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World Radio History



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JUNE 1984 • ISSUE NO. 188

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**SPiRiT**  
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*Second albums are traditionally harder to make than first ones. Was that true for Arrested Development with Zingalamaduni?*

For a time we put pressure on ourselves by thinking we had to make an album that would do as well commercially as our debut, but we quickly realized that wasn't the route to go. We realized we just needed to make music from our soul, the way we did before. That made things easier. So instead of doing "Mr. Wendel, Part 2," we did "United Front."

*Where does the title come from?*

*Zingalamaduni* means "beehive of culture" in Swahili. We called it that because we sample a lot on this album. Sampling is like picking up a spirit. If you sample Herbie Mann, you're sampling his spirit at the time he did that music. We sampled Native Americans. We sampled sounds from the Caribbean and South America. All of those voices and spirits rise up through our music.

*On Zingalamaduni you talk about reaching out to all people, but you also express an Afrocentric consciousness. Is that a contradiction?*

Not necessarily. What we do comes from an African person's perspective, but it's for anyone who wants to listen. We all saw *Cinderella*, the movie, when we were little kids. Whoever made it might have been coming from a European perspective, but I could still enjoy it.

*A sector of the black audience has rejected Arrested Development for not being hard enough.*

We hope to open their minds. We ask them to embrace what we say as a part of African reality that hasn't had enough airplay. We're not naive or blind. Like we say in "United Minds": "No, not Baptist/No, not Catholic/No, not passive/VERY ACTIVE!" We're talking about being in control of what you do. I think we're a very political group. It takes a lot of guts to talk about a positive outlook.

*Was it scary to become so successful?*

It got a little bigger than we would have hoped in one sense: Instead of being seen as part of the pie—one perspective on black reality—some people in the media tried to use Arrested Development as their voice and say, "This is the way hip-hop needs to be." We never took the stance that our form of hip-hop was the only form of hip-hop. That's when it became scary. We insist that people accept us as a hip-hop group. Those people who give Arrested Development credit, but say they don't like hip-hop—they don't realize that they *do* like hip-hop. They should say, "I like hip-hop, but I don't like all of it."

*You've been championed as the opposite of someone like Ice Cube.*

We're not trying to be an opposite voice, just another voice. I've met Ice Cube on a number of occasions and everything's cool with me and him. I've never had any static at all. I can legitimately say I'm a fan of his music. He's a very talented artist.

*Did Arrested Development's popularity make it hard to keep things in perspective?*

We experienced a period of cynicism during the touring for the first album. The realities of the business side of things had us thinking twice, but you can't afford to dwell on them. If you start to think about all the bad things going on in the record industry, which can be so cold, it'll stop

**"Sampling is like picking up a spirit."**



# SPEECH

your growth and ultimately consume you—you'll become one of these same bad entities. That's what "Ease My Mind" is about: keeping straight despite all the different directions people are pulling you in.

Being able to consult with people like Curtis Mayfield helped me to have a more level mind. We've talked on a number of occasions since we did the *Musician* article together [June '93]. He helped me understand the different aspects of the industry and understand my artistry. Being so involved in the business side, I forgot about my artistry for a minute, and Curtis brought me back to that.

*Apart from the stresses of success, how else has your life changed?*

I bought a house in Lithonia [Georgia]. For the first time in my life, I own some land. That was a very important move for me. When I have children, I'll be able to pass that land down.

*What do you foresee for Arrested Development?*

We're gonna be around for 10 or 12 years, at least. In that time I feel confident we'll be able to do all the things we want to do. Someday we'd like people to be able to look back at 10 different albums and say, "Dang, they did some fly stuff. Remember this album, or that jam?," like I do with Herbie Hancock or Gil Scott-Heron. When people have had that many records, you can see them grow over the years. We hope you'll see us in about 10 years and say, "You guys have done a whole lot. You've covered a lot of space with your music."

JON YOUNG



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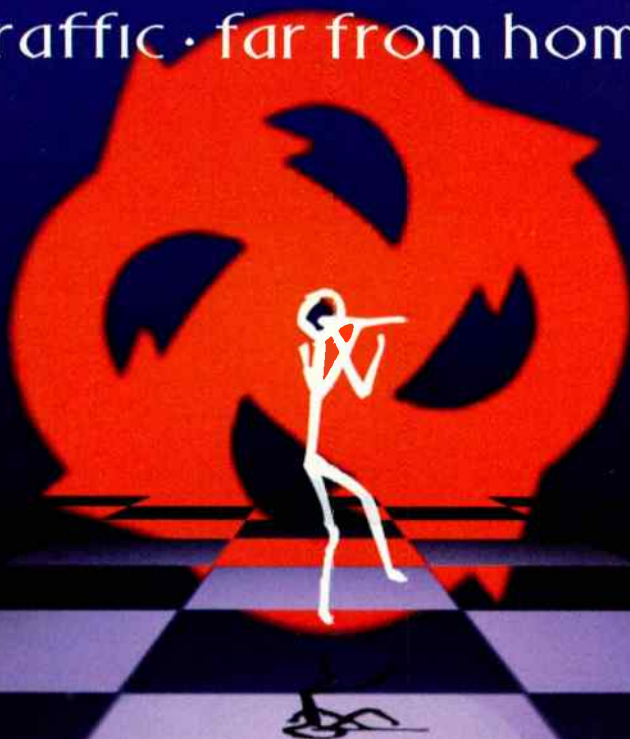
members Steve Winwood and Jim

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by Steve Winwood, assisted by Jim

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# LETTERS

## TRENT REZTOR

Thanks for the phenomenal interview with Trent Reznor (Mar. '94). The fact that Nine Inch Nails are virtually uncategorizable, not "industrial" à la Throbbing Gristle, not "alternative" along the lines of mega-'70s-style rockers Pearl Jam, makes the music all the more compelling. Trent's not a fallen angel, he's just stumbling like the rest of us.

Sue  
West Haven, CT

Your interview with Trent Reznor absolutely ruled. I'm a pissed-off electronic musician myself, and he has been my biggest influence. A chance to take a quick tour of his mind was invaluable to me.

Christopher Watts  
Charleston, SC

## NO MORE SEXIST USURY!

Your review of Snoop Doggy Dogg's *Doggystyle* (Mar. '94) missed the point. Musically, we have sample after sample, stolen bassline after ripped-off chorus. Calling this *his* is absurd. The parts that are original are an unending torrent of childish, materialist dreams, sexist usury, hatred and violence. Your reviewer, like most other politically correct hipsters, is afraid to buck the trend. Is it really cool to romanticize and

applaud someone whose message to the world is connected to pointing a gun in its face? Is this what we need in the wake of the L.A. riots and generations of prejudice and civil unrest?

One can't pin the blame solely on Dogg. The fault lies with foolhardy critics and media gatekeepers who turn a blind eye to this hatred in favor of being cool and taking their piece of the pie. The first amendment rightly allows this stuff to be, but please, let's label this the garbage that it is.

Rick Schwartz  
Los Angeles, CA

I subscribed to your magazine to get information on music and musicians. That picture of Snoop Doggy Dogg pointing his handgun at us was one of the most appalling pieces of photojournalism I've ever seen. Then the article on that overwrought weasel-boy Trent Reznor, who's really not a musician at all but an angst-ridden computer nerd with an MTV look. His comment that he hopes his computer-generated

guitar licks cause misery to those trying to figure them out shows just how far "musicians" have evolved in their social consciousness.

Cancel my subscription. If you ever go back to reporting on music and real musicians feel free to contact me. In the meantime, keep your violence, anger and video stars out of my mailbox.

Kenny Langone  
Tucson, AZ

## WHO KILLED DAT?

Craig Anderton deserves high praise for his "Who Killed DAT" article (Feb. '94). As

The fact that Trent Reznor has managed to create music that does not fit into normal pigeonholes is a mark of a true pioneer. Trent Reznor has created a musical dimension that he alone inhabits, and it is up to the current field of aspiring musicians to see if they can follow him. NIN to me isn't necessarily industrial, it's NIN, a sound and class all its own. The more some people (read: Throbbing Gristle and other thin-skinned industrial groups, and the pigeonholing media) take the time to understand this, the easier this all should be on Trent.

Fredrick Beondo  
Richmond Hill, NY

someone who has watched the development, and subsequent early demise, of DAT, I enjoyed his take on just what or who did DAT in. We may never know who did it.

The death of DAT is the music industry's version of an Agatha Christie drawing room mystery. Hercule Poirot has gathered together everyone he believes had a motive. The vindictive ex-wife, the spurned lover, or maybe the butler? Or the former business partner? Tune in next week for the exciting conclusion.

John McElligott, Jr.  
Fullerton, CA

When I looked at the list of corporate participants in the killing of DAT, I realized these folks are only Republicans on April 15. Copyright law is intended to prevent copies from being produced for personal cost avoidance or sold for commercial gain. Here that intent is stretched pretty thin to support pure protectionism of a cash cow. The marketplace suc-

cessfully rebelled against PC software copy protection because it impacted legitimate users. Prosecution of copyright violators isn't so tough as to warrant crippling the product, and ultimately the whole concept.

Eric E. White  
Renton, WA

## DON'T TOUGH THAT DIAL

Thanks for the article on electromagnetic field hazards (Mar. '94). Some researchers believe that EMFs are partly responsible for the development of male breast cancer; perhaps Quincy Jones' recent bout with that disease was related to his exposure to electronic equipment. It's also possible that Frank Zappa's prostate cancer could have been aggravated by constant EMF exposure.

John Lankes  
San Francisco, CA

I applaud Mr. Cochran after having read his article "Killing Me Softly." He gave *Musician* readers a fair peek into the troubling question of electromagnetic radiation that's been on everyone's minds lately, particularly because this problem is characterized by so many unanswered questions. It is nice to see someone concerned about our artists.

I would like to entice Mr. Cochran onto another story: "The Danger and Ill Effects of Exposure to Theatrical Smoke." Let these manufacturers set up a medical study to prove that these chemicals, when heated to approximately 700° F. and inhaled, have no ill effects on human health—including the audience. I, for one, dare them.

Nina J. Paris  
The International Foundation  
for Performing Arts Medicine  
North Caldwell, NJ

## BIG COUNTRY

Matraca Berg (Mar. '94) can come zipping out of playlist purgatory and into my country anytime.

Chris Alastair  
Washington, DC

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





## robert cray

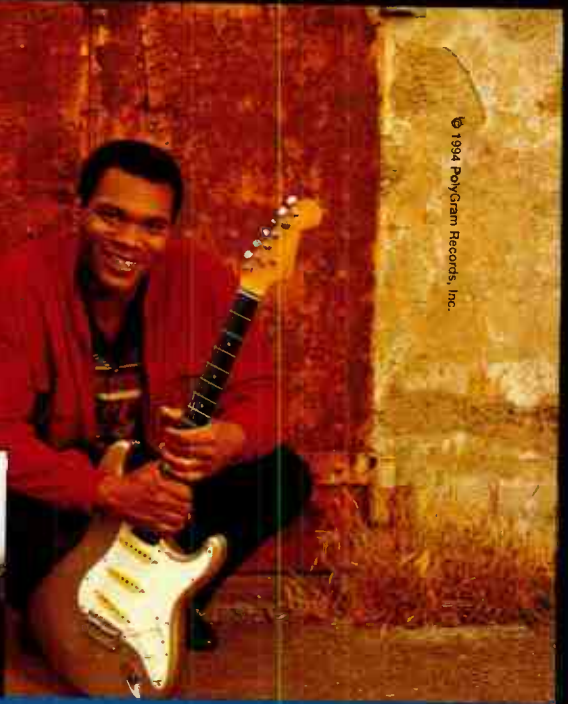
"Shame + A Sin is, in fact, the work of an artist hitting full stride."  
-The Oregonian

Robert Cray's latest album. Featuring "1040 Blues" plus "Some Pain, Some Shame" and "You're Gonna Need Me," a duet with the late Albert Collins.

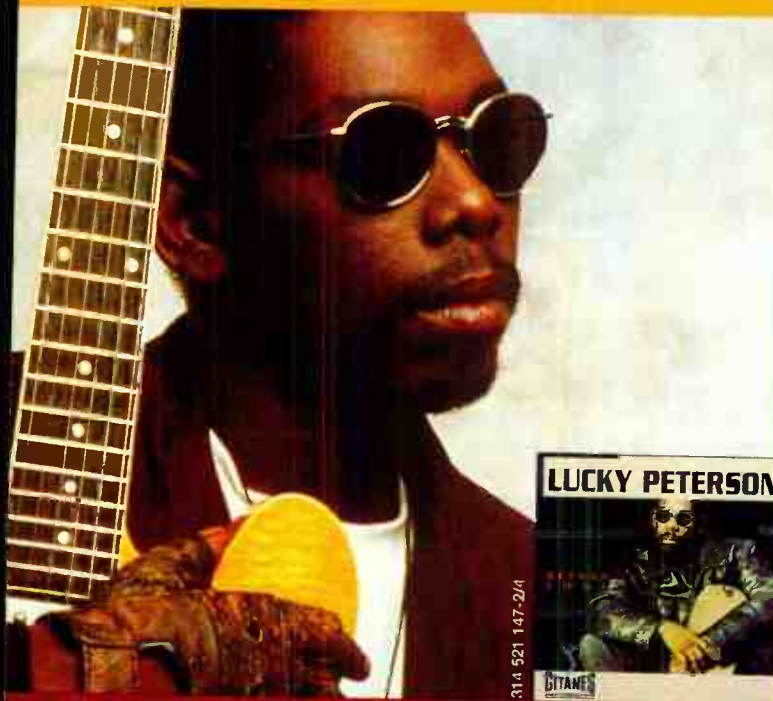
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-Guitar Magazine

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Produced by John Payne



# otis

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## VAN THE MAN

Van Cliburn is returning to the stage this summer. The tour coincides with the re-release of Cliburn's recordings of Rachmaninoff and Beethoven concertos from the RCA Victor vaults.

Cliburn struck the musical world like a thunderbolt in 1958 by winning the first Tchaikovsky competition, inspiring ticker-tape parades and platinum-selling releases. He retired from the stage in the late '60s, and since then has divided his time between sponsoring his Van Cliburn International Piano competition and performing for presidents and world leaders in private recitals. Although he hasn't yet performed for the current regime, negotiations are in progress between Hillary's people and his people.



ILLUSTRATION BY RUPERT HOWARD

## FLYING SAUGERS ROCK & ROLL!

Thirty-seven years after Sputnik, the first guitar has been launched into orbit. A scaled-down version of Martin's already-scaled-down Backpacker model accompanied astronaut/guitarist Pierre Thuot aboard the space shuttle Columbia in March. The guitar, built to Thuot's specs, is small enough to fit into one of the Columbia's personal storage compartments.

# Living Honestly As a Gay Musician

by Fred Hersch

**T**HE FIRST time I heard live jazz was in a small club in Cincinnati, OH in 1973; I had just turned 18 and was home from college on a Christmas break. There were musicians and listeners of all ages, races and backgrounds sharing the love and camaraderie of jazz. Beside the fact that

the joyful music and the exotic atmosphere really intrigued me, I was struck by the sense of community; the jazz world seemed like a hip club that anybody who wanted to play could belong to. And I felt—perhaps for the first time in my life—accepted as a member of *any* club when I decided to seriously become a jazz musician. I felt supported and encouraged by the local musicians as I learned to play jazz (and made my mistakes) on the bandstand. One of the sayings that I remember vividly from those days is “you’ve got to give it up to get it back”; at the time I connected this with giving of yourself in accompanying a soloist, then receiving support from the rest of the group when it was your turn to step out front. I loved that jazz was music that happened *with* people and in front of people.

After a few years playing professionally

in Cincinnati I moved to Boston in 1975 to further my musical education at New England Conservatory. Away from family and high school friends, this was also the place where I first felt free to live as a gay man. Though I had told my close friends and immediate family that I was gay, I began living a dual existence; gay friends and musician friends never seemed to be one and the same. This duality continued when I moved to New York City in 1977 to try to “play with the best.” Once again, my close friends knew of my sexual orientation, but I was petrified that some of the jazz legends in whose bands I was working would find out. And I knew no other jazz musicians who were openly gay, so I had no idea what the reaction might be—and my career concerns overrode everything. I was feeling disenfranchised from the com-

# ROUGH

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SERIES #1:  
“I AM SO  
DOPE.”



VANILLA ICE



HAMMER





EXPERT WITNESS

munity that I had so wanted to be part of, trapped in a psychological closet that I came to see was largely of my own design.

One of the pivotal moments came for me in 1982; I was living semi-secretly with a lover at the time. Stan Getz came over to our loft for a rehearsal and I remember hiding my lover's toothbrush in a moment of panic. After the rehearsal, I realized that I was spending an inordinate amount of time and energy worrying about who "knew" and who didn't. Straight musicians talked about their wives and girlfriends, but I wasn't comfortable talking about who I was seeing. I was becoming a musical chameleon and erasing myself as an artist—being what I thought people wanted me to be. It was then that I started the long process of integration that continues to this day: One can't be honest as a musician and dishonest as a person. I also learned to treat my sexual orientation as a matter-of-fact non-issue, and, to my surprise, found that I (and other musicians) became more comfortable with who I was. As a result of my greater honesty, I began to come into my own as a creative musician: I found a group of my peers to play with, formed my first bands, began composing in earnest and made my first records as a leader.

I found out that I was HIV-positive in 1986. It's difficult, almost impossible, to describe the effect that [cont'd on page 54]

PHOTOGRAPH BY KRISTINE LARSEN

# MIX



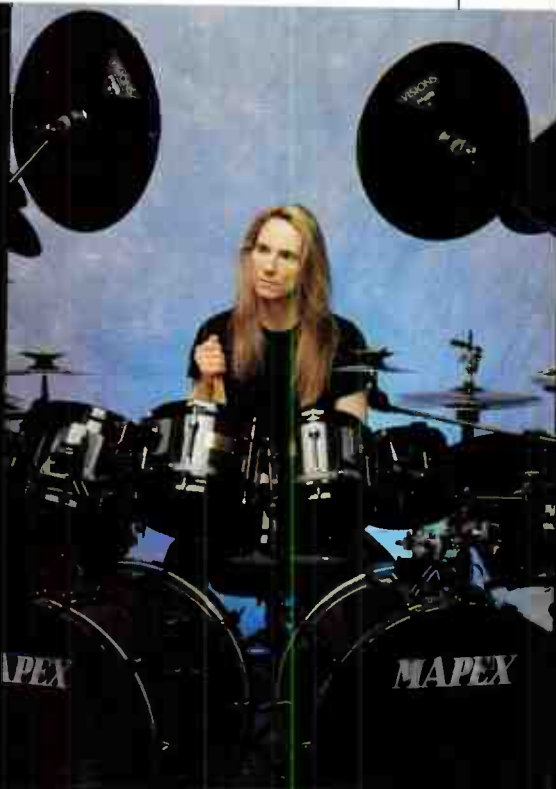
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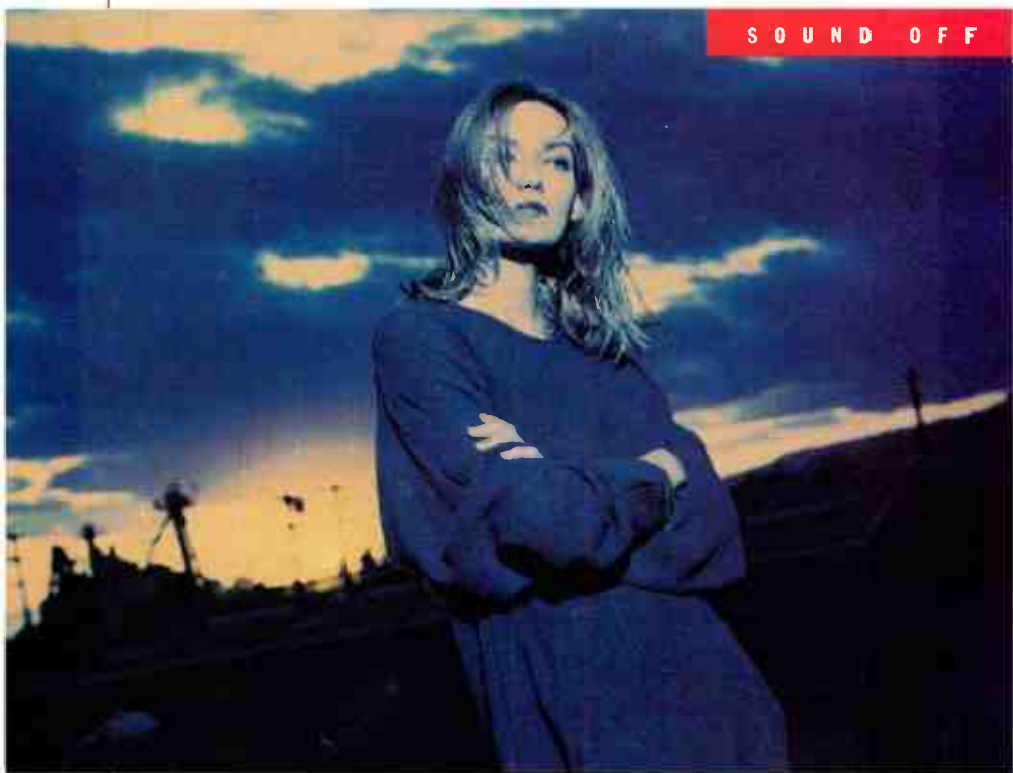
## NO BASS SOLOS, EITHER

Terry Bozzio is doing something few rock drummers have dared: He's gone solo. Through a series of unaccompanied drum set concerts, workshops and three new instructional videos—with solo drumming CDs looming on the horizon—the alumnus of Zappa, Missing Persons and Jeff Beck has chosen to forsake the band thing.

"I'm taking a risk to see how the public will receive this," he admits. "But so far most people say, 'I didn't know drums could be so musical.' It's because drums not only deal heavily with rhythm, but also incorporate melody and harmony. So when I combine a tom-tom, which has a pitch, with a bell that also has a pitch, you recognize various harmonic and melodic implications."

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PHOTOGRAPH BY CAROLINE GREYSHOCK

## When Will Women Rockers Get Respect?

by Sass Jordan

**I**T SEEMS a little odd to write about women in rock 'n' roll, because there aren't many, at least as evidenced by the omission this year of a Grammy category for Rock Vocal Female. Of course, there *are* women out there playing rock music. But it definitely takes a certain kind of person-

ality to push through the clogged arteries of rock radio and to do battle with the Granddaddy mentality of record companies, the "old boy" network of lawyers, managers, agents and the old-fashioned misogyny of John Q. Public.

Then there's the rock 'n' roll press, who are so consumed with worry about whether or not they are hip to the latest "thang." I have been told outright on more than one occasion that no one is going to buy rock 'n' roll from a female: "It really would make the whole thing a lot easier if you would just put on some sexy clothes and sing this predigested pabulum formula. It would take much less

effort on our part to sell you and you wouldn't have to fight this uphill battle. You'd fit perfectly into one of the acceptable boxes instead of falling through the cracks all the time." I have even heard that some radio stations can't play my record because they're already playing a "girl." Evidently, the music doesn't always speak for itself.

There are remarkable similarities between being a female rock 'n' roll musician and being a black rock 'n' roll musician. There is a resistance towards both. Towards women because we aren't supposed to exhibit the kind of rage and sexuality that fuels any great rock [cont'd on page 44]

**WHAT, NO VELVET PAINTINGS?** On June 18 in Las Vegas, Butterfield & Butterfield, "fine art auctioneers and appraisers since 1865," will auction the largest assemblage of Elvis memorabilia ever offered. Over 1000 items culled from the Elvis Presley Museum of Memphis will be placed on the block, including stagewear, jewelry, personal documents and even a Gianni guitar (estimated value: \$15,000–\$25,000). Call (800) 223-2854 for an illustrated catalog (\$28).



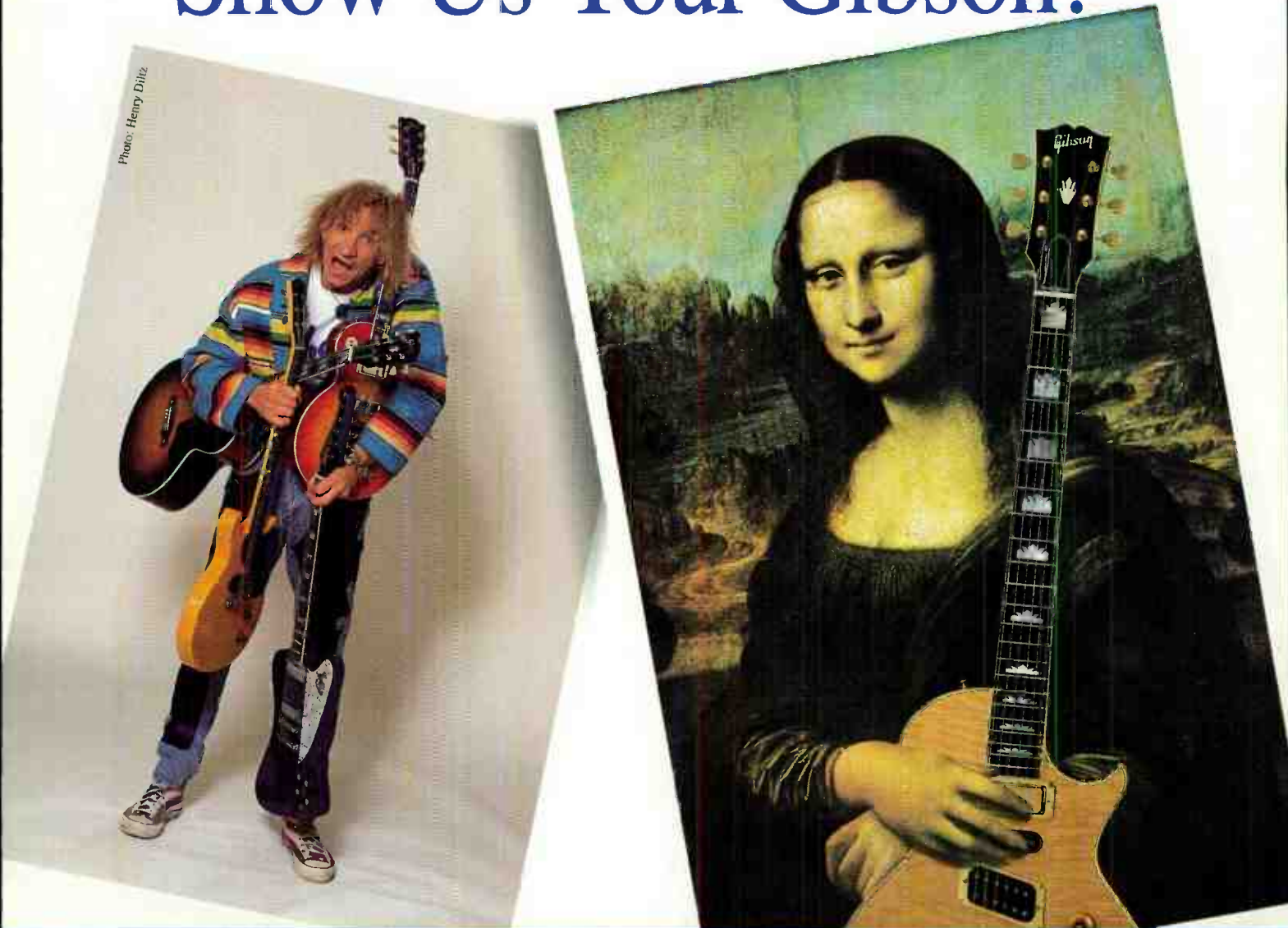
### SCRAMBLED X

Geffen Records is going to produce alternate versions of controversial albums in order to get them into conservative chains such as Wal-Mart and Kmart. Nirvana's *In Utero* will have its package altered—the fetuses on the back will be airbrushed away and the title "Rape Me" will be replaced with "Waif Me." These modifications are to the package only; the music will remain the same. That's not true of Beck, whose first album *Mellow Gold* contains the hit single "Loser." A censored version of *Mellow Gold* will be made available to touchy stores with the obscenities scrambled on tracks like "Motherfucker" and "Fuckin' with My Head." How long before albums by John Lennon, the Rolling Stones, Neil Young and others get the fucks scrambled out of them?



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# ROUGH MIX



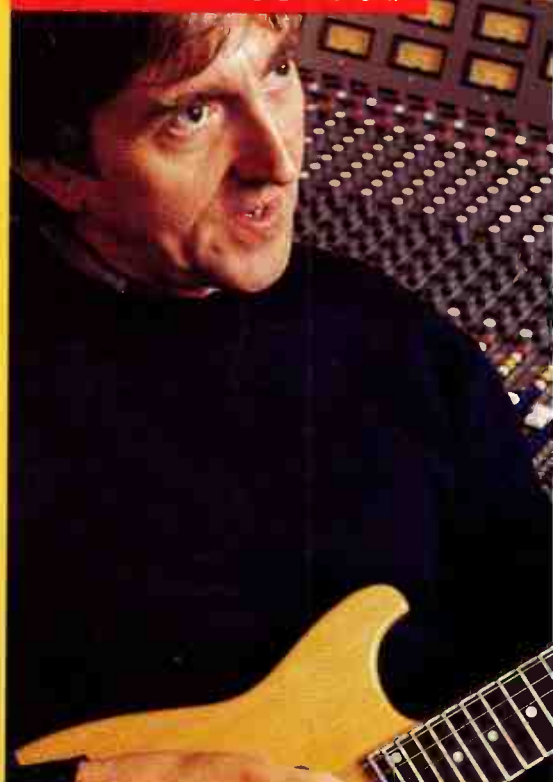
## DEAD CAN DUNK

First came Shaquille O'Neal's raps; now arrives a spoken-word CD by hoop legend and Dead-head extraordinaire Bill Walton, on New Alliance Records. Titled *Men Are Made in the Paint*, the big redhead dispenses practical tips and wisdom gleaned from playing under great coaches like UCLA's John Wooden, with musical interludes courtesy of another hall-of-famer—Doors keyboardist Ray Manzarek.

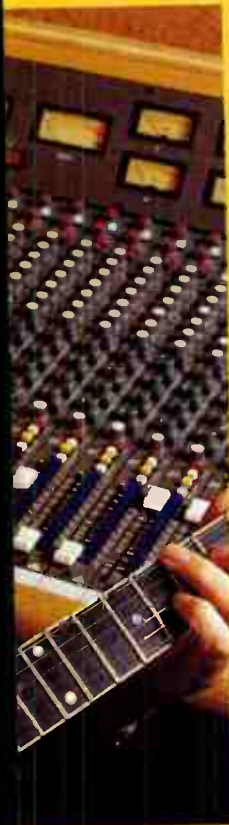
"Basketball is just like music," Walton observes. "It's a constant flow. You've got to be in rhythm, in sync and on the beat." Anything else? "The fun, the emotional commitment, the passion, the dreaming, the beauty, the timing, the teamwork. And at the top, competitive greatness—guys who know how to put the big show on. When the game is on the line, when the packed house is there and ready, do you deliver? That's the Dead, that's Bob Dylan, that's Neil Young." Walton smiles: "That's not the New York Knicks, though."

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL CHRISTMAS

## PRIVATE LESSON







#### ALLAN HOLDSWORTH

Allan Holdsworth started turning heads almost 20 years ago, laying down spidery riffs and digit-bending chord voicings behind Jean-Luc Ponty, Tony Williams, UK, Bruford and, for many years now, on solo projects. On his new one, *Hard Hat Area*, Holdsworth continues to hone his private reserve of scalar and chordal sensibilities.

"I think of a scale as a family and a chord as just part of that," he explained recently in his studio near San Diego. "If you stop thinking about playing inversions of, say, A major 7th, and start thinking of notes in the scale, you end up with different ways of playing a chord.

"You can make it more linear when you're moving from one chord to the next, instead of always playing a static voicing of one chord. That was one of the things that frustrated me with the guitar, that chords really sounded plain compared to a piano, so I wanted to look into making them sound different and more open."

He does that by, within a single chord, mixing tightly knit notes—for instance, the 3rd and the 4th together—with widely voiced outer notes, often requiring an extended reach. "As for the close notes, that was one way for me to add color into the sound."

Like his chordal approach, Holdsworth's single-note playing relies on avoiding the obvious. "I've tried to make it difficult to tell which notes are picked and which are hammered on. Also, I try to practice playing notes with only my left hand tapping. I actually don't use pull-offs—I don't deflect the string sideways. There's something about when you pull the string," he demonstrates on his custom guitar, built by Bill Delap, "it has a kind of a meow to it that I don't like."

#### RECENT LABEL SIGNINGS

**Body Count** Daryl Gates' favorite band (Virgin)

**7 Year Bitch** Riot Grrrls go majrrr (Atlantic)

**Dishwalla** Melodic "alternative" Santa Barbara Quintet (A&M)

**Royal Trux** Windy City eccentric rock duet (Virgin)



*This month's Rough Mix was written by Andy Doerschuk, Bill Flanagan, Ted Greenwald, Keith Powers, Mark Rowland and Josef Woodard.*

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# R A N G E O F



BY CHUCK CRISAFULLI

Porno for Pyros frontman and master of Lollapaloozas Perry Farrell strolls onto the balcony of a Venice Beach coffee house flashing a cracked smile and swigging from a bottle. The flamboyant rocker is dressed down in simple, casual garb, while his close-cropped hair accentuates his piercing eyes and dramatic features.

"I'm running on raspberry iced tea today," he says by way of introduction. "This stuff is incredible."

Farrell is famous for his moods, among other things, and today his mein seems decidedly mellow. He's here to help celebrate the release of a new record and a reunion with his band. No, not Porno for Pyros, his current ensemble, who are otherwise at work finishing their second record. And certainly not the members of Farrell's previous powerhouse, Jane's Addiction. Perry's come to see the guys who backed him up when he made his first splash in the clubs of Los Angeles a decade ago, the members of Psi Com.

Farrell makes his entrance just as drummer Aaron Sherer is explaining that he and guitarist Vince Duran did not, in fact, end the band back in 1985 by becoming Hare Krishnas. Sherer, Duran and bassist Kelly Wheeler haven't been in touch with each other for years, and none of them have seen Farrell since they attended some of the earliest Jane's gigs. But as the singer spies his former mates, his smile warms and widens. Celebratory hugs

# D D I C T I O N S

are exchanged, and the group's energy immediately kicks up.

Farrell's always been a fascinating focal point onstage, and up close, his star presence doesn't dim. He ushers everyone inside to a cushioned alcove where the old days can be hashed over more comfortably. There, alternately appearing as a weathered wise man, a lysergic shaman and a mischievous preschooler, Farrell holds court to his chums' delight.

Psi Com had a brief but exciting moment of glory in the midst of the mercurial mid-'80s Hollywood scene. The quartet played nearly as many loft parties as they did proper gigs, and their touring plans never got past the "everybody in the station wagon" stage. But at a time when Wham! and "We Are the World" were sitting high on the charts, when glam-metallers were squinching into their first pairs of spandex trousers and punk rock was coughing its death rattle, Psi Com made some distinctive, powerfully original music that, if nothing else, served as an excellent warm-up for Mr. Farrell's further endeavors.

"We were a smash success as far as I was concerned," he declares. "It wasn't a question of getting signed to a label, because that wasn't even a possibility in those days. What was important was that we were recognized among our peers. I saw our name in the *LA Weekly* as 'one of the best new bands in the city,' and I was completely thrilled. I'd tune in the college radio stations just to hear our name get mentioned in the club listings. And, playing at the Anti-Club..."

The group held together for about three years. In 1985, a couple of months before they split up, they decided to rent out a recording studio for a weekend. They cut a five-track EP and self-released 1500 copies on their own Mohini label. Thanks to negligible distribution and a poor pressing job that left nearly half the EPs unplayably warped, this music has been virtually unheard ever since. Recently, however, Triple X Records re-released the EP after managing the considerable task of recovering the master tapes, ultimately discovered in a closet at the home of a sister of one of the members of Savage Republic. (Don't ask.)

The long-last session holds up well. Icy washes of reverb betray the influence of art-punk heroes like the Cure and Siouxsie and the Banshees, but the snaky songcrafting and emotive playing on tunes like "Ho Ka Hey" and "Human Condition" clearly foreshadow the tribal thunder that made Jane's Addiction so potent. The guys act somewhat surprised that this particular piece of the past has resurfaced, and rather amused that their first decent record deal arrived nine years after Psi Com's demise.

Nonetheless, everyone seems to have fond memories of the time.

"We dovetailed perfectly for a while in terms of philosophy, creativity and music," recalls the soft-spoken Sherer. "Nothing too mystical, but the parts added up to something bigger, which is exactly what people are after when they play in bands."

"We didn't think too much about what we were doing, but we put in a lot of hours," says Wheeler. "We were living Psi Com. Perry and I were also roommates in this house full of artists and punk rockers. People were always coming and going and you didn't know if they were friends or if they were stealing something."

Farrell nearly sparks with nervous energy, but he's clearly in a happy mood. "You're all invited to the Lollapalooza this year," he says.

"There's going to be another one?" asks Wheeler.

"Thanks for the vote of confidence," Farrell smirks.

The traveling alterna-fest is in its fourth year; this year's tentative lineup includes Smashing Pumpkins, the Beastie Boys, the Breeders, Nick Cave, George Clinton, A Tribe Called Quest and, heading up the second stage entertainment, black-clad country legend Johnny Cash. Last summer's show collected criticism for delivering diminished entertainment value, but Farrell insists that this year's event will capture some of the tour's original excitement. He says that one of the differences is that he's had the time to become a take-charge organizer again.

"I'm very hands-on for this one," he explains. "Last year I was trying to get Porno off the ground and had the least amount of fingers on the Lollapalooza.

This year, I think we're going to have the

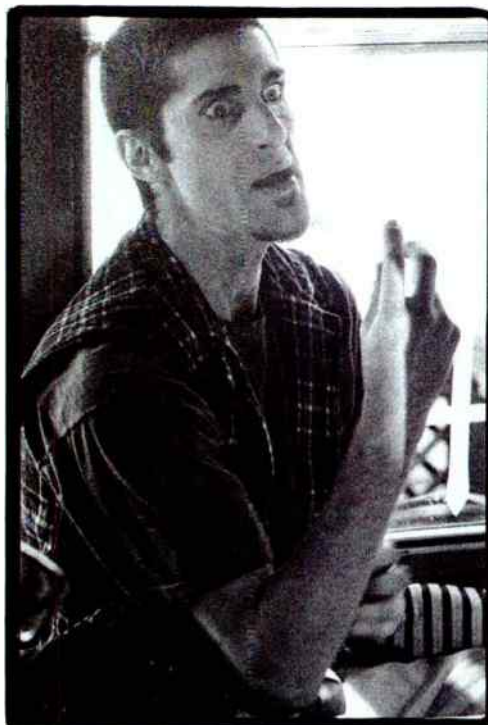
best show yet. It's going to be well thought out."

Wheeler says he's had a great time at previous Lollapaloozas, and will be happy to take up Farrell on his invitation.

"Sure, I'll get you in," Farrell assures. "But you may still have to stand in line for a drink bracelet."

Farrell created Lollapalooza in 1990 as a way to do something creative during what he knew would be Jane's Addiction's final tour. Since then, putting together a yearly festival of engaging music, tasty foods, provocative politics and eclectic attractions has become as much a passion for Farrell as his music-making. The challenge of keeping the concept fresh remains a pleasure.

"I'm very proud of the shows. It's work that's never really finished. Just when people think it's turned into a formula, we'll pull out a brand new formula, like we're doing this year. If it was so easy to put together a show like this, there'd be lots of concerts like it. But there's only 'it,' and it's going to get better and better.



"I was crying behind a rock after we played. It turned out it didn't matter what I'd done because everyone in the crowd was on acid."

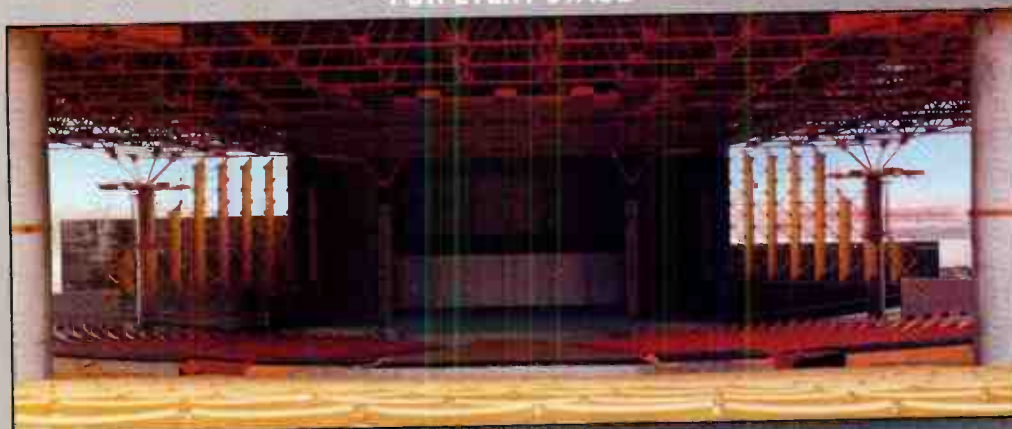




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“At first it was hard to get anything done, because nobody believed in the idea. Now that we’re up to the fourth, if I say I want it to be booked into the Brazilian rain forest, a team of people gets right to work on that.”

Some critics point to that kind of teamwork as one of the flaws, and charge that what started as a celebration of the underground has quickly turned into just another smoothly run, big-ticket rock show. Negative press doesn’t faze Farrell, mostly because he never sees it.

“I’ve never read a Lollapalooza review. I don’t need to read about the shows after the fact to figure out if they were a success or not. And if I know something didn’t go well, I don’t want to hear about it from somebody else, because it already bothers me. A long time ago I read a one-line negative review of a Jane’s show and I felt so hurt and so upset that I just decided not to worry about reading the stuff anymore.”

Lollapalooza ’94 is still a hazy piece of the future; what’s brought Psi Com together is the past. As the atmosphere loosens, the stories begin to fly.

Farrell says he became involved with the band when he answered a “drummer wanted” ad that mentioned Joy Division, U2 and the Psychedelic Furs as influences. He was invited to an audition, where it was hoped he could replace a drum machine. By the end of that meeting, the drum machine was still running and Farrell was the singer.

Eventually Sherer filled the drum slot. “He saw an ad and called for an audition,” Farrell remembers. “I talked to him and I liked the music he was into, but I asked about his fashion. He said he had a feather in his ear, and that was good enough for me.”

“I told him I had kind of a mohawk,” the drummer laughs, “and he said, ‘Cool, me too. What color’s yours?’”

As a trio, Psi Com scored their first big gig as the opening slot at a bash in the middle of the desert with Sonic Youth, Redd Kross and the Meat Puppets. Just before the show, Kelly Wheeler decided to join the group when they offered to buy him a bass.

“I knew Kelly didn’t have time to learn the parts, but we did a lot of improvising, so I thought it would work out all right,” Farrell recalls. “What I remember about that show is being on mushrooms and having all this sand kick up around us. I just got stuck in this pocket onstage, spouting off like an idiot. I thought, ‘Damn, this was our big chance in front of all these people and we blew it.’ I was crying behind a rock after we played. It turned out it didn’t matter what I’d done because *everyone* in the crowd was on acid.”

Farrell’s fierce, somewhat demented showmanship became an early trademark of the band’s performances, although Sherer says he often got so involved in the music that he didn’t notice anything unusual happening onstage.

“People would come up to me after a gig and say, ‘Is Perry okay?’ I was never sure what they were talking about because I’d shut my eyes and be in a different world.”

“I remember Aaron playing so hard he’d fall off his stool,” laughs Farrell. “But that was the only way we knew to play.”

The singer’s intensely physical performances were usually a spontaneous reaction to the music, but he admits that occasionally his antics were calculated. “One of the club-owners was a real schmuck who had ripped off other bands. I was angry that we had ended up with a gig at his place, so I decided to make sure that we’d never get asked back. At the end of the set I jumped off the stage and slid all the way down the bar. Unfortunately, after the show the schmuck came up with a big smile and said, ‘You guys were great!’”

That wasn’t the only tactic of Farrell’s that backfired. His early dabbings in the darker powers of the spirit may have cost Psi Com a bass amp.

“Oh God, I never told you guys this,” he says excitedly. “I wanted our first big show at the Troubadour to be strong, and I had some black magic books, because we were into everything weird and spiritual back then. I decided to put a spell on our performance. I opened a book and did some little thing with candles and prayers the night before. Then, at the gig, we started playing and the bass amp immediately blew up. I never touched that book again.”

Psi Com took its music seriously, but wasn’t too concerned with strategies for rock ’n’ roll success—they were happy to take gigs at house parties, Mexican restaurants, Filipino weddings. They did sign on with a hard-working manager, albeit one with peculiar credentials.

“She was a prostitute,” Farrell explains. “She didn’t know what the hell she was doing in the music business, but she could get us money fast. She’d been at one of our shows and liked us and said, ‘I’ll invest.’”

Band photos were taken at a Sears on “Picture Day,” where the group put on their finest rock duds and got in line with grade-schoolers in clip-on ties and party dresses. As Farrell fans might suspect, the singer was always concerned that the members of Psi Com project a unique look.

“Perry was our hair stylist,” says Wheeler. “The first thing he did when I joined the band was cut my hair off.”

“We always had communal snip-and-cut sessions before our gigs,” Sherer notes.

Farrell smiles and shakes his head. “I had my mohawk and then I had this braid growing with a bell at the end—what a spazz. But that braid helped out in Jane’s, because when I got sick of it and tried to undo it after not washing it for a year, there were all these weird-looking dreads happening. I stuck with the dreads. The rest is history,” he adds with a laugh.

**L.A. GEAR**

**B**ack in 1985, Psi Com made some sizable sounds with fairly modest equipment. They weren’t opposed in principle to upgrading their gear, but found that the flamboyant post-punk appearance that worked well for the band onstage didn’t score them any points in a retail setting. “We’d go shopping for new gear,” says PERRY FARRELL, “and nobody in the music stores would want to deal with us.”

On their EP, AARON SHERER bashed away at a six-piece set of DW drums. Bassist KELLY WHEELER used the full-scale, small-bodied Ibanez bass the band bought for him when he became a member, and ran it through an SWR bass amp. VINCE DURAN ran his late-’70s Fender Strat through a 50-watt Music Man and a Roland JC 120 Jazz Chorus. His specialty at the time was bending his whammy bar “the wrong way” to achieve various warbling effects. Farrell contributed percussion as well as vocals to the record, applying sticks to church bells, hubcaps and a Chevy engine block. He says he’s continued to use one of his Psi Com vocal effects throughout his tenure with Jane’s Addiction and with Porno for Pyros. “I still have the Ibanez EM-1000 echo unit I had back then. You get a much wilder effect spinning the knobs on that unit than you do pushing buttons on anything digital. If you want to sound like me when you sing, you need to find a beat-up, 10-year-old analog echo effect.”



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"The funny thing is, I look at kids today and think, 'They're silly—why do they put so much effort into what they look like?' Then I stop and think—I'm the guy that used to have a bell on a braid with silver things weaved in to the sides of my head. I cut the toes of my shoes off to have the steel plate

recording sessions. "It was funny," remembers Farrell, "because our engineer was also making soundtracks for dirty movies in his back room: *Johnny Deep* or something. It was kind of creepy to see him sitting at the board with this strange smile on his face."

Psi Com bashed out five of their strongest

high notes, and that's where you can actually hear my real voice being born."

The band sold their record out of the back of their station wagon after gigs. "We thought it was doing well because we got a few people outside of relatives to buy it," says Farrell.

"I remember a pretty good EP release

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**"This bed is on fire with passionate love"— "Laid"**





Left to right: Saul  
Davies, Mark Hunter,  
David Baynton-  
Power, Jim Glennie,  
Larry Gott, (forward)  
Tim Booth

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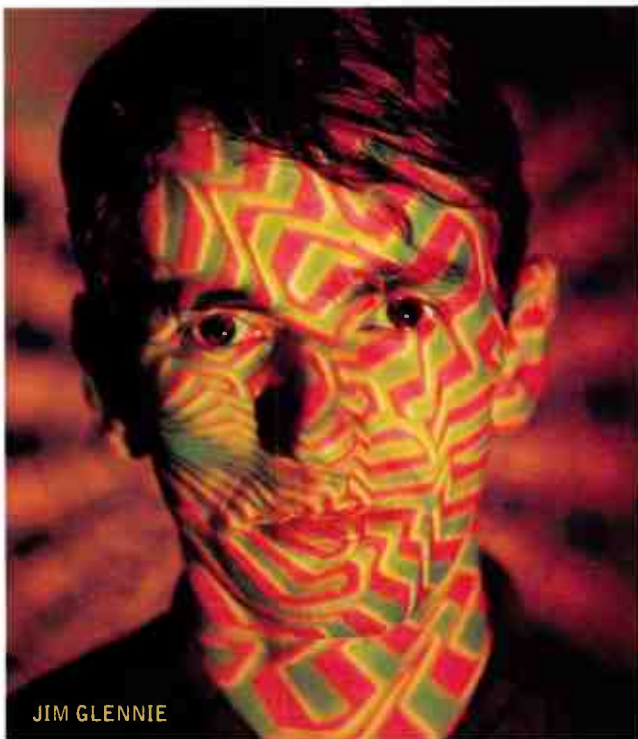


W

*HUMPF!* As James' tour bus lurches into Memphis, vocalist Tim Booth finds just the right word to describe the sound of his Tibetan doctor initiating a "cleansing ritual" before a recent James tour. After a soothing massage with exotic oils, the merry shaman dropped a lit match on Booth's exposed back, turning the already flamboyant singer into a kind of human flambé for a split second. "It felt incredible all up and down my spine, and especially here," he adds, gripping his gonads. (Hey, buttheads, don't try this at home.) Booth looks pensive. "Of course, it wasn't really authentic." A smile of enlightened goofiness lights up his face. "You're supposed to use rancid yak butter for the full effect."

He leads me to the back of the bus to meet the rest of the band, who are huddled around a video monitor, watching what appear to be amorphous, vaguely humanoid blobs of color writhe and interpenetrate each other. Video rave art? "No, it's ambient porn," announces Booth. "They crank up the contrast and the color knobs as far as they go and stare at it for hours."

Emerging over a decade ago from the same Manchester scene that spawned English eccentrics from Morrissey to Happy Mondays, James is, well, not like other boys—particularly English ones. They started as a Factory/college cult band that grew through a stint at Sire and three excellent albums on Mercury. Unlike many less fluid English bands whose by-the-number influences (two parts Bowie, one part Morrissey, a pinch of Clash) tend to freeze them into a pose, James evolved and oper-



JIM GLENNIE



TIM BOOTH

ates more like an organism than a hierarchy. They tune into each other and the world with a kind of inner radar, absorb it all and watch it pop back up in the form of musical hybrids. Booth and James occupy a remarkably balanced zone where the sacred and profane not only meet for lunch—they mirror complementary aspects of the same whole. Tim and his mates are not doe-eyed new agers or spiritual dilettantes. Booth is that rare person who can embrace any experience that offers the possibility of growth.

How did they get there? Tim Booth sighs. "In the beginning this was a street tough, motherfucking band. Violent. Terrible." He's not kidding. "The original guitarist wound up in prison for beating up a policeman. And then we all went through a dope phase, which mellowed people out. Later we got into meditation, and something just shifted." They don't meditate anymore; martial arts is up on their collective radar screen at the moment. Booth enthuses about the writings of Robert Anson Wilson, and how his mind-jolting, interactive books "help deprogram you, breaking up negative patterns of thinking and feeling."

Later that evening before a packed house at a Memphis club, James mesmerize the audience with the dreamy but powerful undertow of songs from *Laid*, their Eno-produced American breakthrough album. Songs like "5-0" and "Lullaby" create a blissful, hypnotic dreamscape. It's as if the songs are playing the musicians, rather than vice versa. Guitarist Larry Gott drops quicksilver slide lines, drummer David Baynton-Power shifts from a tentative patter to a martial roll, Saul Davies adds color and textures on both violin and second guitar, as does Mark Hunter on keyboards, while bassist Jim Glennie's modal lines move the tunes along like



an insistent subterranean current. In short, they interact like luminous, amorphous blobs of light making love. And Tim Booth looks and sounds exactly like a man whose genitals have been smeared with yak butter and set on fire. You can almost feel the waves of numinous energy as he whirls around the stage in a shamanistic frenzy, keying in on various bandmembers to jump-start their creative juices when the energy lags. "He likes to harass us when things get stuck," agree Glennie and Baynton-Power with wry grins. Booth cites the mutual trust among band members as the key to keeping the energies flowing. But as with most things James, conscious planning is taboo. Intuition and understatement are the guiding principles.

"We encourage each other to improvise—onstage and in the studio—when things freeze up," asserts Booth. "Larry did some lovely things the other night by playing more mellow, which is hard. When you're panicking because things are going wrong, the normal response is to get angry and be more aggressive. Instead, Larry went the other way, more subtle—which was really sweet."

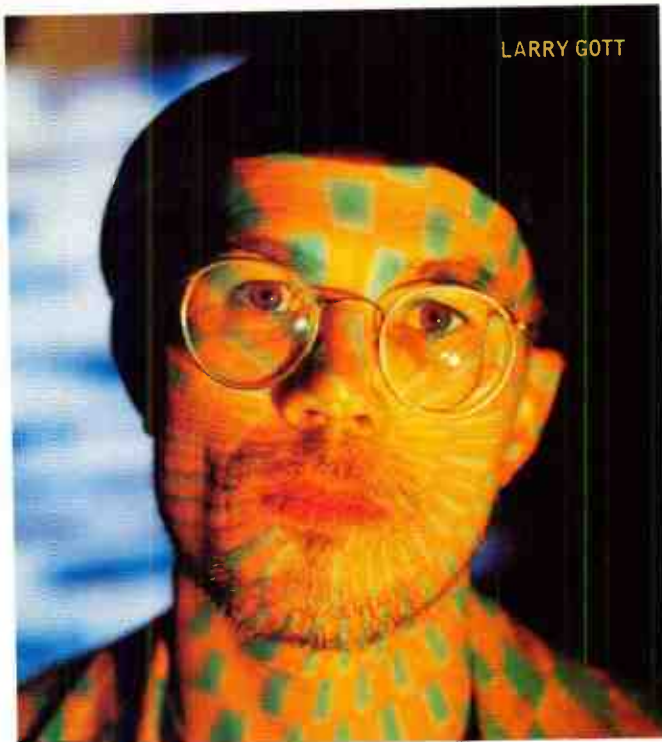
Back on the bus we're doing the overnight run to New Orleans under a spectral Mississippi moon. Suffering from a slight case of food poisoning, Booth is amazed to hear that everyone else didn't consider the show a disaster. I mention that at times their energy reminded me of seeing U2 at the Ritz in the early '80s and Booth brightens. "That's an energy I'd be proud to be associated with."

Glennie mentions that "the other night in Atlanta we were so up, you start to anticipate, ah, how do we recapture that spontaneity? It just creeps in."

And then you fall off the bicycle? "Exactly," nods Glennie. "You have to remember to relax and let go each time."



MARK HUNTER



LARRY GOTT

Talk turns to the rigidities of the English music biz and English society, and how James has spent 11 years intuiting their way through a scene where emotions are impacted and striking a pose is the norm. "In England, the whole scene has become crystallized—rigor mortis has set in," muses Booth. "The music papers are writing about everybody all the time. There's far too much introspection and mental analysis." James see their countrymen as stuck in the rational, cut off from the intelligence of their own emotions and spirit, limited to one color of the spectrum. "It turns into control and fear. Everything has to have its place and be easily understood. There's a fear of anything that doesn't fit into preexisting constructs, a fear of anything that creates something really new and wonderful. A fear of magic," concludes Booth. "The only way that they can understand magic is in terms of something like drugs."

"Instinct is a powerful, intelligent tool," muses bespectacled guitarist Larry Gott, a gentle but solid guy who looks like a cross between a street hooligan and a college professor. "You can call it your heart or your soul or your subconscious, but it means you're flying by the seat of your pants. In this band, if you want to explore, or go out of key, nobody's going to bum you out about it. Out of those creative accidents and leaps come some strange directions, and those 'accidents' form our music."

When I mention that many Americans assume that James must be an Irish band,

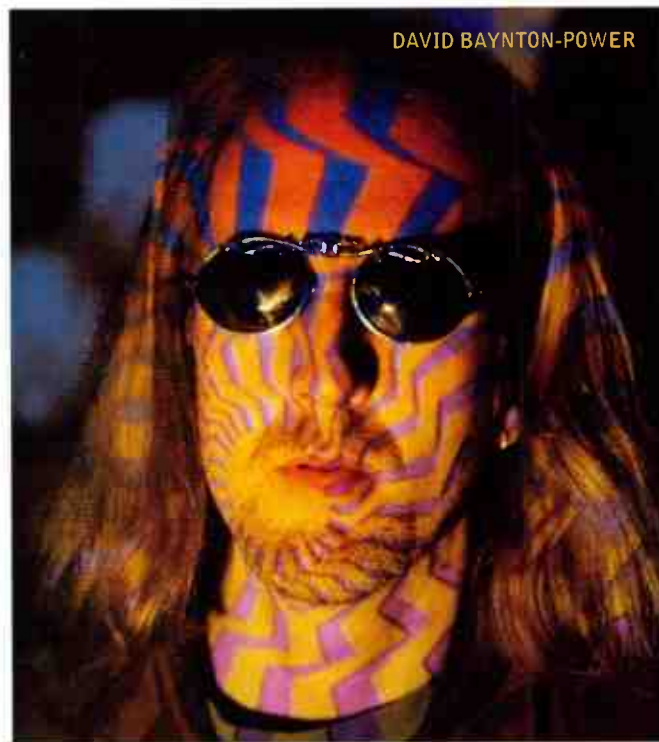
**"If you lift from other people you might find some interesting permutations. But you're not going to find magic."**

**“I’m very much a battlefield between mind, body and emotions. They’re struggling to come together to find out what I really feel.”**

they’re delighted. Gott, who recently bought a house in Ireland, compares James’ unregimented, role-shifting way of making music to what he hears in Irish pubs. “They play these different variations on old tunes. First this old guy in the corner who’s most respected starts off, and the others follow. But it’s not a normal hierarchy, because when a young guy’s got something he thinks he can show the old man, he’s encouraged to flourish. And the old man will doff his cap to him in respect. There’s this living, breathing relationship going on in their music, and when it starts to hap-

pen the whole nature of the pub changes. People feel the musicians have connected and they suddenly stop talking. You can’t get a hair between the beats or the harmonies. Everybody goes with it, people jump up and start dancing because they’ve caught something from the musicians. Their pub culture is so much more emotive than the English one.” He pauses. “Most English bands are about *whining*. It’s embarrassing.”

James accepted the fact that they were going to be misunderstood by the press, especially at home, years ago. They meditated, so they must be Buddhists. They write about God,



DAVID BAYNTON-POWER

they must be a Christian band. Now they question the image of a “wrathful desert God,” so they must be atheists. They smoked dope, they must be typical Manchester stoners. Now they’re working with Eno, they wannabe the next U2.

Gott and Booth see Eno’s role as providing a similar catharsis for both James and U2. “*The Joshua Tree* was them breaking down everything that they’d done before to find where they were going next. We were at the same point in our process and Eno became our navigator,” Gott explains. The Neil Young tour was a crucial step in the band’s preparation for working with Eno. “That’s where we learned the value of understatement,” says Gott. “Neil wanted us to play acoustically, and suddenly we had to deal with all these holes and spaces and instruments that don’t sustain. At first you feel really naked, and then we started to enjoy it. So when we went into the studio with Eno we picked up our electric instruments, but we handled them with the same feeling and purity we’d developed with the acoustic ones.”

James didn’t need Eno to tell them how to create music by trusting their subconscious. “During the early days of James we’d rehearse all the time, just make a racket,” remembers Tim. “During the second year of our existence we wrote exactly one song! We weren’t trying to write, we were trying to have fun, we were looking for a new language.” But why all this emphasis on learning to write from the subconscious? “Because otherwise you’re never going to create something beyond what the conscious mind can envisage or already knows—you’re never going to find that place where a new language can emerge. If you lift from other people you might find some interesting permutations. But you’re not going to find what [cont’d on page 38]



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**THE DECLINE AND  
FALL OF THE  
BRITISH EMPIRE**  
BY THOM DUFFY

**I**N A BALLROOM at London's swank Savoy Hotel, the British record business gathered last fall to pat itself on the back. Mingling with the record execs were some of the most promising young acts on the British scene—Polly Jean Harvey, the Stereo MCs, the Auteurs and Suede, among others—each nominated for the 1993 Mercury Music Prize for the best British album of the year.

Soon the wait was over. As their Bowie-esque album blasted over the PA, members of Suede took the stage to accept the honor for their self-titled debut disc, another triumph for a band widely acclaimed in the U.K. as the Great New Hope for English rock. Cheers rose from the staff of Sony Music, which had signed Suede for the world outside the U.K. Then amid the merriment, a Sony boss approached a colleague and plaintively asked:

"Can we just sell a few records now?"

For years now, the critical praise for new talent from Britain has largely failed to translate into significant or sustained pop success in America. While Suede has, in fact, sold some 100,000 copies of their debut album in the U.S. and more than a half-million worldwide, the band's failure to crack the lower rungs of the *Billboard* 200 album chart with their debut is all too typical of the fate of English acts in the U.S. in the '90s.

Thirty years ago, the Beatles and the Stones launched the British Invasion of the American pop charts. Elton John and David Bowie carried the banner of English rock into the '70s. The Police, Genesis and George Michael became England's worldwide superstars in the '80s. And the '90s have brought a steady British parade of critics' picks: the Happy Mondays, the Stone Roses, Curve, PJ Harvey, Radiohead, to name a few—none of whom have a Top 20 album in the U.S. EMF edged up to number 12 with *Schubert Dip* in 1991, and then promptly dipped out of sight. Unbelievable, indeed.

"It might be cyclical, but I've never known it to be this bad since I started in the business," says Muff Winwood, a veteran British A&R man and head of Sony's Soho Square label.

That's not to say English rock 'n' roll doesn't sell in America anymore. Old English rock chugs along just fine, thank you. Consider the multi-platinum sales of Eric Clapton's Grammy-winning *Unplugged* album, with its easy-listening version of "Layla."

"I was looking at the *Billboard* chart and horrified to note there is just one British act in the Top 50—Rod Stewart," says Howard Thompson, senior VP of A&R at Almo Records. An expatriate Brit who has worked in the Ameri-

# english rock

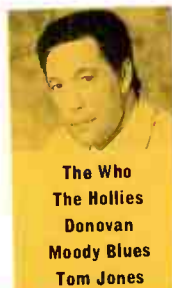


The Beatles  
The Searchers  
The Dave Clark 5  
The Kinks  
The Rolling Stones  
The Zombies  
The Animals

1964

Herman's Hermits  
The Yardbirds

1965



The Who  
The Hollies  
Donovan  
Moody Blues  
Tom Jones

1966



Cream  
Jeff Beck Group  
Procul Harum  
Pink Floyd  
E. Humpardinck

1967

Deep Purple  
Traffic  
The Small Faces  
Fleetwood Mac

1968



Led Zeppelin  
Blind Faith  
Jethro Tull  
Black Sabbath  
Ten Years After  
Joe Cocker

1969

**1970**

Elton John  
Cat Stevens  
King Crimson  
Dave Edmunds

**1971**

Yes  
E.L.P.  
Genesis  
Foghat  
Free  
Humble Pie  
Rod Stewart  
T. Rex

**1972**

David Bowie  
Bad Company  
E.L.O.

**1973**

Wings  
Queen  
10CC

**1974**

Roxy Music  
Bay City Rollers  
Mike Oldfield

**1975**

Robert Palmer  
Ace



can record business for years, Thompson signed such artists as the Happy Mondays, Billy Bragg and Sisters of Mercy while at Elektra Entertainment. He observes that the British acts recently trailing Rod Stewart on the *Billboard* album chart included Sting, Elvis Costello, Phil Collins—veterans one and all.

New acts from outside the U.S. are still breaking through in the States. But now they're coming from Canada (Crash Test Dummies), Ireland (the Cranberries) or even Iceland (Björk). From anywhere, it seems, but Britain.

What's happening here? British pop music rode high on American airwaves for a quarter century. Why has this generation of English acts found it so difficult to find lasting success on American shores?

One key change in the '90s has been in the nature of the *Billboard* 200 chart itself. With the introduction of more accurate Soundscan data in 1991, many more albums from genres such as country and rap found a place in the overall ranking, creating tougher competition for all, Brits included. And some say the strength of artists from Nashville or Seattle also is evidence of musical trends directly at odds with those in Britain.

**"THE NEW ACTS  
HAVE NEVER KNOWN  
ABOUT CONSTANT  
GIGGING. IT'S A  
STRUGGLE TO GET A  
BRITISH BAND TO  
TOUR THE U.S. FOR  
MORE THAN FIVE  
WEEKS."**

"America is going through a very conservative period, hence the sales of people like Garth Brooks and this so-called new 'grunge' music, which has been very retrogressive," says Mike Edwards of

Jesus Jones, whose fusion of dance technology and rock 'n' roll yielded the Top 5 hit "Right Here, Right Now" in 1991. For Edwards and others, the dominance of dance culture in Britain in the '80s has made English pop more adventurous—and a lot less comprehensible to U.S. audiences. "And America's need for a dance revolution is lessened by the fact that rap fulfills the same role as street music there," he says.

That's possible. But record buyers in the U.S. embraced such dance-oriented artists from Britain as Soul II Soul and American expatriate Neneh Cherry on their debut albums in 1989. But neither act maintained its initial success.

"There is talent in Britain, but the way the record industry, record stores and radio stations work together is not geared toward breaking bands but breaking hits," says Michael Rosenblatt, an American A&R executive who worked for WEA Records in London before returning to the U.S., where he is senior VP of A&R at MCA Records.

And the British hit singles chart, funded by the British record



Culture Club  
Duran Duran  
Depeche Mode  
Modern English  
Adam & the Ants  
Bow Wow Wow

**1982**

Eurythmics  
Billy Idol  
UB40  
Big Country  
Paul Young  
Thomas Dolby  
Big Country  
Def Leppard

**1983**

George Michael  
Wham!  
Sade  
Fine Young Cannibals  
OMD  
Thompson Twins  
Simple Minds  
Frankie Goes to  
Hollywood

**1984**

The Cure  
The Smiths  
Tears for Fears

**1985**

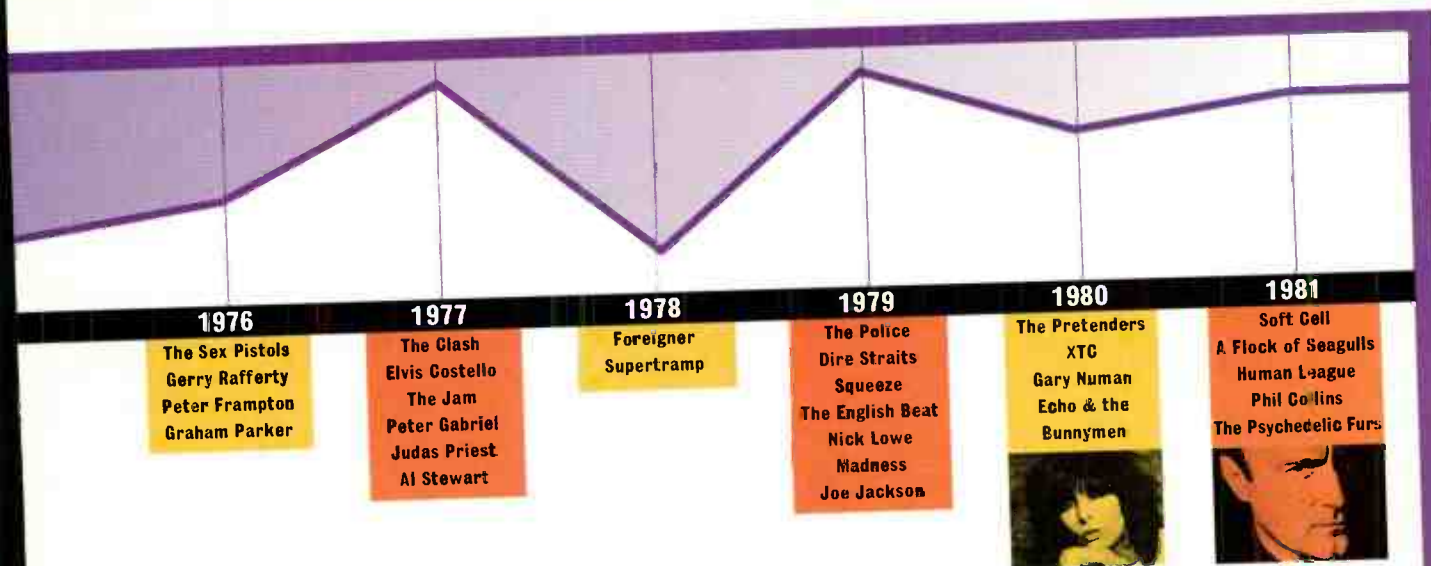
Simply Red  
New Order  
Pet Shop Boys

**1986**

Whitesnake

**1987**





companies, is notoriously volatile. "A record is in and out of the charts in two or three weeks," says Rosenblatt. "How is that going to help bands develop? The British record business developed the monster they're living with now."

The state of the music scene in Britain "is very disheartening," says manager Michael Lippman, whose client Terence Trent D'Arby found his first success as an American in London in the 1980s. D'Arby has since relocated to Los Angeles. "The climate is not the same for him," says Lippman. "It wasn't the same vibe going on."

The British record companies also are suffering from the fallout of their own earlier success. Muff Winwood told colleagues at an industry convention last fall. "They made so much money between 1981 and 1985 that they either sent it all back to their parent companies, so it went out of Great Britain, or they paid it to the Inland Revenue, or they signed more acts," said Winwood. "Now, funnily enough, it turned out not to be a very good idea because we actually signed quite a lot of crap. We all lost a lot of money on all that crap we signed, so now we've got to be very careful about what we sign."

The high-flying '80s also left Britain with a legacy of inflated major-label record deals, recording and marketing costs that makes

long-term artist development daunting. "There's no way on earth that Ensign Records could launch in 1994," says Nigel Grainge, who had signed Sinéad O'Connor, the Waterboys and World Party to his former label in the 1980s. "I was allowed the luxury of develop-

ing acts over three albums. You can't do that anymore without going horribly into debt."

In such a high-stakes setting, the British music weeklies, *Melody Maker* and *New Musical Express*, have acquired a ridiculously exaggerated influence on the British record labels. "The people establishing the ground rules for the A&R department are the £20-per-week writers for *Melody Maker* and the *NME*," says Grainge.

"In order to satisfy an audience hungry for new faces," says Howard Thompson, "they pick up on artists that are not quite ready to be taken as seriously as they might be later."

*NME* editor Steve Sutherland offers no apologies. "We have become seen as unpaid A&R men and we've taken a hiding for it," he says. "But when we do a feature on a new band that means they're exciting. It doesn't mean they're going to sell a million records."

While British acts in the '90s find fast and easy national celebrity

**"THERE'S A HANGOVER FROM PUNK, WHEN THE ATTITUDE WAS YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO PLAY WELL. IT'S HARD TO MAINTAIN THAT LIVE."**



Rick Astley

1988

Soul II Soul

1989



Lisa Stansfield

1990



Jesus Jones

1991

Right Said Fred

1992

1993 - 1994

in the pages of *NME* and *Melody Maker*, they are also quite literally the children of Britain's punk era, when attitude not aptitude meant everything. "There's a hangover from punk," says Sutherland, "when the attitude was you didn't really have to play well. It was about the way you looked. And it's hard to take that attitude out and maintain that live."

With the decline of Britain's pub circuit, younger English acts don't have the chance to hone their craft live, and may be unprepared for how hard they'll have to work abroad.


"The new acts that have come up since 1985 have never known about constant gigging," says Muff Winwood. "Certainly, it's always a struggle now to get a British band to tour in the U.S. for more than five weeks. You tell them they've got to be there for 10 weeks and they completely freak out. Maybe because Britain has always led the way, new bands think it's their birthright to have American success. Because they're British, it will happen for them the same way it happened for the Who, for Traffic or the Clash. They've got to stop thinking that way."

Or perhaps America should stop thinking that young British acts still see the U.S. as the Promised Land of Pop as their predecessors did. "Most of the British bands are unwilling to go to America and spend a year of their lives kissing ass and playing in Idaho," says Sutherland.

After all, this is the first generation of English acts to enjoy access early in their career to an alternative—a unified European market that is larger and potentially more profitable than the U.S. Suede, for example, toured from Sweden to Italy and sold four times as many records outside the U.S. as they did within the country.

"You can't break a band around the world in six months," says Saul Galpern of Nude Records, who signed Suede in Britain. "And I didn't want them to spend six months in America and lose momentum elsewhere. I'm quite pleased with what we've achieved so far."

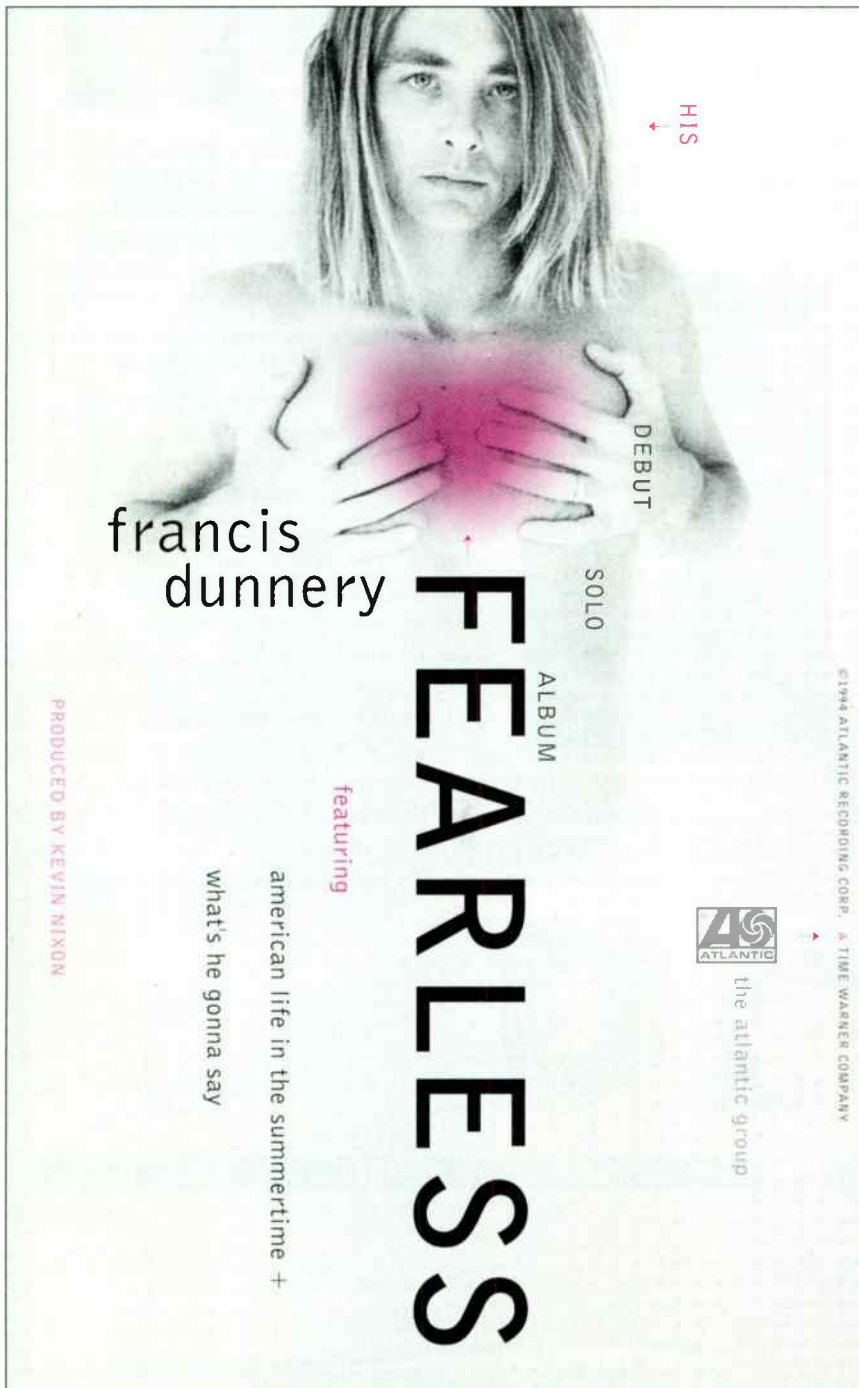
The Stereo MC's only reached number 92 on the *Billboard* album chart last year with *Connected* but say they are satisfied with the impact they made following American tours with Jesus Jones and Peter Gabriel's WOMAD Festival. "I know we worked pretty hard in America," says band co-founder Nick Hallam, "even if our record company looks upon it as not having done enough."

"The record company looks at American success as the be-all and end-all," says Hallam. "We're not looking at it like that. We don't think in those terms. We don't forget there's a whole planet out there." 

**JAMES**

[cont'd from page 32] you're ultimately looking for, which is magic."

Eno offered the band a six-week window to finish the *Laid* sessions, forcing them to galvanize their attention and testing their ability to think with their hearts and feel with their heads. Not only did they finish the album, but in the process recorded an album of improvisations at Eno's insistence, which the band hopes to release in some form in the near future. "When Brian Eno says your jams are as interesting as your songs, and you should release a double LP of them, you listen," admits Booth. Every band member found the sessions a revelation of sorts. "The Eno Myth," chuckles Booth, shaking his head. "Very funny, because it all centers around his brain. And he is a very bright and cultured man. But the



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way he worked with us was to go for the first or second take on most songs because it *felt* good. He was going on feeling. And a man that brainy didn't know the anagram of his name was One Brain. He has the harmony of the spheres going there, the harmony of the hemispheres, right and left brain working together. He has an amazing problem-solving mind and it rubs off—everybody stops to join in. There's no sense of ego or blame or judgment. He has a wonderful effect on people."

Larry Gott recalls the band tentatively

working through the rough structures and tempos of their first takes. "Dave would be adjusting the tempo, pitter-pattering in, Jim sliding and feeling his way on bass, like we all did. By the second take, we're getting more confident and we began to understand what we're doing on the song—'Oh, it's this bit next and then we go into that bit.' Then Brian had us listen back to the first take, where everyone's feeling their way around, and tells us it's wonderful. And we got caught up in, 'Yeah, but the beat slows here and there's a mistake there.' He said, 'Yeah,

but there's a quality to it, let's go with it.'" Eno would stop the band from going that one step too far, teaching them to catch the song at its moment of greatest creative potency.

"You've probably noticed we tend to use only three or four chords in a song," Davies says, "and they're often the same in the chorus as in the verse. So you're dealing with

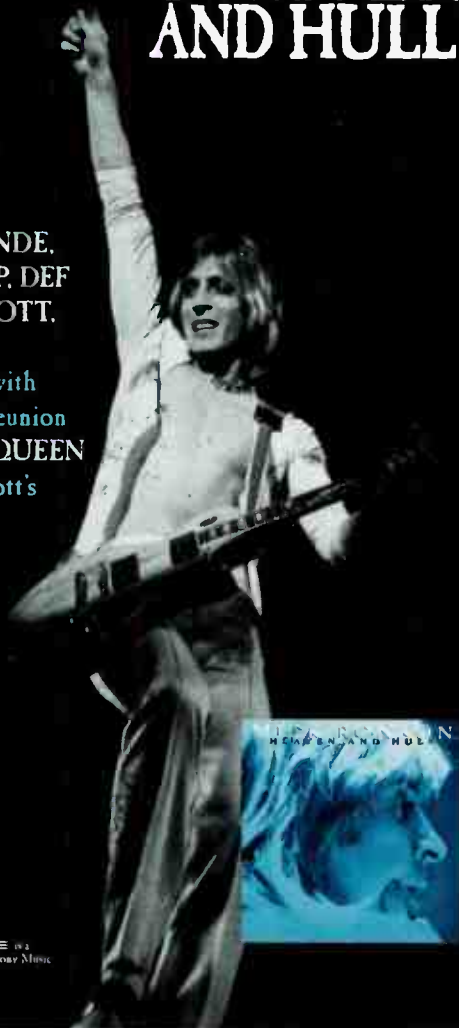
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### JAMES JOYS

**T**he real secret is proper water temperature," confides drummer DAVID BAYNTON-POWER. You mean, you boil your drumheads and... "No, I'm talking about tea, Earl Grey, on a hot afternoon," he explains with a hint of exasperation. Okay. Dave swears by the Sonor drum kit he's happily lugged around since 1986, supplemented by Sabian cymbals, Regal Sticks and Calato brushes. He favors Pro-Mark Hot Rod ("sort of half-stick and half-brush") for rhythmic mood swinging. "I prefer Darjeeling, myself," asserts bassist JIM GLENNIE, who uses Ernie Ball Music Man basses, particularly the Sterling model. He's a D'Addario string man, and pitifully pleads for them to send him any rare XL Reds they have stored away. His bass is run through Nomad and Ampeg preamps to a British-made programmable EQ and on into a Trace Elliot power amp ("it's a big beastie") and an Ampeg Bx10 bass cabinet ("...with sharp pointy teeth!"). SAUL DAVIES' arsenal includes Tucker Barret and Zeta violins ("they're rivals, so I use one of each"), run through a Yamaha SPX900 multieffects unit and a Dunlop Crybaby wah-wah. For *Laid*, he ran his rig through an Eventide H3000-SE Ultra-Harmonizer in the studio. His stage guitars include Godin Acoustics, a G&L Telecaster and a Levenson Blade, run through a Zoom effects unit and vintage Ampeg, Gullid and Gibson amps. LARRY GOTT's main squeeze is a '61 Fender Strat, and yes, he does play most of those slide runs in standard tuning. He switches to his Gibson Les Paul Gold Top when he wants to play in open G tuning—or apply some crunch—and utilizes an electric National with DXL pickups for that Dobro feel. Strings are by Dean Markley, with Earthwoods preferred when he goes acoustic by way of Takamine. His TC Electronic 2290 delay unit complements a slew of Boss outboard effects, including distortion, chorus, reverb and the all-important compression unit to highlight his slide work. TIM BOOTH enters the trance state via a Shure SM 58 mike.



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these very subtle shifts in emotional intensity. Eno really encouraged us in that area. *Laid* is full of songs that are so simple, there's almost nothing to play. But that allows emotion to come through the music."

Baynton-Power saw an oblique strategy at play. "He didn't want us meddling with overdubs so he kept us busy by suggesting we do the improvisatory album."

Eno would come in two hours before the rest of the band to go over their rehearsal tapes. "He came up with three songs we'd

completely neglected," admits Booth, "including 'Laid,' 'Dream Thrum' and '5-0,' saying listen to these, you missed them. None of us chose 'Laid,' none of us liked it. We thought it was a throw-away pop song, unrepresentative, not deep enough," grins Tim. "Brian's the one who found it."

One week Eno only worked with them four days. "So the next day, when he wasn't there, we finally recorded 'Laid.'" Tim pauses, then continues in his best Charlton Heston Old Testament voice, "AND ON THE FIFTH DAY THEY GOT LAID, AND

THEY SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD." The bursting-out-of-your-skin vocal was a result of Tim "trying to capture that feeling of an intense relationship being out of control. It's dangerous and exciting, and you want it to stop—but you also *don't* want it to stop. It's a love-hate thing where a lot of crockery is going to be broken before it's seen through." But on a deeper level, could the song also be about the male part of a person wrestling with the female part, the rational trying to come to grips with the emotional? What's behind the line "messed around with gender roles," and the band decked out in dresses on the cover...? "I really like what you just said," reflects Tim. "I think I write to myself as much as to anybody else, a kind of inner dialogue. I'm always giving myself lots of advice, to be honest. And it's true, I feel at the moment I'm very much a battlefield between mind, body and emotions and they're struggling to come together to find out what I really feel. What my real morality is, too. For instance, at the moment I'm allowing myself to do things which go against my mind because I don't trust it. It wants to impose all kinds of conditions on my life, wants me to be seen in certain ways."

Later, over lunch in the French Quarter, Tim elaborates. "I've spent the last 10 years trying to retrieve my heart," he reveals. "I was sent through the English public school system, and I remember consciously cutting off my emotions because it was too painful. You're cut off from your home and family, everything you know. When you arrive you're called 'new scum' for the first year, that's actually your name. The second year you're just 'scum.' There's a bizarre hierarchy—you can talk to boys one year above you, but not two years above you or you get beaten up. It's mental cruelty, pitting boys against boys." Tim's emotional and musical awakening came when he was called into the office of a housemaster he hated to hear that his father was in the hospital and might die. Determined not to show his feelings, Booth finished his day in a numb state, but was unable to sleep. He snuck past the monitors to the study where he found a cassette machine and headphones. "I'd heard Patti Smith about two weeks earlier, and thought, God, she can't sing in tune. I put on the headphones and the first thing I heard was her singing 'His father died and left him alone...' I was completely devastated." His father survived, but Tim disposed of his old



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record collection. "I thought, I'm not getting anything until I hear something as powerful as this again. *Berlin* came close, then punk came along so I lowered my standards and let the energy come through. But it was just her, really. I ran away from school to see her play. I've got loads of pre-*Horses* bootlegs," he enthuses. "Amazing—she was more a poet than a singer then, with just Lenny Kaye playing behind her and she's having orgasms and talking about Wilhelm Reich teaching his son to masturbate. Incredible improvised raps. She went further than anyone."

Booth's lyrics tend to rail against misuse of power by manipulative hierarchies and the hubris and arrogance of gurus, bishops, governments and whoever else may use their power to deceive others. In the spirit of *James'* "God Only Knows" and *Seven's* "Ring the Bells," *Laid's* "One of the Three" isn't a rant against God or even religion per se. It's directed at those who, in Tim's words, "have taken control and power of that sacred myth and have used it to imprison people's will and sense of identity, rather than free them. The Pharisees want to monopolize Christ, emphasizing fear rather than love."


Another theme in Booth's work involves rejecting the myth of the "suffering artist," and the illusion that art can only emerge from staying stuck in pain. "There was a kind of turning point dream about seven years ago," recalls Booth. "I'd said to myself, 'Either I'm going to find some proof that there's a meaning behind this existence or I'm going to let myself burn out.' I read a book on dreams that night, and decided if I had a great one, I'd take it to a Gestalt therapist, which the book had recommended." That night Booth had a dream where he found himself in an electric theater surrounded by people he was in awe of, like Jim Morrison and Iggy Pop. "We were listening to a lecture given by nurse Rachett from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* with Jed Clampett as her assistant. And she asked, 'Right, has everybody understood?' And I hadn't. So she passed around this steaming potion and we all took a sip. She said this was the juice that all great singers need, but it completely fucks up your life. And I said, excuse me, I made a mistake—*this isn't the one I want at all*. They said, Well, too late, you've taken it. I kept insisting, so finally they took me in this back room and they brought out these huge pliers. They put

them in my mouth and clamped onto something and ripped out this alien creature. I asked, really, is it gone? She said yes, in this very unconvincing way...and I woke up with this incredibly sore jaw," he chuckles. "That dream led me through various therapies, meditation, and I wound up getting the proof I needed.

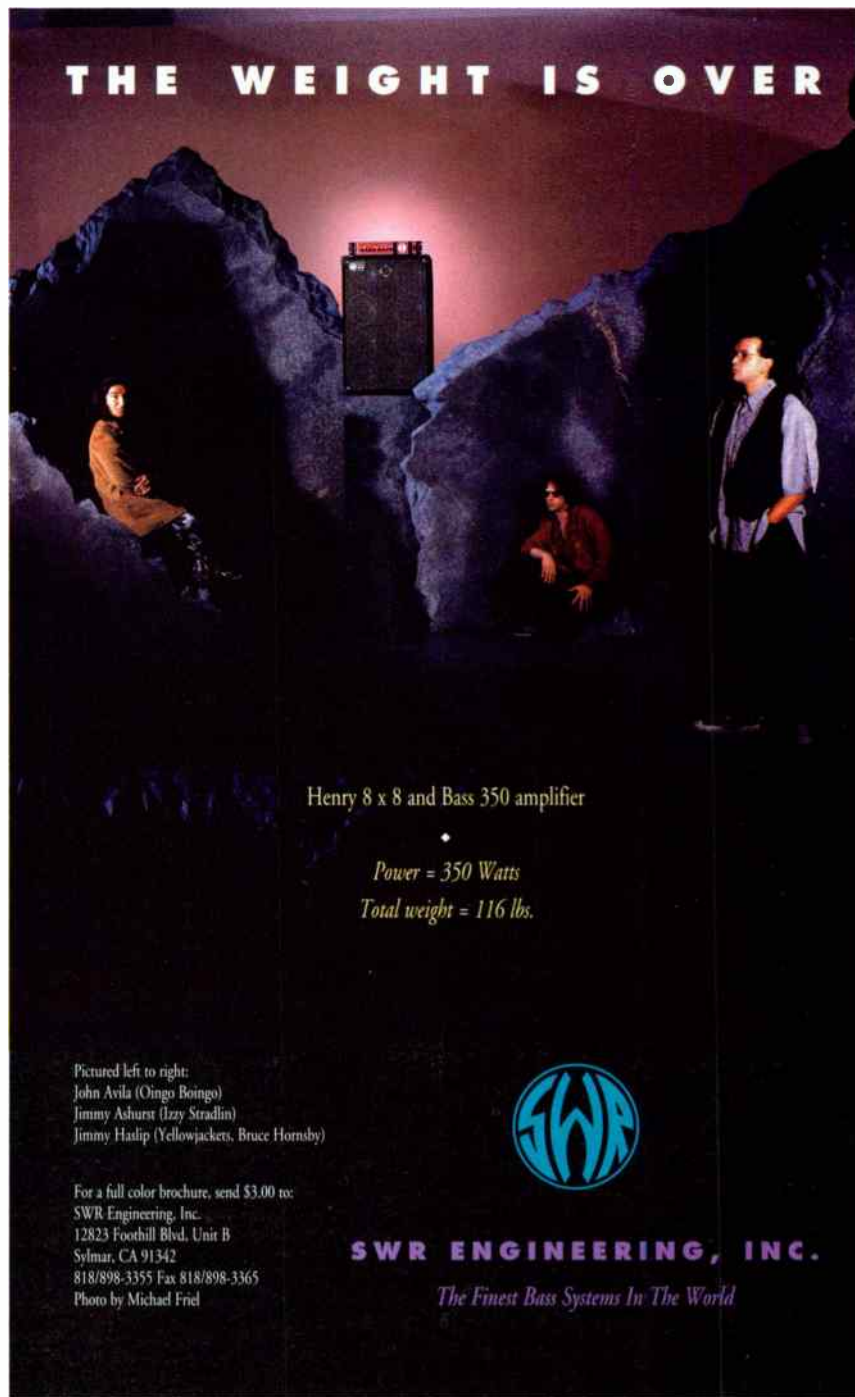
"My proof, no one else's." 

SASS JORDAN

[cont'd from page 16] song, let alone feel it. Towards blacks because "they only play

R&B, hip-hop, jazz, etc" (regardless of the fact that they invented rock 'n' roll). Yet in the end, the true power of any performer—male, female, black, white or Martian—lies in their capacity to communicate emotion, to touch the listener and to make them feel something. A great piece of art transcends the identity of the artist—or so it should be. 

At press time, Sass Jordan's "High Road Easy," from her album *Rats*, was the only song by a female artist listed on Billboard's Top 20 Album Rock Tracks.




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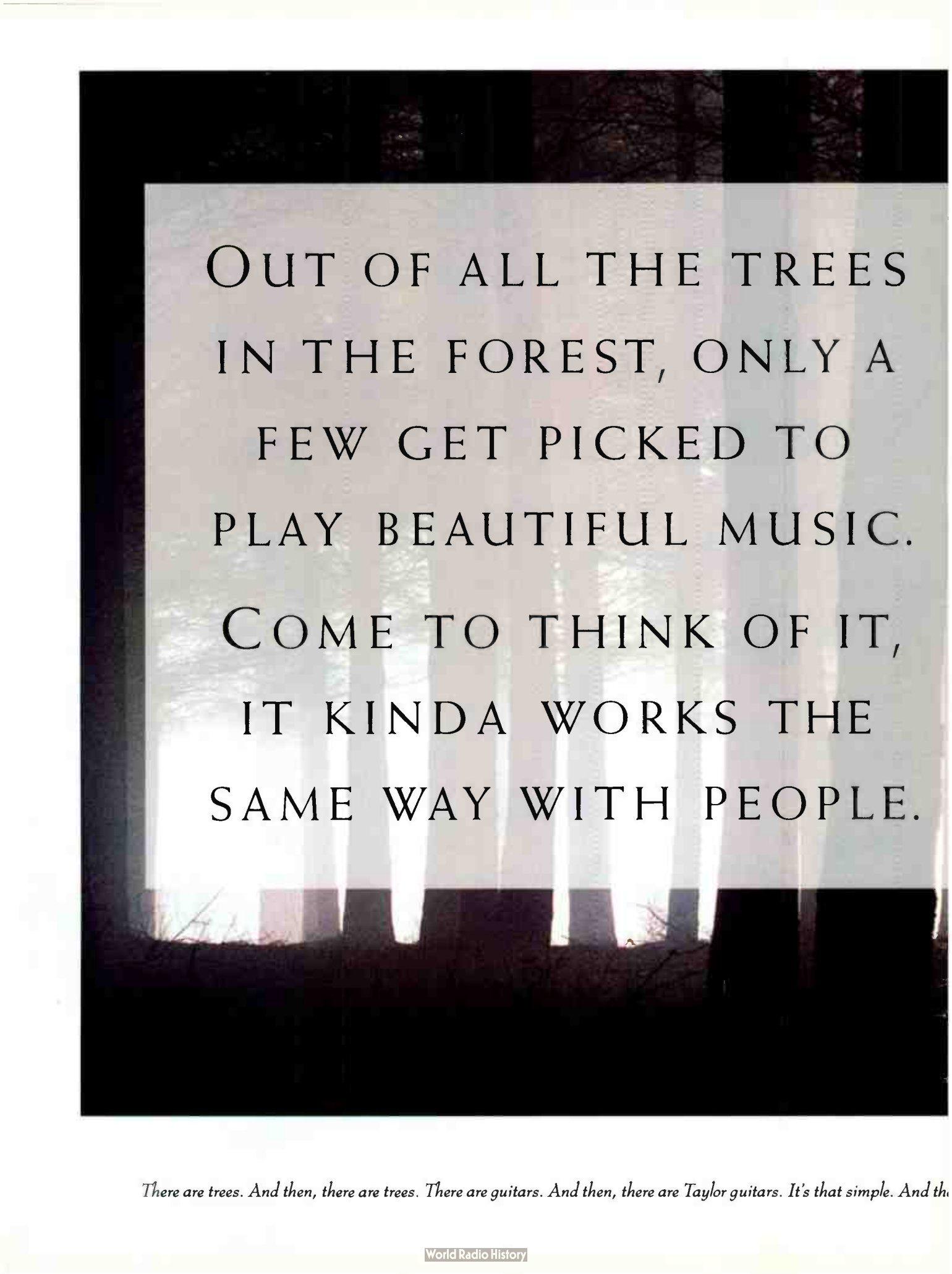
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Tom Freston  
CEO of MTV




FOUR BIG RECORD COMPANIES WANT A VIDEO





# VS THE MAJORS



AT LONG LAST, it looks like MTV may be getting some real competition. But before getting too excited about the possibilities of a broader or more adventurous music channel, you'd better take a look at who will own the proposed new network: four of the world's six largest record companies. ★ The Warner Music Group, Sony Software—a sister company of Sony Music Entertainment—EMI Music and PolyGram Holding Company, along with Ticketmaster, have banded together to launch a new 24-hour video music cable channel in the U.S.A. The as-yet-unnamed outlet is slated for debut later this year, although others in the industry doubt the channel can be up and running before 1995. ★ If that's not

ambitious enough, the record companies aren't just talking about the U.S.: They're planning a global network with a price tag that will run into the hundreds of millions of dollars. The first channel, Germany's Viva, is already up and running, and other outlets in Europe, Asia and Latin America are expected to be broadcasting before the U.S.

Why would record companies want to go into the video broadcast business? There seem to be a number of reasons. As to how good the channels would be—or how they would affect such existing outlets as MTV, VH-1, the Box, Black Entertainment Television or the two country channels, the answer is simple: No one knows. But Tom Freston and Les Garland, the honchos of MTV and the Box respectively, are not pleased.

"They look at MTV and say, 'Hey, this is a good business,'" says Freston. "We allowed the radio business to get going and missed that boat. We missed the MTV boat. Let's not miss it totally. Let's have our own channel and control it."

**O CHANNEL OF THEIR OWN BY FRED GOODMAN**

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT LEWIS

JUNE 1994 49

# IN RETALIATION FOR BEING CALLED ANTI-COMPETITIVE, A GROUP OF RECORD COMPANIES HAVE GONE INTO BUSINESS TOGETHER.

At the Box, which has staked much of its reputation and ultimate success on its ability to break new acts, Garland worries about being co-opted and victimized by a channel that gets preferential treatment. "My greatest concern—and I hope that it's not what they're thinking—is that this is a way of reintroducing exclusivity and to force certain costs into the marketplace," says Garland. "Philosophically, the record companies believe they should be paid for video use."

Clearly, record companies have reasons to support additional outlets for videos. The success of MTV has played a major role in many of the music industry's biggest success stories over the last 12 years, but it has also created some real frustrations for record companies. Despite the channel's recent and much-ballyhooed commitment to airing a greater percentage of current videos, MTV's programming strategy is largely based on presenting a wide variety of styles with a broad appeal. And when you try to be all things to all people, you run the risk of being nothing to anyone—and that includes the record companies. MTV may be able to boast that it played a big role in the recent success of an act like Blind Melon, but record executives seem to view the glass as half-empty rather than half-full: They'll take MTV's successes, but they're just too few and far between. "We can never give them all that they want," says Freston. "They would like to see more outlets for music in any way, shape or form. Which is hard to argue with."

That said, it's somewhat surprising that the decision to start the record company-owned video channel was not made at the label level, but by "the suits"—the executives at the corporate level like Jim Fifield at EMI, Robert Morgado at Warner Music and Michael Schulhoff at Sony Entertainment who supervise the label chiefs. One head of a Warner-distributed record label says he heard about the new venture from a competitor and not from Warner Records chairman Mo Ostin. Around New York, word was that the announcement caught Sony Music head Tommy Mottola and Columbia chairman Don Ienner unawares: The first they reportedly heard about the new channel was when journalists called looking for comments.

It's unlikely that breaking bands was uppermost in the minds of the executives who brainstormed the proposed channel. Their concerns are far broader, and a successful, worldwide music video network serves two strategic purposes: It puts music companies in a related field and it also protects their turf at a time when technology is posing new questions about the future role of record companies.

Looking for "synergy" and income by developing businesses in related fields is one of the philosophies that has driven the acquisitions and mergers end of the record business since Sony's purchase of CBS Records six years ago. Since then, *every* major record company has been involved in a big acquisition—either as a buyer or a target. Now, the players with position and market share want to make the most of that synergy—and taking a bite out of a neighboring industry is one way. But there are other, more forbidding issues that music software companies have to deal with.

With communication and entertainment companies hooking up in anticipation of the not-too-distant day when advanced home delivery systems allow people to spend a bigger chunk of their time and money being entertained at home or shopping at home, record companies are in danger of getting lost in the mix. "I think labels are greatly concerned about becoming licensing agencies," says Garland. BMG, which owns RCA Records and Arista, is not one of the participants in the proposed label channel, but has announced its own plan to offer a music-and-shopping channel in partnership with video systems operator Tele-Communications Inc.

Another reason for label interest is that MTV is a very successful business. The channel is shown in 88 countries and claims a reach of 252 million households—57 million of those in the United States. MTV, along with Showtime, is owned by Viacom, the firm that just won the battle for Paramount. Viacom's network segment earned \$206 million in 1992 on revenues of \$1.1 billion. That's a lot of money, and a very attractive profit margin.

But it's not an easy business to get into or to succeed at. Whether cable operators will want another music channel is open to debate. MTV established itself at a time when operators were looking for basic services, and were subsequently able to get systems to pay them. And although much is made of the future possibilities of having as many as 500 channels on a system, the reality is that most cable operators today offer 30–40, and there isn't a whole lot of room for newcomers.

"The average cable operator already thinks he carries five or six music channels," says Freston, ticking off BET, the Box, VH-1, MTV, the Nashville Network and Country Music Television. "Music on TV is not the greatest business; it's much easier to program other things."

"In '93 approximately 30 new channels were announced and scrubbed," says Garland. "If you take all the ratings of the music channels *combined*, they pull about a six share, which is less than the Fox Network. The demand is not that great—so you better do a damn good job. The system operators are the jury and the only way to get in is to offer money or equity."

Indeed, although the labels involved in the proposed channel have been mum on details, mega-cable operator TCI has expressed interest in joining the consortium. And artists and labels are being offered similar enticements, with a promise of a pay-for-play system on videos and concerts.

Still, industry scuttlebutt is that BMG is finding it difficult to get their program with TCI up and running. Further evidence of how difficult it is to start a new channel can also be garnered from the failure of the Comedy Channel, which MTV and HBO—who have a lot more experience and muscle in this business than the record companies—launched a few years ago and scrapped after \$80 million in losses. As a result, MTV is taking a very cautious approach to testing a home-shopping service on its channels. Even VH-1, which has man-



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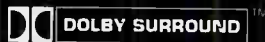
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aged to become a cable staple, doesn't have the personality and success of MTV. Instead, it survives as the Regis Philbin of music television: out of touch, bland to the point of being obnoxious, and somehow still there whenever you're channel surfing. Now the record companies appear ready to commit a much larger sum than was spent on the Comedy Channel. *And* they're making this commitment without a staff or any evidence of a programming philosophy.

Yet it makes sense. Aside from the perceived limits of relying on MTV to break acts,

there are several other reasons why record companies would want to lay a little *tsuris* on MTV. Twenty percent of the programming on the channel is now non-music, which Freston admits makes the labels nervous. And despite his assurances to them that the non-music programming will not increase, the mass success of "Beavis and Butthead" suggests that there could be a day when MTV's constricted value to record company promotion men becomes even more constricted.

The success of MTV also has resulted in the channel creeping into the labels' business.

Now Geffen Records is paying to make "Beavis and Butthead" records, rather than getting paid by MTV for use of its videos. And the success of "Unplugged" has led to a series of successful albums—on which some artists and producers earn a reduced royalty and upon which MTV places its logo and gets a piece of the profits.

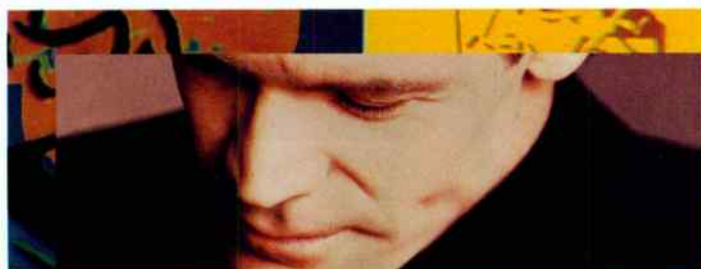
But these beefs are small compared to the fight the labels have been waging with MTV in Europe. On the continent, broadcasters have to pay licensing fees to the record companies in order to show music videos (in the U.S. there is little or no payment; in fact, the Box is having some success with a program it calls "Playola," in which record companies pay them for video exposure). The record industry has organized a British collection society, VPL, to negotiate licensing fees for the labels. MTV Europe, which pays VPL \$5 million in annual licensing fees—nearly half of VPL's income—says the organization is not really a collection society but a cartel, and that its ability to unilaterally impose an industry-wide price is anti-competitive.

MTV has taken its beef to the European Community, saying the VPL is preventing the channel from dealing individually with record companies. The broadcaster has also complained that they have no leverage against recent VPL fee raises. While the EC has appeared supportive of MTV's complaint, saying it considers pan-European licenses restrictive, it has not taken any action. MTV has since sued VPL in the British courts, an action that is on hold until September.

Some in the business believe MTV's actions against the labels in Europe galvanized the record companies and helped lead to the proposed channel. If so, it's an unusual scenario: In retaliation for being called anti-competitive, a group of companies have gone into business together.

Which raises what may be the most important question: Is the U.S. government going to view this alliance as an anti-trust violation? You can bet the ranch that MTV and its parent company will be down in Washington looking to break up the party. And chances are they'll find allies within the government.

Attorney Maxwell Blecher, whose Los Angeles firm of Blecher and Collins has brought antitrust suits against movie studios and record companies—they represented the Wherehouse chain in its antitrust case against record companies who attempted to punish retailers who sold used CDs—believes there



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are possible anti-competitive issues in the proposed channel.

"There could be a danger that these people are going to use their own recordings for their own station and would not deal fairly with MTV," says Blecher. "Those possibilities exist and are magnified when you have four record companies involved rather than one."

Blecher and others point to the failure of the Premier channel, a movie channel that was proposed by four studios in 1981, to clear government hurdles. The studios, claiming that HBO had a monopoly, had sought to establish their own channel and endow it with an exclusive window of nine months on studio films. The government issued a permanent injunction against withholding product from HBO, and forbade the studios from being in business together. And that was during the Reagan administration, when the government often took a hands-off attitude toward regulating anti-competitive practices.

"This smacks me as the same," says Blecher. "I think the record companies have a problem. I would think that [the current administration] will be more vigilant. I know the Federal

Trade Commission has an inquiry on used CDs and is looking at the record industry. It's not impossible it would extend to this."

Nor does MTV stand alone in wanting to see the government take a hard look at record industry practices. Others, including executives at some labels, suggest the new channel is one more indication that the relationship between the music operations of two of the world's largest music companies, Time Warner and Sony, have gotten too cozy. They trace the relationship back five years to the forced sale to Warner Bros. of a 50 percent stake in Sony's record club, Columbia House. The sale was part of a settlement of a Warner's suit over the hiring of Jon Peters and Peter Guber to run Sony's Columbia Pictures at a time when Guber and Peters were under contract to Warner Bros. Films. Since then, Sony and Time Warner have undertaken other cooperative ventures, including a cable radio operation. Now they are viewed as prime movers in the music channel.

"It's an unholy alliance," says a top executive at a competing record company. "Once upon a time Warner Bros. and CBS Records were like the cobra and the mongoose—they were deadly enemies and that was healthy. But they're no longer competitive. There's a pattern here that's broader than music, and it's designed to be anti-competitive."

Stay tuned.



FRED HERSCH

[cont'd from page 15] it had and continues to have on every aspect of my existence. AIDS poses several vexing puzzles: How does one deal with the pressure of time, the pressure to achieve? How to walk a fine line between hope and denial? If one is asymptomatic (as I thankfully am), should I behave as though I'm sick—even though I've never been more creative, productive and energetic? Some of these are questions that every musician (and every human) should ask with frequency—in essence, how do I want to live, how and with whom do I want to spend my time, what are my values, what do I want to create? And, once again, I found out that by talking about who I am and what I'm dealing with I'm able to get—and give—support at a time when that is ever more precious. To go back to my home town in Cincinnati in 1992 to play a benefit concert as an openly gay man with HIV was one of the great experiences of my life. It enabled me to put a face on AIDS for people who have known me or my family for years, and that made a difference [cont'd on page 72]

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Meanwhile, high-tech manufacturing superpowers including Philips, Sony, Sanyo, Hitachi, Apple, IBM and Intel are squaring off for the inevitable format war, the one that will leave the victors empowered to sell the next generation of entertainment boxes to every home in the world.

Although the big changes are around the corner, there are interactive music experiences to be had right now. Typically, they look something like this: You're seated in front of a screen, either a computer monitor or an ordinary TV. You've got one hand on a mouse, joystick or other input device. It provides instantaneous access to megabytes of data stored on something that looks exactly like an audio CD (usually a CD-ROM, for read-only memory) and plays on a special machine.

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If Peter Gabriel's *Xplora 1* is in your CD-ROM drive, you can navigate to a screen that displays photographs of exotic third-world instruments. Mouse-click

**DAVID BOWIE'S *Jump***



on one of them and you'll hear it play. Clicking elsewhere brings up documentary footage of the instrument being constructed and played by indigenous craftsmen, a lecture on its history, its role in the culture from which it springs and so on.

Should you tire of this at any moment, simply click into some other interactive experience. This, in fact, is the big idea shared by all current interactive productions: They're *non-linear*. You can skip right to what interests you without having to sit through prologues or

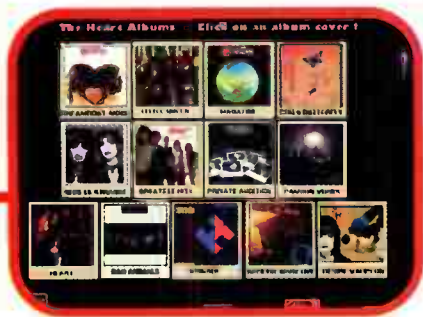
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preambles, and without having to tolerate uninteresting material.

Which suggests a vexing esthetic question: Isn't music intrinsically linear? Since the dawn of time, musicians have striven to put one note after another in an arresting fashion. When you get down to it, that's what even the most free-form John Coltrane sax solo is about. Most of the world's



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to it. That's why they call it art, isn't it?

Can computers enhance this age-old relationship between music and listeners? Can they offer any new experiences that are equally, or even more, emotionally resonant than the ones to which we are accustomed?

Right now, big money is betting that they can and will. Major record labels, including Warners, MCA, Capitol and Geffen, are forming interactive divisions. Multimedia publishers including Compton's New Media, Voyager and Time Warner Interactive are rushing to market with interactive titles built around names like David Bowie, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Heart and Beethoven.

musical conventions are based on linear models. Songwriters know that you can make people cry in the third verse if you set up verses one and two just right. Classical audiences know that the slow movement always comes in the middle of a symphony.

So musicians and songwriters have one tough assignment in coming up with genuinely interactive music. It'll be intriguing to hear this new music—when it happens. But little of it has happened yet. The interactive titles currently on the market are mostly about existing music. They offer educational insights into how music is made. They provide background material and illuminating information. But, for the time being, interactive music has yet to evolve into an art form.

"We're at this awkward cusp, with the old linear media getting shoe-horned into an interactive environment," says Thomas Dolby, who enjoyed considerable success throughout the '80s as a recording artist, songwriter, session player and producer. "You'll get a song from a group's back catalog, the video for the song and maybe a lyric sheet, all under control of the user. I think this stage will pass very quickly. The next stage—the exciting one—will be when music becomes truly interactive, when interactivity affects the way the music is composed to begin with."

Once Dolby was "Hyperactive." Now he's interactive. Under the aegis of his company, Head Space, he recently created an interactive installation for the Guggenheim Museum in New York City entitled "Virtual Quartet." Spectators "wander around"

a cartoon rehearsal space in which an animated string quartet plays Mozart. If you lean toward any of the instruments for a better view, its sound gets louder. Or you can "tickle" a player, upon which the virtual musician will launch into a jazz or bluegrass improvisation.

"Right now, the public still feels a bit dazed, and maybe disenfranchised, by [interactive media]," he notes. "They only know what they're reading in the *Wall Street Journal* about alliances between cable companies, film studios, computer companies and game designers. So they think, 'You're asking me to spend three, four, seven hundred dollars on a new box? Prove to me that I'm going to have fun with it. 'Cause if not, I'm gonna buy a new motorbike instead.'"

#### IF I HAD A TALKING PICTURE OF YOU

So is it more fun than a motorbike? To evaluate the hype that surrounds the new, nonlinear media, it helps to scrape away the patina of buzzwords. First there's *multimedia* and *interactivity*, terms that often get jumbled together but mean quite different things. Multimedia is simply text, photos, video, animation, graphics, music, dialog and sound effects all in one package. In fact, the informa-

can, they don't do it all that well. The technology is still developing. For instance, computer-based video in the industry-standard QuickTime format occupies only a third of a monitor screen. In order to stuff more data onto a CD-sized platter, developers often use half the usual number of video frames per second, imparting a jerky, flip-book quality.

#### THE RESIDENTS' *Freak Show*



**ALL OF THIS IS JUST A REHEARSAL FOR INTERACTIVE TV**

tion pouring out of your TV set is multimedia. Only recently have computers become multimedia-capable, thanks to

increased processing horsepower and industry standards for such details as video data compression.

Big deal—now computers can do what television has done for decades! But, of course, they can also do what computers have always done so well. And that combination is a powerful one. Computers are random-access devices, making it possible for users to manipulate the elements of a multimedia presentation in a way that TV viewers can't—for instance, to enter or erase lines of text, rearrange frames of video, speed up or slow down segments of music, or access a new program instantly. And that is the essence of interactivity.

While computers can finally do what TVs

And until the recent arrival of the A/V Macintoshes, desktop computers haven't been capable of reproducing full-bandwidth audio without the addition of external hardware.

Some manufacturers are taking the opposite tack, adding computer capabilities to the conventional TV set. The most promising fruits of this approach are Phillips' CD-I (Compact Disc Interactive) and the more recent 3DO system. CD-I and 3DO are meant to be unimposing black boxes that sit atop the good old family TV set. Not surprisingly, these systems look and sound great, but they lack the kind of sophisticated user interface that computer buffs have come to expect.

Which approach is winning? So far, the numbers seem to favor CD-ROM, which requires a fairly powerful computer. Depending on whom you want to believe, between two and six million homes around the world are CD-ROM-ready. CD-I comes in second with an estimated 200,000 players installed worldwide. The newcomer, 3DO, is



# PETER GABRIEL WITHOUT FRONTIERS

In a shed at Peter Gabriel's blissfully pastoral Realworld studio complex, a revolution is under way and it is being televised. Pixilated color graphics from Gabriel's groundbreaking CD-ROM, *Xplora 1*, grace the screen of a small computer.

The technology behind what has been hailed as the finest desktop multimedia product to date may have originated, at least partly, with the hugely profitable shoot-to-kill school of computer games, but Gabriel's is an altogether more philanthropic venture. "The shoot-'em-up esthetic is going to be challenged," Gabriel states with quiet emphasis. "Interactive technology is going to open up in the form of this whole big communication, entertainment, information and education soup."

*Xplora 1*, which runs on any suitably RAM-laden color Macintosh and sufficiently speedy CD-ROM drive, enables the user to probe the nether recesses of Gabriel's life and work (excluding, oddly, the Genesis years). Stroll around a video mock-up of Realworld, knock on a few studio doors and find yourself invited in by none other than Brian Eno to "remix" the odd Gabriel track. Gabriel himself—reduced to a low-res talking head in the upper left-hand corner of the screen—is your host, supplying a suitcase that you can fill with virtual tour laminates that allow "access" to various events (rather, video footage of them) including the Brit Awards, a WOMAD festival and a Grammy ceremony. Along the way, you can learn about exotic musical instruments from across the WOMAD spectrum, listen to tracks from Gabriel's Real World record label, peruse a range of high-tech videos including the extraordinary "Kiss That Frog," and watch filmed interviews with various Gabriel collaborators.

There's a serious interlude, too: a tie-in with the Witness Project, through which Gabriel is attempting to send video cameras into various trouble spots across the globe. The disc includes brief but brutal footage including a firing-squad execution in Vietnam.

With *Xplora 1*, Gabriel is redefining the role of the rock artist. In fact, these days he's less likely to refer to himself as a musician than as an "experience designer." It's a role that may find its ultimate expression in the interactive theme park that he has been planning for the past 15 years, most recently with fellow park directors Brian Eno and Laurie Anderson, as well as a throng of architects and technologists. Gabriel says they have already "got their feet wet" with a ride based on flight simulators to accompany his "Kiss That Frog" video, and

they are planning small-scale "mobile experiences" for shopping malls and leisure centers.

Last November the theme park received its official go-ahead from the mayor of Barcelona (the city closest to the proposed site). Gabriel now faces the sticky problem of finding investors in the face of EuroDisney's well publicized difficulties. "The esthetic, though, is totally different from EuroDisney or Disneyland," he says. "We want to create a beautiful, natural environment with lots of water, trees and gardens, and then bury the experiences. It would be like the Greek underworld. You could come up to the surface, where it's calm and relaxing; then, when you're ready for another big adventure, you go down."

Upon going down, park goers will have the opportunity to "personalize" their experience in order to maximize entertainment or educational value. It's the latter proposition, suggested by the late psychologist R. D. Laing, that most intrigues Gabriel, who spent time recently confronting snakes (in the flesh) in order to overcome a lifelong fear. "There'll be an initiation process before you go into it," he says, "in which you can offer as much information about yourself as you want. But you're also able to say, 'Today I just want to have fun and relax,' or, 'Today I want to look at these issues, create some experiences that work through some of this particular stuff.'"

The stuff he has in mind, Gabriel explains, includes low self-esteem and all kinds of problems with relationships. Over a period of months, gradually repersonalizing the experience along the way, the shy could nurture self-confidence, the arrogant, perhaps, engineer a little humility into their outlook.

Like much of the theorizing that surrounds interactive technology, Gabriel's notions are not without sinister implications. If a theme park can have such a profound impact on visitors, what is to keep people with less altruistic agendas from using them to manipulate huge numbers of people? This is the very reason why Gabriel is keen to be at the forefront of these new technologies. As an artist, he believes, he can not only communicate the advantages of interactive media to the largest possible audience, and can do it with a certain integrity.

"The critical question," he says, "is who controls the technology. If we jump in and grab it for ourselves, it can serve us. If we sit back and let it be fed to us, then it will be in someone else's hands."

MARTIN TOWNSEND





in third place with approximately 50,000.

But numbers don't tell the whole story. For instance, Todd Rundgren—a genuine power user—chose CD-I for his interactive disc, *No World Order*. “At the time I began the project, CD-I seemed like the most viable medium,” he explains. “The audio quality was better. Also, I wanted to reach the general public, not just computer hobbyists.”

But the current format wars between CD-ROM, CD-I, 3DO and various other acronyms may prove mercifully short-lived. “All of this is just a rehearsal for interactive TV,” Dolby observes. Currently being tested in places like Orlando, Florida, interactive television will provide something extra along with the 500 channels we've been told to expect. It will provide interactivity: the ability to select any of eight camera angles during a sporting event, or to participate in game shows. The role of music is being determined right now, largely in the CD-ROM market. So let's take a look at what's currently available.

#### HARD FACTS ABOUT SOFTWARE

The CD-ROM market has developed around two types of products: databases and computer games. The first wave of music-related CD-ROMs tend toward one or both directions. In fact, one of the major publishers is Compton's New Media, which made its mark with that excellent paper database, *Compton's Encyclopedia*. CD-ROM boasts vast storage capacity and quick access, making it ideal for encyclopedic reference sources, whether it be Audubon's *Birds of America* or everything you ever wanted to know about your favorite band.

The first database-style CD-ROMs were

classical and jazz references, such as *The Orchestra: The Instruments Revealed* from Time Warner Interactive and Compton's *Jazz: A Multimedia History*. Now rock 'n' roll packages are starting to appear, among them *Heart: 20 Years of Rock & Roll* from The New CD Music Show.

The Heart package covers the usual rock-bio turf in a cuddly “family album” format. There are baby pictures and an interview with “Mom Wilson,” plus video clips, interviews, lyrics and short, mid-fi snippets of every Heart song ever recorded. “It's a great way to communicate with fans,” Heart's Nancy Wilson says, “a way for them to know us better. It helps tear down the wall between star and person. The image side of rock got a little blown out of proportion in the '80s. I think this is a healthy step in the opposite direction.”

Database-style productions are heavy on “shovelware,” as it's called in the trade: data developed for other formats and slapped onto a CD-ROM mainly because it can be. Some observers argue that the emphasis so far has been on providing astounding quantities of data, often at the expense of quality. All those bytes might be better spent on shorter-form experiences with higher audio and video resolution, and more engaging forms of interactivity.

Thomas Dolby speculates that interactive TV might foster an environment in which con-

sumers are less concerned with getting their money's worth from a disc. “I think it will become more like MTV,” he says. “Instead of spending three hours browsing through an encyclopedia, people will do a given experience for five minutes and move on.”

Perhaps the best use of shovelware is in the

electronic equivalent of liner notes. For instance, *World Tour* by keyboardist/composer Jason Miles serves up an album's worth of smooth contemporary jazz. But if you pop the disc into a CD-ROM drive, you'll find photos and bios of

other Lipstick Records artists, and audio clips from their releases.

But the disc space needn't be devoted to advertising. It might be used for interviews, videos, lyrics and anything else that might enhance the musical content. “From a visual standpoint, the replacement of the vinyl album by the CD was a step backward,” notes Ty Roberts, head of the new BMG interactive music subsidiary, Ion, and producer of David Bowie's CD-ROM. “Kids today are completely visually oriented. The record industry switched to a medium that was less visually rich than the old album cover art. CD-ROM offers a way of putting that richness back into the product.”

Speaking of “those kids today,” computer games are the other big antecedent/paradigm for music-related interactive productions. *Xplora 1: The Secret World of Peter Gabriel* (MacPlay) has a game-like superstructure.

**BETWEEN TWO AND SIX MILLION HOMES AROUND THE WORLD ARE CD-ROM READY**

## HARD UP FOR HARDWARE

IN ORDER to play back the current run of interactive music products, you'll need either a computer or a TV set-top multimedia player. On the computer side, there's the usual choice between Macintosh and IBM. While some CD-ROM discs will play on either platform, most are tailored for one or the other.

If you're partial to the Mac, the minimum recommended setup is a IIcx with five megs of RAM. IBM-compatible users will want an MPC Level II machine with Windows. With an IBM setup, a sound card is a must. Both Mac and IBM systems will need a good-sized color monitor, a large hard drive and a fast CD-ROM drive (double-speed at least).

To run interactive multimedia on your TV set, the most popular

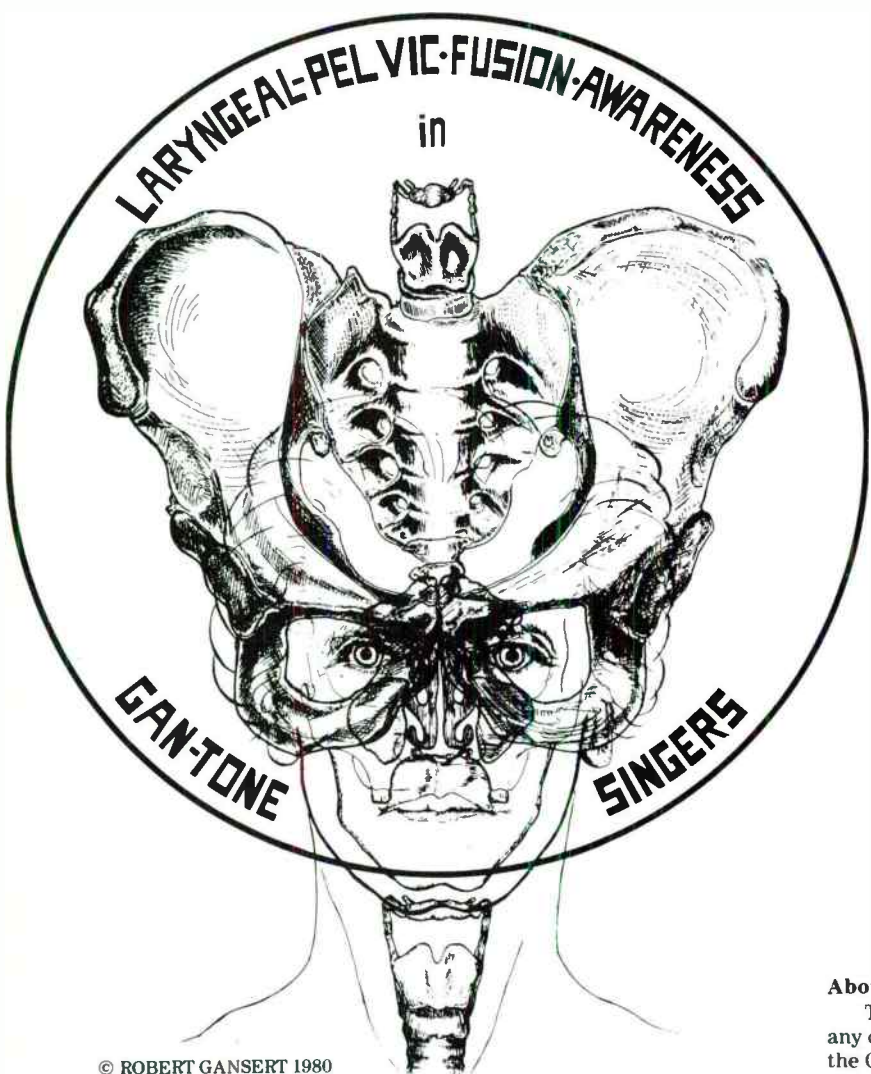
choice currently is CD-I, introduced by Philips during the mid-1980s. A CD-I player looks a lot like a CD or CD-ROM machine. The obvious advantage is that it delivers TV-quality video and audio, rather than miniaturized QuickTime images and compromised audio. But CD-I's older, eight-mHz main chip doesn't have nearly the processing power of a modern Mac or IBM, so the user interface (and therefore potential interactivity) isn't quite up to snuff.

3DO, the newest set-top format, is also designed for the consumer market. Fortunately, the player's processing power is on a par with latter-day personal computers. Unfortunately, music-related 3DO titles have yet to appear.

ALAN DI PERNA



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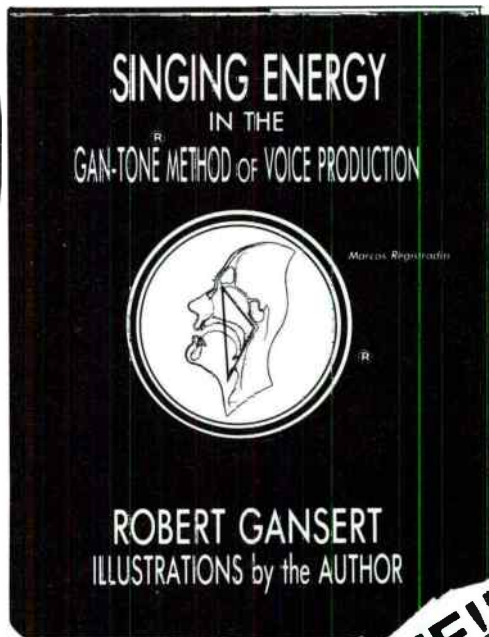
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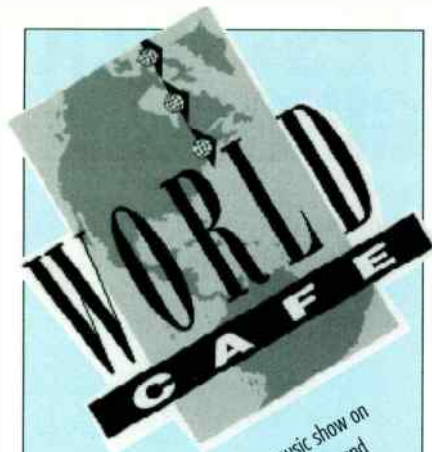
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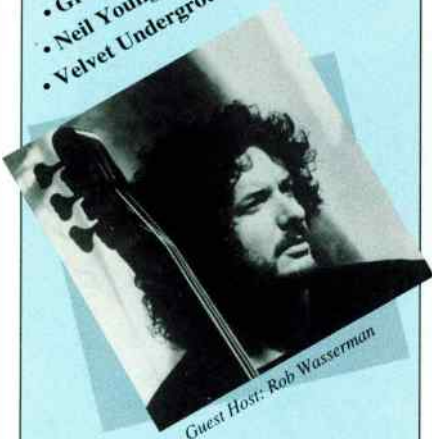
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**MUSICIAN**

Users navigate through video clips of the artist's Realworld studio complex and the WOMAD (World Organization of Music Arts and Dance) festival, collecting "backstage passes" that provide access to other screens and hidden interactive experiences. Many of these experiences are of the database sort: There's the aforementioned info on third-world instruments, personal information about Gabriel, lyrics, baby pictures and propaganda for Peter's favorite causes.

Then there's the "objectless" game structure of packages like the Residents' *Freak Show* (Voyager), in which the user can sniff around the backstage areas of a surreal animated carnival, and the forthcoming *Virtual Graceland* (Virgin Interactive Entertainment), which reveals the equally surreal environs of Elvis Presley's actual Memphis home. In the latter, you'll find mock-ups of the principal rooms of the King's mansion. Visitors can mouse-click on the keys of Elvis' piano and hear the actual notes. They can visit Graceland's theater to screen Elvis films, home movies and, yep, more baby pictures.

The game paradigm highlights another question mark in the world of interactive media. Nobody seems quite sure whether this stuff is for the Nintendo generation or forty-something power hobbyists. Most adult users could probably live without the game angle. On the other hand, compared with *Mortal Kombat*, *Xplora*'s romp through Realworld will seem pretty tepid to a 14-year-old game fanatic.

"I think *Virtual Graceland* is a totally cool interactive experience," says Georgia Bergman, VP of creative enterprise for Warner Records' new interactive music division. "But a game freak says, 'Who cares? There's no winner! It would be interesting if you had to sneak into Graceland, steal everything and then get out without getting caught.'"

#### **WILL CD-ROM MAKE MUSICIANS OBSOLETE?**

Whether based on games or encyclopedias, interactive media have been touted as offering a historic opportunity to unlock the creative potential of everyman. Peter Gabriel, for one, speaks of bridging the gap between artist and audience. Much like Nancy Wilson, though, Gabriel seeks to bridge the gap via education and experience, rather than handing any real control over his music to the layman.

The mixing console screen in *Xplora* is a perfect case in point. Gabriel's engineer appears, saying he "needs some help" on a

mix he's doing. We're presented with a screen depicting four faders which command a four-track premix of "Digging in the Dirt." By clicking and dragging, you can raise or lower the level of the drum kit, bass, guitar or vocals.

For someone who has never witnessed a mixdown, this is a nifty educational experience, not unlike checking out the cello in Dolby's "Virtual Quartet." But the average guitar processor offers more interactive control. This is not to fault *Xplora*. Its purpose is clearly to provide "edutainment," not an experience of personal discovery or accomplishment.

So the question remains: How can interactive media enable Joe Average to "interact" with a gifted musician, composer or producer in a creative way? Todd Rundgren's *No World Order* comes closest to supplying an answer. It's all music; no QuickTime movies, games or baby pictures. The graphic interface isn't meant to entertain. It's merely a control surface for playing back a series of short, unmistakably Rundgrenesque musical segments that can be assembled in an astronomical number of possible orders, depending on commands from the user. They aren't musical commands, *per se*. No knowledge of music is required, and everything is optimized to generate decent-sounding output.

The project, Rundgren says, grew out of his "desire to find a response to the way people consume music today. Ever since the Walkman, people don't set aside quality time to sit down and listen to a record anymore.

"Say you're having your parents over for dinner," he explains. "You can specify that the tempo never gets faster than a certain speed that's appropriate for dinner music. Or if you're having a dance party, you can have the disc play all dance tempos. You can also specify a certain mood, or issue a 'no vocals' command."

Of course, the reason artists like Rundgren become popular in the first place is that people enjoy hearing what *their* musical decisions sound like. Rundgren says that listeners who are interested in the old-fashioned listening experience can buy the standard CD version of *No World Order*, which contains his own assemblage of the segments on the CD-I. Rundgren insists that he put as much thought and passion into the structure of this CD as he has into any album he's made. But somehow the noninteractive *No World Order* doesn't have the pacing and cohesiveness of his best records. It sounds like what it is, a bunch of snippets pasted together. Context—the sense of logical or emotional con-



nection between points A, B and C—inevitably may fall by the wayside on the nonlinear way to interactive wonderland.

The prevailing pop esthetic, which embraces appropriation, disjuncture and relentless irony, has already taken us some distance in that direction. In fact, Rundgren believes that pop music as we know it is already dead. "The pop song isn't really central to popular culture now. The successful records all seem to have some sort of novelty feature, like 'Whoomp, There It Is.' There's no more grand tradition of pop songs that we all sing along with. Who knows the words to 'Smells Like Teen Spirit'? It's not like it was, when one week everyone was singing 'Strawberry Fields Forever' and the next it was 'Baby You're a Rich Man,' and we were all anticipating what next week would bring. To a certain extent, that chain has been broken."

So is interactive music really just a ruse, a way to sell records to sloppy listeners? "Unfortunately, a lot of listening is quite sloppy," Dolby concedes. "As music makers sitting in a soundproof studio with our heads right between the speakers, we'd love to

believe that listening is not sloppy. But, regrettably, out in the real world it is.

"The other thing is that, once all our entertainment is coming down the same pipeline, musicians are going to be competing directly with video games, movies on demand, interactive soap operas and game shows. If people's attention spans are as short as we're led to believe, the chance of having them stay on one channel long enough to listen to a whole song is very remote."

Then again, there were bad listeners in Mozart's day too. And while the maestro probably had strategies to avoid alienating the powerful ones, he also managed to please his more attentive listeners. Real listening requires real effort. It's hard to listen to Schoenberg at first. It takes careful, engaged, attentive listening to come to grips with Ornette Coleman, or music from a foreign culture. But those who put in the effort generally find the reward well worth it. If the purveyors of interactive music can offer that kind of reward, they stand a chance of creating a valid art form, rather than next year's computer game.

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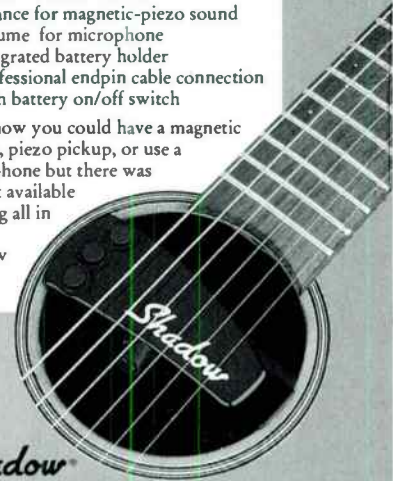
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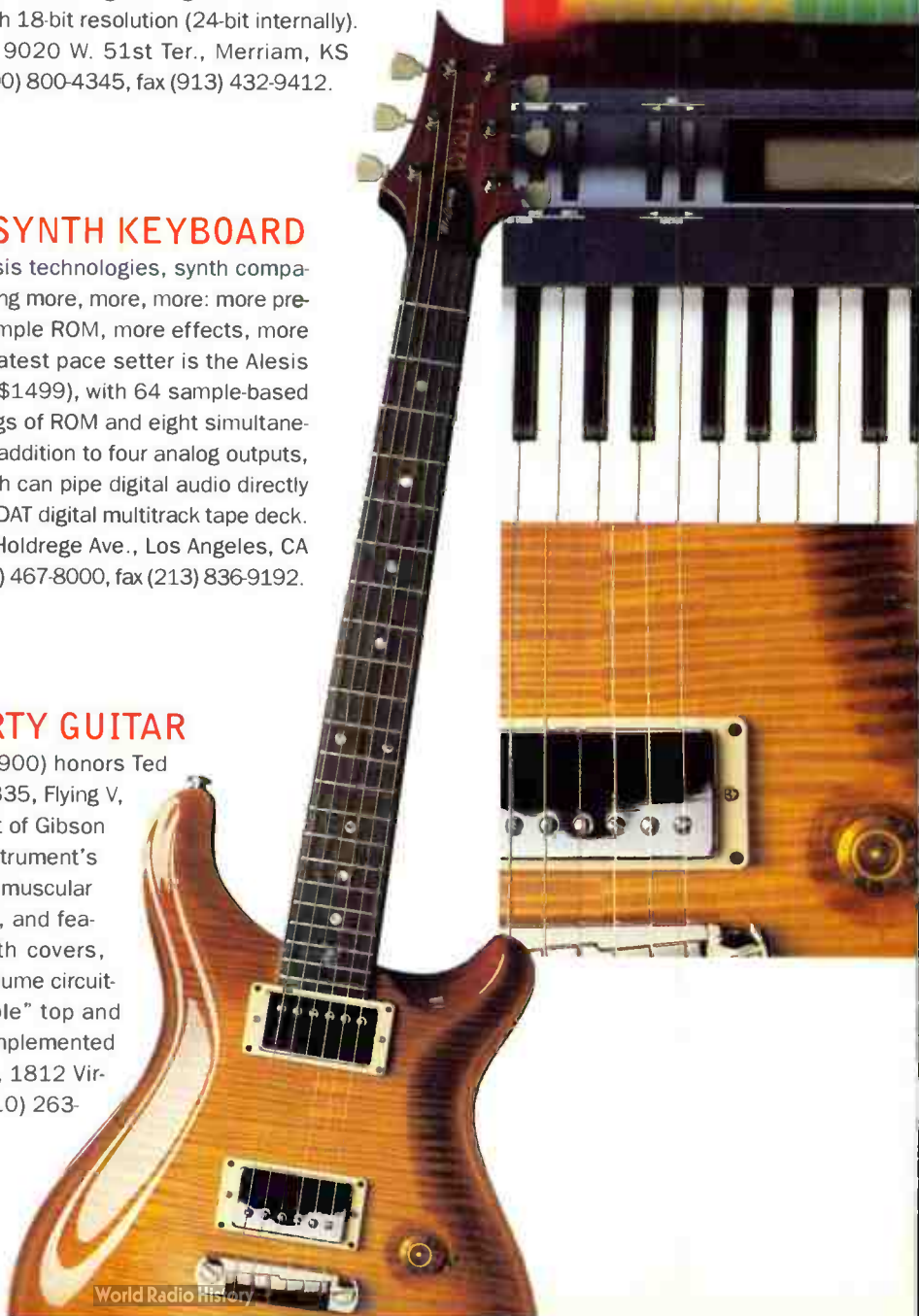
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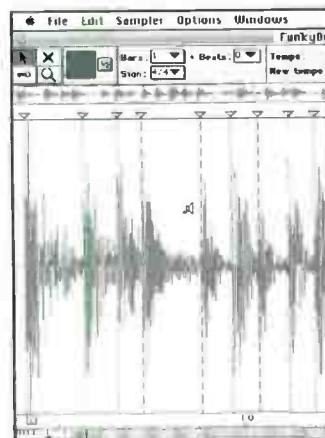
## KAWAI POCKETBAND

The portable cassette player is a powerful practice tool, but it offers little control over the music you're playing along with. Kawai's GB3 Pocketband (\$199) is a nifty alternative for guitarists, bass players and keyboardists, a compact music-minus-one machine with built-in analog distortion. You can turn up or down individual sampled instruments and adjust key and tempo to suit your needs. Twenty styles are included, and a library of classic songs is available on ROM cards (\$89 each). ♦ Kawai, 2055 E. University Dr., Compton, CA 90220; voice (310) 631-1771, fax (310) 604-6913.



## STEINBERG RECYCLE! SOFTWARE

So far, the wedding of MIDI and digital audio has been a marriage of convenience. With Steinberg's ReCycle! for the Macintosh (\$199), it reaches a new level of intimacy. ReCycle! slices an audio file—optimally a drum loop—into its component events and creates a MIDI file that triggers them with their original timing. This provides independent control over pitch and tempo, as well as over individual events, which can be modified, replaced and rearranged. ReCycle! works with Akai and Digidesign samplers. ♦ Steinberg/Jones, 17700 Raymer St., Suite 1001, Northridge, CA 91325; voice (818) 993-4091, (818) 701-7452.



135.8

= 120.

## NEW TOYS & NEW TOOLS

### GUITARS & BASSES

**Fender's** SX series of acoustic and acoustic/electric guitars feature solid spruce tops, fingerboards and bridges of African mahogany, ebony or Indian rosewood, and mother-of-pearl fret markers. The series includes dreadnoughts and jumbo sizes. ♦ The ultra-lightweight Fly guitar from **Parker** soon will be available with vibrato. As standard block-and-spring vibrato assemblies are too heavy, Parker has designed the Fly's vibrato from the ground up. ♦ The Ronnie Wood signature model from **ESP** duplicates Wood's custom instrument. It features a double-bound alder Tele-style body, 22-fret neck with maple fingerboard, LH-200 humbucker in the neck position and TS-120 single-coil in the bridge position, and optional Parsons-White Stringbender. ESP's new Mirage is a bolt-on solid-body made of ash with a 22-fret rosewood fingerboard. Black hardware and a Floyd Rose tremolo bar are standard, as are two ESP stacked single-coil pickups and a Seymour Duncan JB humbucker. ♦ **Dunlop** introduces two ceramic slide lines, Moonshine slides and Mudslides, available in five sizes. Mudslides are made of porcelain for a brighter sound. ♦ Users of Fender-Lace acoustic pickups can obtain free technical support via e-mail using **Actodyne's** Internet address: [fnrlce@aol.com](mailto:fnrlce@aol.com).

### AMPS & SPEAKERS

**Marshall** offers the Acoustic Soloist, a stereo solid-state combo (40 Watts per channel, 2x10 plus tweeter) optimized for acoustic guitars. Independent channels are provided for piezo-electric transducers, microphones and magnetic pickups, each with special features. Effect send/return, analog chorus and digital reverb are included. ♦ **Yorkville's** EX-1000, a three-way speaker cabinet rated at 1000 Watts, is 20 percent smaller than the model it replaces. Also from Yorkville, the YMS-3 three-way studio monitor is designed to handle high power with exceptional accuracy. Integrating a 600-Watt amp and two 10" speakers, the Pulse PW active subwoofer yields higher output (up to 128dB SPL) than systems using bigger drivers. The Audiopro 3400 power amp is the top of Yorkville's Audiopro line, delivering 1200 Watts per channel into 4 Ohms for applications involving large speaker systems.

### KEYBOARDS & MIDI

**Korg** adds two instruments to the Concert Piano line, the C505 and C303. Both house 88 keys,

expression pedals, sampled sounds, effects, MIDI sequencer and 60-Watt sound system in a walnut cabinet. ♦ The Bass Station from **Novation** (distributed by Music Industries Corp.) is a monophonic analog synth designed to emulate Roland's TB303, MC 202 and SH101 models. Filter and envelopes respond to MIDI continuous controller messages. ♦ **TimeStream's** MC/48 Visual Conductor Plus eliminates the need for click tracks by displaying standard baton patterns on a grid of lights, as well as current tempo and bar number. Tempo and time signature information can be entered via MIDI or from the front panel. ♦ The Thru 1x4 from **MIDiman** makes it possible to route a single MIDI signal to four destinations without daisy chaining, which can introduce delays. The unit is self-powered, tapping current from the MIDI input.

### SOFTWARE & HARDWARE

**Twelve Tone** introduces Cakewalk Home Studio, an entry-level sequencing/notation program for IBM/Windows. The program provides up to 16 staves per page, onscreen faders, graphic MIDI editing, tempo and meter mapping, and piano-roll and list editing. With a .WAV-compatible sound card, the program allows simultaneous playback of MIDI and audio files. ♦ **Passport** offers version 2.0 of their entry-level notation program with sequencing functions, MusicTime, for the Mac or IBM/Windows. The new version supports color and virtually any sound card. It also includes an onscreen keyboard and accepts input from the QWERTY keyboard, allowing notes to be entered without any external hardware. ♦ **MCS SoundRevue** from **Animotion** is a CD-ROM sound effects library for IBM/Windows. The disc includes MCS SoundTrack audio editing and processing software, which can also be purchased separately. MCS SoundTrack provides flange, chorus, pan, volume, reverse, 3D and other effects. ♦ **Second Wave** has updated their Macintosh expansion chassis for compatibility with Apple PowerPC models. These products allow NuBus boards to be added beyond the number of expansion slots offered by the computer. Four- and eight-slot configurations are available.

### SIGNAL PROCESSORS

**Rane's** half-rack FDA 28 Stereo Distribution Amplifier is a two-in/eight-out splitter and distribution amp for balanced signals at either line or

mic level. In stereo mode it delivers four pairs of two-channel outputs, while mono mode provides eight outs from a single input signal. The VC 18 Voltage Converter powers any Rane device on a DC input between 12 and 24 Volts. It also doubles as an uninterruptible power supply: When AC power fails, the unit switches to DC (12- or 24-Volt battery).

### DRUMS & PERCUSSION

**Rhythm Tech's** line of instruments and accessories includes the aluminum Studio Bar Chimes, available in either single-row (10 chimes) or double-row (20 chimes) configurations, and the Hat Trick, which attaches tambourine jangles to the top of a hi-hat. Their Piccolo Active Snare is designed specifically for 13" snare drums, while the Piccolo iT index Tension drum tuner is intended for piccolo snare drums or drums with lugs close to the rim. ♦ **Ludwig** has updated their Modular Hardware line, offering the double-brace 900 series and single-brace 800 series. Nylon casting inserts surround the collar clamp to eliminate metal-to-metal contact, and nylon lines the tubes as well. Also, Ludwig introduces a new modular bicycle-seat throne with a detachable backrest and greater height. ♦ **Zildjian** introduces entry-level cymbals in the Scimitar and Scimitar Bronze lines. Among the new Scimitar models are 13" hats and a 14" crash. New Scimitar Bronze models include a 10" splash, 13" hats, 14" crash, 14" and 16" chinas.

### RECORDING & PLAYBACK

**Sprocket Digital** unveils the PrismSound MR-2024T Interface Adaptor, an accessory to the **Tascam** DA-88 digital multitrack deck. The unit enables an unmodified DA-88 to record either eight 16-bit tracks, six 20-bit tracks or four 24-bit tracks. AES/EBU and S/PDIF ins and outs are included, as well as word clock outputs. ♦ **Tannoy** offers the PBM Mark II series of near-field monitors, which updates the three models in the original PBM line. Improvements include an additional half octave of low-frequency response and smoother mids and highs. ♦ The Musician's Protective Earplug from **Doc's Proplugs** is designed to attenuate high frequencies while allowing mids to pass without distortion, and comes in six pre-formed sizes. The Protune Earphone Enhancer slips over bud-style earphones to reduce ambient noise and increase gain while providing a secure fit.



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# ALBUM-ORIENTED RECORDING

**A**NY ARTIST who sticks it out through club dates, demos, singles and EPs eventually reaches that pinnacle of the business, making an album. Recording an hour's worth of songs for presentation as a unit is no small challenge. It's expensive and time-consuming, and it requires a bit more foresight than recording smaller-scale endeavors. In addition to the usual considerations that should affect any recording session, the keys to a successful album project are making efficient use of studio time and achieving consistency among the songs.

Before the first session gets under way, ask the engineer to use the same track assignment for each instrument from song to song. You'll save time and money during mixdown if you don't have to keep re-adjusting the settings on a given mixer channel for guitar, then snare drum, then a vocal. If you have a large band, and especially if you use trap drums, "lock out" the studio for recording basic tracks. By booking block time, you'll only need to set up mikes, instruments and headphone mixes once. Likewise, you'll save money and get a more consistent sound from song to song if you block-book for mixing. If nobody else can use the studio between your sessions, the mixing board will stay the way you left it and you're less likely to find yourself asking, "Just how did we get that awesome kick drum sound yesterday?"

As you mix, get a finished mix of each song on tape, and a cassette dub made, before either breaking for a meal or quitting for the night. That way you can check the mix with fresh ears when you return, and you'll be able to make minor changes without having to set up all over again. Resist the temptation to start a new mix before you've had a fresh listen to the last one. Gaining an hour or two on the next song is a poor tradeoff against the easy opportunity to nudge a fader on yesterday's "final" mix.

Mix similar songs consecutively, and mix the loudest, most dynamic song first, especially if you're mixing to a digital medium. Once you've verified that your first mix is great, you can use it as a standard reference for the rest of the project. That is, as the sessions drag on and you start to lose perspective—and, believe me, you will—check the levels and EQ balance of each subsequent mix for compatibility with the first one. Another good test is to make a dub of peak sections of similar songs. Checking the segues can alert you to imbalances that will become much more noticeable when the two songs are part of the same record. You can avoid costly corrective remastering by doing these nitpicky comparisons before settling on a final mix.

Still, if you plan to release your project on both CDs and analog cassettes, count on doing some remastering to optimize the master tape for each format. The analog cassette is the more limited, so it's best to mix full-bore for CD and remaster for cassette. Typically, this entails stereo compression or limiting to rein in wide-ranging dynamics. You may also need to roll off some of the extreme highs and lows in order to avoid tape distortion or clipping dinky ghetto blaster speakers. Leave the technical details to an experienced engineer, but make sure such tinkering doesn't rob your mixes of their impact.

Your final task will be to put the songs in the most effective order. Many DAT recorders allow you to program playback of individual cuts in any order, giving you an easy way to evaluate the flow of a given sequence. If you don't have a DAT player, take home a cassette copy and dub the songs in various orders using a dual deck.

Finally, don't depend on the recording engineer to be alert to all the shortcuts and pitfalls of recording an album. If you can't afford to work with an experienced producer, take the initiative to bone up on album production yourself, *before* you enter the studio. It will save you a lot of headaches, and just might earn you a spot on the charts.

**Working efficiently and maintaining a consistent sound make for a successful album project.**

**BY MICHAEL COOPER**

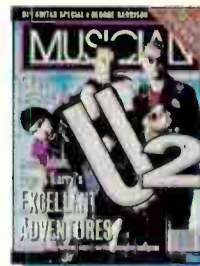




- 45 7/82 Willie Nelson, John McLaughlin, the Motels
- 70 8/84 Peter Wolf, King Crimson, Sly + Robbie
- 102 4/87 Robert Croy, Los Lobos, Simply Red
- 104 6/87 Springsteen, The Blasters, Keith Jarrett
- 111 1/88 R. E. M., George Michael, Year in Rock
- 112 2/88 McCartney, Stanley Clarke, Buster Poindexter
- 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 Cosh
- 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
- 133 11/89 The '80s, Daniel Lanois, Syd Straw
- 135 1/90 Aerosmith, NRBQ, Richard Thompson, Max Q
- 137 3/90 George Harrison, The Kinks, Abdullah Ibrahim
- 138 4/90 Tom Petty, Lenny Kravitz, Rush, The Silos
- 139 5/90 Paul McCartney, Cecil Taylor, Kronos Quartet
- 140 6/90 Robert Plant, Suzanne Vega, Soul II Soul, Drums
- 143 9/90 Steve Vai, Michael Stipe, Malmsteen/McLaughlin
- 144 10/90 INXS, Neville Bros., Lou Reed/Vaclav Havel
- 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 Costello, 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 Nicks, 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 Deols!, 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 Donnelly, 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

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167  
U2



153  
Bonnie Raitt



168  
Elvis



120  
Keith Richards



134  
Grateful Dead



157  
Jimi Hendrix



126  
Lou Reed



170  
Roger Waters



146  
Slash



171  
Best of 1992



142  
Sinead O'Connor



SP1  
Beatles & Stones



SP2  
Masters of Metal

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# NEW WORLD ORDER

THEY DON'T have some salacious character in silk stockings and top hat at the gates leering "*Villkommen, Bienvenue, Welcome, meine Damen und Herren.*" Nonetheless, you would never think that this, the world's largest musical instrument trade show, were in Los Angeles—or Chicago, Atlanta or even London. The MI industry's spring tea party has always been in Frankfurt, the slate-gray money capital of northern Germany, and the setting for the Musik Messe ("Moozeek Messa" if you want to go native), from the colossal steel and glass exhibition "Halles" to the food, the language, the haircuts and even much of the product, is very, well, foreign.

Recently California's winter NAMM show has stolen much of Frankfurt's thunder. NAMM is held six weeks earlier, and is handily located near Silicon Valley. While Frankfurt—is where sausages come from? (Correct.) Is on the other side of the world? (Correct.) Is not so important these days? No; you have to stop with that one. If you make musical instruments and want them to be seen, sold and strummed on the international stage, Frankfurt is where it's at.

Korg seized the occasion for the European debut of their "MIDI conga," the Wavedrum, which heads up their next generation of synthesizers. The blurry fuzz of sitar and tabla generated by their demo team was disconcertingly redolent of a night's hard drinking in an Indian restaurant. But under the cooler palms of Germany's favorite expatriate Japanese percussionist, Nippy Noya, the instrument's finesse, range and delicacy were evident. Residual concerns are the looks—1970s wooden toilet seat about sums it up—and the fact that the ddrum 3 (from Sweden) seems capable of delivering much the same result only earlier, cheaper and without all the technical flannel.

A few years back, Akai's grease gun (the EVI) and Yamaha's praying mantis (the WX7) locked horns

when MIDI wind controllers entered the fray. Today Akai seems assured of a Yamaha-free run for its new Concorde lookalike, the EW13202, and 3020M and 3030M sound modules (one analog, one digital).

But will Yamaha have a clear run with its new Silent Piano? Deciphering the German-only literature, it appears that this is an otherwise-standard Yamaha acoustic upright in which, when you stamp on the third pedal, the hammers cease hitting strings and trigger samples instead.

A nice idea when the kids want to practice late at night, but a brilliant new concept? Not quite. Furstein (run by Farfisa) got there first in 1993 with its Night and Day model.

Among alternative MIDI controllers, guitars seem the most valid. Not just because it's virtually impossible to execute a decent strum from a keyboard, but because guitarists are rightly tired of being brought in to "humanize" yet another dull sequence. This is territory traditionally ruled by Roland, but the latest solution comes from Italy. One Charlie Lab showed a contraption the size of pocket calculator called the Digital. It clips onto your belt, comprising six rods that you can pick or strum while controlling pitch from either a MIDI keyboard or a sequencer.

It's a treat for part-time plank spankers, and it's fast, accurate and cheap (probably under \$500).

Having tried sign language to learn more about Quasimidi's Photon synth—a real looker in the Waldorf Wave class about which I can tell you absolutely nothing—I was relieved to find a fellow Englishman (John Molloy, ex of British synth company Greengate) working for Sound Control. The innards of their cost-effective Deep Bass Nine module are modelled unerringly after Roland's old TB303 Bassline.

Tailor made for the likes of Brian Eno, who snagged the \$15,000 Frankfurt Music Prize this year.

Frankfurt loves contests, special events and the like. This year's theme, digital audio, manifested as the Glasernes Studio (Glass Studio), a see-through Aladdin's cave featuring the latest from Otari, Dyaxis, Fostex, Korg Soundlink *et al.* The cavern featured daily seminars on hard disk recording, digital post production and digital mastering. Meanwhile, a new competition was announced: Rock 'n' Ruins, to be staged at German palaces and castles in order to fund their restoration.

While it isn't exactly in need of restoration, the musical instrument industry is definitely changing. The old order (America vs. Japan) is a thing of the past. In the coming years, we will have to keep an eye on Korea (Goldstar, Daewoo, Hyundai), China (for pianos), Italy (Generalmusic, Farfisa, Viscount) and Germany (Wersi, Solton, Hohner). And Frankfurt is just the place to set your sights. ☛

**The world's largest instrument trade show, Frankfurt's Musik Messe, reveals the new internationalism.**

BY JULIAN GOLBECK

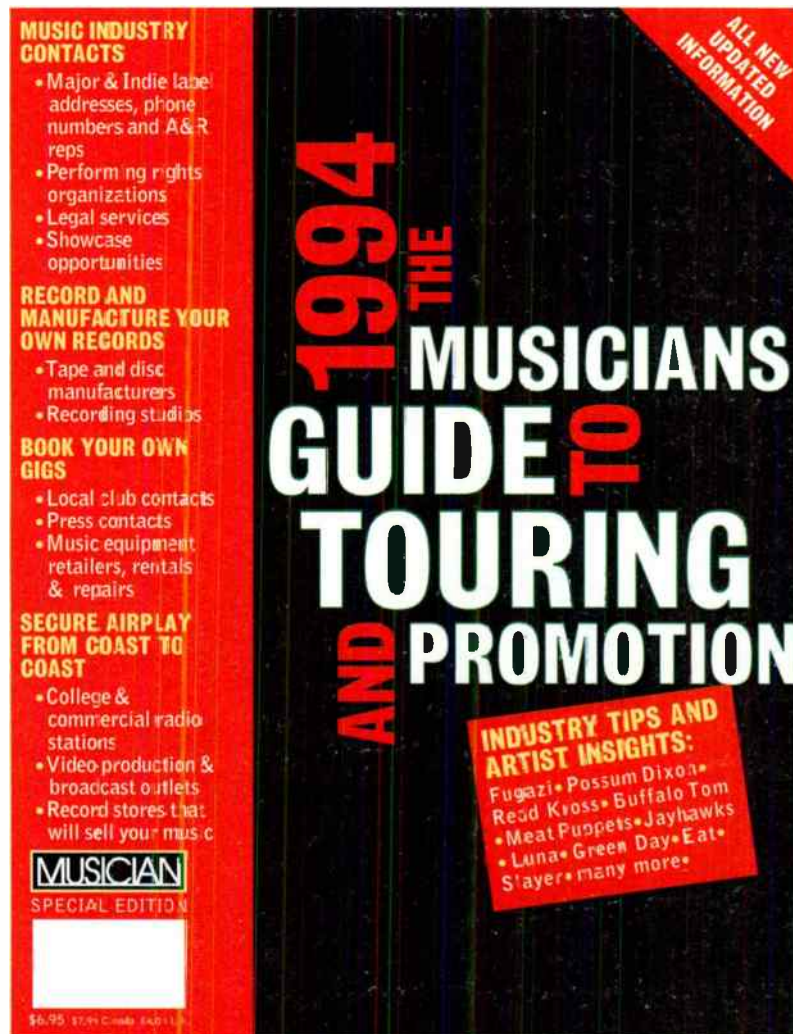




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FRED HERSCH

[cont'd from page 54] to them and to me. Several friends of mine who are HIV-positive took courage from my example and told their families of their condition; this made me extremely proud.

Not that it has been universally positive. One of the things that makes me angriest is that I—the person infected with the virus, the person in need—sometimes had to worry about making everyone else comfortable with my condition. In a way, this perception created an “AIDS closet” that was just as psychologically draining to maintain as the “gay closet.” As a musician friend of mine with AIDS said, “Why shouldn’t we anticipate an appropriate reaction from those who we could assume, in any other crisis situation, would respond in a loving and supportive way?” Not everyone has responded well, but I now realize that it is best to know who you can count on before you’re in a crisis.

As time has gone on, as more and more famous people have spoken out about their own HIV positivity, as the public becomes better

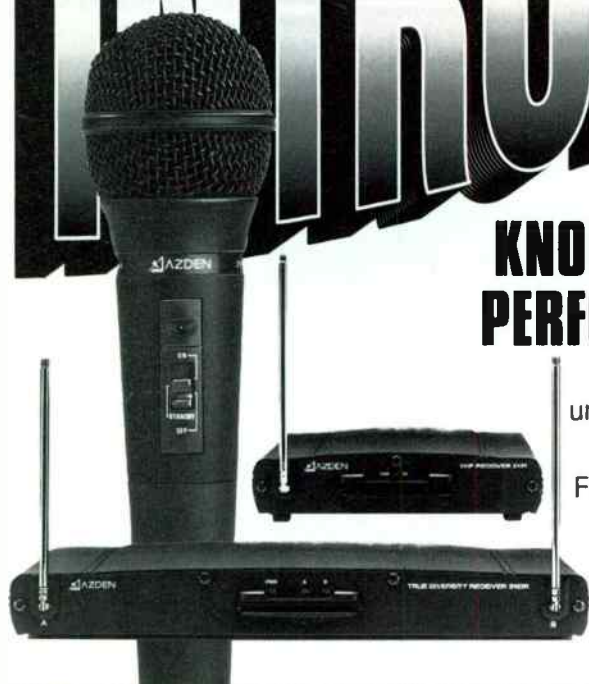
informed, reactions have become more compassionate. I produced and played on an all-star CD of jazz ballads to benefit Classical Action: Performing Arts Against AIDS. As I talked to the performers, representing a broad cross-section of gender, sexual orientation, age, race and jazz style, I was struck by how each one had been personally affected by AIDS: Two of us have AIDS, one lost his lover of over 20 years, one lost a brother-in-law, one lost a manager, all have lost friends. AIDS touches everyone.

Jazz music is about taking risks, being personal, improvising, following your instincts and feelings. It also demands the ability to trust—both yourself and your musical comrades. Perhaps, as I become more outspoken about my health status, I’ll be referred to as “that gay jazz pianist with AIDS”—perhaps it will have a negative impact on my career. But I’ll take that chance, for in taking chances and in being yourself lie the path to artistic and personal growth. And in giving up the closet, I’m getting back something that is of the highest importance: my identity. ♣

*Fred Hersch is a Grammy-nominated jazz pianist, composer and producer.*

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1. What is the name of the organization based in NYC that will provide music biz legal assistance in most major cities if you can't afford a lawyer?  
A. National Entertainment Lawyers Organization  
B. Lawyers Who Care Foundation C. Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts
2. Which group has a health insurance program for anyone in the music biz?  
A. US Coalition of Record Distributors B. Recording Industry Association  
C. National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences
3. The people at a record company who sign the talent work in the A&R department. What does "A&R" stand for?  
A. Artists & Relations B. Artists & Repertoire C. Aid & Relief
4. Who is in charge of signing songs/songwriters at a publishing house?  
A. Professional Manager B. A&R Rep C. Song Plugger
5. Which copyright form protects authorship of your songs?  
A. PA B. VA C. SA
6. What is the new type of songwriter royalties mandated by Congress?  
A. Public Performance B. Mechanicals C. Digital Surcharge
7. Which 'Association' annually presents thousands of artist showcases on a regional & national basis directly to college talent buyers?  
A. National Association of Campus Activities  
B. College Booking Agent Association C. Talent Show & School Association
8. To protect the "brand" name of your group which do you NOT have to file?  
A. Trademark B. Servicemark C. PKA (Professionally Known As Form)
9. To protect the name of a solo artist must they file the same registrations as a musical group? A. YES B. NO C. Under Certain Circumstances
10. Name the watchdog agency dedicated to preventing hearing loss from music? Clue: Call 415-773-9590! A. HEAR B. QUIET C. ListenUp!

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# MARK O'CONNOR'S HO





# HOME STUDIO



## FAST FORWARD

MARK O'CONNOR is no stranger to the recording studio. Nashville's favorite fiddler, 32 years old, made his first record when he was 12 and had recorded six albums by age 17. By then, O'Connor knew exactly what he wanted to hear—but getting it on tape was another matter.

"It was an incredibly frustrating experience dealing with engineers and trying to communicate to them what I wanted," he recalls. "All I knew was it wasn't good enough."

Eliminating those frustrations was top priority when O'Connor built his dream house in 1988. The entire place is wired and ready to go, with headphone and XLR jacks in every bedroom and bathroom routed to his **CAD Maxcon** board ❶ and **Tannoy LGM** monitors ❷.

O'Connor's latest projects have been "fiddle concertos," which he composes for symphony orchestra using a **Macintosh Quadra 800** ❸ running **Opcode's Studio Vision** for sequencing and **Coda's Finale** for printing scores. The process involves working out parts on a prototype **Zeta Systems Mark O'Connor MIDI violin** ❹ and **VC225** hardware. (On rare occasions when the violin controller isn't the best choice, he resorts to his trusty **Yamaha DX7** ❺.) MIDI, routed via an **Opcode Studio 5** MIDI interface ❻, triggers a **Digidesign Sample Cell II** card in the Mac. O'Connor also uses his Mac for digital recording, using **Digidesign's Pro-Tools** card and **Digital Audio Interface** ❼ with **Digidesign's Sound Designer** and **OSC's Deck II** software. Final mixes end up on a **Panasonic SV255** portable DAT.

O'Connor records his fiddle—either a **German violin** from the 1860s ❸ or his prized **Italian violin** built in 1715 ❹—and guitar—another Mark O'Connor signature model, built by **Michael Heiden** of Vancouver, BC ❿—in an upstairs space with 26-foot ceilings and adjacent open-walled bedrooms. (A **Pedulla** fretless bass ❾ and **Takamine ES36090** electric/acoustic guitar ❾ are always ready for action.) His favorite mike is a '50s-vintage **AKG C24**, though he's also fond of his **Neumann KM64** from the '60s ❶.

He modifies their output using a selection of processors, most of them perched above the Grammy for his 1991 album *New Nashville Cats* (much of which was recorded here). Two **Ashly SC-40** preamps ❶ feed the mixer via a pair of EQ modules from an **API** console ❷. He also uses a **Drawmer DS201 Dual Gate**, **UREI 1178** limiter, **Lexicon PCM42** and **PCM60** digital reverbs and two **Teletronics LA2A** limiters ❸, his choice for fiddle. An old **Peterson** strobe tuner ❹ and **Brüel & Kjær** oscilloscope ❺ also come in handy.

Because he works alone much of the time, O'Connor has become adept at controlling the functions of his **Otari MTR90** analog 24-track deck ❶ by working the autolocator ❷ with his stockinged feet.

BY PETER CRONIN

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM HERRINGTON

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# Paint It Black

JOHNNY CASH

*American Recordings*  
(AMERICAN)

**F**ROM A CYNICAL PERSPECTIVE, JOHNNY CASH'S SIGNING TO Rick Rubin's American Records label may seem motivated more by his once notorious image than by the quality of the music he makes. "Johnny Cash is this historic, legendary outlaw figure," Rubin has said. "Outlaw is part of what I perceive this label to be about." So it's little wonder a record company prone to sending out cute promotional items like metal detector-proof "letter openers" and logo-emblazoned brass knuckles would jump at the chance to sign the original Man in Black.

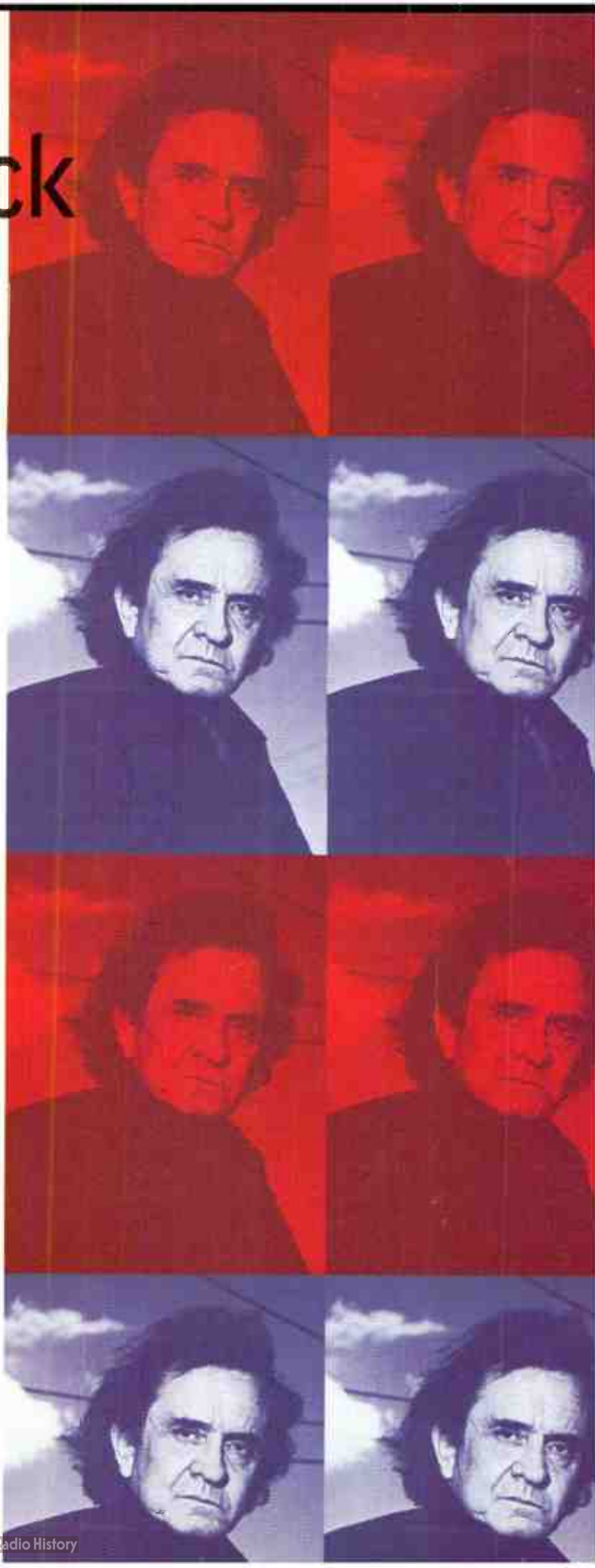
And from the conspicuous placement of "Delia's Gone," this album's stark, flatly recorded opening track, it's obvious Rubin has found his man. "I went up to Memphis, and I met Delia there/Found her in her parlor, and I tied her to her chair," sings the 62-year-old country legend. "First time I shot her, I shot her in the side/Hard to watch her suffer, but with the second shot she died."

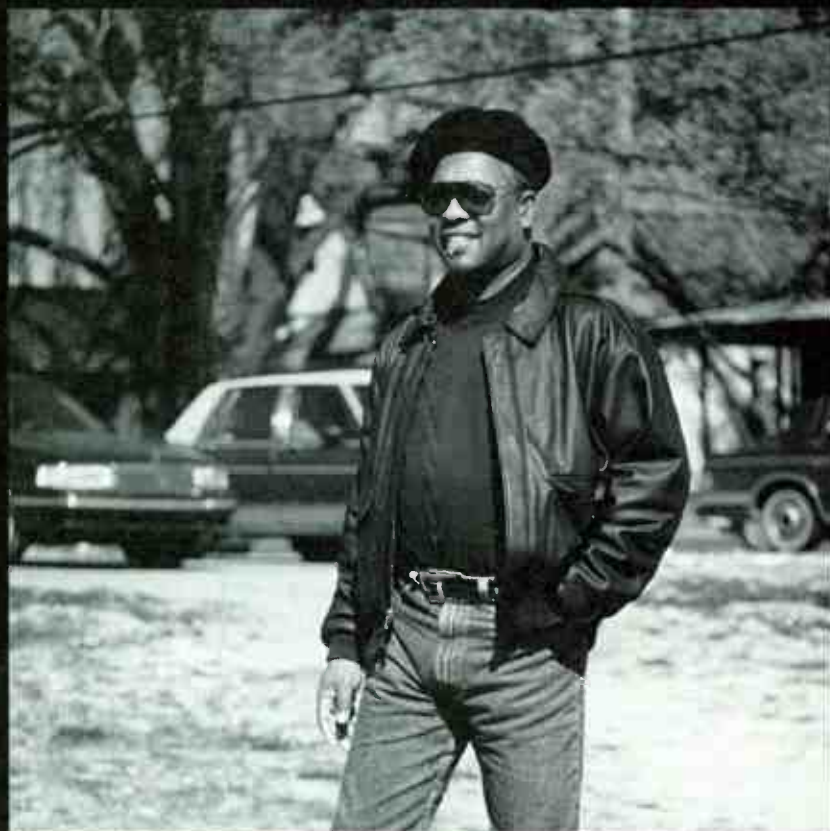
Cynicism has its place—but not, ultimately, when it comes to the quietly remarkable *American Recordings*. After all the advance hype of superstar collaborations, sessions with the Heartbreakers and Red Hot Chili Peppers and a highly visible "cameo" on U2's *Zooropa*, Cash is presented here with the best accompaniment of all: his acoustic guitar. The result is a spellbinding and thought-provoking album that sounds literally ageless—as removed from a specific timeframe as Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska*, and not too unlike it in tone, either.

Part of the credit must go to Cash's seamless blend of original songs and covers, at once self-consciously autobiographical and in keeping with the classic "outsider" persona that attracted Rubin in the first place. Consider the titles alone of Kris Kristofferson's "Why Me Lord" and Loudon Wainwright III's "The Man Who Couldn't Cry." The grim self-evaluation of Leonard Cohen's "Bird on a Wire," which seemed a desperate, world-weary cry for salvation when sung by Tim Hardin in 1971, becomes for Cash a proud and righteous statement of personal affirmation. His overwhelming presence as an artist makes material from unlikely sources (such as former stepson-in-law Nick Lowe and, yes, Glenn Danzig) seem entirely his own, and lends peculiar resonances to even the most traditional of songs—including "Tennessee Stud," regrettably performed here before a too-hip Viper Room audience that apparently thinks "stud" has but one meaning.

If *American Recordings* aims to capture one of this country's finest performers in a no-frills, all-or-nothing performance setting, it has done precisely that. If it's drawn the attention of one or two Danzig or Slayer fans in the process—doubtful, but you never know—maybe they'll take a hint from the original Man in Black's best and most autobiographical song here. "I'm like a soldier getting over the war," Cash sings near the album's end, "I'm like a young man getting over his crazy days/Like a bandit getting over his lawless ways/Every day gets better than the day before." Not the message you'd expect from a man who stared Beelzebub in the face and sang "Ring of Fire," but an uplifting word about walking the line from one who has walked it more often, and more steadily, than most.

—Dave DiMartino





STEVE ROBERTS

## BOOKER T. JONES ON THE WAY IT SHOULD BE

BACK WHEN Booker T. & the MG's started making records, there wasn't much thought given to how "the Stax sound" worked—it just did. But when Booker T. Jones, Steve Cropper and Duck Dunn began putting together *That's the Way It Should Be*, it took a lot of effort to find ways to get that sound today.

Most important was finding someone to fill Al Jackson's drum chair. "We had some luck as far as that goes," says Jones. "We had Steve Jordan. He worked very hard to emulate the Stax feeling. He knew what it was—he was a disciple. I mean, he was religious about it!"

Then there was the matter of his keyboards. Most people think of Booker T. as a B-3 man, but he actually used an M-3 on early hits like "Green Onions."

"Those things were made in the '50s or '40s, and they're tube models," he explains. "I found one in a garage over in the San Fernando Valley out of a book called

the *Recycler*, and had it redone. It doesn't have all the bells and whistles that the Hammond does, but it has that sound. That's why this sounds so retro. It's actually the same old console organ with one speaker in the middle."

Perhaps the easiest was deciding between analog and digital recorders. "We used both machines simultaneously," says Jones. "We used a 16-track analog machine, and a Sony digital machine. Michael Kahne, the Sony Music president, wanted to try to get something similar to the Memphis sound, and that's what we were using back then, a 16-track analog tape recorder. The digital acted as a back-up, because we recorded everything both ways. Certain things did work better with the analog," he adds. "The heavier stuff—the bass, the kick drum, the snare drum, the organ and the guitar. Other stuff, like cymbals and hi-hats and synthesized instruments, worked better on digital."

—J.D. Considine

## SONIC YOUTH

*Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star*  
(DGC)

**S**ONIC YOUTH HAVE A PROBLEM HERE. While their artistic impulses are dead-on, their execution—as befits a band clanging around for over a decade—is a bit tired. The band's third major-label release is their first to further explore the experimental side of their independent releases. At a time when anything labeled alternative makes sure it has its pop riffs in place, to release an album with fewer hooks per minute than *Bad Moon Rising* is at least a true testament to Sonic Youth's Lower East Side beginnings.

Ethics mean a lot to post-punk bands. Oftentimes emotional commitment, skewered by irony and noisy self-indulgence, sits dead-center with a band's refusal to be screwed with. To major labels, they seem to be saying, with a purity of logic: "You signed us because we make a noise only we can legitimately make; we're here to make it." Unfortunately, what begins as a sonic revolution can become sonic repetition. The boundaries guitarists Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo imploded with alternate guitar tunings raised new borders they now seem uncomfortable with confronting. As Sonic Youth's emotions are projected through their breakdown of traditional structure, ultimately you're left with music that sounds infatuated with its own avant-gardeness. Attitude often enhances great music, but it can't take its place.

There are high points. Atmospheric cuts like "Tokyo Eye" and "Sweet Shine" allow the Youth to expand to a fifth dimension. However, Thurston's J. Mascis imitation, "Winner's Blues," is the sort of white-boy lament that begs the question, why bother? The same can be said for "Self-Obsessed and Scxxxee," "Androgynous Mind" and "Waist," where sincerity remains in as short supply as a fresh musical idea.

Sonic Youth will always be one of the major touchstones for all post-punk. Even at their worst, their signature sound allows them to coast. We don't need them to add a horn section, or backup singers, or even Billy Preston on keys, thank you very much. We also don't need them to repeat themselves. A wise man once said, you can't go home again. Especially not if you've already burnt it down. —Rob O'Connor

## ETTA JAMES

*Mystery Lady*  
*Songs of Billie Holiday*  
(PRIVATE)

**H**ALF A CENTURY SINCE THE APEX OF her popular success and more than 30 since death gave her the peace she never found in this



world, Billie Holiday remains the measure by which all popular singers may be judged. Over the years that tacit understanding has been underscored by a spate of Holiday "tribute" albums from jazz singers and instrumentalists, most of which end up sounding reverential without really conjuring Holiday's soulful essence. All of which makes this homage by rhythm and blues legend Etta James, a singer whose flamboyant, down 'n' dirty vocalizing would seem light years removed from Holiday's fragile elegance, such a stunner. *Mystery Lady* is a gem whose musicality and depths of feeling bear comparison with the best records of James' or Holiday's career.

For starters, James' singing here is a revelation. From the opening bars of "Don't Explain," her vocal approach is at once concise and emotionally naked; like Holiday, she knows how to summon deep passion by exercising restraint. But James has too much character to simply imitate Lady Day. Buoyed by Cedar Walton's unobtrusive sextet arrangements, at once luscious and intimate, she finds the bluesy thread that connects her R&B heritage with the jazz standards of Holiday's era. Favoring ballads of bruised romantic longing, from "You've Changed" to "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance" and, inevitably, "Body and Soul," her phrasing and sandy timbre sharpen the sense of loss at the core of these songs to a knife's edge. Her treatment of "Lover Man," to

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2. Rhino D.I.Y. compilation
3. Smashing Pumpkins—*Sia nese Dream*
4. Tony! Toni! Tone!—*Sons of Soul*
5. Scungarden—*Super-unknown*

**Q-TIP**

1. Nasty Nas—*Illmatic*
2. Gang Starr—*Hard to Earn*
3. Earth, Wind & Fire—*That's the Way of the World*
4. Rampage—*The Last Boy Scout*
5. Stevie Wonder—*Songs in the Key of Life*



**BILL LASWELL**

1. Buddy Miles Express—*Expressway to Your Skull*
2. Black Uhuru—*Dub Factor*
3. Naked City—*Apsinthe*
4. Jeff Mills—*Wave Form Transmission, Vol. 1*
5. Ornette Coleman—*Science Fiction*



the accompaniment of arpeggiated guitar chords, evokes sympathetic chills, while a consciously dreamy take of "The Man I Love" floats along on a cushion of impeccable small-band swing.

In her liner notes, James explains that Holiday was her mother's idol, and that the glamour both women exemplified became, for Etta, an ideal both to worship and to rebel against.

It would be natural to speculate that James' empathy for Holiday also stems from the hard knocks both suffered over the years, and maybe that's true. But unlike Billie, Etta has survived, and indeed, it's that survivor's grit which ultimately makes these songs and this album her own. For all that, *Mystery Lady* makes plain that James and Holiday are true sisters under the skin.

—Mark Rowland

### THE PRETENDERS

*Last of the Independents*  
(SIRE)

**S**URELY CHRISSIE HYNDE WAS A forerunner of the do-me feminism of the '90s, an appreciator of "Tattooed Love Boys" before same were cool, a girl who asserted that she was special with something between a sob and a sneer. In this new search for Mr. Right Now, she celebrates "A Night in My Veins": "He's got his hands in my hair and his lips every-

where...he's got his chest on my back 'cross a new Cadillac...oh yeah—feels good." Hynde chants her message of love over jangling chords out of some chop-socky movie soundtrack. The title to "977" would seem to have come from a hotel room door, and the dream-time melody (especially arriving on the heels of the tossed-off wah-wah-fest "Money Talk") is one of Hynde's prettiest: "So I let you/Take me down," she shudders, "I'm like your rent-a-clown." As she disturbingly relates, she likes to "taste the sugar" of her lover's violent moods: "He hit me with his belt/His tears were all I felt..."

Atop musical settings ranging from pop to funk to rockabilly, Hynde outswaggers all comers, from Anaïs Nin to Camille Paglia to Thelma and Louise, with her tough-to-tender switchbacks. If "Forever Young" is a bit redundant after being on the live Dylan tribute disk, her own "Tequila" is an exquisite bar-room balladette at just 1:13, and "I'm a Mother" is an all-out war cry on a record shot through with intertwined images of motherhood and lust.

Independent though she may be, Hynde's opportune instinct for these sessions was to recruit founding Pretenders drummer Martin Chambers, who both sparks and anchors a produced-by-committee 13-song effort with a gaggle of journeyman players. All in all, *Last of the Independents* boasts some of the most committed singing of Hynde's career, an inspired, combo-punching return to her inimitable peak form.

—Fred Schruers



KATHY HUBBARD

# REVIEWS

## FRANK BLACK

*Teenager of the Year*

(4AD/ELEKTRA)

**W**ORD HAS IT THAT "TEENAGER OF THE Year" is a title that young Frank Black (né Charles Thompson) once actually held, so apparently his various aptitudes were well-recognized even before he became an icon of head-punk as Black Francis of the Pixies. Last year's self-titled solo debut sounded like the blue-ribbon science project that such a talented teen might cobble together—sharp exercises in musical mathematics that were impressive but not entirely endearing. On *Teenager of the Year*, Black has loosened up, hunkered down and put together a killer Senior Variety Show.

Packing 22 tracks into a little over an hour, the record's full of the odd grooves and wisenheimer brainpower that one would expect from Black. But the big difference this time is in the songs. After a couple of grandly disjointed opening cuts, Black reaches out and grabs the listener by the ears with "(I Want to Live on an) Abstract Plain." Sung in a Neil Young cum Lou Christie plaint, and clocking in at just a hitch over two minutes, the tune stands up as a big, beautifully sad piece of work. The gentle, soulful "Sir Rockaby" is equally moving, and tracks like "Space Is Gonna Do Me Good" and "Big

smartly obtuse lyrics keep things appropriately edgy.

Working again with producer/bassist/keyboardist Eric Drew Feldman, Black has masterminded a happy sprawl of an album that holds together even as it offers some wild contrasts. The music can perk along through a "Sultans of Swing" shimmy, strut like something from *Diamond Dogs* or rage ahead like an old Damned track. What unifies the album is its off-the-cuff wit and warmth—it tumbles along like Black's version of *The Basement Tapes*.

That may sound like a lot of retro references for one teen to handle, but Black is an inspired scavenger as a songwriter and a crafty chameleon as a performer—he pinches what he needs and makes it his own. *Teenager of the Year* would have sounded great back in '78 blasting out of a Dodge Dart's FM radio, but it happens to sound great this year, too. As his guidance counselors must have told him, "We're proud of you, young man." —Chuck Crisafulli



MICHAEL HALSEBAND

## JIMMIE VAUGHAN

## JIMMIE VAUGHAN

*Strange Pleasure*

(EPIC)

**I**N THE WRONG HANDS A SONG ABOUT the death of Stevie Ray Vaughan—complete with Jimi Hendrix welcoming the guitarist to blues heaven—could become *extremely* maudlin. Sung by Stevie's brother, it runs the risk of getting downright morose. But backed only by thumping acoustic guitar and a trio of gospel singers, Jimmie Vaughan delivers "Six Strings Down" with the sort of understated dignity of Mance Lipscomb singing "Motherless Children." Such taste and self-assurance have marked everything the ex-Thunderbird has recorded, but never as strongly focused and fully realized as on this, his solo debut.

Vaughan trades in his unmatched rhythm chops for raw-boned leads and foregoes the T-Birds' Jimmy Reed and Slim Harpo riffs for a more urban, Bill Doggett groove, aided by veteran organist Bill Willis and drummer George Rains. Male gospel voices substitute where horns would normally punch and pad, but the overall sensibility here is decidedly old-school—for instance, Willis' left hand supplies the bass throughout—without ever lapsing into

nostalgia or parody. The strength of his singing and songwriting may surprise even Vaughan's longtime fans (he wrote or co-wrote every tune here), though the level of musical maturity and individuality on display is something Jimmie followers (especially in Texas) have come to take for granted.

Making the old sound new is the elusive goal of the contemporary blues artist. On *Family Style*, Jimmie and Stevie set out to make a commercial, radio-friendly version of the genre. Aided by producer Nile Rodgers, they came close to hitting their mark. But the aim of *Strange Pleasure* (again teaming Vaughan with Rodgers) was to keep it raw. And whether it's a blues shuffle about a flamenco dancer, Pop Staples gospel, a Curtis Mayfield/Bobby Womack soul ballad ("Sweet Soul Vibe," which is a step up from *Family Style*'s "Tick Tock"), or the spacey, Lightning'-Meets-Django-Meets-Fellini title track (an acoustic instrumental duet with Dr. John on piano), Vaughan succeeds. It's his vision, rather than any window dressing, that makes the old sound new, a bit twisted and uniquely his own. —Dan Forte

## VINCENT HERRING

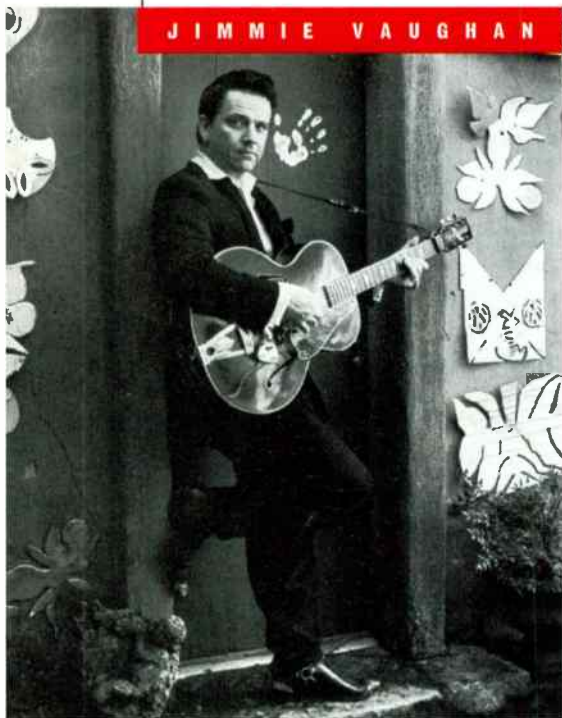
*Folklore*

(MUSICMASTERS)

*Good Fellas 2*

(EVIDENCE)

**D**ESPITE THE GLUT OF BOP-ORIENTED young lions around these days, you have to be pretty jaded not to appreciate alto saxophonist Vincent Herring. Best known for his ongoing stint in cornetist Nat Adderley's aggregation,



MIKE CARLIS

Red" are full of sweetness and hooks. Black hasn't gone all soft and fuzzy though. There's plenty of loud, jagged guitarwork—some courtesy of ex-Pixie Joey Santiago and Capt. Beefheart alumnus Moris Tepper—and Black's



Herring plays with a gritty, blues-drenched sound reminiscent of Cannonball Adderley, but with less of a swagger. Forceful without being overbearing, he's the kind of altoist who often makes the horn sound like a tenor.

His second release on Music Masters captures Herring's quintet during a weekend engagement late last year at the venerable Village Vanguard. The rhythm section, a first-call youth brigade, features Cyrus Chestnut on piano, Ira Coleman on bass and Carl Allen on drums. Allen is a powerful presence throughout, but this is Chestnut's gig to steal, with his natty, well-crafted Wynton Kellyish solos. Herring makes an impressive showing as a writer, with the title track sounding like it could have come from one of Bird's Dial sessions and his "Theme for Delores" reminiscent of a Herbie Hancock tune, circa *Maiden Voyage*. One drawback is that every tune here is up- or mid-tempo; the lyricism Herring displayed on his last album, *Secret Love* (hear his gorgeous version of Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge") is sadly missing. The only thing approaching a ballad is Vincent Youman's underservedly obscure "The Girl Next Door" (it was originally "The Boy Next Door," maybe he's

cross-dressing?). What *Folklore* lacks in variety, it makes up for with a youthful will to swing.

Herring is also a major presence on *Good Fellas 2*, the sequel to last year's strangely titled album put together by the fine drummer Yoichi Kobayashi. Drawing on much the same talent pool as the first release—with the brilliant Stephen Scott holding down the piano chair for most of the gig, Philip Harper on trumpet, James Genus on bass, Jamal Haynes on trombone, Bob Kenmotsu on tenor and Mark Gross on alto sax—Kobayashi leads what is basically a well-directed hard-bop blowing session. The album contains a much better mix of moods, tempos and textures than Herring's live date, but then there are many more colors with which to paint. With its many strong solos by up-and-coming players, *Good Fellas 2* certainly justifies itself better than most Hollywood sequels.

—Andrew Gilbert



DENNIS HEALEY

**JACKOPIERCE**  
*Bringing on the Weather*  
(A&M)

**W**HEN WAS THE LAST TIME A SONG made you cry? The tasteful existential dread so common in pop today can't do the job—it just causes an uneasy knot in the stomach. For the kind of three-hankie catharsis Hol-

**BEST  
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SEMI-FINALISTS  
PART  
ONE**

**MUSICIAN**

Firstly, let us say thank you to all of the bands and artists who entered our Best Unsigned Band competition this past year, and especially for your patience—the process took a little longer this year, as *BUB* was moved from its former location in MA to the Musician offices in New York (but not a single cassette was lost in the transition!). Here is the first half of our semi-finalist list. The second half will appear in next month's issue. Congratulations to all who have made it this far!

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# REVIEWS

lywood melodramas once delivered so effectively, try "Jacob," one of many weepy tracks on Jackopierce's *Bringing on the Weather*. As Jack O'Neill and Cary Pierce sketch a lilting sing-song melody with their acoustic guitars, they spirited duo croons a poignant tale of a youngster caught between warring parents. "He thinks he's done something wrong," they sing breathlessly, and of course adult reassurance won't change his conviction. If this pitiful, true-to-life vignette doesn't at least give you the sniffles, get that heart of stone checked out immediately.

Guileless and impassioned, O'Neill and Pierce share composer credits, though they write

separately, and blend their eager voices in ragged unison. This freewheeling vigor adds a sharp edge to love songs about failing to connect. From "Late Shift," a desperate roadside phone call, to "Along for the Ride," the musings of a discarded suitor, to "Capable Girl," about strangers who may or may not be approaching a relationship, Jackopierce make anticipation and regret sound like brand new, earthshaking phenomena.

These shameless displays are discreetly sweetened by T-Bone Burnett's typically shrewd production, which incorporates Denny Fongheiser's nimble drums and Benmont Tench's evocative organ into the rousing groove.

## SHORT TAKES

BY J. D. CONSIDINE

### TERMINATOR X AND THE GODFATHERS OF THREATT *Super Bad*

ALCOHOL

This isn't just a solo album, it's a compact history of rap, incorporating everything from the old-school style of Cold Crush and Kool Herc to modern hardcore stars like Ice Cube and Chuck D. Naturally, the P.E. DJ is as comfortable scratching against Grandmaster Flash in a turntable battle on "G'Damn Datt DJ Made My Day" as he is with the dancehall riddims of "Mashitup." But what really makes this project worthwhile is that all of these all-star collaborations stand up as tracks, from the classic funk of "It All Comes Down to the Money" (featuring Whodini) to the street sass of "Don't Even Go There" (with Bonnie N' Clyde). Not since James Brown has a record so deserved to be called superbad.

### APEX TWIN

*Selected Ambient Works Volume II*

30

It may seem odd to find a major figure in techno making background music—sonically, the two styles couldn't seem further apart. But ambient and techno are both meant to evoke a physical response, and each emphasizes texture and mood over melody. Apex Twin underscores that connection by making the rhythmic momentum key to his music's aural atmosphere. So whether these tracks percolate gently or pulse dreamily, there's always a groove going on.

### YES

*Talk*

100%

Shut up.

### BASIA

*Basia*

100%

What sets this apart from past projects isn't the sound, which is as jazzily lush as ever, but the subject matter. Basia, it seems, has found her mate, and spends most of the album celebrating how wonderful true love is. Sadly, the words and music aren't always as well-matched as she and her sweetie seem to be ("The Sweetest Illusion" sounds nothing like the love song the lyric sheet suggests), but the best moments—songs like "The Prayer of a Happy Housewife," "Drunk on Love" and "Perfect Mother"—frame her voice better than anything she's recorded.

### TAP MAMA

*Sabsyina*

100%

While this album goes pretty far afield, drawing on everything from funk licks to raga riffs, the sound remains remarkably rootsy and consistent. Doubtless, as an a cappella group, the Mamas will always sound more or less like themselves. But their real strength isn't rhythmic ingenuity or mimetic range so much as a collective sense of humor and personality. That comes through as clearly within the aural dreamscape of "Awakening in Australia" as in the joyous polyphony of "Locklat Africa."



(And a big thumbs-up to Scarlet Rivera's rip-snorting violin on "Witch in the Old Man.") Sometimes no amount of support helps: O'Neill and Pierce tumble from the brink of excess into corniness on bloated epics like "Iron John" and the precious "Free," with its image of "gold dust in her hair." But whenever the lads start to bore, they uncover emotions most of us so-called grown-ups try to suppress. At its best, *Bringing on the Weather* is embarrassing in the best possible way. —Jon Young

## BRIAN ENO

*Brian Eno I: Instrumental*

*Brian Eno II: Vocal*

(VIRGIN)

**B**LAMING BRIAN ENO FOR NEW AGE music is like blaming Kohoutek for the comet. All Eno did was make beautiful and innovative records, some superficial aspects of which were latched onto by the tofu lawn-party set. The guy has had a hand in some of the most thought-provoking albums by Roxy Music, David Bowie, Talking Heads, James and U2, while virtually reinventing the role of synthesizers in popular music. These immaculately remastered three-CD boxes not only unveil the quality of his solo efforts, but the scope of a vision that, in its consciously subtle way, has changed music as much as Phil Spector or Jimi Hendrix.

Box *I*, helpfully subtitled *Instrumental*, collects an impressive breadth of material from the compact song-shards of *Another Green World* to the expansive electronic mantras of *Thursday Afternoon* and *Discreet Music*. (One also notices interesting connections like Eno's recycling of "No One Receiving"'s rhythm track on "M386"—he didn't just redo the part, it's the actual track treated and used to radically different effect.) Though it boasts no previously unreleased tracks, a lot of the material here hasn't been heard since the Eno anthology *Working Backwards*, which disappeared about a decade back.

The *Vocal* box collects nearly everything from Eno's classic post-Roxy Music rock albums *Here Come the Warm Jets* and *Taking Tiger Mountain*, then charts his ground-breaking journey into world music via *Before and After Science* through last year's *Nerve Net*. Included are a number of tracks from *My Squelchy Life*—sort of a *Nerve Net Mark I*—which are surprisingly more direct than those on the released album. As with the instrumental material, the high-resolution remastering is so great it's like hearing these songs for the first time. If records ever sound much better than this, I'll be surprised. —Thomas Anderson

# VIDEO

JEFF "SKUNK" BAXTER

*Music for the 21st Century*

(INSIDE MUSIC/CPP BELWIN)

This video bills itself as elucidating "advanced guitar techniques" for the session players of the future. Actually, it's a 70-minute rap session in which studio vet and producer Baxter discusses what young players need to know as they prepare for a career in the glare of the "record" light.

Although pearls of wisdom flow more or less continuously from behind his colossal moustache, the Skunk declines the opportunity to show off licks, chops or even tricks of the trade. Rather, he urges viewers to develop an individual style by "synthesizing all your experiences and knowledge as a musician and human being, and putting them together in the moment that you play guitar."

Baxter discusses some of the rhythms, tones and effects used to create country, rock and R&B grooves, and delves lightly into the tasteful application of effects. He also has some wise words on the "lost art" of playing rhythm guitar and the importance of the guitar synthesizer to the upcoming generation of hired guns.

Despite the title, though, this is something less than an advanced lesson, and Baxter's advice boils down to something along the line of "This above all, to thine own self be true." Granted, plenty of advanced players could stand to hear that, but even they might find the rest superfluous.—Steph Paynes

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## BILL FRISELL

*This Land*

(ELEKTRA NONESUCH)

**A**MERICA WASN'T EXACTLY "DISCOVERED." It was raided, caressed, neglected, enhanced, glorified, mythologized, fouled and adorned. Bill Frisell knows the exact dates when all these things happened—times and places, too. Even better for us, he knows how those involved actually felt. *This Land*, his richest recording so far, assesses the historic breadth that American life claims.

We know all about Frisell's guitar talents. His

piercing pastels have made him one of the last decade's most instantly identifiable stylists. *This Land* shifts things, focusing on his composing and arranging. By adding three horns—trombonist Curtis Fowlkes, clarinetist Don Byron and alto player Billy Drewes—to his already pliable rhythm section of Kermit Driscoll and Joey Baron, Frisell leads a virtual orchestra. His music has always been evocative, and the charts he's written attain a new level of polyglot eloquence. Visual images constantly stream to mind, from elation in the Ellis Island air to the stress of an L.A. traffic jam. Like Ellington's

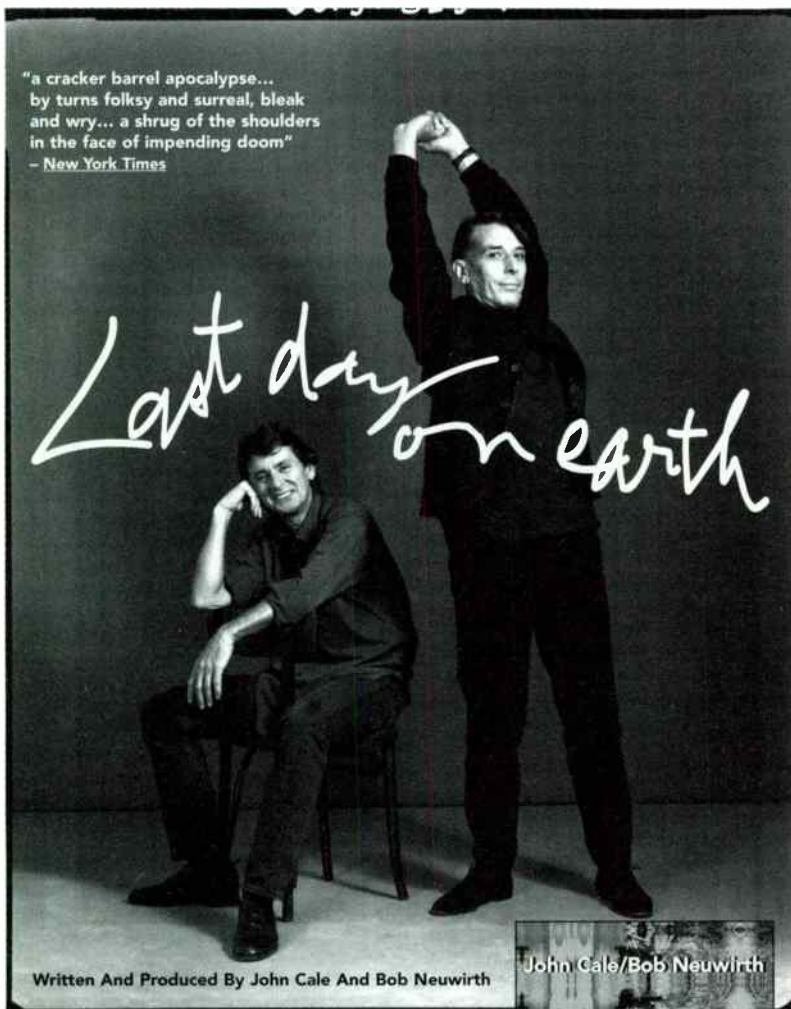
Tone Parallel to Harlem, these pieces evoke an elaborate emotional weave.

"Amarillo Barbados" dances a dusty rhumba. "Dog Eat Dog" suggests the squeeze of social rivalry. "Jimmy Carter (Part 1)" signs the farm foreclosure papers, "Julius Hemphill" does the nasty in a dark alley. The musical turns are fleet, but Frisell's got a way of making the intricate seem natural. It's a talent honed by scrutinizing Buster Keaton comedies and constructing scores to parallel that master's shifts between melancholy and slapstick.

Though there's plenty of hip blowing, *This Land* is about as far away from head-solo-head jazz as you can get. As an ambitious characterization of a nation, it recognizes the distinction of regions, but brims with pluralism. Grand Central Station and the Georgia Sea Islands never had a better friend. —Jim Macnie

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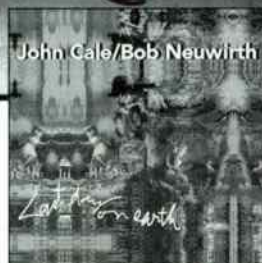
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## SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE

*Diary*

(SUB POP)

**W**ITH THEIR DEBUT ALBUM, SEATTLE'S Sunny Day Real Estate manage to merge the drive of early U2, the acrid, aching melodicism of Dinosaur Jr. and a touch of the wicked, weird un-pop of the Flaming Lips. The result is music that revolves around angst-tinged vocal outbursts, interspersed with intense, contemplative calms. Though the mood swings become predictable after a few tracks, these fractured tunes are fraught with enough emotional intrigue to keep them engaging.

No matter what's going on around him, frontman Jeremy Enigk remains at the center of the music, his vocals shifting from impressionistic mumbling to anxious ranting. Drummer William Goldsmith and bassist Nate Mendel create a sturdy rhythmic foundation to anchor the stream of colors and textures that Enigk and Daniel Hoerner conjure with their guitars. Superimposed on the tug-of-war between brooding and exuberance is an odd collection of sonic embellishments. "Round" is spiked with a guitar riff and lyric that bears an uncanny resemblance to the Beatles' "Baby You're a Rich Man"; "Pheurton-Skeurto" is an oddball piano/vocal number in 3/4 time that ambles along sulkily, like the disgruntled ghost of an old music hall tune; the meandering "Grendel" is even more spectral with bright guitar chords drifting in and out of focus around Enigk's fretting voice while feedback wisps overhead. The whole affair is deliriously, deliberately erratic—aural clutter that's at once distracting and inviting.

—Sandy Masuo



## THE "5" ROYALES

*Monkey Hips and Rice:  
The "5" Royales Anthology*  
(RHINO)

**Y**OU MAY NOT KNOW WHO LOWMAN Pauling was, but a lot of musicians do. Guitarists Jimmie Vaughan and Steve Cropper cite him as a major influence; James Brown, Ray Charles and the Shirelles cut hit versions of his songs. Pauling was the guitarist, principal songwriter and baritone/bass voice for the '50s R&B group the "5" Royales (an act that often numbered six members, hence the quotation marks). As great and original as they were, the Royales have been shamefully neglected in the reissue marketplace: Their lone domestic release, a shabbily packaged single-LP set, came out about 15 years ago. *Monkey Hips and Rice*, a 41-track overview of the group's work for the Apollo and King labels, should go a long way towards restoring the unjustly neglected reps of the Royales and their resident genius.

Originally a gospel unit called the Royal Sons Quintet, the Royales changed their handle and loped into R&B in 1952. Powered by straight-outta-church tenor lead Johnny Tanner, they cut swinging hits like "Baby Don't Do It" and lightly salacious numbers like the almost-single-entendre "Laundromat Blues" for Apollo. They shifted to King in 1954; while tunes like the jumpin' "Women About to Make Me Go Crazy" and the blissful "Someone Made You for Me" are eminently likable, there's little in the songs or the performances to distinguish these efforts from the conventional R&B of the day.

But sometime in 1956, somebody alertly decided to unleash guitarist Pauling, and his twanging, economical playing fueled one dazzling number after the other. The second Rhino CD documents many of these later recordings, including "Think" (turned into a hit by label mate James Brown), "Dedicated to the One I Love" (the Shirelles smash, enlivened here by bluesy Pauling obligatos) and "Tell the Truth" (which became Ray Charles' last Atlantic single). The best of the lot has to be the down-child stomp "The Slummer the Slum," which boasts not one but *two* unfettered guitar breaks.

The "5" Royales fragmented in 1962, and Pauling, who went on to play with Sam & Dave and Ben E. King, died in relative obscurity 20 years ago. But the group's legacy was not forgotten by R&B diehards (including Rhino's compiler/annotator Ed Ward, who has carried the torch for this outfit for years), and now *Monkey Hips and Rice* delivers the goods for unenlightened listeners. Nevermore foolishly ask, "Lowman *who*?"

—Chris Morris

## SPANISH FLY

*Rags to Bitches*  
(KNITTING FACTORY WORKS)

## JERRY DOUGLAS, RUSS BARENBERG & EDGAR MEYER

*Skip, Hop & Wobble*  
(SUGAR HILL)

**M**USICIANS NEEDN'T SMASH CONVENTION to gain new stylistic ground— inching from orthodoxy is sometimes enough to create a new point of view. Nimbly sidestepping the

usual procedures, this pair of trio records show how modernist departures can be just a shift 'n' twist away.

The odd collective sound of trumpeter Steve Bernstein, tuba player Marcus Rojas and guitarist Dave Tronzo is instantly imposing. The recreational essence of jazz often suggests glee, but Spanish Fly prefer melancholy. Secure enough to embrace the sound of silence in its improves, they're the kind of band that stares into the void and decides it likes the space of the room. That makes their written material, which conflates Louis Armstrong and Charles Ives,

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seem rather sketchy. Texture is what's emphasized; they take their scrape 'n' blur forays to the outer limits. But producer Hal Willner has bundled together the pieces in a wily manner: The fragments always manage to intersect at the places where congress is crucial.

Nuance guides Douglas, Barenberg and Meyer as well, but this chops-galore string trio understands the power of pith. D, B & M—who play dobro, guitar and bass respectively—intersperse trad tunes with graceful if peculiar originals; it's an approach that helps simultaneously ground and broaden the music. Their compositions seem to wince at the limits of bluegrass; measures are crammed with nifty improvs, though melodies are never left in the dust. "Monkey Bay" is pressure cooker on overboil, and elsewhere, frantic tempos help balance the feel-good tone of the melodies. Even virtuosos can't be cheery all the time.

Both of these groups flash with invention. From Tronzo's daft harmonies on Ellington's "Black and Tan Fantasy" to the gorilla outfits sported by the Wobblers on their record liner, these trios have transformed themselves into quartets of a sort. The additional member is whimsy.

—Jim Macnie

## ALI FARKA TOURE WITH RY COODER

*Talking Timbuktu*

(HANNIBAL/RKODISC)

**R**UMORS OF A CROSS-CULTURAL ROOTS-guitar summit involving Ry Cooder, Ali Farka Toure, John Lee Hooker, Boubacar Traore and David Lindley were rife a few years ago. But the record company organizing it went belly up, Lindley went to Madagascar, and Toure invited other collaborators—from Taj Mahal to a couple of Chieftains—to play on his recent discs, *The River* and *The Source*. Then last year, with dates set for Toure's Southern California debut, new rumors began to circulate about a collaboration with Cooder. This time the dream pairing came true, and the two played together at a series of transcendent local gigs, their tour-ette culminating in the *Talking Timbuktu* recording sessions.

Joining Toure, his two Groupe Asco percussionists and Cooder on certain tracks are Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown on guitar and viola, jazzbo John Pattitucci on acoustic and electric bass, and Jim Keltner on traps and knick-knacks. Not surprisingly, the two cuts veering closest to American blues, "Amandrai" and "Ai Du," feature the curmudgeonly Clarence Brown. On the slow turning "Ai Du," he summons a growling, moaning spirit voice from his big fiddle, which reasons with Toure's finely etched fingerpicking as Cooder double-tracks



on lightly strummed mandolin and wrung-out electric slide.

Many global fusion projects fail because they add up to less than the individual strengths of the musics and performances. Not this time. Cooder once more proves himself to be perhaps world music's most flexible and thoughtful contributor, able to insert himself as seamlessly into the soul of Malian music as he has with Okinawan, Tex-Mex, Hawaiian and Indian styles. His Sandwich Island-flavored mandoguitar on "Soukora" augments the tune's reflectively romantic mood, gently brushing against Toure's sturdy, irrepressible groove.

Toure's home village of Niafunke nestles between the Sahara and the Niger River, his farm plots carefully cultivated in a precarious symmetry between two inexorable forces. It's fitting that *Talking Timbuktu* achieves its own quiet balance among several roots and branches of the blues. —Tom Cheyney

### WILLIE ALEXANDER

*Willie Alexander's Persistence of Memory Orchestra*  
(ACCURATE)

### MACEY'S PARADE

*Too Much Perspective*  
(MOON HILL)

**F**EW SCENES CONTRIBUTED MORE TO THE punk movement with less to show for it than Boston's. Fifteen years later, when magazines are running "whatever happened to" pieces of that time, these two records are inspiring proof that even punksters who never quite made it the first time around can endure and provide compelling second acts.

In Willie "Loco" Alexander's case, it's more like Act Five. A local legend, Beantown's punk godfather boasts musical roots that include '50s beat/jazz, '80s garage rock, '70s punk and '80s spoken word; his latest album manages to mix all these currents into a fresh musical stream that defies category. Fronting a hard-rocking quartet that generally dispenses with guitars or bass, Alexander's sideways vocal rasp and jazz jukebox piano, drummer Jim Doherty's sizzling swing and the strip-joint saxophones of Ken Field and Mark Chenevert create an offhandedly hip racket that brings to mind references from Monk to Tom Waits to NRBQ. But Alexander's not doing this to charm. Underscoring his quirky narratives about figures like the lost waitress "Rita Ratt" and the doomed war veteran "Shopping Cart Louie" is a keen, angry intelligence that refuses to accept a compromised view of the world—or of popular music, for that

matter. Grungemeisters who consider themselves cutting-edge and world-weary would do well to check out the sheer nerve of this record. Alexander, 50, has achieved that rare combination of middle-aged insight and teenage esprit.

The sound of *Too Much Perspective* is more quietly crafted and introspective, befitting the odyssey of Jon Macey, a new wave popsmith who missed the brass ring and spent a good part of the next decade detoxing from drugs. A typical story, except that Macey, older and wiser, has put together a song cycle of that experience that melds catchy pop with occasional country flavors to his

affecting fables. No whiner, Macey sings about "The Clinic" with droll wit, while "Song for T" and "Home" show he hasn't lost his ability to grace the most forlorn complaints with sweet, singable melodies that underscore their poignancy. His laconic vocals and the band's crisp, guitar-based arrangements provide occasional suggestions of Tom Petty, even with considerably more spare (read cheap) production values. But that's okay. Like Willie Alexander, Macey has been around enough to learn that pop success is more or less a crap shoot. By any other measure, these records are a triumph. —Mark Rowland

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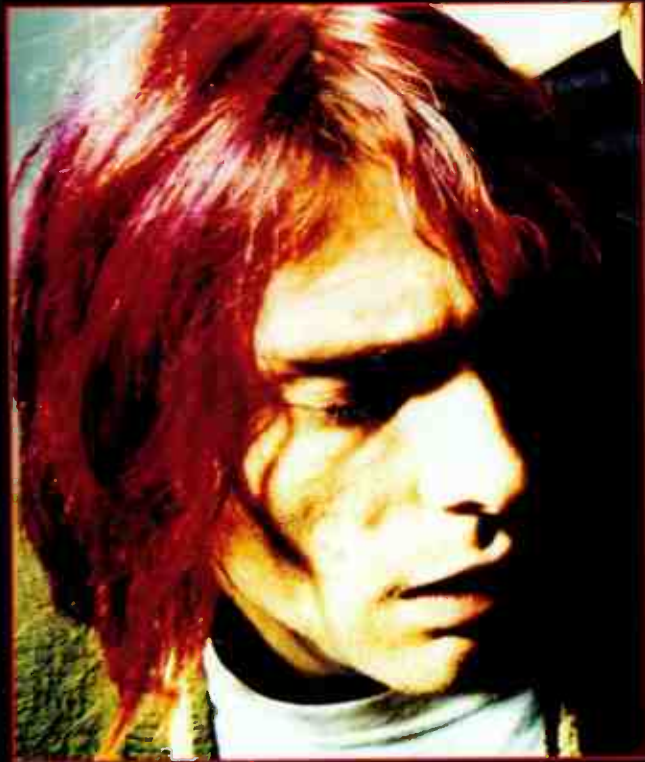
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# INTO THE BLACK



PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL LAVINE

He was not a spokesman for his generation. To call him that insults both Kurt Cobain's music and his generation. Like any musician and songwriter of his accomplishment, he was a spokesman for those who shared the vision he articulated, regardless of which generation they belonged to. The proof will be seen in 25 years, when listeners unborn today are moved by his work.

Cobain himself was moved by musicians as contemporary as Jesus Lizard and as ancient as Leadbelly, who was dead when Cobain was born but whose most famous song opens with lines that could have been sung by Nirvana: *Sometimes I live in the country, sometimes I live in town, sometimes I take a great notion to jump in the river and drown.*

It's no secret that talented people who are wracked by unreconcilable pain often become artists. (It is also one of life's tragic jokes that they often inspire imitators who think that being miserable will turn them into artists.) It was surely Cobain's pain, not his art, that caused him to take his life. No one should be shameful enough to perpetuate the lie that he gave his life for rock 'n' roll or that fame killed him. None of us know what is in a man's mind at the moment he pulls the trigger of a gun aimed at his own head. For all we know rock 'n' roll might have kept him from doing it sooner.

However all of us in the media that promoted and profited from Nirvana's public drama should have the human decency to not exploit Cobain's ghost. We should hope that the slanderers who did not dare take on Cobain in life will not be emboldened to cash in on his passing. We should hope that

## ALL APOLOGIES

years go by before any attempts are made to dramatize his story. We should let enough time pass that the music he made has a chance to put the shock of his suicide into perspective. Cobain was not Sid Vicious, who needed a public death to justify a wasted life. He is more like John Lennon, Marvin Gaye or Sam Cooke, whose violent deaths are ultimately just footnotes to brilliant lives that continue to touch the lives of others.

Kurt Cobain and the wife he loved so much had in common troubled childhoods and broken families. They wanted to do better for their daughter. They hoped to give their child Frances what they were denied—two parents and a loving home. Cobain's anguish must have been enormous to take that chance away from his daughter. Now Frances will grow up knowing her father through the music he left, the stories her mother tells her, and what others say, write and remember of him. If everyone in the music business and the media decided to value the beauty of Kurt Cobain's accomplishments more than the scandal of his death, his child might have a chance of achieving the self-forgiveness her father was denied.

Those who wish to honor Cobain could do so by recalling him as someone who pulled raw beauty from a life filled with hurt, who kept trying to raise himself up—even when the world was watching for him to fall, who made art out of his struggle, and who gave other people in pain the comfort that they weren't alone.

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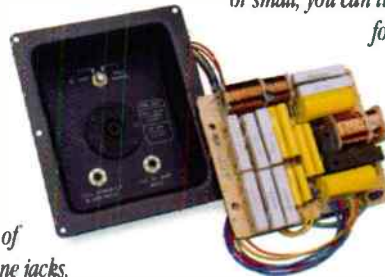
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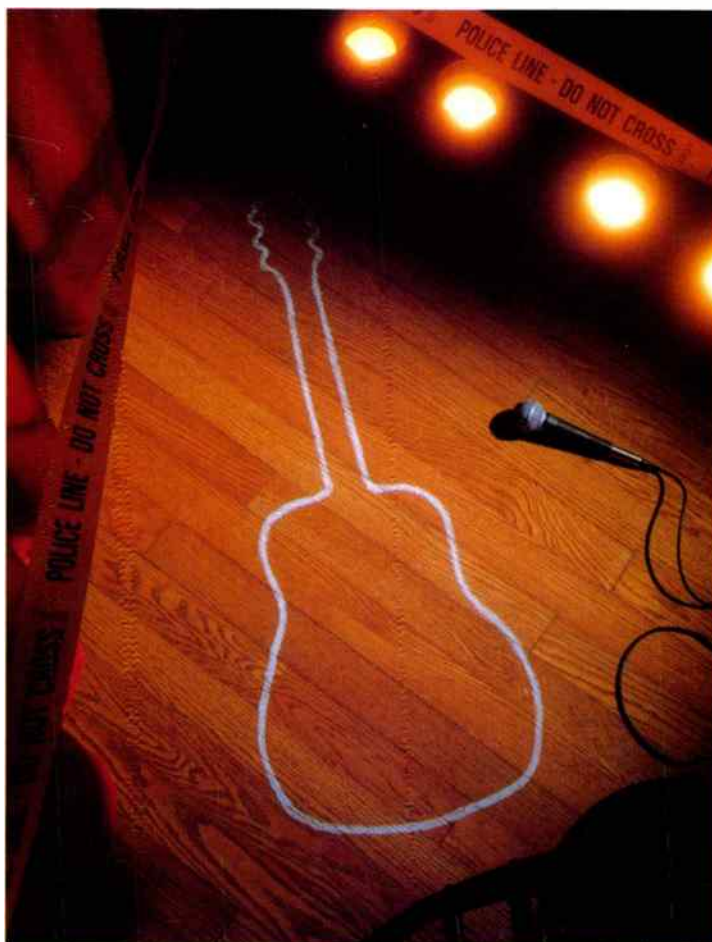


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