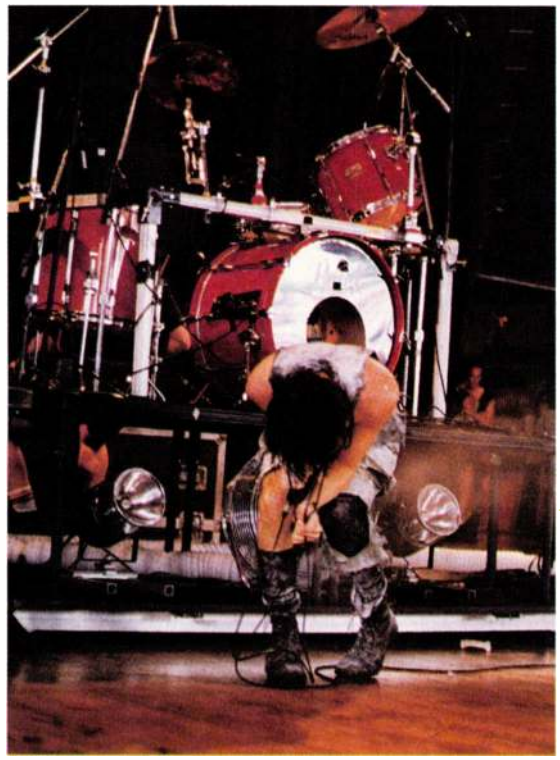
Thin, handsome—he could pass for Andy Garcia's little brother—Reznor has the air of a man who is bravely attempting to bear up under bad news. And he is. For Reznor, that great sucking sound you hear is God and the Universe abandoning us, drawing us into the void. On Nine Inch Nail's debut, *Pretty Hate Machine* (quasi-industrial synth pop) and the EP *Broken* (more machine-driven *and* more raw guitar punk), he railed against the dissolution of his inner and outer universes with a laser-like ferocity at once chilling and a bit over the top.

He is not, however, the anti-Vedder, except in the most superficial sense of being more introverted, at least offstage, than either Eddie Vedder or Kurt Cobain. Indeed, the first thing you notice about Reznor up close and personal is the absence of any malice in his mien. Though often painted as some bitter lost soul, his music suggests deeper yearnings toward faith, hope, even charity. Not to deny Reznor's fascination for the dark side: He did live in the Benedict Canyon house where the Manson murders were committed. (He's since moved to the Hollywood Hills above Sunset—even creepier.) He also made the most repulsive video you've never seen for *Broken*'s "Happiness in Slavery," featuring a naked man being mechanically eviscerated and castrated. Then again, Nirvana's *Bleach* boasts "Floyd the Barber," a little tune about the same grisly scenario. Small-town geniuses seem partial to castration fantasies.

Well, better to externalize it, "to get it out, and feel purged," as Reznor puts it, than to cut off your ear à la Van Gogh. One of the hallmarks of Nine Inch Nail's music is a sense of catharsis, of toxins being purged and cleared, rather than the impacted whining and wallowing in the mire of bands who blindly celebrate their pain. In that regard, Reznor is less pop's Dracula than its Edward Scissorhands, the gentle, wounded Prince of our Disorder, struggling against his isolation to reconnect with a greater whole. His awkward, ingenious mechanical appendages are his computers, MIDI keyboards and studio consoles, which he uses to manipulate or obliterate musical categories. One listen to *The Downward Spiral* will change the way you think about electronic and "industrial" music forever. Combining technique and intuition, Reznor has made machine music which carries the human pulse in ways that astonish. Even the guitars, processed through a virtual wall of electronic mirrors, sound like everything you've ever loved and nothing you've ever heard before.

The child of divorced parents, he was raised by grandparents in Mercer, Pennsylvania, whose bleak cultural landscape echoed Grant Wood's *American Gothic*. Reznor's back door literally overlooked a cornfield. (Mercer made the national news just last month when it suspended all criminal trials for the Christmas season, for fear jurors might imbibe the holiday spirit and prove insufficiently grim.) Every child in a divorce blames him or herself on some level—the mind may forget or rationalize such traumas, but the emotional impact can resonate through a lifetime. For Reznor, classical piano lessons and Kiss fandom eventually suggested a creative outlet via electronic music. A move to Cleveland led to a contract with TVT and 1989's *Pretty Hate Machine*, which spawned two semi hits, "Head Like a Hole" and "Terrible

Lie." But TVT was expecting more of a pretty hit machine, and two painful years of litigation ensued when Reznor found more compatible quarters at Interscope Records, home to fellow left-field visionaries as Primus, Helmet and Snoop Doggy Dogg. His 1991 EP *Broken* was, as Reznor puts it, "the kind of record that sounds like a real band playing but upon further investigation there's something definitely wrong with it." Layering tracks beyond the assimilative powers of the human ear ("if we had 48 tracks we wanted to bury 48 riffs that were meant to come out with repeated listenings"), manipulating raw sounds through intricate machinery, Reznor succeeded in creating an overall effect at once primal and complex. "The starting point there was to make a dense record," he observes with some understatement. "We approached the new one from the opposite point of view—a record with holes everywhere."



Indeed, *The Downward Spiral* marks another quantum leap musically for Reznor, even featuring other humanoids, including some Möbius strip guitar work by Adrian Belew. Lyrically, songs like "Mr. Self Destruct" and "Reptile" ("She spreads herself wide open to let the insects in") are as cheery as ever. But Reznor is not Lucifer with a drum machine; he's more like the suffering Job crossed with the raging Jeremiah, tearing down the false in a desperate, oddly confident search for higher, reconciling truths. "You can have my isolation," he intones on "Closer," easily his most realized cyber-prayer to date. "You can have the hate it brings/You can have my absence of faith/You can have my everything/Help me tear down my reason."

Over the course of two lengthy conversations, we attempted to do just that, going beyond the how of his music into the "why." He struggled to answer questions he'd never articulated, perhaps even to himself, but which are very much at the root of his artistry. We even got him to laugh once or twice... okay, twice.

MUSICIAN: *There's a political correctness creeping into alternative music lately that tries to define punk, or alternative legitimacy, according to an unspoken set of rules. As if being raw and abrasive automatically means you have integrity. They must go nuts trying to pigeonhole you.*

REZNOR: It seems like the media demand that everything be categorized and labeled to be understood, yeah. That became really apparent when we went to England. This guy comes in to do an interview and he's really pissed at me. What have I done? And he's fuming. [*imitates his anger*] "Well, what kind of music do you guys play? Are you electronic? Then why the guitars? And your show was bordering on being theatrical—what's going on?" I said, "You're the one making up the names, I just do what I do. I'm sorry I don't fit neatly into your retro-all synthesizer-cyberpunk category bullshit." I'm watching him struggle with, "I want to like this...but I can't because I don't know what I'm liking." If I told him it was electronic, he'd still be pissed off because it wasn't pure electronic: "Wait, you're a synth band but you use guitars!" Well, blow me.

MUSICIAN: *The new album goes beyond blending genres. The machines sound so warm and human, while the vocals sound eerily mechanical. As if the two have switched places.*

REZNOR: I'm flattered you say that. I think I was setting out to make a record that you might not realize is mostly synthetic. When you sit down behind a drum machine and a computer, there's a very obvious way to use it, and if you read the instructions, the music comes out a certain way. A lot of people reject that because they don't want a Janet Jackson or Gary Numan sounding record. It's dismissed as unfashionable. And I was at a point where I'm thinking, maybe there's a reason every rock band has guitars, drums, real people playing them. So I started this album on the computer or keyboards, then I fleshed them out by bringing in some guitar. Because of my classical training, I feel more competent on keyboards. As soon as I put my hands on the piano the chord is far richer than the E or A barre chord when I naively play guitar. I know where that added bit of harmonic depth is on keyboard, and that's one thing I wanted to expand on with this album.

The organic thing is true on a number of levels. This album focuses on decay, and I chose to use a lot more organic sounds, from real instruments to swarms of bees. I hired a guy whose job was to do nothing but sample these sounds. So there were these new textures. But the guitar is a more expressive instrument in many ways; you can get nuances that are very hard to simulate on keyboards, and especially samplers.

MUSICIAN: *I think Pete Townshend once said he wished he could play like Larry Carlton early on. But if he had that facility then, he probably wouldn't have been so innovative.*

REZNOR: Yeah, there's a transcription of "Wish" in some guitar magazine, and the best part was where they said, "This middle section is virtually untranscribable." Alright, success! Now, that main riff has got to be the simplest thing in the world for any real guitar player. But a lot of them ask me how the hell I got that sound. The answer is, Don't read the instruction book! Fiddle around. The studio itself became a big instrument for me. I didn't really know how it worked, but that's where the naivete factor kicks in. You do something "wrong" and think, "Wow, that sound's cool, why not try this instead?"

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE SIGHT OF EVERY SINGLE PERSON FLIPPING YOU OFF IN A GIANT STADIUM THAT MAKES YOU GO INSTANTLY NUMB.

Just like my guitar revelation. Everyone mikes the

speaker. Why not just plug the amp right into the board? That sounds crazy to some people, it's not technically a "good sound." Who cares? What most players might initially think was a godawful sound was inspiring to me and it fit what the track needed. You have to get past the barriers that come with training. I have a hard time working with other engineers, Flood excepted, because they'll try to undo everything I've made sound a certain way because "drums or guitar don't sound like that." Now with computers I can create guitar parts that I couldn't sit down and play.

MUSICIAN: *So we're talking about a kind of "virtual reality" approach to music?*

REZNOR: I try to avoid any word that defines the process, but it's a really unique sound. On this album and *Broken* I played stuff right into the board and then into the computer, and manipulated it with programs that don't work in real time. Once it's in there, you can do things to it that have no equivalent in the real world. Like analyze the frequency and flip it upside-down. It takes maybe 10 minutes for the Macintosh to process that cut, and you wind up with sounds that are different from anything you could get otherwise. I like the idea that there are guitar players out there trying to figure them out. Hopefully, that'll cause some misery.

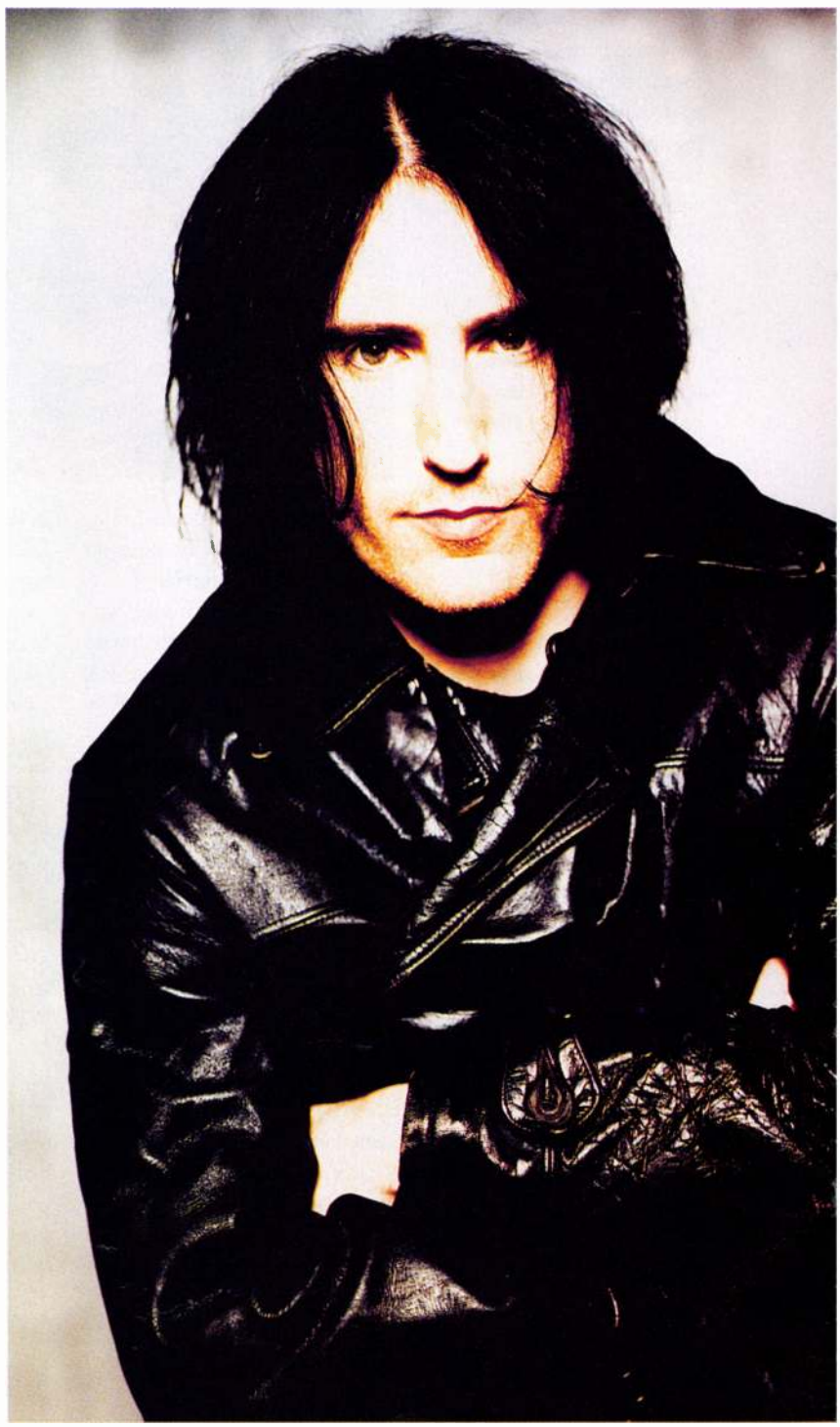
MUSICIAN: *Thematically, the lyrics and vocals have the opposite effect: They're so cold, miserable and mechanical. "The Becoming" seems to be this chilling metaphor of a person literally losing their humanity, becoming machine-like.*

REZNOR: I'm afraid some of this stuff is pretty intense, and I can see how it could be dismissed as calculated or theatrical. But it's real, to me. When I think about the state I'm in, I feel like a fucking loser because I've got things I really should be glad about. I'm aware that I'm fortunate to live in this house and do what I've always wanted to do. And be one of the few who got the record deal. I hear myself bitching about "it sucks to be popular," and I have to just stop because it's bullshit to say that. By the same token, I'm not more happy or content with my life than I was 10 years ago. I got everything I wanted in my life...except I don't really have a life now. I don't have any real friends, any relationships that mean anything to me, and I've turned myself into this music-creation-performance machine. When I got off the road after the *Pretty Hate Machine* and Lollapalooza tours, I didn't write a note of music and I wasn't sure I wanted to do it anymore, to be honest with you. But we had this horrible fucking lawsuit hanging over our heads in order to get off our old label, TVT. *Pretty Hate Machine* was written from the point of view of someone who felt the world may suck, but I like myself as a person and I can fight my way out of this bullshit. *Broken* introduced self-loathing, which is not a popular topic with anybody, especially in a song.

MUSICIAN: *But it doesn't feel like you're wallowing in this pain and betrayal. There's an urge for healing in the howling, a purging of all these emotional toxins.*

REZNOR: I absolutely feel that it's a positive release. Live, some of the songs hit home to where, this sounds idiotic, but honestly, tears just... "Terrible Lie" is one that always kicks into gear. Maybe the first minute I'm adjusting to technically what's wrong onstage, the monitor is feeding back, but by the end of the song it's taken you over and you mean what you're saying. You can't fake that, people can tell. There's a feeling of elation and a strange sense of calmness. Suddenly, I don't really have a desire to go out and fight people anymore. I've gotten something out of my system, and when you do that four or five times a week for a couple of years that's enough. I didn't need to be around alcohol, drugs, backstage scenarios, adulation. Then there's the weird juxtaposition of singing to audiences about being isolated and not being able to fit into anything or relate to anybody. To find a little niche you can just disappear into and

I GOT EVERYTHING I WANTED IN LIFE...EXCEPT I DON'T HAVE A LIFE NOW.



be normal. To not have pain, and have the path laid out for you, which is something I long for at times. And you're onstage with 10,000 people grabbing at you, do you know what I mean?

MUSICIAN: *We're with you in your isolation. All of us.*

REZNOR: Yeah, and you're meaning what you're singing and looking down at these subhuman things going, Take a shit on my head, spit on me, anything. That fucks up anybody after a while. I've learned these little ploys where when the audience isn't into it I'd ram it down their throats and get them to hate us.

But often by the end of the show, when the last thing you felt like doing was going onstage, and your throat's sore and at some point you look out on the crowd and they know the words and they're shouting them back at you, and they're having a real experience of flushing it out of their systems—it's probably the best feeling of my life.

MUSICIAN: *How easy was it to transfer your one-man electronic show to a full, live-band format at Lollapalooza and the rest of your first tour? Sounds like you made a genuine contact with the audience onstage.*

REZNOR: The way I orchestrated the band worked way better than I'd anticipated. I didn't want to go out with a DAT machine and a couple of guys faking playing drums. In the studio, I'll often program cymbal, snares and hi-hat playing at the same time, whereas a real player would probably go insane trying to do that. I start out with a pretty iron fist saying, "Learn this exactly." Then when they've got it I say, "Let's not turn this into a jazz fusion number, but make it your own." Our drummer Jeff was very rock 'n' roll and pretty soon there's a lot of double-kick rolls and inappropriate things. So it was "Jeff, no rolls, only one fill and nothing where you have time to twirl your sticks." [*laughs*] I've probably had a reputation for being a prick in a working environment, and sometimes it is my fault. But I expect it to be done right. And if you're going to do it, let's kick ass and do it.

WHERE I GREW UP IT FELT LIKE THE WORLD HAPPENED IN A PLACE I COULD NEVER GET TO. I COULD SEE A BIT ON TV, BUT I COULDN'T HAVE ACCESS TO IT.

What I learned after a year on the road was to tell the band, "Look, it's not about the chords you're playing, anybody can do that. It doesn't even matter if you hit the wrong note. Within limits. But this music is about people expressing terrible lives. I'll explain what I meant when I wrote this song—which I would never tell the public—to the band so they understand that our mission is to get our message out to these people tonight and really feel it and mean it. It's not E major and F#. It's *fuck* and *you*. Play that, and I don't care if you break every single string.

MUSICIAN: *Did that tour influence the sound on* Broken?

REZNOR: Definitely. When we played the songs live they mutated, they got heavier and more rock-oriented because of the live drums and guitars and the sound began to take on a life of its own. A lot of people had seen us live and said we were great—then they went, "God, I bought your record and it sucks, man! It's like some synth shit or something." After hearing that so many times you start getting macho about it: "I'm gonna make the hardest-sounding record I can."

MUSICIAN: *Offstage, do you get feedback from your fans that your music is helpful or purgative for* them?

REZNOR: I don't know what kind of mail a mainstream rock band gets but we get about one letter out of a thousand that says, "Your music is the only thing that keeps me going." And then, "I totally relate to what you're saying, however..." Insert horrible situation: "My parents beat me, I'm gonna run away; I'm a drug addict; I've tried to kill myself...and if you get this please just call me and respond...you don't know how much that would mean...that would keep me going." I didn't know what to do. I could call this person up, but I'm inevitably going to let them down. I can't talk to you 100 times a day. And if I write a little note, you get one back the next day and another the day after.

MUSICIAN: *You probably would eventually hurt them by trying to help them.*

REZNOR: Yeah, the world fucked them and then I did too, through inaction. I felt shitty about this for four or five days, and after talking to some people I thought the best thing was not to, because I did exchange letters with a woman once and she wanted tickets and she showed up with this, "Hi, we're engaged to be married," scenario. I try to make a point of not being a dick to anyone who comes up to me, and believe me there are many times you don't want someone on your bus fucking with you. I always try to think about if I was meeting someone I respected...

Prince was in the studio here the first day I came in, and somebody said, "Hey, Prince likes your stuff, he had your *Broken* CD in the car and he later actually told his people to mix his tracks a little harder and it might have been due to hearing *Broken*. I thought they were kidding, 'cause this is a guy whose work I respect immensely. Figured it might just be cool to say "hi" if I ran into him around the studio. Then I find myself at one end of a big long hallway and he's at the other end walking towards me. So I simply said "hi" and waited for him to make eye contact. He just turned away. That strikes a wrong chord in my Midwestern upbringing regarding simple human decency. I don't mean to sound judgmental, but I've no great desire to meet Bowie now, because in my mind, I'd rather think of him as this cool guy.

MUSICIAN: *Is that why you chose to use Adrian Belew for "The Downward Spiral"? And how was it working with a live musician in the studio for the first time? Any control issues come up?*

REZNOR: No, he was an inspiration. To be honest, I've been listening to a lot of music I avoided when I grew up—like Led Zeppelin—because people who I didn't like liked them. Flood and I have been on a big Bowie kick, *Low/Heroes* era, *Hunky Dory*—stuff that I never heard growing up in rural western Pennsylvania. But we were infatuated with that whole *Low*/Belew style of playing, and we wondered if he'd be into doing it. It happened he was in L.A., and agreed to come up to the house the next day, so our bluff was called and we were intimidated. What are we going to do? We figured we'd just put on six songs and have him play through them. So Adrian shows up, totally nice guy, no attitude. But I could tell he was thinking, "What am I doing here?" We were in the living room where Sharon Tate was

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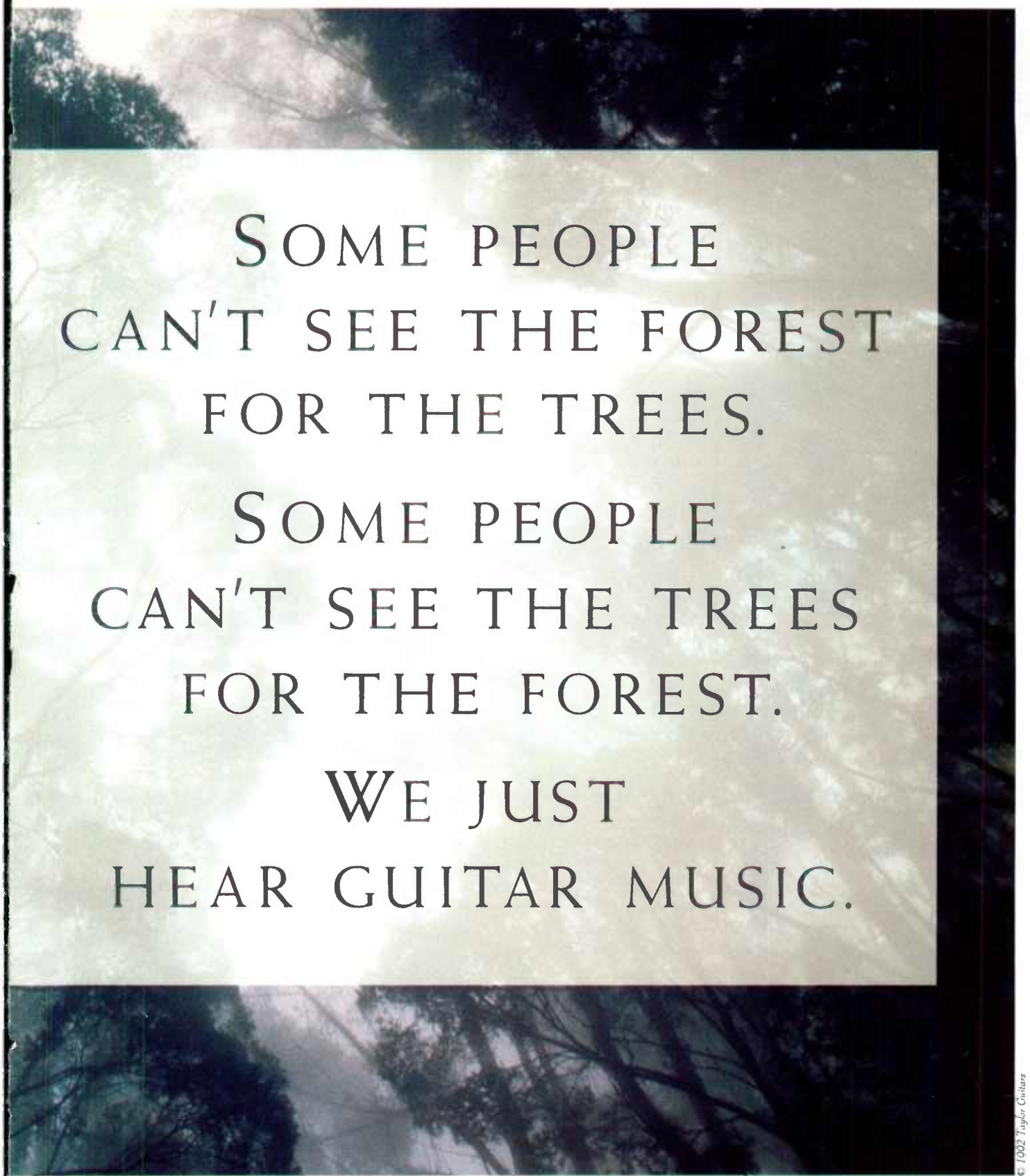

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murdered, the vibes started...what's going on here? So we rolled the tapes and just asked him to play. He's "Do you want rhythm stuff?" I said, "Anything you feel like doing." "Well. What key is it in?" "Uh, I'm not sure, probably E, see what happens, don't worry about it."

MUSICIAN: *This is exactly what Fripp says Bowie and Eno did to him on the* Heroes *sessions. Accidentally. Go on...*

REZNOR: He said something about just doing something with Paul Simon, and we said okay, this is the anti–Paul Simon. This totally fast machine thing kicks in, he stops for a minute and just starts playing and immediately all of our mouths drop open. Just to see someone who can play that well and tasteful. We stopped the tape and he thought we were mad at him or something. And I said, "No, it's worth paying you just to watch you play, man." Next round, we told him to just make noise, come up with some riffs. Later we cut up the tape and dropped it in where it fit. The end of "Mr. Self Destruct" was all loops and him playing straight in the middle.

MUSICIAN: *Earlier you talked about almost giving up music after Lollapalooza and your tour with Guns N' Roses. Was there a part of you expecting not to be liked? You talked about wanting to almost alienate people at times.*

REZNOR: I think it was the insecurity of heavily overstepped boundaries. With Lollapalooza, we ere still an up-and-coming thing. The biggest show we'd ever played was 2000 people. Now we're in front of this scary, potentially hostile audience of 25,000. I was afraid the other bands might be into this star thing, "I want catering!" But everybody, with the exception of Henry Rollins, was totally friendly. I remember Ice T playing guitar with us on "Head Like a Hole," totally cool guy, very talented. But it was a soul destroyer in terms of the technical problems we were having. My performance started revolving around dealing with what was fucking up rather than communicating with the audience. Plus this is the tail end of about two and a half years of touring, compounded by the fact that my drummer had a heroin problem and...now he's dead. And other band members had traumas and I felt beaten up to the point where I was hiding, I couldn't deal with it. The lyrics from "Broken" started to form about then.

Then Axl Rose made contact with us. He was a fan, and wanted to help out. We were going to Europe to do a tour, and figured what better way to confuse people than to open for GN'R? So we did, and the audience hated us. We were terrified to start with, and then we're talking onstage in front of 65,000 people in Germany. The first song goes okay. Second song people begin to realize we're not Skid Row, who came on after us. Third song they'd confirmed the fact that they've heard a synthesizer and it's time to *attack*. There's something about the sight of every single person flipping you off in a giant stadium that makes you go instantly numb. I started laughing, then insulted them with anything I could think of. At that moment I see this fucking link sausage come flying up onstage and I thought, Okay, Germany, link sausage, you got us. So that was a penis shrinker. Then I looked into the audience and about 20 rows back there's some poor fucking kid holding up a Nine Inch Nails shirt, and I gave him a quick thumbs up. Suddenly there was this scuffle and he was *gone*. Never to be seen again.

That night we get the figures for our T-shirt sales. Out of 65,000 people, how many did we sell? Three. Now, I know I saw one of them myself. You would think, just in the general confusion, some folks might have thought, Oh, that's a cool GN'R T-shirt.

MUSICIAN: *Chaos theory would support that assumption, yeah.*

REZNOR: I thought we would have done at least double digits. Twenty, maybe. That was amazing. The TVT thing is nearing litigation, a two-year process, we're told. I've got to stop doing this for a while. Then some idiot booked us on the stupidest tour of all time, opening for The Wonder Stuff. Were they throwing fucking darts, or what? And those guys were egomaniac fuckheads. I started drinking, which we never do when we play. And I couldn't get this stuff we were talking about out of my system onstage. Then I knew I had to get out but I couldn't. The only way out was through the crowd back to the dressing room, and I struggled but people kept putting me back on the stage. I looked down and our road manager's mouth was a bloody mess. I asked what happened, and he said, "You punched me four times in the mouth!" I freaked, had to get away from that scene, and everything onstage was broken. It was just too much shit to deal with.

MUSICIAN: *Which led to* Broken, *and the notorious video for "Happiness in Slavery" featuring castration and other gruesomeness. You knew it wouldn't get airplay. People ask, why spend all that money?*

REZNOR: We're not defiantly doing it so it won't get played. We did it because the director

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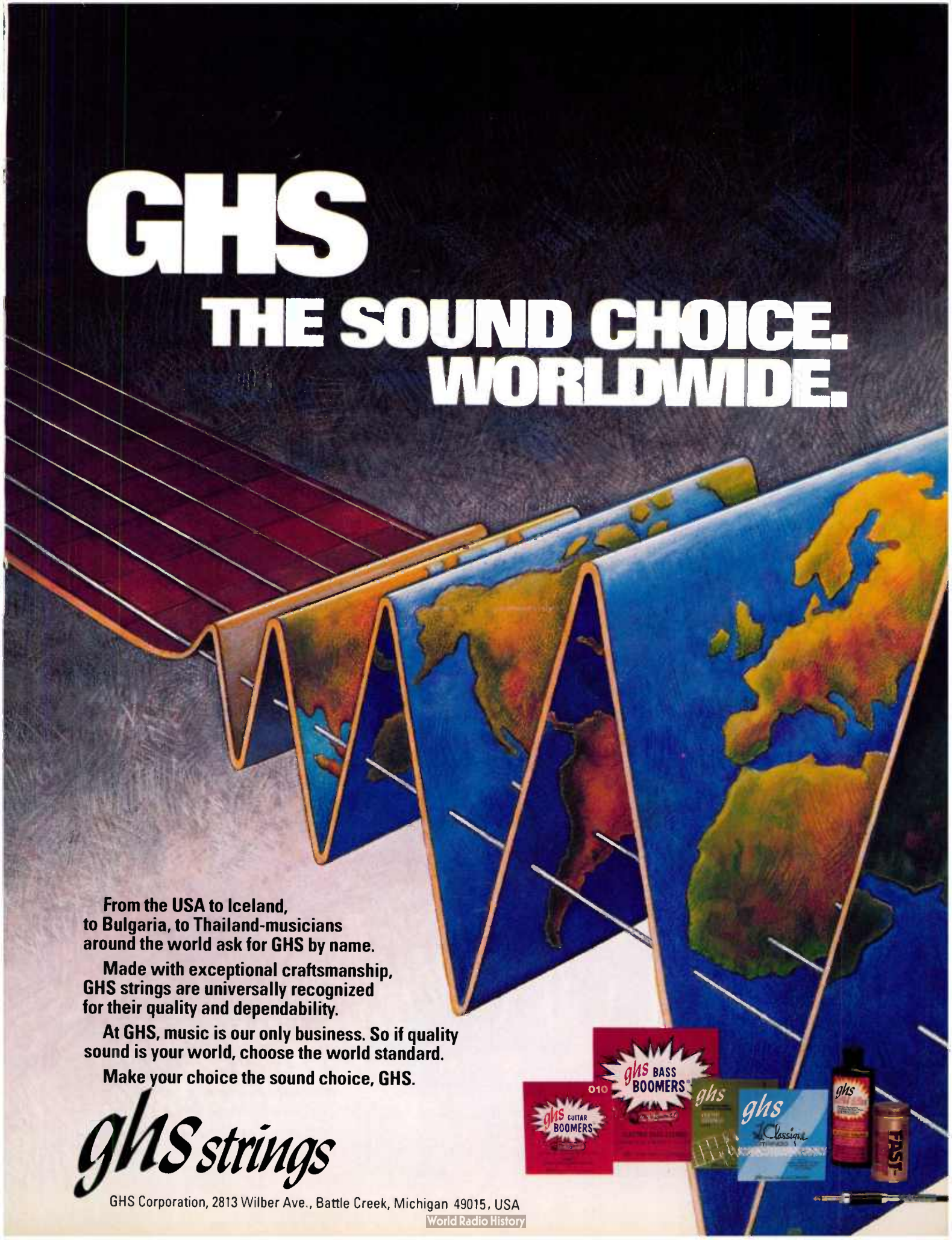

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and I were both into gore movies. We're both into feeling repulsed, the feeling of pushing limits, seeing something that makes you squirm...

MUSICIAN: *Why? Because you've been numbed by the world and you need to jolt yourself to get to what you really feel?*

REZNOR: I don't know why. No—I can tell you why. Because I grew up in rural Pennsylvania where it felt like the world happened five hours away in a place I could never get to. I can see a bit of it on TV, but I can't have access to it. And nobody's doing what I would like to do here. I don't know how to do what I want, and I feel crushed because I have this shitty education. There's a lot of things I wish I knew about,like Eastern religions. My scope of travel was maybe a half-hour radius, and every little town had the same K-Mart and Cineplex playing the same five movies, all Sylvester Stallone. It's hard for people who've grown up in cities to understand that, to have an endless cornfield for your backyard. But that's what a lot of America is—it's not dodging gunfire from gangs. I know what I *don't* believe in. I don't have my own life together, really. I don't wake up in the morning feeling spiritually whole, or great about nature or God or the universe. And I've been on a quest instead of finding a way to start a life.

MUSICIAN: *But even Stephen King doesn't get that much horror and hurt from a cornfield. We're all screwed up, but twentysomething artists saw the accelerated collapse of many of your inner and outer supports—religion, government, educational institutions and a 40 percent divorce rate among your parents. It's hard for our minds to understand, or even see, what that can do to our emotions. It's not the only factor, but a therapist friend told me that in 20 years of practice, he's never seen the child of a divorce who doesn't blame him or herself. Mom and Dad, the sole source of security to a child, have come apart. Unconsciously, it's like the kid's trust bone is shattered, which cripples all your relationships until it heals. Cobain, Vedder, both come from broken homes...*

REZNOR: The stuff you're saying makes a lot of sense. [*pause*] Yes...my parents broke up when I was five. I grew up with my grandparents. It wasn't bad. I love my parents and I'm friends with both of them. I don't blame them at all, because they were really young and I would have done the same thing...

MUSICIAN: *Of course. It's not about blame or guilt. But those emotional scars, that sense of separation, of not being able to trust, is still flushing out, healing up. Looking back, do you sense any of that in your art and life?*

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REZNOR: I know I haven't come to terms with all that shit. I just felt sort of...off to the side. I hated school...I fucking hated it. The fact that it revolved around something you didn't have access to. If you weren't on the football team, if you were in the band, you were a leper. When people say those were the best years of our lives, I want to scream. But my parents allowed me to do things that my friends weren't allowed to do. I smoked pot with my dad the first time. I didn't have to be in by midnight. It was an open environment. And when I moved away I didn't completely fuck myself up or become a drug addict, like some of my friends who had a more oppressive home life. But I remember seeing *The Exorcist* when I was 11 or 12. It probably fucked me up permanently because it was the most terrifying thing I could ever imagine. I couldn't discredit it like I could *The Alien*. Because I'd been fed all this bullshit by Christianity that said, yeah, this could happen.

MUSICIAN: *So your parents encouraged your freedom of expression and experimentation, which you use in your music in creative ways to deal with your shit.*

REZNOR: Maybe all this comes down to me seeing *The Exorcist*. But at least I had that liberated, questioning environment, too. We did this long-form video project around *Broken*, and a lot of people thought I'd become fascinated with serial killers, which I'm not. It's more about questioning my own motives—do I have it in me where I could do that? Like in *Silence of the Lambs* or *Red Dragon*, where the scariest thing is when the detective realizes he has this side of his brain where he could figure out what the killer would be doing. Because he has part of that in him. Facing that. Not that I'd go out and kill somebody...

MUSICIAN: *Yeah, the more you're conscious of where your pain or fears really come from, the less they come up as complexes or demons...*

REZNOR: Well, I actually thought I was the anti-Christ after I saw *The Omen* when I was 13.

MUSICIAN: *That explains a lot of your lyrics, plus those funny marks on your forehead. [laughter] One last question. There's a piece on the new album called "A Warm Place" that is unlike anything you've ever done before. It has a lot of heart.*

REZNOR: I wanted to make a little spot in the context of the record where there was a break in the action. In the midst of this build-up of these ever-growing, terrible machines, I just wanted to remember that there is somewhere...else.

TOOLS OF THE DEVIL

Steve Albini supposedly makes a band sound like you're playing in a room," muses Reznor. "I don't know what room *he's* listening to bands in, but that's not what a real drum kit sounds like to me." Instead of sampling drums and storing them digitally, Trent put his Tama drum kits in 20 or 30 rooms, then played each drum at different levels of intensity into two PZM mikes. "Then I made banks in my sampler of just that, so everything was in stereo, every drum was just the way you hear it, no close miking, no EQing," he explains. "When I played them on the keyboard I was shocked to find they sounded the same as I remember hearing them in that room. You can tell they're real drums." On *The Downward Spiral*, Reznor's keyboard sampler arsenal included four Akai S-1100s, an Oberheim Expander, a Mini-Moog, a Prophet VS, a Waldorf Microwave and his favorite, the Kurzweil K-2000. "The Kurzweil is the coolest instrument to come along in the last five years," asserts Reznor. He'll import guitar samples played on a late-model Les Paul or Gibson Explorer into the Kurzweil for some "real-time modulation." Other string things include a Fender Precision bass and a Takamine Acoustic. From the samplers, sounds are then fed into his Macintosh Quadra computer and manipulated via his favorite software program, Studiovision by Opcode ("great for MIDIfying, EQing and creatively distorting guitar sounds") plus Pro-Tools and Turbo Synth, both by Digidesign. Some of Adrian Belew's guitar samples are run through Infinity Looper. Reznor utilizes Marshall JMP-1 and Peavey 5150 amps, and GHS Boomers (Light) strings. Outboard effects include a Zoom 90-30, an MXR Blue Box, a Mutron, a Big Muff and a Screaming Bird, often run through a Demeter preamp. Vocals are usually punched directly into the board via a Shure 58 and an AKG 414 "when we needed a more 'hi-fi feel.'" His "secret weapon" was two old Neve mike preamp EQs ripped out of an old board which he overdrove for vocal distortion effects and "sometimes ran the whole mix through it just to crunch things up a bit." Trent also wants to thank Interscope pres Ted Fields for the loan of John Lennon's Mellotron, and adds that his "hallucinogen of choice" while recording was Cuervo 1800. Presumably MIDI'd through the internal organs directly to the brain.

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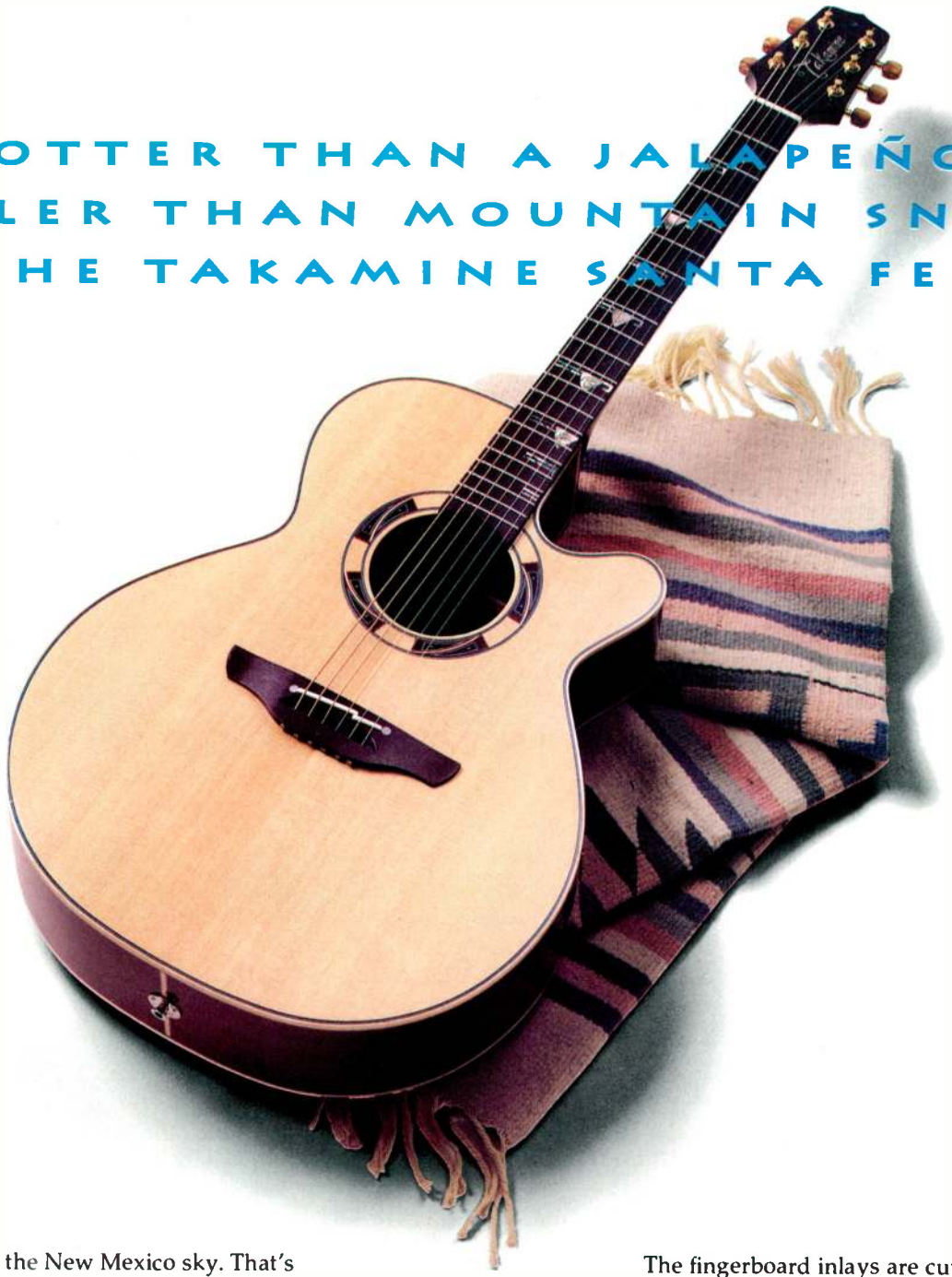

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KILLING ME SOFTLY

LOW-FREQUENCY ELECTROMAGNETIC RADIATION MAY MAKE PLAYING MUSIC HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH BY CONNOR FREFF COCHRAN

STEPHEN SCOTT STEPS INTO THE STUDIO'S iso-booth, sweeping the air with a gadget that looks like a PVC billy club with a hyperactive thyroid. Marco d'Ambrosio is right behind him, fretting. Here in his project studio, Marco is living a scene out of *Ghostbusters*. Stephen plays the role of expert in the pursuit of the invisible, and the handmade PVC tool—officially a *mag tracer*, but more commonly called a *buzzstick*—is the first step in today's exorcism. As Stephen swings the buzzstick from side to side and up and down, occasionally inclining the short T-bar at the tube's end, a droning buzz issues from a Radio Shack speaker attached to the handle. When the sound undulates from soft to loud to soft in a consistent pattern running the length of the iso-booth, he announces that he's found what he's looking for: a magnetic "hot spot," a concentration of potentially dangerous EMF (electromagnetic field) radiation. But what's causing it? And just how bad—or how scary—might it be?

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID SANDLIN

BAD VIBRATIONS

IT'S A dangerous world, brimming with random violence, civil wars, epidemics, earthquakes and environmental crises galore. And now there are *extremely low-frequency EMFs* to add to the list. Exactly the kind of electromagnetic field associated with virtually anything electronic, which includes every piece of music-making gear that has to be plugged in to work. Speakers, amplifiers, synths, samplers, computers, video monitors, signal processors, AC adapters, headphones—they all generate EMF radiation. And according to some studies, exposure to EMF fields is a possible cause of cancer, leukemia and a host of other human ailments.

Maybe.

Or maybe not. The truth is that nobody knows anything for sure, and until conclusive evidence is available people will have to choose based on flawed statistics, irrelevant lab results and anecdotal evidence, all pointing toward some very disturbing conclusions.

Just what is EMF radiation? Is it really dangerous? Do musicians, especially electronic musicians, face a health problem they've never even suspected?

Only the first question is easy to answer.

A plain *magnetic* field is a field generated, obviously, by any magnet. Such fields are completely natural; you've spent your entire life in one generated by the Earth itself. A plain *electric* field is the net charge present wherever there is voltage of any kind, ranging from natural sources like static electricity and lightning to man-made sources such as any plugged-in appliance. (An appliance doesn't need to be turned on to generate an electric field; just plugged in.)

An *electromagnetic* field is something different from either of these, in that it is a magnetic field generated whenever electricity is actually flowing from one place to another. Turn that plugged-in appliance on, causing electrons to whoosh down the wires, and boom—you've got EMF radiation spreading out invisibly in all directions from the source. How far the field spreads is a function of both how much power is generating it and the nature of the source.

"IF YOU TRUST THE STATISTICS, MONTHS OR YEARS OF REGULAR RECORDING IN THIS SPACE COULD DOUBLE YOUR CHANCE OF CONTRACTING CANCER."

Like sound, EMFs come in source-dependent frequencies. Visible light is EMF radiation with a really high frequency (upwards of 1,000,000,000,000,000 cycles per second) and a wavelength measured in tens of millionths of an inch. By contrast, the EMF generated by standard household wiring has a frequency of 60 Hz and a wavelength of around 20,000 *kilometers.* Also like sound, EMFs have amplitude (although the term preferred by engineers is *intensity*). The visible-light EMF from a rock concert lighting rig is pretty intense; that's why you can see the glow of a stadium show from miles away. Low-frequency EMF radiation from power lines, household wiring and appliances, measured in *milliGaus* (mG), is a great deal weaker and thus doesn't travel very far. At five feet from your average television, for example, its EMF output falls off to virtually unmeasurable.

Low-frequency EMF is incredibly weak stuff, and until recently it was assumed that it could not possibly have any adverse effect on human health. The main argument was that human tissue is non-ferrous—that is, it isn't made of iron—so how could a magnetic field affect it? The second big argument was that the Earth's 500 mG magnetic field doesn't hurt us, so the much less intense magnetic fields generated by alternating current couldn't be bad. Perhaps most compelling, the natural electrical fields generated within the human body by the workings of its own cells are vastly stronger than any common EMFs.

CONTROVERSY

PREVAILING WISDOM was first called into question by a 1979 study in Colorado, when epidemiologists studied 334 Denver children who had died of cancer. Researchers concluded that these kids were two to three times more likely to have lived near heavy concentrations of power lines than healthy children. Traditional science said "no way," and the study was criticized by both detractors and supporters as having been statistically flawed.

Denver was also the site of the second round in the argument, when another epidemiologist named Eric Savitz tried to compensate for the mistakes made in the earlier study. His investigation of 356 childhood cancers, including 103 cases of leukemia, reached the conclusion that childhood cancer risk was roughly 1.6 times higher than normal in homes with higher EMF measurements. This was lower than the previous study, but still a surprise to most experts.

In 1991 a study conducted at the University of Southern California compared 232 children with leukemia to their healthy peers. This study concluded that the incidence of the disease was double the norm in homes with heavy wiring or new power lines—and that there was reason to be wary of certain electrical appliances, such as black-and-white TVs and hand-held hair dryers. No word on guitars, Marshall stacks or keyboards, but the inference was clear: Stay away from electrical gear.

Starting to feel nervous? Ready to ditch your synth and go back to a band instrument? Hang on. All of these studies covered small numbers of people over limited periods of time. Some indicated an association between EMFs and childhood brain cancer, but not leukemia; others the exact opposite. More important, the statistical link that was obvious when EMF was estimated (in some studies) would vanish in other studies where EMF strength was actually measured.

In 1992, Anders Ahlbom and Maria Feychting of the Krolinksa Institute in Stockholm published the results of 25 years spent rigorously observing everyone in that country who lived within 300 meters of a high-tension power line. This study covered 500,000 people, enough to iron out the statistical kinks, and clearly established an exposure/risk link between EMFs and cases of childhood leukemia. Kids with a constant exposure of 1 mG or less had the lowest incidence of leukemia. Kids steadily exposed to 2 mG showed a threefold increase in risk. Kids with a 3 mG exposure level showed a *fourfold* increase. And so on.

Before you decide to read the rest of this article by candlelight, keep certain things in mind. First, this risk assessment was based on constant exposure. Second, a fourfold increase in risk sounds terrifying taken on its own, but seems less so when you consider it in context

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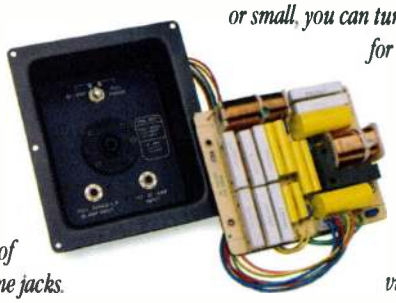

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HOW SAFE IS WIRELESS?

UP THE electromagnetic spectrum from low-frequency EMF lies radio-frequency (RF) radiation, which is measured in millions of cycles per second. While musicians have been working assiduously to get onto the radio since the first days of broadcast, widespread use of wireless microphones and guitar transmitters is relatively recent.

As with EMF, it has long been assumed that RF is absolutely harmless below certain government-approved exposure and intensity levels. But a recent controversy over cellular phones has prompted a new round of research.

It started early in 1993, when David Reynard of St. Petersburg, Florida sued one manufacturer and his local cellular network, claiming that use of the family cellular phone had either caused or exacerbated his wife's fatal brain cancer.

This claim flies in the face of 60 years of scientific testing, but never mind that—Reynard's national television appearance on *Larry King Live* was enough to spark a media firestorm that caused cellular stocks to drop 17% in one week. Almost immediately the companies in that industry committed resources to new and even more comprehensive safety testing, the results of which should become available over the next three years.

The information already in hand, however, is fairly conclusive. No study has ever linked RF transmission, at cellular telephone frequencies and intensity levels, to any human health hazard whatsoever. Period. Most of the frequencies involved are reflected by the skin rather than absorbed. And the power level of hand-held cellular phones is typically below .74 Watts, about the same level as that required to illuminate a flashlight bulb.

Statistics bolster the argument for cellular safety: Although cellular phone use has boomed from 100,000 users to 11 million in the decade from 1983 to 1993, no concurrent rise in any disease has been noted. The typical rate of brain cancer in the U.S. has held steady at seven people per 100,000 for years. Given the number of people using cellular phones, in 1994 you can expect at least 350 brain cancer patients who are also cellular users, no matter their calling habits. While Mrs. Reynard's case is tragic, it does not demonstrate that cellular phones are dangerous.

All of which reflects well on wireless. Wireless mike and guitar transmitters operate at far lower power levels than hand-held cellular phones, typically below 25 milliWatts, about one-thirtieth as much. (The legal limit for musical gear is actually 50 milliWatts, but manufacturers use less in order to extend battery life.) While it is impossible to prove that anything is *absolutely* safe, based on current information it looks as though wireless musical equipment poses no threat to human health. —CFC

"MAKE SURE THERE IS ALWAYS AT LEAST THREE OR FOUR FEET BETWEEN YOU AND THE GEAR YOU ARE WORKING WITH."

of the actual number of cases. Right now the norm is that 1 out of 20,000 children per year will come down with leukemia. A fourfold increase in that number makes 4 out of 20,000, which is bad enough, but considerably less scary than, say, the threat posed by passing traffic to kids who play in the street.

One plus: This study didn't indicate any increase in adult leukemia or cancer due to EMF exposure. On the other hand, another 1992 Swedish study, this one focusing on workplace EMF exposure, did. Meanwhile, laboratory studies have established that cancer cells multiply faster in the presence of low-frequency EMF, but nobody has yet figured out why, or whether these simple and limited lab results can legitimately be generalized to make predictions about what might be happening inside a human body.

Begin to understand why no one knows anything for certain yet?

In response to the growing concern over EMFs, hundreds of start-up companies and consultants around the country have begun to offer testing and shielding services. At this date there is no regulation or oversight of any kind covering these businesses. There isn't even a prevailing test standard. In the interest of establishing one, a group of 40 or so professional testers have banded together to form the National Electromagnetic Field Testing Association (NEFTA), headquartered in Evanston, Illinois.

But what about a musician's concerns? How does a typical modern recording facility check out on the EMF concern scale?

Keyboardist/trumpeter Marco d'Ambrosio composes music for commercials, animation and dance at MarcoCo, a keyboard-dominated studio he built into the ground floor of a combined industrial/residential building in Novato, California. To hunt down EMFs in his shop he called on NEFTA member Stephen Scott, who owns and operates Environmental Electronics in nearby San Rafael. Stephen has been in the EMF business for just over three years, longer than most. Before that he was an electrical contractor for more than a decade as well as a musician himself, playing salsa bass and jazz drums. As recounted above, it didn't take long for him to discover an EMF hot spot.

BEGINNING TO SEE THE LIGHT

HAVING USED the buzzstick to establish the presence and rough location of an EMF in Marco's iso-booth, Stephen pulls out the second tool of his trade. This is a hybrid piece, part custom and part store-bought. The standard portion is a bright yellow digital voltmeter, straight out of an electronics supply house, with a 200-milliVolt scale. The custom bit is a small blue plastic box with a metal plate on one side, a toggle switch on top and a cable running to a pair of banana plugs that connect to the voltmeter. Inside the blue box is the same calibrated detector coil as in the tip of the buzzstick. The current induced by field fluctuations in the coil is passed along to the

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voltmeter to provide a detailed numerical readout of EMF strength. The toggle switch shifts the unit from reading 60-cycle fields only to reading the higher field harmonics commonly generated by electrical appliances.

Kneeling on the carpet, Stephen places the metal face of the blue box down and slides it slowly back and forth. The hot spot turns out to be two "hot lines" about two feet apart, running parallel across the width of the iso-booth floor. The two lines peak at 5.4 and 4 mG, respectively, about twice as high as the warning numbers indicated by the Swedish studies. Then Stephen lifts the detector in a straight line away from the carpet. At eight inches off the floor, the 5.4 mG field falls off to 2.3 mG. At 18 inches it falls to 1 mG—this is the "minimum safety level" recommended by NEFTA and the most cautious researchers in the field. He flips the switch on his detector to the harmonics setting and tries again; no significant change.

Analysis: Two separate circuits, probably, because of the two different levels; almost certainly 60-cycle power lines running through a conduit within the building's concrete slab. An oscillating sound from the buzzstick suggests a motor somewhere on the circuit—an air conditioner or refrigerator, perhaps—which might be contributing through improper grounding. The rate of field dropoff indicates that the lines are nearly balanced, but not quite, which adds to the problem.

"CANCER CELLS MULTIPLY FASTER IN THE LONG-TERM PRESENCE OF LOW-FREQUENCY ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELDS."

If you trust the statistics, months or years of regular recording in this five-foot wide strip of floorspace could double your chance of contracting cancer. What to do, then? Something impractical, like rehearse and record while standing on an 18-inch-tall box, or sketch lines on the floor and stay out of the way? Put magnetism-absorbing *mu*-metal tiles under the rug at $10-plus per square foot? Or tackle the problem at its source—the building's wiring—and work with neighbors and landlord to change whatever needs changing? Much discussion between Stephen and Marco follows.

On the plus side, this is the only problem found in the iso-booth. (The ceiling's track lighting is also an EMF source, but it measures below 1 mG at head level. Stephen makes a note to check them from above when he goes upstairs, since they are right below Marco's bedroom. Musicians may sleep funny hours, but they still sleep, and EMF testers warn that bedrooms are a primary exposure point.)

Stephen and Marco move on to the control room proper. It's a typical project studio: A central keyboard/computer/video setup with moderate-to-massive walls of rackmount gear, monitor screens and other goodies. Marco has a lot of equipment, but only two things are out of the ordinary—a big subwoofer and a wide assortment of ancient drum machines.

In this room the buzzstick reveals no wall, floor or ceiling wiring anomalies, but sounds off loudly near the power amps, the computer monitors and the AC adapters in the power strips. Stephen changes over to his voltmeter-based reader and starts playing EMF detective. "It is sometimes challenging," he says, "to sort out what might be the building's contribution and what is coming from the equipment in a room, especially in a place like this." No kidding. Marco helps, switching things on and off on cue to see what happens to the meter. For a little over an hour they prowl the room, collecting numbers.

Some of the biggest EMF sources are predictable. The 280-watt Crown power amp is pumping 206 mG at contact; the Atari color monitor is running 93 mG; as music plays through the Urei monitors they vary between the low 20s and the high 120s, depending on the volume. But they all tail off to 1 mG within three feet. Since none is closer to Marco's primary working area than six feet, all is well.

Thanks to MIDI, the same is true of most of the rackmount gear. While we find extremely divergent readings—an Ensoniq ESQ-M module that reads 80 mG at contact next to a Lexicon LXP1 processor that reads almost zero—these boxes are well out of the way and represent little danger if any.

The central work area is more problematic. It contains Korg SG-1D and Korg T3 keyboards, a Lexicon MRC remote for the LXP1 and a standard Mac color monitor. The monitor measures neatly within Stephen's experience of the brand, 38 mG at the screen falling to 1 mG at just over two feet. This is almost exactly the distance between Marco's head and the screen when he works, so he might want to shield this one using something like ELF Armor from Fairfield Engineering of Fairfield, Iowa (a steel-alloy cylinder that fits over the monitor's flyback transformer, blocking EMF at its source).

More disturbing is the EMF coming from the right side of the SG-1D. It reads 49 mG at contact in the upper corner, above the unit's transformer, and doesn't drop to 1 mG until roughly Middle C on the keyboard. Sitting at this instrument—something Marco does for three or four hours a day—exposes his right arm and chest to well over 30 times the NEFTA-recommended EMF level. If he wants to do something about this, the options are limited: Never play the upper half of the keyboard, replace the unit with something that tests lower or hire a tech to install better shielding. Oddly enough, the same manufacturer's T3 isn't a problem, reading only 2.2 mG at contact above its transformer and fading to zero only four inches away. What's the difference? "About five years of design," says Marco.

"For a musician or an engineer who works around this kind of equip- [*cont'd on page 94*]

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PHOTOGRAPH MIKE RYAN

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ZOOM PLAYER 20/20 PROCESSOR

The initial wave of digital multieffects revolutionized stage sound for guitarists at the expense of tonal warmth. Now a new generation of processors is bringing analog circuitry back into the mix. Zoom's Player 20/20 ($369) adds six analog distortion/compression programs to an impressive arsenal that includes delay, phasing, flanging, tremolo, chorus, reverb, pitch-shift, cabinet simulation, EQ and pedal-controlled wah and volume. Automatic noise gating keeps the output quiet between fusillades. ◆ Samson, P.O. Box 9068, Hicksville, NY 11802-9068; voice (516) 932-3810, fax (516) 932-3815.

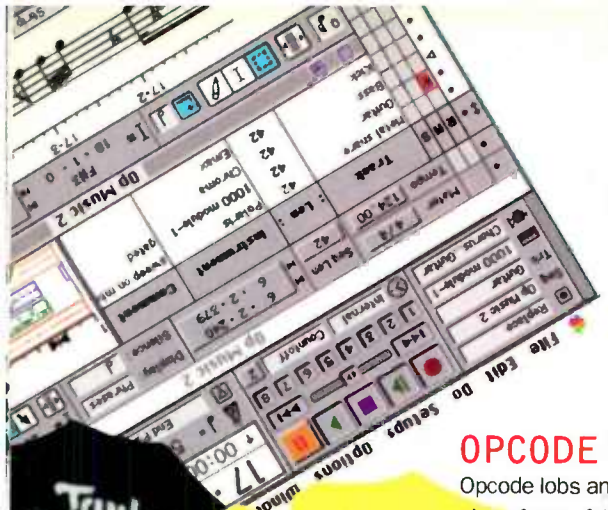
WARD

TAYLOR GUITARS

Taylor is known for a mellow tone, but the two models in the 20th Anniversary series (both $3498) are designed for a sweeter high end and enhanced sustain. Constructed of mahogany with a cedar top (for fingerstyle playing) or rosewood with a spruce top (for flatpicking or strumming), these instruments are larger than a grand-concert and smaller than a dreadnought. Unique mother-of-pearl inlays on the fingerboard evoke the delicate hand-engraving of earlier times. ◆ Taylor, 1940 Gillespie Way, El Cajon, CA 92020; voice (619) 258-1207, fax (619) 258-1623.

LEXICON VORTEX PROCESSOR

Most effect devices rely on a few basic flavors, the most recent innovation having been to combine several of them in a single unit. Lexicon offers something new: the Vortex ($459), capable of blending smoothly between two independent effect algorithms. Furthermore, one parameter—say, delay time or vibrato rate—can be modulated by the envelope of the incoming signal, making Vortex uniquely responsive to individual playing styles. ◆ Lexicon, 100 Beaver St., Waltham, MA 02154-8425; voice (617) 891-0340, fax (617) 891-0340.



RANE FSC 22 STEREO COMPRESSOR

Compressors are among the most overlooked of studio components. Rane offers a no-fuss half-rack stereo unit, the FSC 22 ($399). Features include threshold and ratio controls, selectable attack/release times and dual-function meters (gain reduction or output level). It operates at -10dBV and +4dBu levels, and accommodates TRS and XLR connectors. ◆ Rane, 10802 47th Ave. W., Mukilteo, WA 98275-5098; voice (206) 355-6000, fax (206) 347-7757.

OPCODE VISION 2.0 SEQUENCER

Opcode lobs another volley in the sequencer wars with a new version of one of the leading Mac programs, Vision 2.0 ($495, $99 upgrade from previous versions). The update adds track overview, notation, MIDI Machine Control, mouse-driven scrub, groove quantize (which aligns note timings to a previously recorded performance) and other enhancements. The user interface has been overhauled, too. ◆ Opcode, 3950 Fabian Way, Ste. 100, Palo Alto, CA 94303; voice (415) 856-3333, fax (415) 856-3332.

AST FORW

HAMMOND XB-3 ORGAN

Some things are so essential they form the bedrock on which the culture itself rests, and the Hammond B-3 organ is one of them. The new Hammond XB-3 (in three models, prices not available) updates that instrument. Its sound, a sampled B-3, is processed via proprietary algorithms designed to mimic the character of the original. Tab and drawbar combinations are programmable, and the MIDI features make it a capable master controller. ◆ Hammond Suzuki USA, 733 Annonreno Dr., Addison, IL 06101; voice (708) 543-0277, fax (708) 543-0279.

GUITARS ON TAPE

Fat? Wide? Roseanne? The Fridge? No, silly, your guitar sound. Follow these techniques for better sound from your acoustic or electric.

BY MICHAEL COOPER

GIVEN HOW different acoustic and electric guitars sound, it's no surprise that capturing each on tape requires somewhat different tools and techniques. The acoustic guitar's broad frequency spectrum, low output level and resonant characteristics make it more challenging, generally, than its electric counterpart—but improper recording techniques or the wrong gear can easily make either instrument sound like dog meat. Fortunately, a little common sense and a few simple techniques are the essential ingredients for a killer guitar sound.

MIKING ACOUSTIC GUITARS

When it comes to recording acoustic guitar, the instrument, the player's technique and the position of the microphone are as critical as the gear. For instance, large-bodied instruments may project well to an audience, but may not sound their best from the vantage of a nearby microphone. Find a buddy to play the guitar and listen from one foot away; make sure the instrument produces a bright, full, well-balanced tone before going any further.

The most common defect in recordings of acoustic guitars is a boomy or muddy sound, and the most common cause is aiming the microphone at, or too close to, the soundhole. Pointing it toward the vicinity of the twelfth fret yields more brilliance. Aiming it toward the bridge or a couple of inches behind the bridge produces a warmer, but less distinct, sound. You can put one in each position, panning the bridge mike hard-left and the neck mike hard-right, for a wide stereo image. (If you're multitracking, record each mike on a separate track.)

Sometimes these mike positions don't capture enough of the attack (the sound of the pick or fingernails striking the strings). Fix this by placing the bridge mike over, and slightly in front of, the performer's right shoulder—assuming he or she is right-handed—and angling it so it points directly at the place where the pick meets the strings. Obviously, this doesn't work quite so well if the guitarist is also singing or breathes like a horse! (In fact, trying to record a singing guitarist introduces difficulties ranging from balance to phase cancellation. If you need to capture both guitar and vocal and don't have the time or the will to experiment, try to do them separately.)

Another stereo technique: Place two mikes close to the twelfth fret with their capsules one on top of the other, nearly touching, and angled about 110° apart. This doesn't provide as wide an image as keeping the mikes further apart, but it sounds more realistic, making it a valuable technique for classical recordings.

The proper distance between mike and instrument largely depends on what mike you use. Mikes with cardioid, supercardioid and especially hypercardioid pickup patterns get boomier the closer you put them to the source (a phenomenon known as proximity effect). Omnidirectional mikes are immune to this, so they're a better bet for up-close-and-personal miking (where isolation from other instruments or the room's acoustic reflections isn't a problem). A good rule of thumb is to keep cardioid mikes between six and 12 inches from the guitar.

Small-diaphragm condensers—those pencil-shaped jobs—are usually the best choice for recording acoustic guitar. Their high output level (compared with dynamic mikes) is just the ticket for getting quiet acoustic performances onto tape with a minimum of preamplification, which can add noise. The small diaphragm has an extremely low mass, making it capable of responding to lightning-fast transients and delicate nuances.

The Shure SM94 ($280) is one big-sounding, if relatively noisy, small-diaphragm condenser. If you can afford a more serious recording mike, the AKG C460B ($599) boasts a great price/performance ratio and sounds killer with acoustic guitars. For those who demand the best, the Brüel & Kjær 4011 ($1800) is simply the clearest, most well-balanced mike I've heard for acoustic guitars.

GETTING ELECTRICS ON TAPE

Recording electric guitar is usually a simpler matter. Stick a Shure SM57 ($147) in front of the best-sounding speaker in the

ILLUSTRATION BY MARK MATCHO

45	7/82	**Willie Nelson,** John McLaughlin, the Motels
70	8/84	**Peter Wolf,** King Crimson, Sly + Robbie
102	4/87	**Robert Cray,** Los Lobos, Simply Red
104	6/87	**Springsteen,** The Blasters, Keith Jarrett
111	1/88	**R.E.M.,** George Michael, Year in Rock
112	2/88	**McCartney,** Stanley Clarke, Buster Poindexter
113	3/88	**Robert Plant,** INXS, Wynton Marsalis
114	4/88	**John Lennon,** James Taylor, Robyn Hitchcock
115	5/88	**Stevie Wonder, Sonny Rollins, Joni Mitchell, Johnny Cash**
116	6/88	**Sinéad O'Connor,** Neil Young, Tracy Chapman
117	7/88	**Jimmy Page,** Leonard Cohen, Lloyd Cole
118	8/88	**Pink Floyd,** New Order, Smithereens
120	10/88	**Keith Richards,** Depeche Mode, Steve Forbert
121	11/88	**Prince,** Steve Winwood, Randy Newman
122	12/88	**Guns N' Roses,** Midnight Oil, Glyn Johns
123	1/89	**Year in Music '88,** Metallica, Jack Bruce, Fishbone
124	2/89	**Replacements,** Fleetwood Mac, Lyle Lovett
125	3/89	**Elvis Costello,** Jeff Healey, Sonic Youth
127	5/89	**Miles Davis,** Fine Young Cannibals, XTC
128	6/89	**Peter Gabriel,** Charles Mingus, Hüsker Dü
129	7/89	**The Who,** The Cure, Ziggy Marley
130	8/89	**10,000 Maniacs,** Mellencamp, Brown/Raitt
131	9/89	**Jeff Beck,** Laura Nyro, Billy Sheehan
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146	12/90	**Slash,** Replacements, Waterboys, Pixies
147	1/91	**Robert Johnson,** Bruce Hornsby, Soul Asylum
148	2/91	**Pink Floyd,** Neil Young, Art Blakey, Black Crowes
149	3/91	**Jerry Garcia/Elvis Costella,** NWA, Pink Floyd
150	4/91	**R.E.M.,** AC/DC, Top Managers, Jim Morrison
151	5/91	**Eddie Van Halen,** Fishbone, Byrds, Chris Isaak
152	6/91	**Stevie Ray Vaughan,** Morrissey, Drum Special
153	7/91	**Bonnie Raitt,** Tim Buckley, McCoy Tyner
154	8/91	**Sting,** Stevie Wonder, 15th Anniversary Issue
156	10/91	**Dire Straits,** Jesus Jones, Paul McCartney
157	11/91	**Jimi Hendrix,** Frank Zappa, Primus, Eddy/Fogerty
158	12/91	**Miles Davis,** Robbie Robertson, Massive Attack
159	1/92	**Super Deals!,** Nirvana, Earl Palmer
160	2/92	**Fear of Rap,** Eric Clapton
161	3/92	**The Edge,** Dizzy Gillespie, Harrison/Clapton
162	4/92	**Def Leppard,** k. d. lang, Live
163	5/92	**Drugs & Creativity,** Lovett, Mike Special
164	6/92	**Guns N' Roses,** Metallica, Genesis
165	7/92	**Led Zeppelin,** Faith No More, Burnett/Phillips
166	8/92	**David Gilmour,** Robert Wyatt/Bill Nelson
167	9/92	**U2,** Big Guitar Special, George Harrison
168	10/92	**Elvis,** Horace Silver, Producers Special
170	12/92	**Roger Waters,** Prince, Bob Weir
171	1/93	**Best of '92:** Extreme, Brown, Carey . . .
172	2/93	**100 Great Guitarists,** Paul Simon, Robben Ford
173	3/93	**Mick Jagger,** Hothouse Flowers, Annie Lennox
174	4/93	**Neil Young/Peter Buck,** Henry Rollins, Sting
175	5/93	**World Party,** Stevie Ray Vaughan, PJ Harvey
176	6/93	**Speech/Curtis Mayfield,** Soul Asylum, Chris Isaak
179	9/93	**Steely Dan,** Tanya Donelly, Kim Deal
180	10/93	**Nirvana,** Jeff Beck, Depeche Mode
181	11/93	**Pearl Jam,** Counting Crows, Liz Phair
182	12/93	**Future Shocks,** Year in Music '93
SP1		**Best of the Beatles and Rolling Stones**
SP2		**Masters of Metal,** Metallica, Def Leppard, more

CLASSIC HITS
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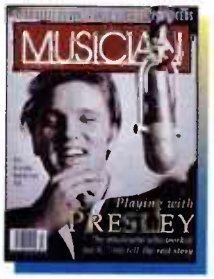
167
U2

153
Bonnie Raitt



168
Elvis

120
Keith Richards

134
Grateful Dead

126
Lou Reed

157
Jimi Hendrix

170
Roger Waters

146
Slash

171
Best of 1992

142
Sinéad O'Connor

SP1
Beatles & Stones

SP2
Masters of Metal

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45 70 102 104 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 120 121 122 123 124 125 127 128 129 130 131 133 135 137 138 139 140 143 144 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 179 180 181 182 SP1 SP2

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cabinet and you're ready to rock. If that sounds too bright or brittle, move the mike slightly to the side of the speaker cone. If the sound still isn't warm enough, use proximity effect to your advantage by placing it nearer to the speaker.

If one mike doesn't cut the mustard on its own, try two or three mikes on one cabinet before resorting to EQ. The Crown PZM 30F ($349), one of the most popular pressure-zone mikes, can add an in-your-face quality. A large-diaphragm condenser mike across the room adds ambience. One time-tested large-diaphragm condenser is the rather pricey AKG C414B/ULS ($1199), but the same company's new C3000 ($699) is a fine alternative.

If you play hard rock or metal, be careful not to overdo it with the fuzz box when laying down rhythm tracks. The degree of distortion that seems right from the stage can, in a recording, soften the impact of power chords and obscure the fundamental pitches in a thicket of overtones, making them unrecognizable. And, like salt in oatmeal, there's no way to reduce it after you've put in too much.

◆ **AKG,** 1525 Alvarado St., San Leandro, CA 94577; voice (510) 351-3500, fax (510) 351-0500. ◆ **Aphex,** 11068 Randall St., Sun Valley, CA 91352; voice (818) 767-2929, fax (818) 767-2641. ◆ **Brüel & Kjær,** 300 Gage Ave., Unit #1, Kitchener, Ontario, N2M-2C8, Canada; voice (519) 745-1158, fax (519) 745-2364. ◆ **Crown,** 1718 W. Mishawaka Ave., Elkhart, IN 46517; voice (219) 294-8000, fax (219) 294-8329. ◆ **Rane,** 10802 47th Ave. W., Mukilteo, WA 98275-5098; voice (206) 355-6000, fax (206) 347-7757. ◆ **Shure,** 222 Hartrey Ave., Evanston, IL 60202-3696; voice (708) 866-2200, fax (708) 866-2279. ◆ **Tech 21,** 1600 Broadway, New York, NY 10019; voice (212) 315-1116, fax (212) 315-0825.

EQ & COMPRESSION

Often you can make the pitch of overly distorted tracks more apparent by using an equalizer to boost liberally around 1 kHz. In fact, a good equalizer can be your guitar's best friend in the studio; if your board doesn't have them, I recommend the Rane ME 30 ($389). Boomy or muddy acoustic tracks can be improved by cutting the upper bass and/or lower midrange (between 125 and 315 Hz). Acoustic or electric, a bit of boost around 3 kHz adds presence and helps define the attack.

Compressing acoustic guitars can help rein in erratic dynamics, though you need to be careful not to increase boominess. Mild compression, say, a 2:1 ratio with moderate attack and release times, helps guitars sit in a mix. For soaring leads, increase the compressor's release time to between one and three seconds to enhance sustain. And for those chunk-a-chunk rhythm parts when you damp the strings with the heel of your hand, hard limiting can help you put 'em in the listener's face without overwhelming the other instruments (20:1 ratio, fast attack and release times). The Aphex 651 Expressor ($495) is a good, reasonably priced comp/limiter.

FATTER, WIDER, DEEPER

I love my Tech 21 SansAmp Rackmount ($595). It never fails to deliver a killer guitar

tone. But, like any mono-output device, it needs a little help. Adding a quick delay during mixdown, for instance, creates an exciting stereo image. Just feed the guitar track to a digital delay—any clean-sounding unit will do, but I'm partial to my Roland SDE-2500, now out of production—via one of your board's sends, pan the dry signal hard-left and the delay hard-right (with the mix control 100% wet) and you're almost there. Set the delay time to around 7 ms. and use the speed (or "rate") and width (or "depth") controls to modulate the delay time slowly plus or minus 3 or 4 ms. Feedback should be all the way down. The result is a shimmering sense of motion between the speakers.

By the way, this also works with guitar cabs miked in mono. But back to the Sans Amp: Add mild compression and short stereo room reverb (around 300 ms. decay), and once it's mixed I defy you to distinguish it from an amp and two mikes in a room.

Sometimes you want to fatten a guitar track but anchor it dead-center in the mix. Automatic double-tracking works great here. Send the track to a delay via the mixer's insert jack (or patch directly from the tape deck), set the effect unit's mix control between 40 and 50%, and set the delay time between 35 and 60 ms. Crank the width to a healthy level but go easy on the speed. If you're not careful, you'll make the guitar sound like the sound effect in a mouthwash commercial.

Okay, so it sounds fat and wide. To make it sound deep, apply reverb; the Dynacord DRP 15 ($1300), Yamaha SPX990 ($1099) and Boss SE-70 ($895) are all excellent values. Plate-type reverb goes well with fast tempos and bright, jangly guitars. Hall-type programs are great for ballads with sparse instrumentation. Room reverb imparts that classic garage sound, and gated reverb is great when you need a big effect without washing out the mix. In any case, dialing in 25 to 60 ms (or more) of pre-delay improves clarity by letting the dry signal hit the listener before the reverb rolls in.

Regardless of how you apply these techniques, remember that the performance is the most critical element. Great sounds can make a mediocre performance palatable, but brilliant playing will shine through all but the worst recordings. So switch on the gizmos and go wild—but while you're at it, play the living daylights out of your instrument.

AIR GUITAR JACKPOT

At the International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, music is the ultimate interactive medium.

BY RON GOLDBERG

IT'S EASY to become disoriented here in America's favorite playground. In the space of only a few blocks you've got a replica of the Sphinx staring down the MGM lion, a full-scale pirate galleon pursuing a man-of-war through a giant pool of water and a 50-foot volcano that spouts Pepto Bismol–colored lava. Who needs virtual reality when you've got Las Vegas?

But the famed Vegas strip pales compared to the 360-degree sensory barrage at January's International Consumer Electronics Show. Some 85,000 hardy souls braved a Pythonesque universe of flashing lights and whomping subwoofers in search of the latest in everything from home entertainment to kitchen appliances. As always, music was a major force at CES. But as the entertainment and electronics industries turn their attention toward interactive multimedia, what constitutes a sound investment is less certain: Are the masses really into music enough to jump on some of the newer technologies?

The jury's still out, but deliberating. On the recording front, the format wars continue as corporate contenders vie for the hearts and minds of America's walkmen. After debuting with units that offered playback-only compatibility with analog, Philips announced a Digital Compact Cassette (DCC) deck capable of both recording and playing back old-style cassettes, and dropped prices on current hardware. Sony countered with four new MiniDisc models for home, auto and belt loop. Several manufacturers withdrew from the competition altogether and showed analog cassette decks with Dolby S noise reduction, demonstrating how hard it is to overthrow a cheap, simple technology that almost everyone uses.

Speaking of Dolby, the noise-reduction experts demonstrated the six-channel Dolby Surround Digital system (based on the AC-3 audio format that has been approved for high-definition television). Dolby Labs believes that music benefits as much as movies from multichannel digital audio, and to prove their point they announced a new record label, the Kore Group. Emerson Lake & Palmer and Tom Scott are scheduled for the initial releases.

Kawai showed an interesting rehearsal tool called Pocketband ($199), sort of a programmable music-minus-one player that clips to your belt and accepts both your instrument output and ROM cards containing preprogrammed rhythm tracks. Cards are available in a variety of styles including arrangements of songs by Clapton, Zep, Van Halen and other guitar-hero types.

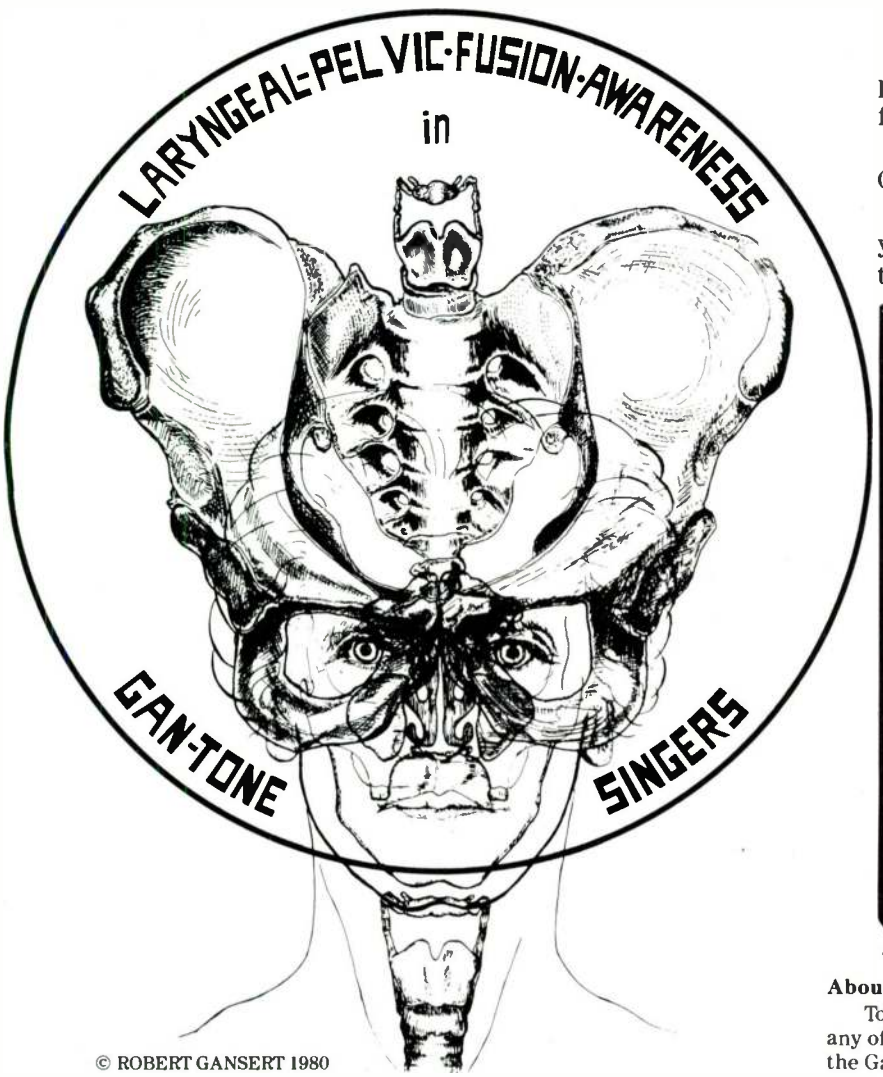
Naturally multimedia was riding high, with consumer-grade tone modules, keyboards, sound cards and software from the companies you'd expect: Roland, Yamaha, Casio, Suzuki, et al. Now in its second decade, MIDI finally seems to be going mainstream. For better or worse, consumer-oriented gear caters to the "one-finger" mindset, offering pros a lot of bang for the buck but less expressive power than they might hope for. Perhaps the next generation of musicians, reared on Soundblaster cards and interactive CD-ROMs, will push multimedia into more interesting territory.

Meanwhile, air guitarists will rejoice with the March release of the Key ($400) from LoneStar Technologies of Hicksville, New York. Looking like a Steinberger axe with an identity crisis, the Key is a guitarish thing that features "strummer veins" where the strings ought to be, plus a keyboard-laden fretboard. Onboard samples provide the sounds with up to 32 polyphonic voices. The real twist is that it plays along automatically, more or less, with specially encoded recordings. Key-ready material can be delivered in any of the usual ways: video, CD, broadcast, etc. Just plug in an RCA connector and the instrument will make sure you're on pitch and in key while you jam along on bass, rhythm chords or lead. According to LoneStar, Geffen and Atlantic already have signed on to release Key-encoded music videos. The live demo, which featured the Unplugged version of "Layla," was so convincing it was scary.

With all eyes on the concept of interactivity, it should become obvious before long that making music is one of the most popular and rewarding interactive pursuits. As the technologies that make up the CES landscape continue to converge, musicians won't be left out—that much is for sure.

ILLUSTRATION BY GLYNISS SWEENY

ANNOUNCING THE GREATEST IDEA IN THE ART OF SINGING



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Why is the **Gan-Tone Method** *described in* **SINGING ENERGY** *a great discovery?*

The **Gan-Tone Method** introduces **BODY FUSION,** the **GAN-TONE BEAT** and the unknown **PELVIC-PERINEUM DIAPHRAGM** at the bottom of the torso which produce the GAN-TONE VOCAL INSTRUMENT that creates a new sound by imposing a Beat Frequency on the singing voice!

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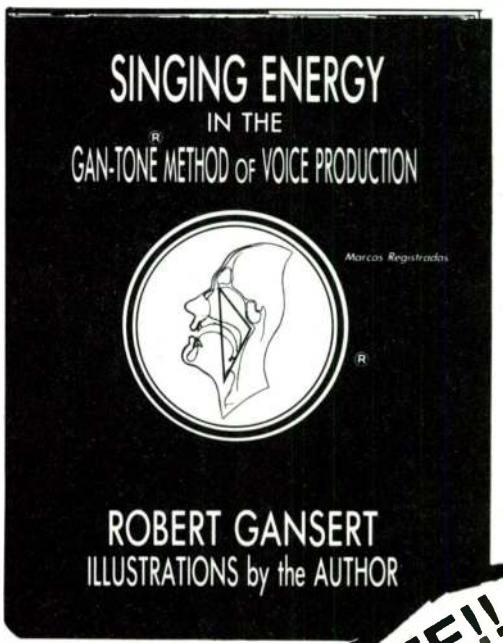

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AKAI S01 & ROLAND DJ-70 SAMPLERS

THE FIREPOWER available in top-of-the-line samplers such as the Kurzweil K2000 is awesome, but let's be honest: How many of us use our samplers to mimic orchestral instruments? In this the era of hip hop, techno, postmodernism et al., as often as not samplers are used to capture and transmogrify soundbites. And what best equips a sampler for such applications? Speed and ease of use. Recognizing this, Roland and Akai have stepped to the mike with samplers specifically designed for soundbite-type applications.

The **Akai S01** ($995), an eight-voice module with one meg of RAM, is designed for easy triggering. Eight sound banks are accessible via MIDI or the front panel. Each bank holds one sound, which you can fire off individually or in combination. Editing and looping are a breeze, too—you get 16 basic, well-labeled editing functions, so it's hard to get lost. Kudos to the thoughtful soul who included "tempo-to-loop point" and "tempo-to-transposition" tables in the manual for those seeking to create break beats. There are sacrifices, though: The unit records only in mono, and at a fixed rate of 32 kHz.

Weighing in at $3495, **Roland's DJ-70** is comparatively feature-laden. It includes 24 voices and two megs of RAM, plus a keyboard, scratch wheel, sequencer and automatic truncation and looping (don't get too excited—the resulting loops aren't perfect). You get plenty of useful functions including sample-rate conversion and time compression. But you've got to jump through hoops to make use of them. What you gain in flexibility, you lose in straight-ahead speed.

Is it any wonder that ten years after its introduction the E-mu SP-12, with its 12-bit resolution and ten-second time limit, is among the most popular samplers ever built? It's the faders, dummy! The ultimate simple sampler would combine the simplicity of the S01 with the features of the DJ-70, look like a mixer, provide ten seconds of sampling for *each* of eight tracks and include an automatic tempo gauge. It'd sell like hot cakes, too.

TED PINE

◆ **Akai,** 1316 E. Lancaster, P.O. Box 2344, Fort Worth, TX 76113-2344; voice (817) 336-5114, fax (817) 870-1271. ◆ **Roland,** 7200 Dominion Cir., Los Angeles, CA 90040; voice (213) 685-5141, fax (213) 726-8865.

KUAU RAINSONG GRAPHITE GUITAR

IT MAKES sense that the first all-graphite acoustic guitar comes from Hawaii, a place famous for extreme humidity. Moisture wreaks havoc on wood, glue, and other materials, subjecting players to endless rounds of tuning, adjustment and repair. Graphite, on the other hand, is impervious to moisture, temperature and shock. And, according to Kuau Technology, it can be blended with other substances to duplicate the density, weight and acoustic properties of wood.

Ovation guitars have featured fiberglass backs for years, but the rest of the instrument —notably the top and neck—is made of wood. RainSong guitars ($2500–$3500 plus options) contain no wood at all. Three models are available: dreadnought, small-body cutaway and classical, all fitted with Fishman preamps and under-bridge pickups as well as Schaller tuners (except the classical, which uses Van Gent or Sloane tuners). They're built to customer specs by Pimentel & Sons of Albuquerque, NM, so individual instruments vary slightly in tone, action and decor. Virtually maintenance-free, they require no neck adjustments once they're set at the factory, and only occasional fret dressing. For these reasons, and also because graphite can take a serious beating, they're especially well suited to touring.

Indeed, RainSong guitars yield a sound comparable to that of a fine wooden guitar: rich, clear and distinct. In fact, my session-playing friends in Nashville were quite impressed (though they complained that the necks were sticky due to excess lacquer). I was disappointed to find flaws in many of the instruments I tried, including sloppy inlays and faulty bracing that caused the bridge to come up. These flaws weren't consistent throughout the line, and seem to indicate poor standardization by the luthier. In addition, Kuau's prices are on the high side, especially considering their relatively drab designs. Nashville pickers are a vain lot when it comes to their axes; for that money, you expect something you can show off.

Still, RainSong guitars demonstrate that graphite composites are a viable alternative to wood, and Kuau says that midpriced models are in the works. For active players, the benefits should translate into fewer trips to the guitar tech for refinishes, neck adjustments and bridge replacements—all without any sacrifice in sound.

BOB COLSON

◆ **Kuau,** P.O. Box 1031, Puunene, Maui, HI 96784; voice (800) 788-KUAU, fax (808) 244-9486.

MUSIC POWER

Over the years these big, beautiful art prints from Castalia Publications have become an important part of millions of homes, libraries, schools and studios. The most comprehensive music reference sources available in *any* format, they have become true classics, and are world renowned for showing musicians how to understand and apply the principles of harmony *even if they don't read music!*

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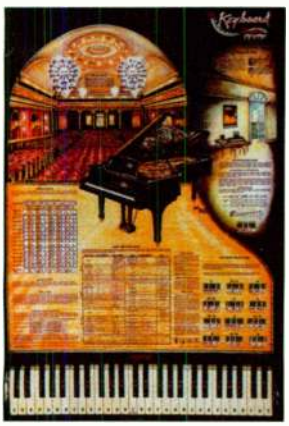

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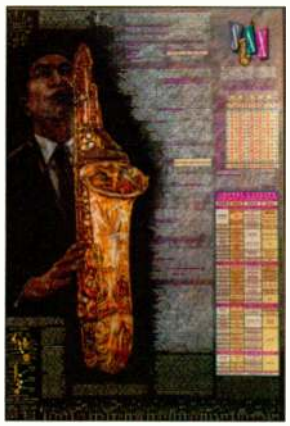

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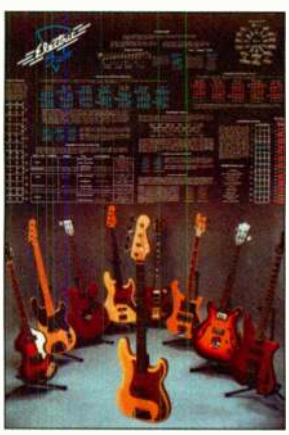

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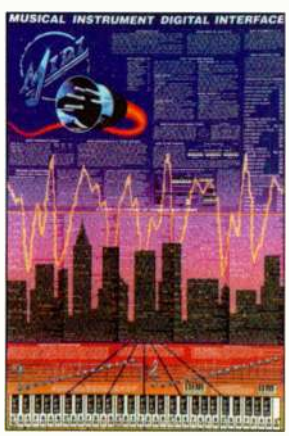

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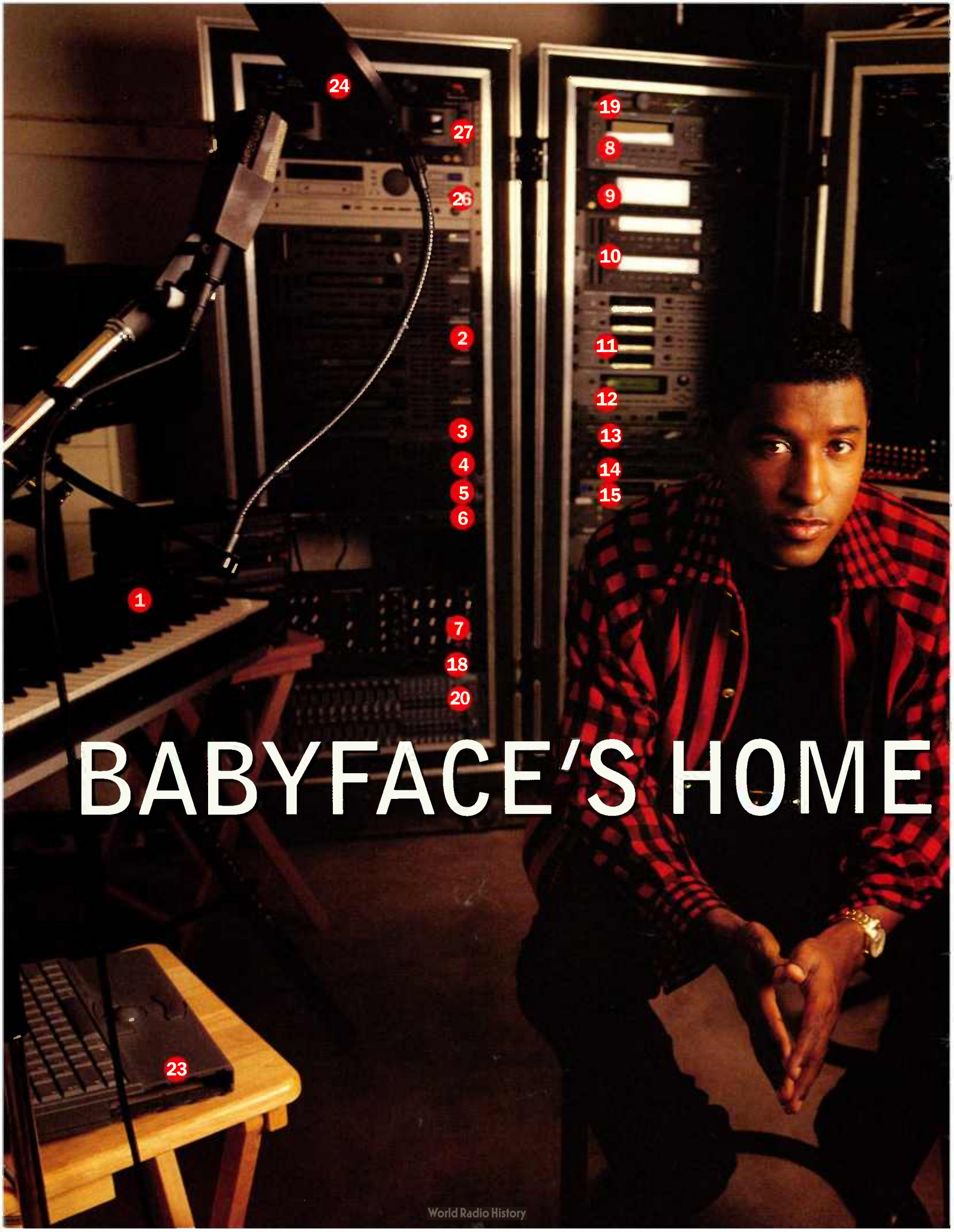
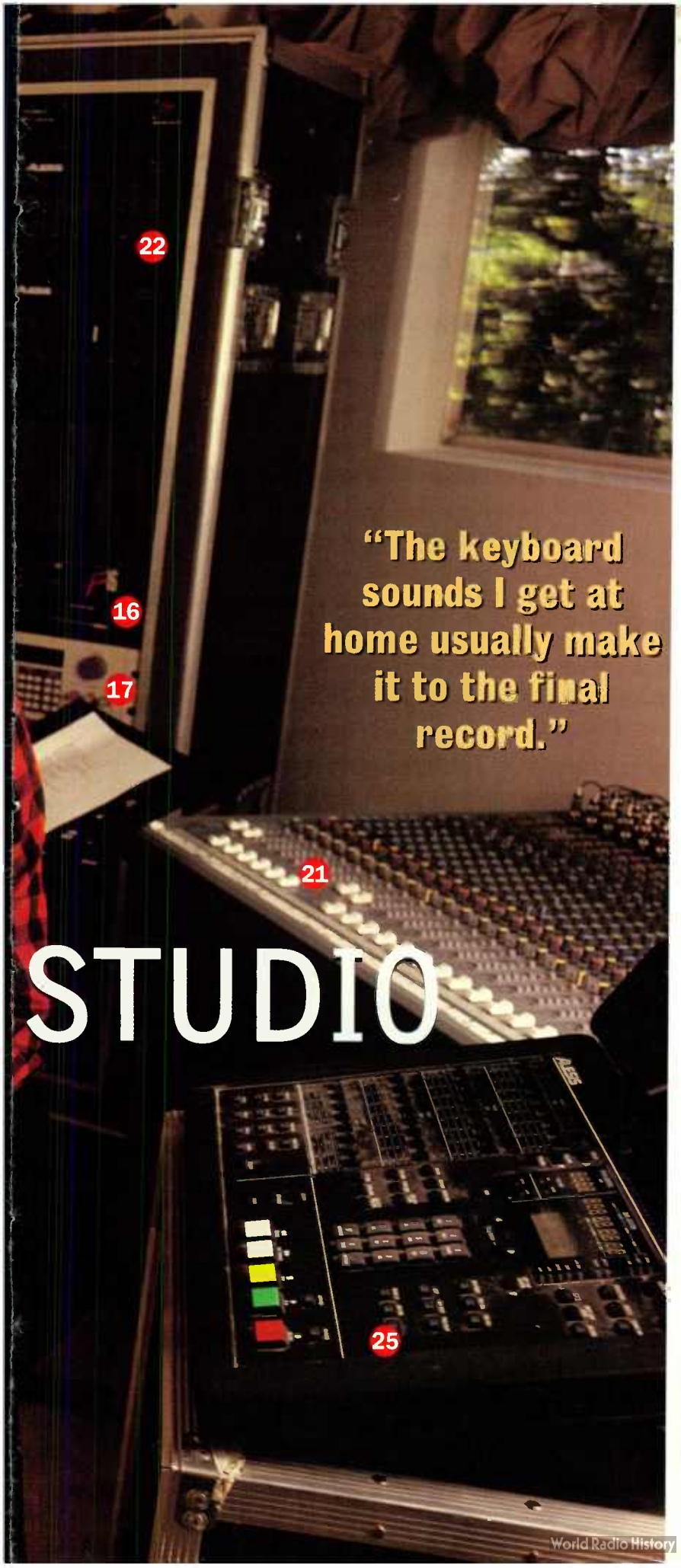


BABYFACE'S HOME



FAST FORWARD

STUDIO

"ALL I NEED is a room and I have a studio," says ace producer and songwriter Kenny Edmonds, better known as Babyface. These days the room is a small one—perhaps the smallest in his sumptuous Beverly Hills home. But it's room enough for a powerful collection of gear, much of which can be heard on Babyface's new solo album, *For the Cool in You*, and in chartbusting productions for Whitney Houston, Bobby Brown, Toni Braxton, TLC, Paula Abdul, Sheena Easton, Boyz II Men and others, all completed with partners L.A. Reid and Daryl Simmons.

Babyface's creative process starts with working up beats and changes on a **Korg Wavestation** keyboard 1, which passes the relevant MIDI data to an **Akai/Linn MPC 60 II**'s onboard sequencer. "I started out writing on guitar," Babyface says, "but all of my recent stuff was written on keyboards."

The sequencer triggers three monolithic racks chock-full of sound modules. One holds five **Korg M1Rs** 2 plus a **Korg Wavestation A/D** 3, **Roland U-110** 4, **Yamaha TX81Z** 5, **E-mu Proteus 1** 6 and a **Minimoog** 7 rack-mounted by **Studio Electronics**. The second includes a **Kurzweil K2000R** 8, another **Wavestation A/D** 9, two more **M1Rs** 10, four **Roland JV-88Ds** 11, **Roland Super JD** 12, two **E-mu Proteus 2's** 13, two **Korg Wavestation SRs** 14, **Alesis D4** drum box 15, another **TX81Z** and a fully loaded **Yamaha TX816** chassis.

"The keyboard sounds I get at home usually make it to the final record," he explains. "But I usually change the drum sounds around. At home I'm mainly interested in getting the patterns down." For percussion sounds he uses **Fourat F-16** 16 and **Akai S900** 17 samplers—both housed in the third rack—and the Alesis module.

Each MIDI rack has its own MIDI patchbay (either a **Digital Music Corp. MX-8** 18 or a **JL Cooper Synapse**) and its own **Furman PL-Plus** power conditioner 19. A **Speck Xtramix** rackmount mixer 20 in each rack supplies a submix to a 24-channel **Soundcraft Spirit** console 21, whose master bus is routed to a **Carvin** power amp and **Tannoy PBM 6.5** monitors. A **ProCo** patch bay handles analog signal routing.

Once Babyface is happy with the synth tracks, he transfers them to two **Alesis ADAT** digital eight-track tape decks 22 and adds vocals. He works up lyrics on an **Apple Macintosh Powerbook 180** 23, recording the vocal tracks through an **AKG 414** mike 24 and **Groove Tubes MP1** preamp. An **Alesis BRC** (Big Remote Controller) 25 for the ADATs allows him to slip the vocals forward and backward in time for his signature late-night vibe. "I do that a lot," he says. "I like it a lot better than flying in samples."

Friends and collaborators take home rough mixes on DAT, via a **Panasonic SV 3700** 26, or on cassettes made using a **Teac** dual deck 27.

BY ALAN DI PERNA

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANN SUMMA

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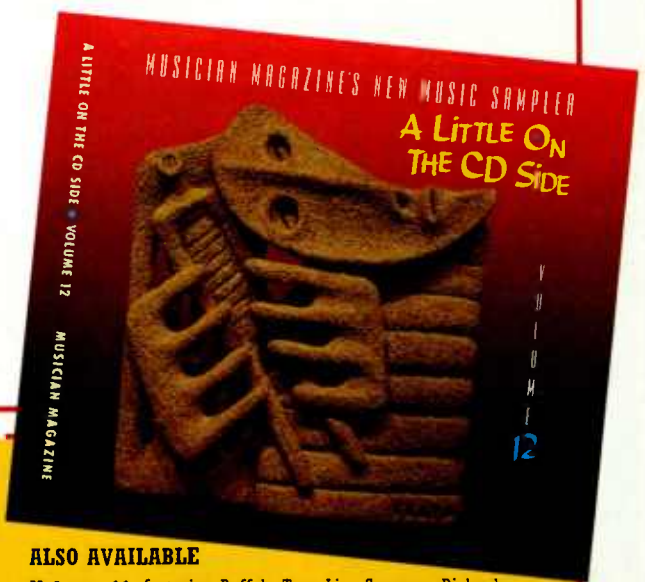

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Get Rhythm

NRBQ

Message for the Mess Age
(RHINO/FORWARD)

AS AN EMBARRASSINGLY LONGTIME FAN OF THIS BAND, WHO watched them perform in Miami *before* they signed to Columbia in 1969, I've come to regard NRBQ as the ultimate proof that talent and mass success are only theoretically related. It's been a valuable lesson. What's remained astounding is NRBQ's consistency throughout 25 years of recording: Last year's Columbia collection *The Best of NRBQ: Stay with Me*, compiling their earliest material, sounded like a brand new record, and so does *Message for the Mess Age*. Were either to be released in 1994 by a band 25 years younger—maybe named Slingshot, Mudpie or Pigtongue—I know, you know and they know it would be a Major Alternative Sensation. That doesn't really make a difference; the freshness and exuberance heard here do.

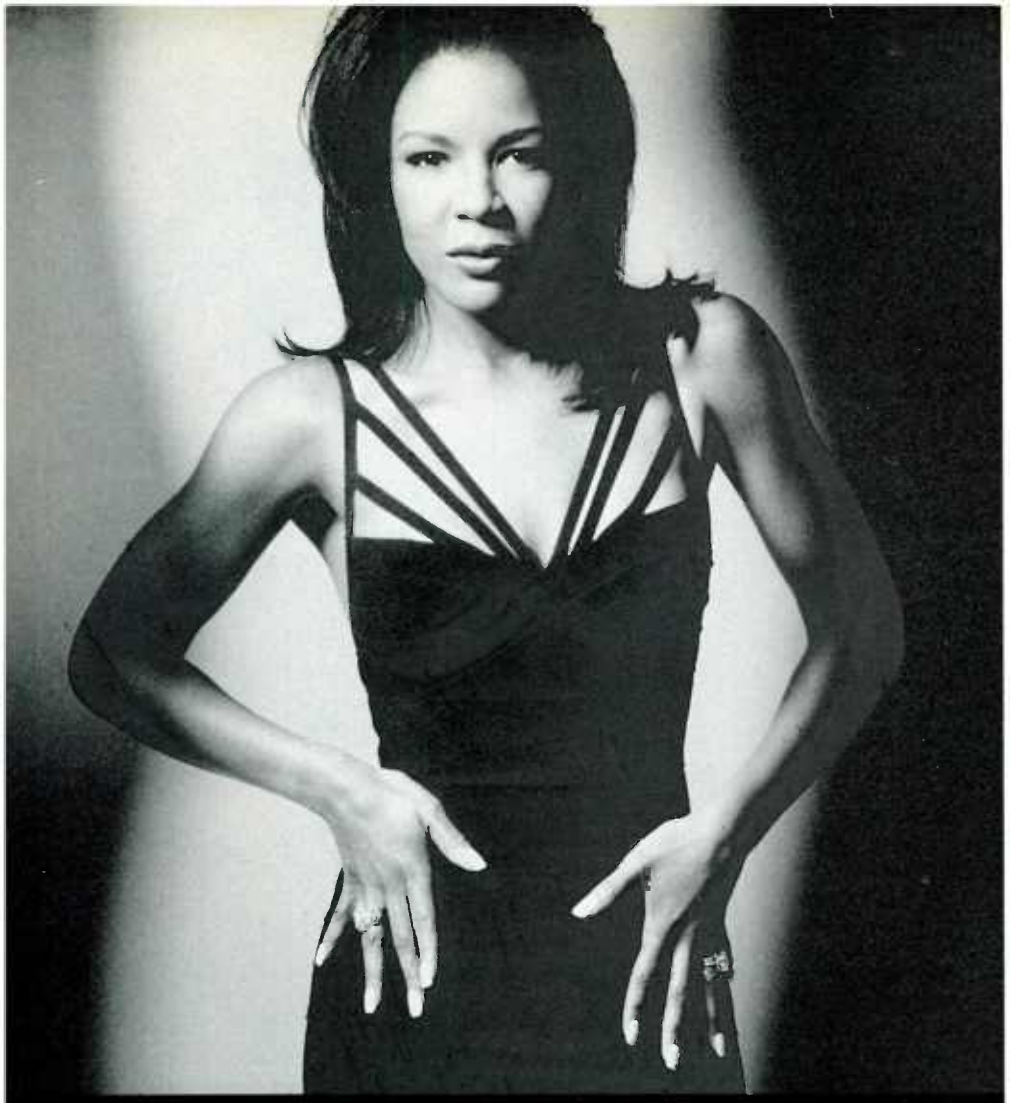
Anyone not yet convinced that NRBQ are this country's finest pop 'n' roll band should sit in a darkened room, plop on this CD and listen to the closing minute of Joey Spampinato's gorgeous and moving "Everybody Thinks I'm Crazy," a characteristically unfashionable band plea for, God bless 'em, peace and love. "And so let them think I'm crazy," he sings, "I know I'm not the only one/I see it in the faces of all the children/They still believe that miracles can and will be done." Following the song's final line, Al Anderson briefly plays a swirling, understated guitar solo that's one of the finest you'll hear. It's a magic, evocative moment so distinctly unflashy and subtle no band but NRBQ would even attempt it.

Message is their best album since 1978's *At Yankee Stadium* mainly because Anderson, Spampinato and Terry Adams are writing some of their most substantial songs in years. While 1989's *Wild Weekend* seemed to have something to prove—it was their first (and last) album for a major label since 1983's *Grooves in Orbit*, was co-produced by Andy Paley and might've portended a commercial breakthrough *Message* seems unencumbered by similar aspirations and is all the better for it. Anderson is back in form with "A Little Bit of Bad," "Nothin' Wrong with Me" and the unusually tender acoustic ballad "A Better Word for Love"; all are classic pop songs likely to be covered by others in the future. Adams, whose "Spampinato" and "Girl Scout Cookies" typify the group's live zaniness, also provides one of his best songs yet in "Designated Driver," which recalls nothing so much as "I Wanna Pick You Up" from *The Beach Boys Love You*. "I'll take your shoes off/And put you to bed/And rub your head if you'd like," he sings, "And if you need I can make you some coffee/And maybe we'll both feel all right."

But "Designated Driver," like "Big Dumb Jukebox" (which takes on crappy music, crappy TV and a "big ignorant fashion magazine"), "Everybody Thinks I'm Crazy," "Advice for Teenagers" and even "Everybody's Smokin'" help comprise only part of NRBQ's real message. The larger statement remains, as always, that music this worthy will last longer than the career of nearly every marketing executive in the record industry. They may not get the message, but I think you will.

—Dave DiMartino

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHAN APICELLA-HITCHCOCK



ANGELA WINBUSH'S OLD AND NEW STYLE

"NON-AESTHETIC records that sound like carbon copies of another."

That's what Angela Winbush believes is the inevitable result of today's sequence-and-sample production practices. "They don't have any natural sense of musicianship," she says. "If a kid can hit one button and sample your record, *they've* got a record—after you've done the work."

Don't get her wrong; Winbush has nothing against keeping up with the times. "It's fun to create new things, and I'm not against that," she says. "But I am against losing a sense of how to pass on a certain type of creativity and musicianship."

So, when laying tracks for *Angela Winbush*, her new album for Elektra, she took pains to bridge the gap between new jack sound and old-school musicianship. Take her approach to drum tracks. "I think what radio looks for is the sound of drum programming," she says. "I look for the feel, so I find myself trying to mix the two so I don't lose either one.

"What I did was program everything, and then have Herman Matthews, the drummer from our band, play over it. Then I mixed his natural feel with the drum synthesizer, the MPC, up under him for definition."

Winbush is particularly proud of the way that balance is maintained on "Inner City Blues," her version of the Marvin Gaye classic. "Actually, recording that was my husband Ron Isley's idea," she says. "He had this premonition where he saw me singing it. We tried to keep a natural groove and bring the new drums to it."

But for "Baby Hold On," her duet with Isley, Winbush had no qualms about taking the "old-fashioned" route and turning over the orchestration to Philly Soul legend Thom Bell. "Certain chord changes just lend themselves to...I don't want to say a 'Philly sound,' but there's a certain sound he had. I don't know if it's relevant for today—I just knew I wanted that." **—J.D. Considine**

SAM PHILLIPS

Martinis and Bikinis

(VIRGIN)

FOR ALL HER SENSE OF POETRY AND power-pop, Sam Phillips is developing into a first-class crank, God bless her. On the one hand, this former gospel singer has turned against the rightist trappings of the church that spawned her music; on the other, she couldn't be more acerbic about the popular culture that stretches from here to Hef. Fortunately, she converted to curmudgeonism while still young, pretty and Beatles-haunted enough to sound like your basic British Invasion–quoting kitten with a whip. *Martinis and Bikinis* is classic-style protest singing that purrs.

With producer/spouse T-Bone Burnett back as her abettor in cribbings both Beatlesesque and biblical, the allusions again run thick. She risks being literarily precious when she tells a possessive lover off by accusing him of hanging with "the hollow men." With XTC's Colin Moulding also sitting in, Phillips borrows enough vintage Fab-ulous touches—sitar, harmonium, what have you—that the album occasionally threatens to become *Revolver Redux* (which is far from the worst thing a contemporary album could augur). And the influences are broader, extending beyond ornate psychedelia to encompass a bit of Burnett's Texas folkabilly, too.

For all that, Phillips has developed a singular voice, coopting the stylistic quirks of pop innocence in a heady search for modern maturity. Druggy with youth and punch-sober with experience, this album feels a little like getting to have your cake and eat it too. The effect is delicious, and uneasy. Vocals and instruments are recorded so cleanly, without the token reverb, that what's in fact very simple sounds like some kind of weird engineering effect. (When Phillips and Burnett do throw reverb on a track, it's so out of left field that the result sounds quirkier still.) *Martinis* is served up dry, all right, and may sound too constricted to a lot of rockers' ears. Phillips' refusal to really rock out and break the tension extends all the way through to a muted, gritted-teeth cover of John Lennon's "Gimme Some Truth" that wraps up the album.

A good thing, too; otherwise you might overlook Phillips' more pressing, if elusive, spiritual longings. "Call it romance or nostalgia," she sings. "This hunger behind our memories/We've buried it in code." In that regard, her world has come full circle. And she still hasn't found what she's looking for. **—Chris Willman**

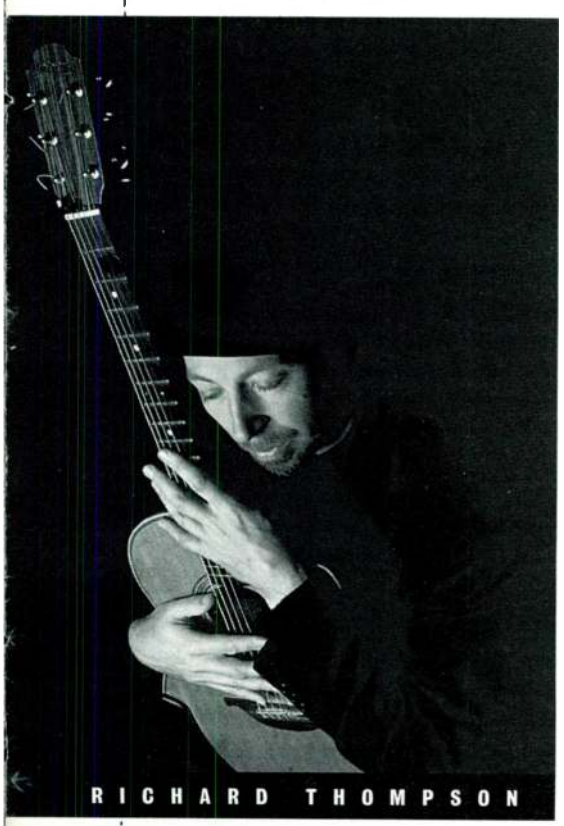
RICHARD THOMPSON

Mirror Blue

(CAPITOL)

RICHARD THOMPSON'S ALWAYS BEEN LESS a confessional singer/songwriter than a musical handyman. Give him any genre and he masters it for you. It's resulted in albums rich in variety and short on focus—heart-searching ballads next to giddy novelty tunes. Rock orthodoxy says musicians who stray too far outside their provincial musical lines are "quirky," "eclectic" or "multi-talented," terms that sound like compliments but are actually strenuously backhanded. Rock orthodoxy is also occasionally right. Putting too many diverse styles on one album makes listeners uncomfortable and likely to track-surf your CD in search of something cohesive.

Mirror Blue works this way. Individually, the songs are impressive. "I Can't Wake Up to Save My Life" is good latter-day Thompson trying to get on the radio with a big beat and a hummable melody; "King of Bohemia," "Beeswing" and "Taking My Business Elsewhere" are the ballads where Thompson's voice cracks and cries and convinces his audience he's the same old sad-eyed, finger-pickin' Richard.



RICHARD THOMPSON

"MGB-GT" and "Fast Food" prove he's still got his literary wits about him. Guitar solos are at once idiosyncratic and inspired.

Taken together, unfortunately, *Mirror Blue* lacks a sense of aural drama. Rather than creating an imaginary dialogue, or at least working through a mood, these songs rudely square off with each other, reducing their impact and giving the album a tossed-off feel. Coming from a man who in the past has closed his shows not with "Wall of Death" or "Shoot Out the Lights," but with "Substitute" and "Shake Rattle and Roll," Thompson's obviously aware of what creates and resolves good tension. But he seems determined to avoid such patented moves on his records. He remains predictably unpredictable—one more reason he's probably destined to remain a cult hero. —Rob O'Connor

HOUSE PARTY

What Are You Listening to Lately?

LISA GERMANO

1. Velvet Underground—Loaded
2. Nirvana—In Utero
3. Jane Siberry—When I Was a Boy
4. Dead Can Dance—Aion
5. Giant Sand—Center of the Universe

DAVID LOWERY

1. Vic Chestnut—West of Rome
2. The Cranes—Forever
3. Versus—Electricity
4. Young Gods—TV Sky
5. Counting Crows—August and Everything After

DEE BROWN

1. Janet Jackson
2. Chante Moore
3. Shanice
4. SWV
5. Top Quality
6. Tevin Campbell
7. Michael Jackson
8. De La Soul

PHOTOGRAPHS: MIKE LASS (LISA GERMANO); DENNIS KEELEY (LOWERY)

DJANGO REINHARDT

Djangology

(BLUE NOTE)

WHEN I LISTEN TO THE MUSIC WHICH comprises this remarkable 10-CD retrospective, I'm bathed in nostalgia, recalling the joy of first hearing this innovative guitarist, and struck again by parallels between the oral traditions which spawned blues genius Louis Armstrong and the nomadic folk experiences which gave us, in Reinhardt, his European counterpart. When young Django first heard Louis Armstrong, he cried, perhaps in the thrill of discovering a kindred melodic spirit and a fellow gypsy. Both wore the mantle of the outsider with extraordinary grace, acclaimed as enlightened primitives by paternalistic cultures which summarily dismissed the ethnic traditions from which they emerged.

Both responded with astonishing displays of creation. Stretching from 1936 to 1948, *Djangology* is the definitive overview of Reinhardt's many breakthroughs. From the gush of brilliant Eddie Lang/Joe Venuti–inspired chamber jazz and solo guitar work which dominates the first three volumes (including his swinging variations on J.S. Bach with violin innovators Eddie South and Stephane Grappelli) to his delightful encounters with American expatriate jazzmen (Rex Stewart seems particularly taken by Django's timbral palette), Reinhardt's melodic vision is unflaggingly modern, even if the rhythmic accoutrements are more evocative of bluegrass than swing. But good God does Django swing! During an era in which most guitarists were content to chug along in big-band rhythm sections, he elevated the shape and substance of his solo lines to Parker/Gillespie–like complexity, with astonishing dexterity and harmonic nuance. And I did mention that he only had two working fingers on his fretting hand, didn't I?

My personal favorite here is volume 9, in which Reinhardt defies the Vichy government and the Nazi occupation with his brand of incendiary melodic subversion. That he fell out of favor with post-war audiences is surprising, given how easily he fell in with French modernists like Pierre Michelot. Check out the Blue Star sessions on Verve, *Pêche à la Mouche*, for the twilight triumphs of the post-war Reinhardt through 1953. But begin with *Djangology*, for a taste of how free guitar solos can be. **—Chip Stern**

REVIEWS

BLOOD ORANGES

The Crying Tree

(ESD)

AT LEAST ONE MEMBER OF THE BOSTON-based band Blood Oranges was country before country was cool: Prior to joining forces with singer/bassist Cheri Knight and guitarist Mark Spencer, singer/electric mandolin player Jimmy Ryan fronted several country-rock outfits in the mid-'80s, when the Beantown rock scene was decidedly post–New Wave. On their excellent second album, *The Crying Tree*, Ryan and his fellow Oranges (including drummer Keith Levreault, who joined in 1991) incorporate country textures with a true grit that should refute any charge of dilletantism.

The album kicks off with the slamming bluegrass of "Halfway Around the World," and veers from there into the steady, driving roots rock of "Hell's Half Acre," the furious punkabilly of "On the Run" and the Stonesy balladry of "Shadow of You." Celtic-flavored folk strains run through many of the songs, sometimes to raucous effect, as on "Sally," one of a number of spirited jigs on *The Crying Tree*. As the album's title might suggest, though, there are plenty of poignant moments here, and it's ultimately the gentle, bittersweet tracks that are most memorable. On "Bridges in the Dark," Ryan's plaintive tenor and Spencer's graceful, vaguely dark guitar colorings evoke Neil Young's haunted lyricism. Better still is the ballad "Shines," which shimmers with a delicate pathos that's perfectly served by Knight's warm, unaffected singing. Tender without stooping to sentimentality, and offering more than the occasional jolt, *The Crying Tree* pours fresh water on old roots. —Elysa Gardner

SUSAN BORAH

LEVELLERS

Levellers

(ELEKTRA/CHINA)

BEWARE OF ANTHEMS: THEY CAN NURture stupidity while overheating the central nervous system. Bruce Springsteen did 'em well, only to see less discerning fans miss the point of "Born in the U.S.A." And who among us was savvy enough at the time to realize punk marches like "London Calling" were a smokescreen for the Clash's superstar ambitions? But if you've gotta have anthems, try the Levellers. On their second U.S. album, these limey malcontents talk passionately 'bout revolution, making it tempting to believe we won't get fooled again.

A rich porridge of Celtic melodies, big beats and wailin' vocals from Mark—solidarity-minded, the lads shun last names—*Levellers* makes each note sound like the beginning of the end. In the tradition of the messenger with too much news, Mark often has more on his mind than he can convey coherently, though there's no mistaking his scorn for the status quo. "Is This Art?" recounts a litany of horrors, from mushroom clouds to man-made epidemics; "The Likes of You and I" recoils at establishment phonies who "tell you that they love you/While they're eating you alive." Storm the barricades!

If the crusading vigor implies a folk-rock version of Midnight Oil, these guys are more fun. Using the old-fashioned textures of fiddle, mandolin and banjo as a departure point, the Levellers build a deceptively complex wall of noise, evoking everything from rap ("This Garden") to metal ("Belaruse") to old funk (the witty "Shaft"-style break of "Warning"). Although they're not above declaiming in the manner of Joe Strummer ("100 Years of Solitude"), the dramatic cut-and-paste arrangements, highlighted by Jon's sweeping violin, recall prime Roxy Music.

Whatever the righteous intent, these heroic strains amuse more than they enlighten, leaving the Levellers open to charges of ideological impurity. On the other hand, who better to spread sedition than entertaining guys who rock like crazy? Could be pretty subversive after all. —Jon Young

ZZ TOP

Antenna

(RCA)

THEY MAY MODESTLY BILL THEMSELVES as that "li'l ole band from Texas," but ZZ Top are nobody's fools. After their Warners deal expired with the release of '90's *Recycler*, the veteran band proved no hicks at the bargaining table, as longtime producer/manager Bill Ham auctioned them off to superstar-hungry BMG for a reported $30 million. What RCA paid for is exactly what they're getting here—a psychedelic, Southern-fried and anglofied roots blooze band, wrapping their electrified Texas-by-way-of-Memphis boogie around the joys of border radio ("Antenna Head"), driving along the open highway ("PCH"), safe sex ("Cover Your Rig") and, in at least half the

ZZ TOP

songs, dispensing oral gratification.

In other words, you could put *Antenna* right next to ZZ Top's first album, released 24 years ago—and you couldn't tell the difference. Is anyone complaining? **—Roy Trakin**

MARK LANEGAN

Whiskey for the Holy Ghost

(SUB POP)

FORGET THE STEREOTYPES: DESPITE Lanegan's long history as the singer with the Screaming Trees, Sub Pop's reputation for squalling guitar bands and the hard-to-shake image of grunge, this isn't a "Seattle" album, at least not in the obvious sense. What we find on *Whiskey for the Holy Ghost* is the dreamscape version of that world. Instead of overamped guitars, raw edges and churning, hypnotic hooks, we get moody violins, muted textures and wraith-like riffs. Mostly, though, what we get is Lanegan. Blessed with a voice as deep and dark as Jim Morrison's (though never as fatuous or overdramatic), Lanegan is perfect in the role of tortured obsessive, locked in a world of uncomfortable urges and minor-key remorse. There's enough blues in his voice to pull off the bent-note regret of "Dead on You," and enough power to push "Borracho" to its frenzied conclusion, yet he never overplays either card, preferring instead to let understatement and implication do the work for him. Though there's little in the way of flash or dazzle here,

VIDEO

THE GUITAR OF MERLE TRAVIS TAUGHT BY MARCEL DADI

Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop

(GW VIDEO)

JUST AS Lafeyette hopped a boat from Paris during the American Revolution, fretmaster Marcel Dadi lifts a few fingers in the service of another great American struggle: mastering the ultimate country guitar style of Kentucky's own Merle Travis.

Dadi, a renown fingerpicking force in Europe, conducts this master class in the subtleties of the Travis alternating-bass technique by demonstrating five classic instrumentals including "Cane Break Blues," "Blue Bell," "Cannonball Rag" and "Walking the Strings."

The real showpiece is "Saturday Night Shuffle," chock-full of thumb fretting, slides, right- and left-hand tapping, artificial harmonics—the works. While the accompanying 58-page book of tablature is helpful, stay close to that "pause" button. You'll reach for it often enough as the licks fly past.

Dadi emphasizes how things like more percussive right-hand picking and effective left-hand damping are the secret to sounding as smooth and groovy as Merle. To prove it, the production includes five rare performance clips from 1951, giving us a glimpse of the master himself working out. Just the chance to watch Travis pickin' and grinnin' from his rocking chair in the heart of God's country is worth the price of this one. (P.O. Box 802, Sparta, NJ 07871)

—Steph Paynes

SHORT TAKES

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

THE GREENBERRY WOODS
The Greenberry Woods
(SIRE)

Just when guitar pop seemed played out along comes a combo capable of making the thing exciting again. It isn't just the writing, though "Hold On," "#37" and "I Knew You Would" are as tunefully intoxicating as anything on *Crowded House*; what really sets this band apart is its sound. Between the muscular thump of "Trampoline" and the glorious roar of "Adieu," the Woods back their well-groomed harmonies with enough instrumental aggression to remind us there was a time when the Beatles, too, were considered edgy and exciting. Greenberry-mania, anyone?

MATERIAL
Hallucination Engine
(AXIOM)

What makes Bill Laswell a successful producer has less to do with culling good performances or great grooves than his ability to find hooks in adventurous music. Whether the end result is as exotic as the Middle Eastern dub he concocts in "Ruins," or unexpected as his tabla-fueled take on "Cucumber Slumber," Laswell knows how to make every beat and shred of melody accessible—and without condescension.

NKOTB
Face the Music
(COLUMBIA)

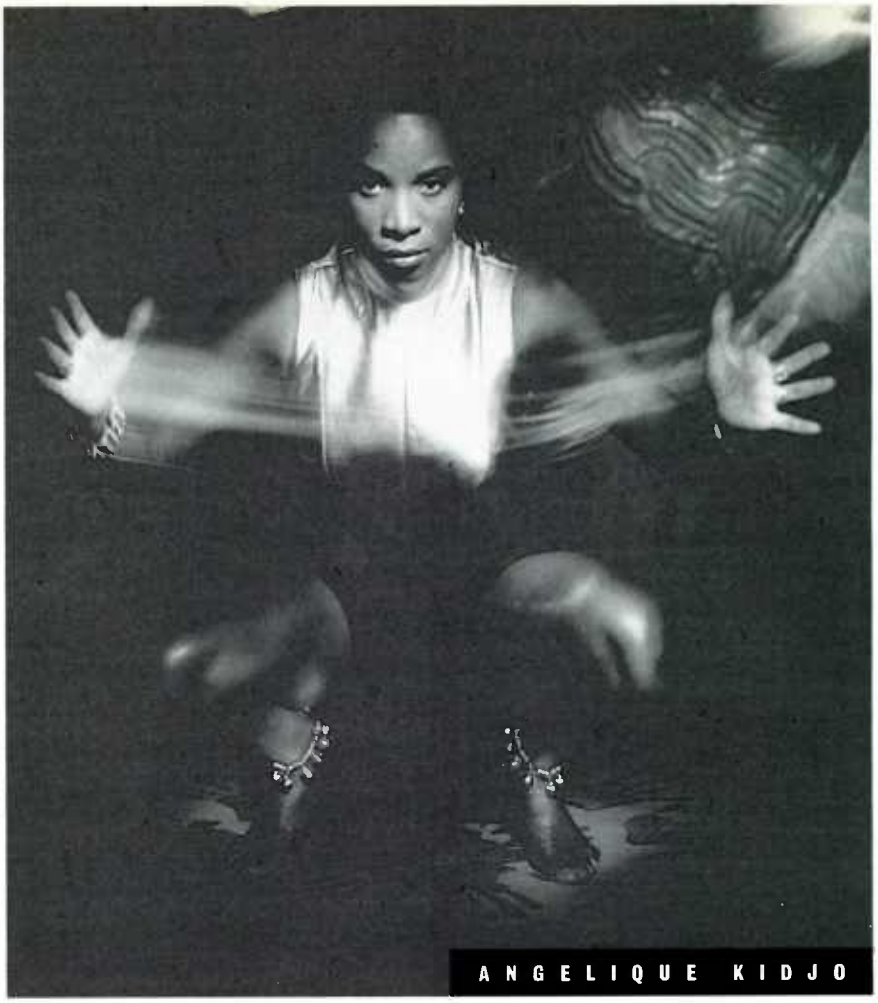
They still sing more about "girls" than women, but there's enough soul in the harmonies on "You Got the Flavor" or "Mrs. Right" to forgive the New Kids' teen idol past, just as we forgot Bell Biv DeVoe's. Now if only they can do something about Jordan Knight's fingernails-on-a-blackboard falsetto....

THERAPY?
Troublegum
(A&M)

Bad attitude and loud guitars may be the stuff of cliché for other bands, but it's true-faith fodder for this lot. Granted, they do articulate the attitude with more wit than most, and the guitars move easily from the ear-shredding power pop of "Nowhere" to the crunchy drone of "Lunacy Booth." But what really gets *Troublegum* popping is the band's enthusiasm, a balls-out sincerity that makes even their most outrageous sentiments convincing.

JODECI
Diary of a Mad Band
(MCA/UPTOWN)

DeVante Swing may be the savviest arranger/producer to hit the soul harmony scene since Smokey Robinson, and this is his best work yet. It isn't just the supple beats and soulful singing; what sets this album apart is Jodeci's seamless blend of harmony, melody and rhythm. So even when the lyrics seem shamelessly shallow, the music boasts enough richness and depth to drown in.



ANGELIQUE KIDJO

he keeps us riveted, from the whispered portent of "Kingdoms of Rain" to the weary swagger of "Pendulum." While it's unlikely that *Whiskey for the Holy Ghost* will supplant *Nevermind* or *Vs.* in the mass audience's vision of what Seattle sounds like, it still stands as one of the most memorable albums the Northwest scene has yet produced. —J.D. Considine

ANGELIQUE KIDJO
Ayé
(MANGO/ISLAND)

TARIKA SAMMY
Balance
(GREEN LINNET/XENOPHILE)

ANYONE WHO WOULD CATEGORICALLY lump albums as stylistically dissimilar as Angelique Kidjo's and Tarika Sammy's into "Afropop" must be asleep at the receiver. Of course there are similarities: The roots music of their respective birthplaces inspires both Kidjo (from Benin) and the female quartet Tarika Sammy (from Madagascar), and both sing passionately in their native languages about social and personal issues. But where Kidjo, now Paris-based, worked with two producers and gathered together two studios' worth of crack players to help her achieve the cosmo-electronic funk of *Ayé*, Tarika Sammy simply sent for a homegrown bass-and-traps team to flesh out the bottom end of their neofolk second outing, *Balance*. Where Kidjo chose mostly electronic accoutrements to dress up her vocals and dive-bomb the global dancefloor on "Agolo" and "Lon Lon Vadjro," Tarika Sammy relied on traditional instrumentation like the *lokanga bara*, a three-string fiddle, to create a bittersweet hoedown feel for the nostalgic "Ventso," and incandescent sheets of plucked notes from the *marovany* box zither to envelop "Roba."

When she slows down or stretches out, Kidjo makes her strongest emotional connections. "Djan Djan" ("Sound of a Rhythm") combines ethereal synth washes with percussive promontories, while Kidjo understates the verses and pulverizes the choruses like a Motherland gospel shouter. None of the Tarika Sammy foursome can claim Kidjo's vocal chops, but their malleable harmonies range from serious ("Bekily") to joyous ("Fora"), providing a more natural unity of sound.

Is Angelique Kidjo more likely than Tarika Sammy to achieve a measure of pop crossover success? Probably. Will *Ayé* sound fresher than *Balance* 10 years from now? I doubt it. Artistic innovators have a funny way of outlasting innovative entertainers. —Tom Cheyney

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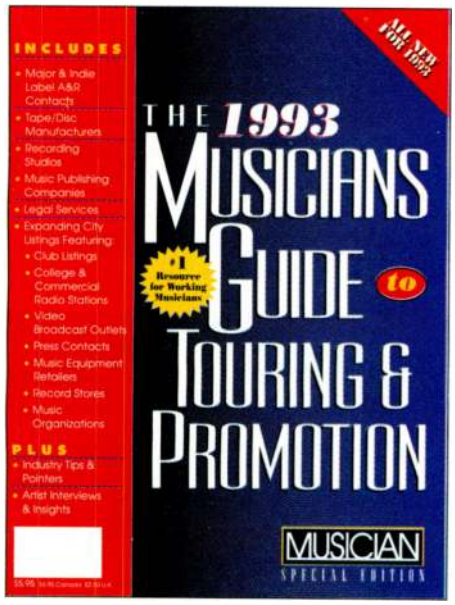

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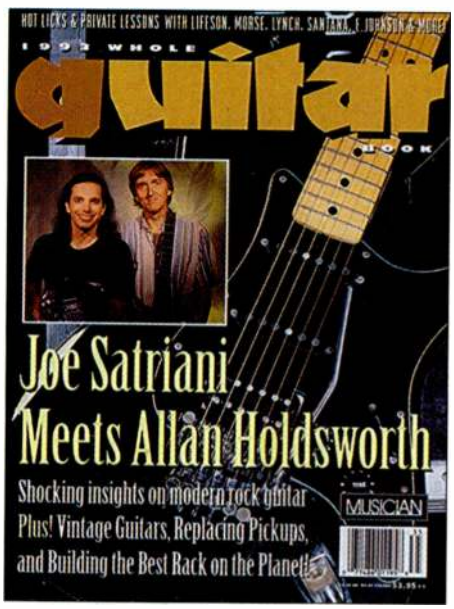

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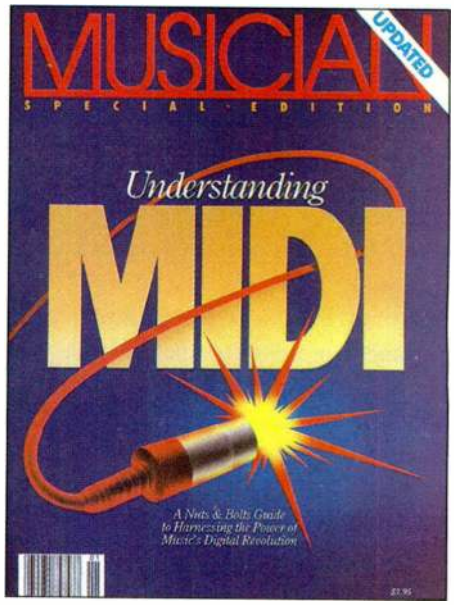

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MEDESKI, MARTIN & WOOD

It's a Jungle in Here

(GRAMAVISION)

THE LOUNGE LIZARDS' LATEST CONCERTS have ably synopsized the past decade's jazz explorations, and they've been killer shows. Two thirds of Medeski, Martin & Wood are also members of that inventive tribe, and on this canny keybs and rhythm section outing (with a dash of horns here and there), the embers of a recent era are fastidiously examined and cleverly revitalized. Virtually every moment bristles with the thrill of putting something to use.

Making the blend seem natural is where most players stumble. But John Medeski, the trio's arranger, is a hero in that department; his taut designs are drawn with a keen understanding of the pop world, making their jazz tenets unusually focused. The arrangements on *Jungle*, from bubble-gum funk themes to Bill Evans balladry, are at once concise and rich.

When the band conflates Monk and Marley—two unforgettable melodists, n'est pas?—the true gist of this date leaps to the fore: linkage. In a pastoral update of King Sonny Ade's "Moti Mo," Medeski's Wurlitzer traces relatives like Miles' "Mademoiselle Mabry" and the Youngbloods' "On Sir Francis Drake" (Banana, you'll recall, was an unsung Wurlitzer wiz). But more is accomplished here than just cool referencing. The trio connects dots with purpose. They're slaves to the groove, regardless of time

signature, and making these pieces irresistible is to the point. So the N'awlins hyperfonk of "Shuck It Up" sounds like the second cousin of the swanging tone that drives "Worms." By stomping out every bit of self-consciousness, and allowing room for an array of modernist details, *Jungle* finds a spot where instincts can coincide with strategy. —**Jim Macnie**

ICE CUBE

Lethal Injection

(PRIORITY)

QUEEN LATIFAH

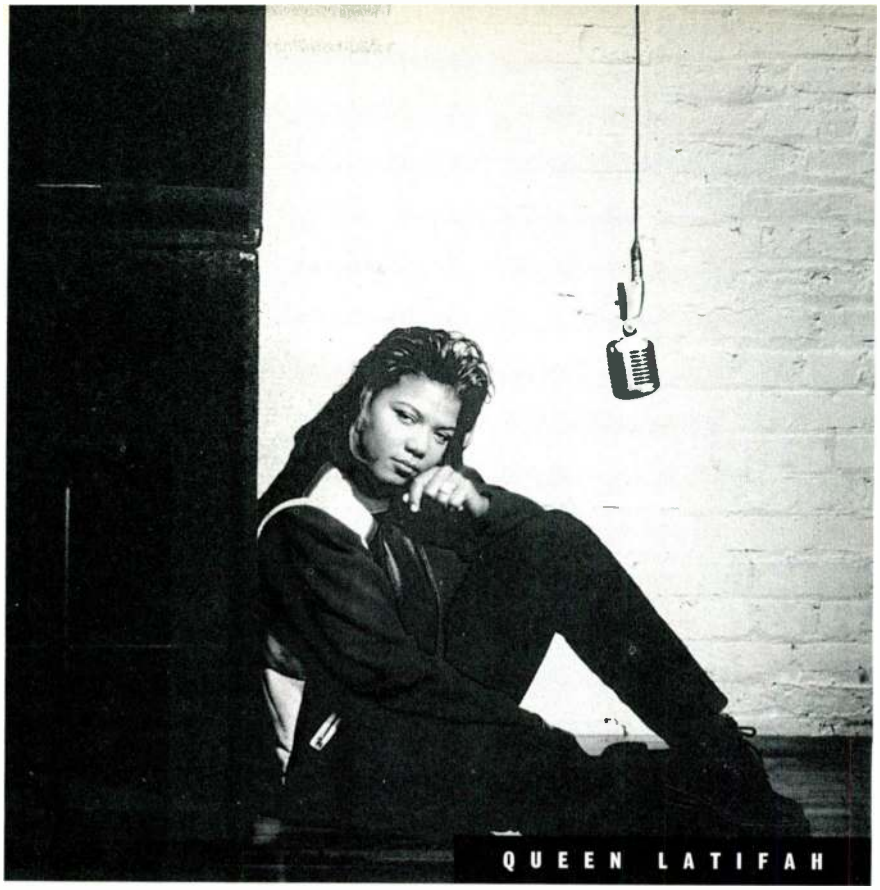
Black Reign

(MOTOWN)

IF YOU'RE EXPECTING ANYTHING FROM Ice Cube's latest gangsta-rap epic that you haven't heard before, you don't understand the genre. Locked into an eternal bad-boy adolescence, the purest hard-core rappers may get older but not wiser; they're the Peter Pans of nihilism. Which is why the 11-minute set piece here, an encounter with George Clinton called "Bop Gun," sets off waves of cognitive dissonance. Cosmic George lays down his patented universal brotherhood of music thing (it's basically "One Nation Under a Groove"), then Cube comes in snarling like you better shake that booty or he's gonna shoot the fucker off ya. He's bitter oil rolling right off the surface of Clinton's organic pleasure machine. It's almost funny.

Cube is more in his element on "Cave Bitch," a weird fantasy that has him beating back an army of horny Mrs. Hathaways. He also takes on the Klan, skinheads and Officer Stacey Koon. So much for white folks. Eagle-eyeing the 'hood, he laments the diminishing returns of crack entrepreneurship, and gives an ambivalent account of the self-explanatory "Lil Ass Gee." No preacher, Cube is about depiction, take it or leave it. When he does take a potentially bold stand, dissing Christianity on "When I Get to Heaven," it's a set-up to push the Islamic line. Which brings to mind the words of a famous white devil troubadour: "You never see the lies that you believe."

After listening to Cube, Queen Latifah sounds like Albert Schweitzer. Unlike Cube, who can rationalize anything (going into the mind of a carjacker he says, "I'm broke and my feet are tired"—but maybe that was a joke), Latifah's response to the general chaos is "I Can't Understand." She addresses the whole "bitch" issue on "U.N.I.T.Y.," pushes Mind Power on "Listen 2 Me" and "Bring the Flavor," sings of love sweet ("Superstar") and erotic ("Mood Is Right"). There's calculation in all this base-touching, but she also manages to convey a certain warmth without going all soft. In fact, her underpinnings here, on balance, are tougher than Cube's logey Southern Cal. textures. Bet she could kick his ass, too; not that she'd bother. —**Richard C. Walls**


QUEEN LATIFAH

COURSE OF EMPIRE

Initiation

(ZOO ENTERTAINMENT)

IT'S A LITTLE JARRING TO FIND A BAND doing as many things as Courses of Empire does on its full-length major-label debut. It's more than a little delightful that it does those things so well.

You could peg this Dallas band as soft-core industrial, or maybe tuneful thrash. *Initiation*'s instrumental centerpiece, for instance, is an elision of the title track and "The Gate," in which a vaulting hard-rock instrumental figure resolves itself in several minutes of feedback and amp noise, courtesy of guitarist Mike Graff. It's enough to knock out the fillings of most industrial fans; the kink here is that the succeeding cut, "Chihuahuaphile," melts all the furor down into a sweetly sung, highly lyrical cushion.

The whole album is like that: Hard rock with a blast-furnace edge is neatly complemented by songs with a sharp ear for restrained melodicism. The best of Type A is "Infested," a demonic boogie piece; worth searching for is the CD single of the track, which weaves a sample of Gene Krupa's "Sing, Sing, Sing" drum solo with Benny Goodman into the frenetic mix. The finest variety of Type B is "Apparition," a downright *purty* track that exemplifies their softer side.

C.o.E. hasn't entirely absorbed its apparent influences—singer Vaughn Stevenson's tonal attack and wordless ululations frequently recall Perry Farrell's work with Jane's Addiction. But the band's blow-down energy is consistently winning, with Graff's abrasive, heavily phased, rhythmically astute work scoring the major coups. *Initiation* is a big-time bow for these Texas upstarts; given a bit more experience, they should brew up some truly startling headwhang. —**Chris Morris**

PROFESSOR LONGHAIR

'Fess: The Professor Longhair Anthology

(RHINO)

DR. JOHN

Mos' Scocious: The Dr. John Anthology

(RHINO)

JAMES BOOKER

Spiders on the Keys

Resurrection of the Bayou Maharajah

(ROUNDER)

THE MUSIC OF HENRY ROELAND BYRD, a.k.a. Roy Byrd, a.k.a. Professor Longhair, is the fount from which all New Orleans keyboardists drank, and the two-CD anthology *'Fess* serves up a tubful of Longhair's sprightliest

material. One disc focuses on the '50s sessions that produced such rolling, rollicking examples of second-line rhumba as "Bald Head," "Ball the Wall," the carnival perennial "Go to the Mardi Gras" and his signature "Tipitina." The other collects 'Fess's later works, notably a furious '74 session with Gatemouth Brown on guitar. Byrd's bobbing rhythms and warbling vocals marked him as an original, and many later acolytes bear his brand. This is an excellent place to begin matriculating in the good Professor's college of musical knowledge.

Mac Rebennack got his start in New Orleans as a session guitarist, pianist and producer during the city's R&B heyday in the '50s. "Dr. John" was the handle attached to the stage persona he forged during the '60s, when he concocted an attenuated and somewhat hokey brand of hoodoo psychedelia. Examples of all this work are available on *Mos' Scocious*, but to these ears the best stuff on the two-CD package comes from the '70s and later, when Rebennack excelled as a one-man museum of New Orleans R&B (on the sublime *Gumbo* and his later solo albums) and a wizardly conjurer of nouveau bayou funk (in such prime cuts as "Right Place Wrong Time" and "Such a Night").

The most eccentric pianist here, and maybe the greatest to emanate from New Orleans, was James Carroll Booker III. Plagued by demons and ultimately fatal addictions, Becker was a master who never recorded much in his own name. Hence, Rounder's two collections—recorded live at the Maple Leaf Bar, a funky French Quarter joint with a laundromat in the back—are as welcome as they are magnificent. On *Spiders on the Keys*, Booker whacks out some mind-frying solo instrumentals; he plays the gayest "Sunny Side of the Street" you've ever heard, and almost wrings pathos from "Besame Mucho." On *Resurrection*, the playing is accompanied by raucous singing that incorporates paranoid ejaculations about the CIA and paeans to heroin; listening to this album is like waking up with a hornet's nest in your head. Both records give an accurate depiction of Booker's virtuosity, a genius bordering on madness. —Chris Morris

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Stone Free: A Tribute to Jimi Hendrix

(REPRISE)

IF AN ALL-STAR ALBUM OF HENDRIX COVers seems like a sure thing, think again. How do you separate Jimi's songs from his wonderful voice and awesome guitar? You don't, of course: The peers and disciples assembled for *Stone Free: A Tribute to Jimi Hendrix* aren't just saluting the composer—they're celebrating the whole artiste, a daunting venture indeed.

It's also an occasion for irony, beginning with the album's release via Reprise, which recently lost the Hendrix catalog after a quarter-century stewardship. Then there's Ice-T, who's returned to the Time Warner fold, however briefly, with Body Count to perform "Hey Joe." Apparently, a cheatin' woman is a more acceptable target than a brutal policeman, so fire away, dude! Anyway, this sturdy replica of Hendrix's version will surprise anyone who discounted the band's musicality in the wake of "Cop Killer." Others follow suit, retracing the outlines of sacred texts and avoiding heretical departures. Spin Doctors ("Spanish Castle Magic"), Living Colour ("Crosstown Traffic"), the odd squad of Slash, Paul Rodgers and Hendrix sidemen Buddy Miles and Billy Cox ("I Don't Live Today"), and even Eric Clapton ("Stone Free"), among others, turn in pleasant curiosities that offer no revelations.

The folks who don't play by the book provide a bigger rush. Seal's reading of "Manic Depression" promises another retread until good ol' Jeff Beck cranks up his fab sputtering axe. P.M. Dawn turns "You Got Me Floatin'" into a cool funky jam, while the Cure recasts

"Purple Haze" as a typically loopy Cure song. The unexpected high point, though, is Belly's "Are You Experienced?" Fighting to be heard above the pulsing noise, Tanya Donelly suggests an anxious kid exploring strange new ground, unsure of what's ahead yet determined to push forward. While Jimi might be flattered by the affectionate copycatting on *Stone Free*, he'd surely recognize a soul mate in Donelly's cosmic daring. —Jon Young

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Brill Building Sound

(ERA)

PAUL SIMON

1964/1993

(WARNER BROS.)

MOST BOXED SETS ARE THE MUSIC-BIZ equivalent of coffee-table tomes—impressive to behold, too big to really cozy up to. But *The Brill Building Sound* was assembled with such affection and joy that it's like the page-turner you can't put down.

This four-CD set salutes the New York songwriting factory that churned out countless hits from 1958 to 1966. It mixes dozens of chart-busting classics with several real clinkers. So in addition to flawless gems like Ben E. King's "Stand by Me" and the Drifters' "Up on the Roof," we get pap like James Darren's "Her Royal Majesty" and Paul Peterson's "My Dad." The compilers' decision to stick in a few dogs makes the Brill Building come to life.

Social culture as well—the last gasp of innocence before the social and sexual revolutions of the '60s. As the box unfolds, women move from the forlorn passivity of Connie Francis' "Where the Boys Are" to the smarter, sassier stance of Lesley Gore's "Maybe I Know." There are glimmers of social commentary in several songs, notably Paul Revere & the Raiders' "Kicks," an anti-drug song that never lapses into "Just Say No" platitudes.

The set features 55 artists, ranging from future Hall of Famers the Everly Brothers and Dion & the Belmonts to long-forgotten girl groups and TV celebs. The producers couldn't get the rights to some key Phil Spector hits and they went a little overboard on Neil Sedaka (he has five tracks; no one else has more than three). But overall, this box is, well, the "Leader of the Pack."

Paul Simon landed his first big hit with Art Garfunkel—"The Sounds of Silence"—in late 1965, just as the Brill Building era was passing. Indeed, the rise of singer/songwriters like Simon rendered such songwriting mills obsolete. But Simon has much in common with the Brill Building's best writers: Both represent the application of traditional Tin Pan Alley songwriting values to contemporary pop/rock. Both write from a distinctly urban point of view. And though Simon's personal touchstone is the doo-wop scene which preceded the Brill Building by a few years, he has long echoed the latter's emphasis on hook-filled, novelty-tinged pop singles. Think how pleased Brill Building boss Don Kirshner would have been had Goffin & King turned in "Cecilia," "Kodachrome" and/or "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover." The big difference: The Brill Building was built around teen fantasies, while Simon seems to have had adult concerns on his mind since birth.

This set's only flaw is that it's too weighted toward Simon's most recent music, at the expense of his pre-1968 work with Garfunkel. Fourteen of the 16 songs on disc 3 are taken from Simon's last two albums, *Graceland* and *The Rhythm of the Saints*. Yet, he left off such early hits as "Homeward Bound," "The 59th Street Bridge Song" and "A Hazy Shade of Winter." He may have thought this work wasn't "serious" enough. But if the Brill Building box can include "My Dad," Simon ought to lighten up enough to include "At the Zoo." —Paul Grein

BILL BRUFORD

[*cont'd from page 16*] for playing the weirdest lick on a drum kit, which is more or less what happened when I started. It's a huge change.

To be smiled upon by the labels your music must be *useful* in some way, which means it sells. People whose music isn't geared to sell are not really listened to. Therefore Simon Phillips, Terry Bozzio and other giants of the drums are playing their best stuff to other drummers in clinics.

I'm not complaining; happily, I do still release records. But I know that Terry Bozzio's had a hard time finding a label, as has Simon Phillips.

Could such drummers make their livings as studio musicians? We're all probably too characterful, too recognizable, have too many idiosyncrasies to be good part-time actors. He's a chameleon and will do his work without any detectable personal style. It's quite a skill. But Keith Moon wouldn't get called for a session—he'd make the whole thing sound like a Who track.

It is hard out there now to make a living as a full-time creative drummer, by which I mean people who play music they want to play full-time. I'm not sure that young drummers realize that 95 percent of the time a drummer sits down at his kit he's playing some music he's directed to play that he may not feel much for. That's a change from the way I grew up, where we all sailed out and did what we thought was interesting—just as long as it was different from the previous guy. Now, it all has to be the same as the previous guy.

Bill Bruford, whose credits include Yes, King Crimson and several albums under his own name, has just finished a new live album with his band Earthworks.

FUTURE SHOCKS UPDATE

[*cont'd from page 20*] That would be a real case of "meet the new boss, same as the old boss."

However, if the government rules that access to the superhighways must be wide open, that anyone with a modem should be allowed a shot at selling his product through the new system, it will mean that an album you make at home will be able to compete with albums by superstars. That is the sort of may-the-best-man-win capitalism that allowed old Tom Edison to invent records in the first place!

In a major speech at the University of California on January 11th, Vice President Al Gore said that the Clinton administration would propose legislation this year that would offer the telecommunications industry new freedoms to form mergers and combine technologies—in return for that industry providing open access to its services. Such legislation is vitally important to independent musicians who hope to use the superhighway to get their music to market.

The big communications corporations would like to control who gets into the new systems, and they have the money to lobby Congress to see things their way. Gore has done a great service to the small-time creators, artists and entrepreneurs who might have expected to be ignored in such a high-stakes competition.

If such legislation becomes the law of the land, we'll all forgive Al for the PMRC.

KILLER EQUIPMENT

[*cont'd from page 64*] ment on a regular basis," Stephen adds, "it would be a responsible investment to purchase a gaussmeter and check for themselves."

Studio finished, they check out the living quarters. The bedroom above the downstairs track lighting turns out to be fine; the numbers here run below 1 mG. Same for the living room and dining area. A power-line buzz in the bathroom wall, next to the toilet, gives Marco a scare—but it fades away before it would reach anyone catching up on his reading there.

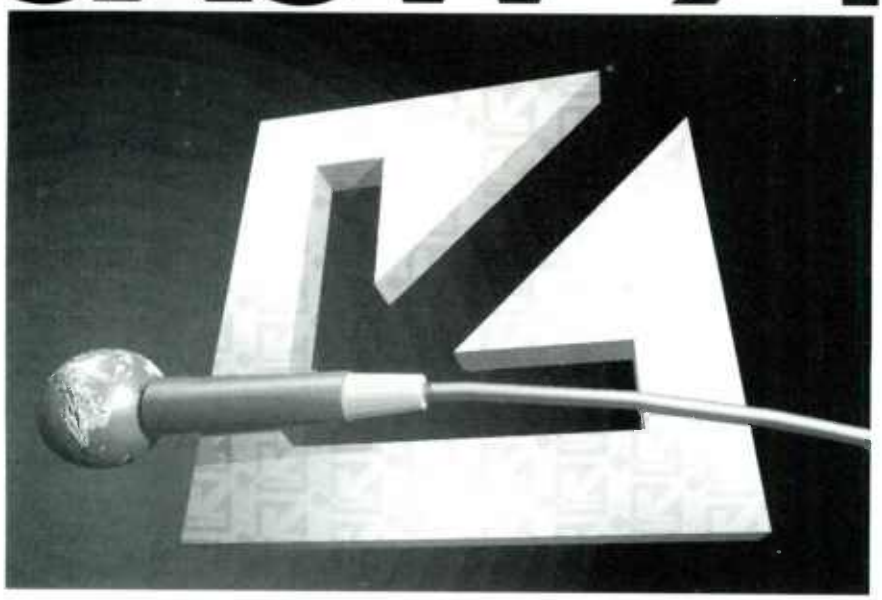
The kitchen is the big shock. Marco doesn't have a microwave—which wins Stephen's approval, because he recommends that people stay at least five feet away from them while they are operating—but near the stove the detector *howls*. The culprit is the oven clock, which gives us the highest number yet: 370 mG, fading to 1 mG at over four feet. Dinner may not be all that's cooking here.

"This is pretty typical," Stephen says. "The cheap motors in these clocks—and the GE or Westclox alarm clocks we've all grown up with—can be huge EMF sources. I've been in kitchens where the oven clock measured two or three *thousand* milliGaus. The only thing to do is disconnect them."

What's the lesson? First, the EMF fields are real, and they are present—no illusion. Second, they are present in high enough levels, and coming from enough different kinds of equipment, to justify taking action (*if* you place faith in the stats).

Fortunately, most of the action in a musical context is as simple as making sure there is at least three or four feet between you and the gear you work with. In Marco's case, fitting the monitor with proper shielding and dealing with one questionable keyboard would cover everything else. The biggest EMF issues for musicians are the same ones faced by everyone else—the wiring and plumbing and household appliances where they live and work.

SXSW 94



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COSTELLO

[*cont'd from page 34*] body gets sick you realize you say not, 'It isn't me, thank goodness' but 'It isn't me, what a surprise!' "

Costello has been talking about this stuff for hours now, and he's getting restless. He is wary of getting into what he calls, "The ramblings of the tortured I AM, the pampered artist. This is the dilemma in writing songs. You can write about a totally unique experience, so unique to yourself that it is almost meaningless to other people. But you still have some distant admiration for the song, because it conjures up a mood which you have not necessarily experienced. I've written songs like that and in retrospect realized that they don't communicate a universal experience. They don't even pretend to. 'Kid About It' off *Imperial Bedroom* is about as obscure and abstract a lyric as you could imagine, yet it definitely means something."

So how rarified is too rarified?

"Joni Mitchell's talking about fairly rarified things on *Court and Spark* and particularly *Hissing of Summer Lawns*," Costello says. "I still think they're her two best records, not the earlier ones that people love so much or the later ones where it just becomes either too self-conscious or, probably, just *too* rarified. That can happen. It happens to most."

Costello looks past his window. The lights are coming on in Ireland and it's time to think about dinner. "I've been lucky to not be so famous," he says. "I can still move around. I discussed this once with Dylan: the difficulty of maintaining some perspective. That was the thing I was most curious about. You can have the most fantastic imagination but you've still got to have some substance to draw from. You can draw from other people's experiences and piece it together with other things, but it won't always ring true. I also don't think you can live an experimental life just so you can have subject matter. I know—I've done it."

AD INDEX

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Fleetwood Mac—The Runners Up

Hats off to the crafty Mick Fleetwood and John McVie, who have launched yet another version of their ancient combo Fleetwood Mac with yet another pair of new recruits brought in to do the donkey work (you know, singing, guitar playing, fronting the band, writing the songs—those little side jobs) while Mr. Fleetwood and Mr. Mac do the important stuff, like negotiating T-shirt deals, collecting royalties and dangling little balls between their legs for publicity photos. Trading in '60s Macs Peter Green and Bob Welch for the '70s singer/songwriter team Buckingham/Nicks brought Fleetwood Mac huge success during the Carter administration. Replacing Buckingham and Nicks with a couple of L.A. session dudes worked less well in the '80s. Perhaps realizing the importance of gender balance to pop success, the '90s Mac has recently announced the recruitment of daughterly singer Bekka Bramlett and grandfatherly guitarist Dave Mason. If this Mac Mach 4 proves successful, we see no reason Mick and John can't keep rotating frontpersons forever. And we have some notions for future draft picks!

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5. NATALIE COLE AND NAT "KING" COLE So one's just a fuzzy old videotape. More coke for everybody else!

6. CHRIS FRANTZ AND TINA WEYMOUTH Two drums and two basses could get a little monotonous, but a medley of "Tusk" and "Wordy Rappinghood" would gain Mac points with the hip-hop generation.

7. REGIS AND KATHIE LEE They could probably get the band gigs on the funship cruise.

8. BILL CLINTON AND TIPPER GORE She is well-versed in rock music, he's a top-flight sax man, and both know all the words to "Don't Stop Thinking about Tomorrow."

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