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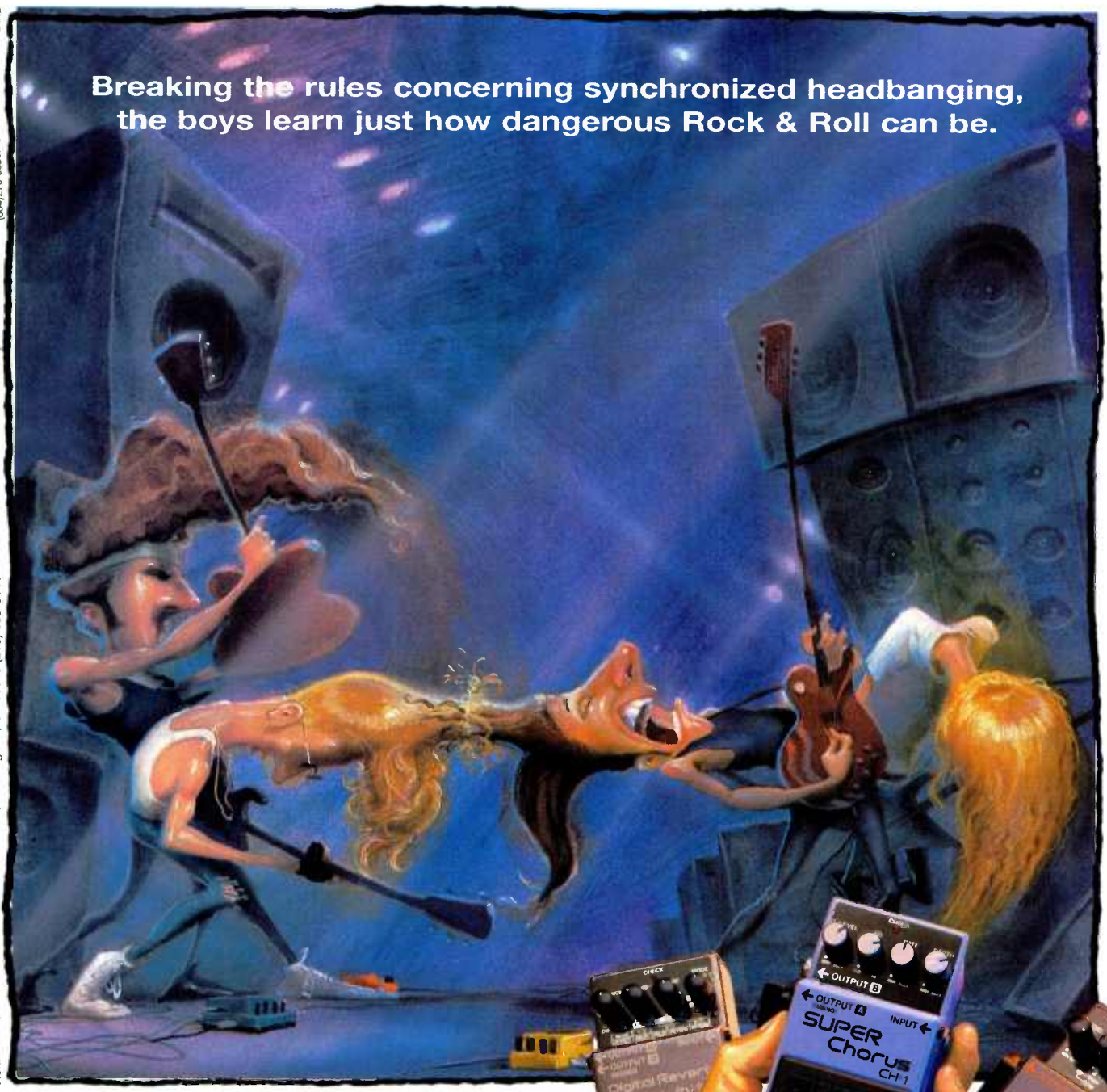

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CHRIS ROBINSON

"Acid goes away but Dylan stays with you."

Why did the Black Crowes get involved in Hempilation, *the benefit album for NORML [the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws]?*

I'm not even in NORML, I don't really care about the politics. I care about the human side of it, and the human side of it is, some people smoke marijuana and don't think it's a drug, and people in charge think it's a drug. You just make a statement to people saying, "Our thoughts and feelings are there for you."

You did a cover tune for the album, right?

I think we gave 'em "Rainy Day Women." It was a real loose B-side from *The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion.*

Do you think this project will be rained on as contributing to the delinquency of American youth?

Well, coming from a place that's never apologized for the genocide of its native people, I imagine, yeah. I don't think it means that much, in the overall scheme of how manipulating and hypocritical all the systems are. It falls through the cracks. Like that pot festival we did in Atlanta four years ago—it was 80,000 kids there or something. No one wanted to talk about how many people showed up. It wasn't even really on the news, except as a traffic thing—"All these people made it, so I can't get to the mall."

The Black Crowes have recently been playing with people who have had a huge influence on their music—the Rolling Stones, the Grateful Dead, Dylan, George Clinton.

Music to me is just this continuous horizon. When we were kids in Atlanta and made *Shake Your Money Maker*, those influences were overwhelming, but once you get out on the road and sort of metamorphose from a caterpillar to a butterfly, those influences become a horizon that you already passed, and now there's another horizon in front of you. Like when we go see the Rolling Stones—we just played with them—I love the songs, and I love Keith and Charlie and Woody and Chuck Leavell, and what those guys are doin'. But me and Rich were just sitting up there and laughing. We've been doing our own thing for so long, we *forgot* that we were influenced by them. Your own music becomes so much more the focus and the tool, as opposed to searching for outside inspiration. If it was a statue, maybe we were looking at it from the front, and maybe now I look at it from the back, or from the side, or maybe an aerial view. It just changes.

But didn't you have any times when you were whipped back and said, "Whoa, this is the Stones we're sharing the stage with?"

Yeah, definitely. When we played with George Clinton, that's the kind of thing that affects me more, because that influence is coming from over a longer period of time. Hearing Gary Shider from Parliament-Funkadelic sing, I realized, "Well, yeah, that's how I learned to sing—singin' that guy's parts." And then getting to sit down with George—who called me "one stringbean singin' motherfucker"—I was like, "Man, did I just hear that? That's the best thing anyone has ever said!" Dylan played a gig with us and the Stones, in Montpellier, in the south of France. I began to realize those words fucked me up more than my first acid trip. Everyone thinks acid is so heavy, which it is; acid goes away but Dylan stays with you.

The Crowes have gone through immense changes, and it seems that the audience has changed too. At recent shows, you've been drawing a young and, for lack of a better term, a new-Deadhead crowd.

Oh, yeah. I'm not comparing us to anything as special and as great as the Grateful Dead, but I think we've always represented something where you're in on it, or you're really not. It would have been the easiest thing in the world to play open-G, chug-a-lug rock 'n' roll. That [original] crowd was a little older—which is funny, because that was when we were the youngest, and they were the shit-kickin', hell-raisin', rock 'n' roll [types]. Now it's become a little more soulful, and a little more mind-altering—not in a musical sense, but as far as the textures and contours and shapes of what we're doin' musically.

The band has been evolving almost from show to show over the last year. You're on this continuum of frustrating people's expectations.

Yeah, it's weird. We're exactly the same way we've always been—the only way we can do something that we feel is moving and soulful and smart is by never falling into the lapse of, "What we do is so great that we don't have to change." There are people who say, "What happened to *that* Black Crowes, or *this* Black Crowes?" The thing is, that's because of the way the modern music industry has everyone, in a Pavlovian way, in the same slot. "Here comes the new record, ding, ding, ding," and your mouths drool. —CHRIS MORRIS

LETTERS

U2: THE END

I've never liked bands that used their music to deliver their personal agenda. U2 (Aug. '95) was one of these bands; however, I would have traded all my Frank Zappa recordings for the chance to sit with Bill Flanagan and watch U2, Eno, Flood, and everyone else create music for music's sake. I'm not going to rush out and buy the U2 catalog, but I'll already have read *U2 At The End Of The World* by the time this letter reaches New York.

Dave Farrell
Ephrata, PA

Whatever happened to a band jamming together, figuring out the songs themselves and doing it that way? What is this crap about everybody else leaving and Flood staying in the studio all night to make a recording sound like he wants? Why analyze everything right down to the bone? Give U2 a 4-track cassette recorder and see what they could do. What would it sound like if everything was left up to the band? Who knows? Give Adam a coke for me.

Jon Milavec

T-Bone Burnett should change his name to T-Bonehead Burnett. I've read some stupid quotes before, but his takes the cake (July '95). Bono is nothing but an egotistical, pretentious buffoon who fronts one of the most overrated bands in the history of rock 'n' roll. And to compare Bono and U2 to John Lennon and the Beatles is absolutely ludicrous. U2 is hugely successful, but their music will never stand the test of time. Twenty years from now a song like "All You Need Is Love" will still be cherished whereas a song like "I Will Follow" will be nothing but an embarrassing moment best forgotten.

Hill@polisci.sscnet.ucla.edu

THE READERS SPEAK

I don't know what's wrong with Jeremy Sale (Letters, Sept. '95) that he has to be told this rather than feeling and hearing it for himself, but I'll oblige. Charlie Watts is a god. Always has been, always will be. Your friend who disagrees obviously suffers from such a lack of coordination and sense of rhythm that he must poke himself in the eye every time he goes to pick his nose. Be more careful in choosing your friends, Jeremy. Now go get a copy of *Exile On Main Street*, put on the headphones, crank up the volume, and stop wasting time with foolish questions.

Susan Jelcich
Wood-Ridge, NJ

Jeremy Sale in the September letters needs a tie-breaker about Charlie Watts. I've been drumming nearly as long as Charlie, so here goes. Charlie's time is terrible. He slows down and speeds up and has for years. What Charlie has is rhythm. Charlie swings and makes the Stones swing. Ideally a drummer should have rhythm and great time. But it's better to swing and waver a bit than to be metronomic and not swing. Once in the early '70s a guy told me I sounded like Charlie. That's the best thing a drummer can hear.

Penguin Faxon
Tucson, AZ

VAN ZANDT & STEVE EARLE

Yeah, that Russian roulette story is believable (Aug. '95). But you see that big smile on Townes' face? Well, it's quite possible that the firing pin was filed down or some crazy thing like that. Thank you all for showing up for a great interview.

John E. Butwell
Naugatuck, CT

Bill Flanagan's Steve Earle interview revealed pure talent that comes up the hard way and, against all odds, won't quit. Steve Earle was packing clubs in Philadelphia where cowboys from South Jersey showed us how to line dance and everyone knew the words to his songs. He doesn't fit the formula that has become "country"—thank the lord—and we can't wait for him to hit Philly again.

Susan Schulman
Philadelphia, PA

A special thank you to *Musician* for their article on U2 in the studio (Aug. '95). It was much needed during their long and painful hiatus. I have been a die-hard U2 freak since 1983. I have always loved reading about U2 and learning anything I can about them. Your Issue No. 201 with U2 on the cover was a long time coming. Your focus on the technicalities of working in the studio and how songs are harder to put together than they make it look was excellent. I was able to get an excellent picture of Edge collaborating with Flood or Brian Eno about laying down tracks or overdubbing solos.

With a great deal of the music today seemingly angry or hostile, it is refreshing to see that U2 is not following the same pattern. Their music comes from hard work, long hours, and pure genius. This is something the real fans knew all along. Keep up the good work.

Alexander Munoz
Bryn Mawr, PA

ROCKIN' NICHE MARKETS

Really enjoyed the article on the old rockers ("Guitar Gods Get a Life," Sept. '95). Alvin Lee and Ten Years After were tremendously influential to me as a teen coming up in the '60s. As for Oasis and the term "lad," I'm sure they confused this with the word "lugnut."

Longboard Jim
Imperial Beach, CA

I found it refreshing that these old warhorses are continuing to make music that pleases them. And as for the reason stated by Michael Schenker: "Well, having fun is the big picture for me right now"—yeah Michael, me, too!

Bob Little
Eaton Rapids, MI

R A TAH

In Michael Cooper's "Drums on Tape" (Sept. '95), the three polar pattern diagrams were misidentified. Fig. 1 is the Shure SM57, Fig. 2 is the Sennheiser MD 441-U, and Fig. 3 is the Neumann KM150. Also, Cooper's name was traded with Julian Colbeck's in the table of contents.

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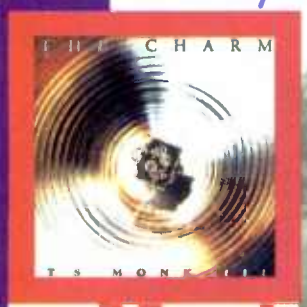

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The cooking starts early on *The Charm*. Making hard bop mean something in the '90s, the band's third recording for Blue Note smokes from beginning to end. **Don Sickler**–trumpet, **Bobby Porcelli**–alto sax and flute, **Willie Williams**–tenor sax, **Ronnie Mathews**–piano, **Scott Colley**–bass and **T.S. Monk**–drums and electricity.

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On his second disc for Blue Note **Fareed Haque** shows why he is one of the premier guitarists in music. Equally at home in jazz or classical music, Fareed brings a fresh perspective to the instrument whether playing acoustic or electric. Now a member of **Joe Zawinul**'s new band, Fareed is recognized as one of the leaders of the modern jazz guitar movement.

29270

Charlie Hunter Trio

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Introducing an incredibly creative triad of musicians. San Francisco guitarist **Charlie Hunter** and his band blur the borders between jazz and rock. He plays a mean eight-string guitar (covering both bass and guitar) while **Dave Ellis** handles saxophone and **Jay Lane** lays down a rock-solid beat on drums.

Javon Jackson

30244

Tenor saxophonist **Javon Jackson** takes a bold step into the future of jazz with *For One Who Knows*. The band is a who's who of creative young talent: **Jacky Terrasson**–piano, **Fareed Haque**–acoustic guitar, **Peter Washington**– bass, **Billy Drummond**–drums and **Cyro Baptiste**–percussion.

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How We Wrote That Hit Song

by Gary Baker and Frank Myers, composers of All-4-One's "I Swear"

BAKER: IT WAS JUST LIKE any other song, in the sense that you write it and you hope somebody will cut it. MYERS: Gary was actually working on another song, with another title. I don't remember what the title was, but in the bridge it said something like, "blah, blah, something, I swear."

Baker: I knew I had something, but it wasn't strong. So I told Frank one day that he should listen to what I had and kick it around a little bit.

Myers: Gary lives in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, which is about a three-hour drive from my house in Nashville. So on the way down to his place, I wrote the chorus, singing into a little hand-held recorder.

Baker: This was five or six years ago, so I don't remember if he had the whole thing down, but he had a lot of it. When he came in and played it for me, man, we went to town, and it fell right out.

Myers: I had the whole chorus written. The melody just came out. Obviously, when I'm writing something, I have the rhythmic feel in mind, and I'm aware of how the words flow, where they lie and where they rhyme. So I thought, " 'I swear' . . . by what? By the moon, and the stars, and the sky." That's how the first line came out. Then I knew I needed something to rhyme with "I swear," so I thought, "I'll be there."

Baker: That's the biggest part of the song, the way those two words are sung. What's cool is that it translates into every genre there is.

Myers: That's right. John Michael Montgomery made it a number one hit on the country charts for four weeks last year. Then All-4-One's version came out right after that.

Baker: The key is to find the coolest melodic hook you can. Of course, if you don't have a lyrical hook you don't have anything, and we had both with "I Swear." Once you've got that, well, there are only so many chords in the world, and they can only be put together in so many ways. I know there's a million other I-VIm-IIIm-IV-V songs out there, but this one happened to catch the right words and the right melody at the right time.

Myers: We wrote "I Swear" to flow in a way that my band at the time, the Shooters, could cut. We knocked it right out on two guitars, although it translated incredibly well to the keyboard on David Foster's production for All-4-One.

Baker: We're always just trying to write the best songs we can, although we don't write any negative tunes. I don't know why we don't do any "cryin' in the beer" stuff, but that's the way it is. I guess we're two happy guys.

Baker and Myers, who have also written hits for Alabama, Marie Osmond, Restless Heart, and Eddie Raven, will release their own debut album on October 1, 1995 on the MCG/Curb label.

RO

SCOTT SCHAEFER

EXPERT WITNESS

Building a Mix in the Clubs

by Brad Madix, Sound Engineer, Queensryche

The challenge of mixing live arises from finding creative and pragmatic ways to present a band's sound in various acoustic environments. Acoustic response is concurrently the greatest influence on sound, and the factor you can least easily affect. While arenas differ mostly in degrees of "boominess," clubs present a special challenge, coming in countless configurations. If you are the resident engineer of a club, you may have defeated some of the bass traps and flutter echoes. If you're blowing through town, though, and haven't had the pleasure of mixing at Joe's Bar 'n' Grill before, you must build a sound from scratch. You can bring racks of equalizers and reverbs, but—short of loading in twenty couches and nailing futons to the walls—you won't alter the acoustics of the room. Allow me to offer a few suggestions for handling these hairier venues.

1) Don't try to defeat the room. It always wins. You spare yourself great heartache adopting this frame of mind. Tailor the P.A. and mix to fit the environment, recognizing that no amount of knob twirling is going to remove standing waves and slap-back echoes. Take comfort knowing that the best treatment for a problematic acoustic space is to fill it with human bodies, which is ideally what happens when the doors open.

2) Manage your stage volume. This does not always mean "turn down." There are times when some stage volume is needed to support a weak P.A. I have stood in front of the stage listening to the balance, and told guitar players to turn their amps up! They've looked at me like I had two heads, but haven't been shy about doing it. Assuming the level of the loudest acoustic instrument (*i.e.* drums) is fixed, you can achieve equilibrium with the rest of the band right from the stage, evenly filling the club with leeway for enhancement.

3) Use a sound system's capacity wisely. I often allow minor bumps in frequency response to get by because I believe an overly equalized P.A. sacrifices [*cont'd on page 94*]

JAY BLAKESBERG

UGH MIX

RECENT SIGNINGS: BILLY MANN

Some improbable advice for musicians looking to get signed: find a stairwell with nice acoustics. It was on a flight of stairs in a midtown Manhattan apartment building that multi-platinum producer Ric Wake stumbled on singer/songwriter Billy Mann.

"When you don't have an effects module," relates the 25-year-old Mann, "a stairwell can come in handy. I used to look for buildings that had good stairwells where I wouldn't get caught." Which brought him to a friend's steps one day. "I'm playing a song and this real friendly guy comes in and he says, 'Do you mind if I listen?' I say, 'No. Are you in a band?' And he says, 'Yeah, kind of.'"

Wake, who has produced hits for Whitney Houston, Mariah Carey and Hall & Oates, picks up the story: "I was going to see another band, and I heard this guy playing in the stairway. So I went to check him out, and a few things struck me immediately. His voice was really soulful; he could really put it across. And his songwriting hit me right."

"Anyway," Mann continues, "the next thing you know, I'm sitting in the middle of this state-of-the-art studio and there are platinum records on every wall, everywhere. It's like a Frisbee factory."

Demos in hand, Wake shopped the Philly native around to a handful of major label heads, eventually landing in the office of A&M chief Al Cafaro. "I was terrified," says Mann. "I did one of those Bruce Springsteen auditions where you go into the president's office with your guitar. The room was so dead—I could find more reverb in a corkscrew than in Al Cafaro's office. You can't hide at that point."

Fortunately, Mann didn't have to. "It just clicked. Al wasn't the scary caricature of a record company CEO that you would imagine. He got it."

It certainly sounds that way, speaking to Cafaro. "Billy is a unique and remarkable talent," says the [*cont'd on next page*]

label president and CEO. "He's also a great guy." Cafaro signed Mann to A&M as the first artist on Ric Wake's new DV8 label; his first album will be released in early 1996.

Along the way, Mann has chalked up some experience as a songwriter. His songs have been recorded by Diana King and Chaka Khan, among others, and he's had other tunes put on hold by some impressive names. "If I could say anything to anybody trying to make music their business," says Mann, "I'd say write songs. You can have the voice and the act and you can have your vibe, but ultimately, you have to have those songs."

A little luck doesn't hurt, either—but don't rely on it. "I'd also say never underestimate the stranger in the audience," offers Mann, "The luck element is a crap shoot. But I think it also depends on how available you make yourself to the roulette wheel." —*Nathan Brackett*

ANNAMARIA DISANTO

OTHER RECENT SIGNINGS

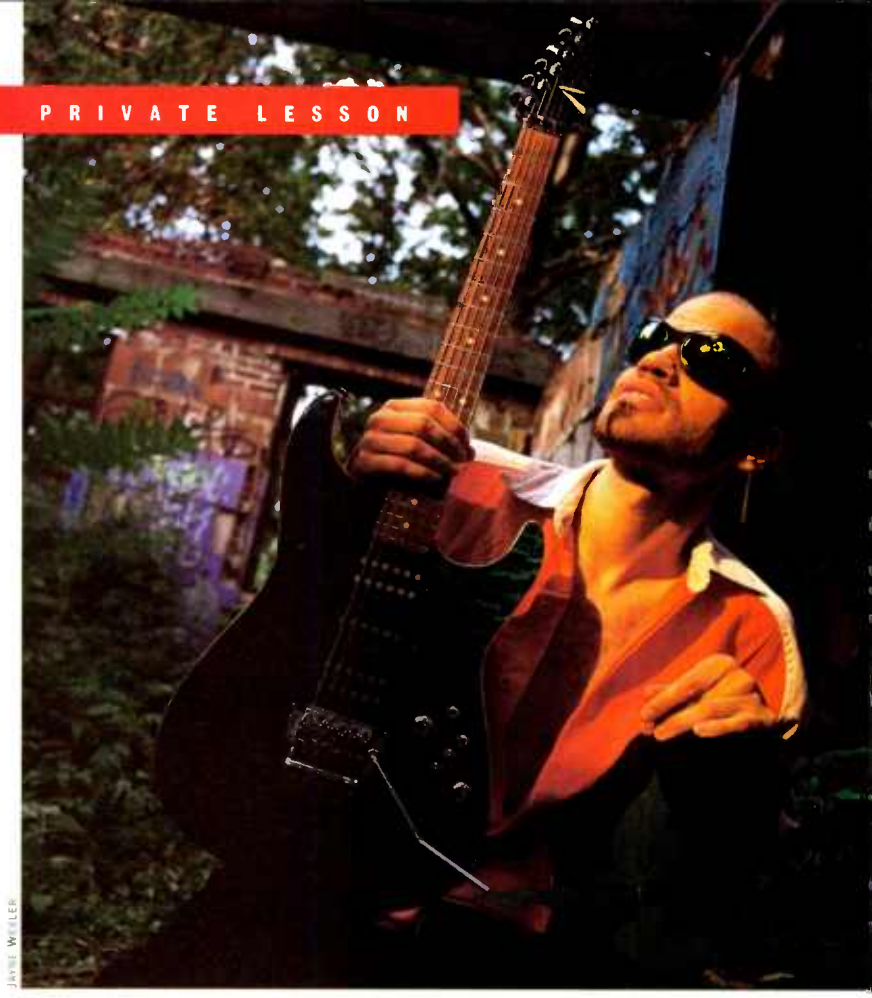
Girls Against Boys—DC–based indie rockers go major. (Geffen)

Plexi—"Dense, slightly psychedelic" L.A. trio taste the latte. (Sub Pop)

Self—Murfreesboro, Tennessee one-man show finds a home. (Zoo/Spongebath)

◀ **Matt Mahaffey of Self**

PRIVATE LESSON



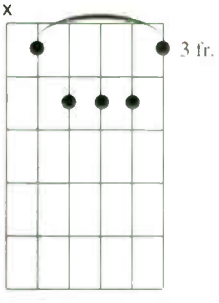
JAYNE WHEELER

DAVID FIUCZYNSKI: CHORDAL CLINIC

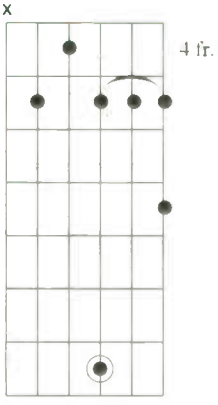
He may have written a book on the subject, but Allan Holdsworth is by no means the only guitarist searching for the uncommon chord. Just ask David Fiuczynski of New York's Screaming Headless Torsos. On their self-titled debut (Discovery), the Torsos filter their melange of hip-hop, jazz, reggae, and alternasludge through an advanced harmonic sensibility, much of it provided by Fiuczynski's chordal know-how. Fuze puts it simply: "I'm into grooves with extended chords."

Many of those extensions are fairly daunting; several sound right out of the school of composer George Russell, a longtime champion of the Lydian mode (a Lydian scale is a major scale with a raised 4th). "I'm working a lot with Lydian sharp 9, Lydian diminished and Lydian augmented modes, and trying to use them in chords," Fiuczynski says. "'Quest' [on *Lunar Crush*, Fuze's 1994 collaboration with keyboardist John Medeski] starts on a C Lydian #9, then goes to E Lydian #5. Later on, there are a few symmetrical chords like G13*b*9 and B*b*13*b*9. Harmonically, I'm just trying to fill in the gaps with rarer chords. For example, a min/maj7#11 chord isn't used that often, but it works with Lydian diminished and harmonic minor modes." Ex. 1 fits the key notes of a C min/maj7#11 (C, F#, B, D# and G) into a familiar structure: basically a 3rd-position C with the middle three fingers moved [*cont'd on page 94*]

Ex. 1



Ex. 2



Ex. 3

Black dots = left hand
Circled black dots = right hand

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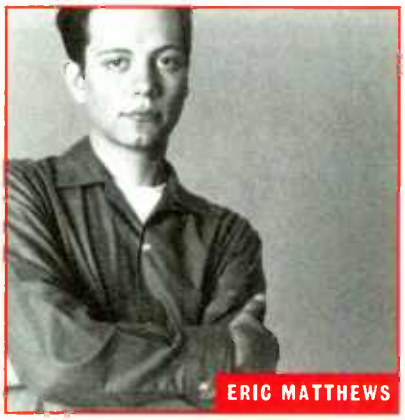
ERIC MATTHEWS

When British duo Cardinal released their one and only album in 1994, fans of finely honed, elegant pop experienced epiphany. Cardinal's orchestrated moodiness sounded like outtakes from *Sgt. Pepper*, or at least, Burt Bacharach meets the young Bee Gees.

Eric Matthews was the conservatory-trained, first-chair trumpet half of Cardinal. His *It's Heavy In Here* extends the realm of detailed, gorgeous pop, which would surely please one of Eric's heroes, George Martin.


ERIC MATTHEWS

"Martin was an early role model," says Matthews. "I hope to walk in his footsteps as far as arrangements and compositional structures. His *Revolver* period was particularly expressive and sophisticated."

Surrounding himself with players capable of realizing his ambitious designs (Jason Faulkner of the Grays, Steven Hanford of Cardinal), Matthews' music recalls Andy Partridge and Prokofiev ("Angels for Crime"), Brian Wilson and Bach ("Fried Out Broken Girl"). He happily admits to achieving his lofty goals.

"I wanted to make a very clear, powerful, highly musical statement, unlike any other first record if possible. There's certainly some conjuring people will do, but I see these songs as highly original compositions. It's a good first body of work." —*Ken Micallef*

VANESSA DAOU

Vanessa Daou's debut solo album *Zipless* successfully melds the sumptuous, languorously seductive dance grooves of Daou and her husband, producer Peter Daou, with the erotic poetry of Erica Jong, who just happens to be Peter Daou's aunt.

"Everything Erica writes is very erotically charged," says Daou, herself a poet. "Even when she's writing a poem about an onion, it's very sensual. Being a very sexual person myself, I've always been interested in that energy in music."

Daou's hushed, uninflected vocals on tracks like "The Long Tunnel of Wanting


VANESSA DAOU

You" and "Near The Black Forest" conjure up a world where love and lust are inextricably linked: "I think sex is about being completely uninhibited and relaxed with yourself. The ultimate sex creates a certain kind of intimacy that's very genuine and real. It should be an almost unconscious process."—*Marc Weingarten*

BEN FOLDS FIVE

Ben Folds Five is a pure pop, piano-based trio with no guitars. On their eponymous debut, Folds mercilessly bashes his Baldwin baby grand and leads his band (bass player Robert Sledge and drummer Darren Jessee) through a dozen exuberant, hook-laden songs. In an indie-world of self-conscious, low-fi losers, Ben Folds Five's optimism is almost refreshing, although the band's relentlessly sweet harmonies and impeccable craftsmanship sometimes recall one of those "Be all that you can be, in the army" ads.

Folds formed the band over a year ago when he returned to his hometown of Chapel Hill, N.C., after stints as a session drummer in Nashville and a role in an off-Broadway version of *The Buddy Holly Story* in New York. "I kind of got burned out on the professionalism," he says. "I wanted to go home and get a band together with some friends, put out a record and see what happened."

One listen and it's apparent Ben Folds Five have spent their time wisely. On the record, they bring to mind any number of bands with up-front piano and vocals, and Folds himself cops to a character-driven songwriting style similar to Randy Newman's. But the combo's main influence is a surprise.

"I think Jimi Hendrix is the big inspiration for this band," says Folds. "Having a rhythm section that rocks but is loose. We all play a little like Mitch Mitchell. If we had any policy when we started, it's that we wanted to rock as hard as some guitar bands without guitars. It's no guitar, but that doesn't mean we play 'wussie music.' It requires some innovation, a lot more than someone who hasn't done it would know. We have to really stretch to make it work."—*Pat Fitzgerald*

BEN FOLDS FIVE

This is Al of Al's Music in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

A good friend of Al's named Scott Stroot walked in one day and spotted a Taylor on the wall. He asked Al if he could play it.

Al said no.

Scott was shocked. Al was usually so helpful and easy-going.

Then Al explained that this Taylor was outside Scott's price range. And he knew that if Scott played it, he would never be satisfied with any other guitar.

Well, Scott pleaded, then insisted.
And, as Al was taking it down, Al said,
"Okay, but don't say I didn't warn you."

You know how the story ends. Scott had to
have it. And he found a way to pay for it.

When we told Scott and Al we were going to
tell their story to you readers, Scott was
excited. Al just said, "Be sure to warn 'em."

arizona dreams

The parallel world of the meat puppets

flashback, 1994: It's mid-morning in Vancouver, and the sun shines brightly over the crisp, clear October sky. Not that you'd notice, if you were Curt Kirkwood. In a darkened room at the Georgian Court Hotel, the guitarist sits, dourly smoking pot. "We're back in that same old Meat Puppets land," he says. "Strange fuckin' *nowhere*. Every time we reach a new plateau, we seem to find the ether in it."

The plateau of which Kirkwood speaks isn't just the product of an imagination sunbaked by the Arizona desert. Things have never been better: His quietly remarkable band is in its fifteenth year together, a year marked by unprecedented success. First came a late 1993 guest appearance on Nirvana's much-aired *Unplugged* set, then the full-fledged success of *Too High To Die*, which bore an actual radio hit ("Backwater") and eventually, unexpectedly, went gold. In June, as the album reached its chart peak, the band hit the road second-billed to the Stone Temple Pilots, playing venues holding audiences of 20,000 and more.

Still, sitting directly across the street from the Georgian Court Hotel is the very large Pacific Coliseum—an arena the Meat Puppets had played with the Stone Temple Pilots a few months earlier. They won't be there tonight. Their upcoming headining show had been scheduled at the Commodore, a large local theater, but slow ticket sales have instead bumped them to the Town Pump, the same small bar they'd been playing in the days before *Too High To Die*. It's enough to drive a guy to ether.

"I'm supposed to go over and play my hit song on the radio station here," Kirkwood says morosely, "and the thought of it makes me want to barf. I could do it real easily, but it ain't gonna help. Tonight's a bomb."

The guitarist holds a match over the homemade pipe he's made of an empty soda can, then inhales. "I don't really care that much, as long as I don't have to humiliate myself by going out and trying to scrape together heads to come to the damn thing. It's like standing out in front of the place going, 'Come see the naked ladies!'"

MUCH CAN happen in a year's time, and the Curt Kirkwood I see strolling up to the entrance of Chaya Venice is noticeably lighter in step than the one bonging away in Vancouver several months before. Part of that lightness may stem from where he's just been: at a meeting with a longtime friend who happens to be the Hollywood dealmaker who just set up actor Jim Carrey's spectacular $20 million back-to-back film deal. The same agent, it happens, who's now repping Michael Jackson's film interests as well. "He's got the gnarliest brain-to-

By Dave DiMartino **Photography by F. Scott Schafe**

CHRIS KIRKWOOD: "I'm an epileptic and compulsive behavior is typical of epilepsy. After the seizures, my drawing became more complicated."

mouth coordination," raves Kirkwood about his pal. "He's a genius, he's an artist, and he thinks he's just a paper pusher. Something comes across his table, and if the spirit moves him, he can make it happen."

Whatever plateau Kirkwood thought the Meat Puppets had reached last year, it's been elevated. "We live in a newer place than we did for a dozen years," he says, sipping from a bowl of garlic soup. He's referring to *No Joke!*, the Meat Puppets' new album, but he's also talking about the year that preceded its making.

Most remarkable to Kirkwood was the success of "Backwater." "There's just blind faith behind a hit song," he says. "You get blind faith from people you walk by on the street—all of a sudden it's something 'everybody knows.'" Concurrently, the decision by Geffen Records to release Nirvana's *Unplugged* session suddenly gave songwriter Kirkwood a three-song presence ("Lake of Fire," "Oh Me," and "Plateau") on one of the hottest albums of the '90s. Unlike some of the Meat Puppets efforts, it won't be going out of print any time soon.

Is the money starting to come in?

Kirkwood looks up. "In the last year I had four really big songs," he says, still amazed by the fact. "I had a hit song, which paid me off largely through BMI, and then I had three songs on the Nirvana record, which I own the publishing on, lock, stock and barrel. So, go figure."

SO WHAT'S he feeling from his label these days?

"Hero worship," says Kirkwood. "Totally. It's from beyond. And it's well deserved, because this record rules, in my book. Because it's everything I wanted out of it and then some, by a long shot."

Meat Puppets melodies—as Kurt Cobain clearly knew—are one of the band's greatest strengths, and *No Joke!* contains many of Kirkwood's finest songs. Consider the extended "Nothing," which amid shrieking guitar harmonics and interlocking riffs boasts such cheery lyrics as "You see it, I'm nothing, I'm nothing"; or the restrained, distinctly odd "Head"—featuring dubbed cellos (courtesy of John Hagen from the Lyle Lovett band), piano (from Joey Huffman, lately with Soul Asylum), and the divinely romantic lines, "As the head falls off the table/Crashes to the floor and shatters/Dust and glass are blowing everywhere/Down there." Who else is writing stuff like this?

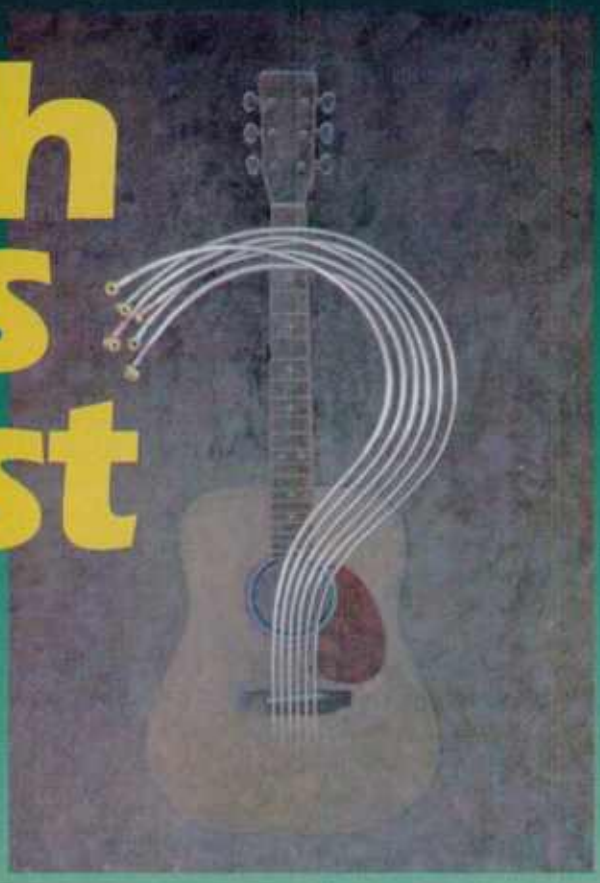
"I just did it the same way as always," Kirkwood grins from across the table, "but this time everybody was very considerate about getting the right stuff together."

Further making the past year an emotional rollercoaster for Kirkwood was his mother's battle with cancer. She's now fully recovered, but it was rough going for a while, says the guitarist. "Through the whole recording session my mom was fighting it," Kirkwood says. "They told me she was going to die, and they didn't even tell her, because it was that bad. We've had quite a year. She lost a kidney to it—which oddly enough is the same kidney that I lost when I was four years old. But for some reason the gods were smiling on me—and this record is as strong as fuck, and they know it."

ANYWAY YOU slice it, life as a Meat Puppet has been full of unexpected ripples since the Kirkwood brothers and drummer/punk fan Derrick Bostrom joined forces in Phoenix back in 1980. As one of the true heavyweights of the early SST Records roster—alongside Black Flag, the Minutemen, and Hüsker Dü—the trio helped formulate the concept of American indie rock while playing crappy bars, traveling cross-country by van, and recording full albums in mere hours. Many of them sounded that way, but at least two—1984's *Meat Puppets II* and 1985's *Up on the Sun*—were no less remarkable for it. The Meat Puppets were offering something new, an acid-etched version of countryish rock filtered through ZZ Top, the Grateful Dead, and the lyrical vision of Don Van Vliet. Yet it wasn't until 1991 that they made their major-label debut on Polygram/London, with the ironically-titled *Forbidden Places*. Long gone was Spot, producer of *Meat Puppets II*

Which comes first

The guitar or the guitar strings?



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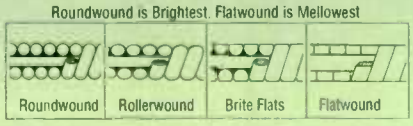
Test your guitar string knowledge by answering the following questions:

Q ***How does string material affect tone?***
The cover wire material affects tone by changing the brightness of the string. Different materials can be ranked by the brightness of the tone they produce. Common cover wire materials used in string construction include stainless steel, nickel plated steel, pure nickel, brass and bronze. The core wires for all strings and all plain steel strings (both acoustic and electric) are made from tin plated Swedish steel.

Q ***How does cover wire shape affect tone?***
Cover wire shape affects the brightness of the string tone. The four common cover wire shapes are shown in the diagram.

HOW WINDING SHAPE AFFECTS TONE
Roundwound is Brightest. Flatwound is Mellowest



BRIGHTEST----------INTERMEDIATE----------MELLOWEST

Q ***How does string "geometry" affect tone, tone life, volume and flexibility?***
String "geometry" generally refers to the ratio of the core wire diameter to the cover wire diameter. These two parameters can be varied to come up with the same final string gauge.

Small Ratio Large Ratio

With all else remaining constant, a small core/cover ratio generally results in a string with greater flexibility and brighter tone. A larger core/cover ratio generally results in a string with greater volume, sustain, tone life and durability.

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The String Specialists

PUPPET STRINGS

In the course of eight albums and 30 billion live gigs, CURT KIRKWOOD has used one guitar pick—a quarter—and, predictably, countless guitars. These days he most often plays an '83 Les Paul reissue and a brand new Gibson Hummingbird acoustic, for which he foregoes the coinage and fingerpicks. Also onstage with him occasionally is a new 1960 Gibson reissue. For effects, he feeds his guitar through a CryBaby wah-wah, Chandler tube overdrive and Morley chorus/echo, then splits the signal to both a 50-watt Soldano and 100-watt Marshall amplifier. Both are connected to a Scholz Rockman; a Yamaha REX50 digital effects device then also feeds the Marshall. "It has some real crazy noise," says Kirkwood of the discontinued Yamaha unit. "That's where I get my flange and phase shifter stuff."

Touring guitarist TROY MEISS now uses both a '76 black deluxe Les Paul Pro and a '60s reissue Les Paul Custom, either of which is run straight through a Marshall JCM 900 half-stack 4x12 cabinet. Other vital playing components, says he, are "beer bottles, drumsticks and my rectal hairs."

Bassist CHRIS KIRKWOOD primarily uses an '86 Japanese P-Bass with EMG pickups in both the P-Bass and Jazz Bass position. "It was all done for me at Precision Guitar Specialists in Tempe by Rich Beck, our guitar tech, who's always done our stuff," says Chris. "It's got a Badass bridge on it, with a brass nut." He uses Ken Smith strings ("The manly gauge, as Billy Sheehan once said") and plays through a Gallien-Krueger 800RV into 8 EV10s. On hand occasionally are a couple of Steinberger basses. "I used to have a Music Man, that I smashed like a retard at the Peppermint Lounge," he adds sadly.

Drummer DERRICK BOSTROM now plays a Yamaha Rocktour Custom set, with an 8" maple snare, a 12", 14", 18" tom array and a 22" wide, 18" deep kickdrum. He plays Sabian cymbals. "Right now I'm using 14" hi-hat cymbals," says he, "a 22" ride cymbal, which I play to the left of the hi-hat, and then a 17" splash, a 17" or 18" china cymbal and another 18" splash." Bostrom adds that he plays the hi-hat with his left hand rather than right—and though not left-handed, he plays with a matched grip style. He also uses Promark drumsticks. "It's not the same set I was quoted as using during our last *Musician* article," he helpfully adds, "which came out in '88 or '87."

and *Up on the Sun*; instead, the Pups were making records with Dwight Yoakam's producer Pete Anderson. It wasn't as comfortable a pairing as it might've been, but it was by no means a sellout.

What exactly is a sellout? Curt Kirkwood is sharp enough to ponder whether the term itself now has any true meaning. "I just think it's a matter of people perceiving you a certain way because of the legacy," Kirkwood observes philosophically. "Suddenly we are able to sell out, rather than just come into it and be accepted on all those levels. This is another of those weird gray areas for us. A lot of the people at alternative stations came up through college radio and have known us for a long time. And when they saw us get played at AOR, they just kind of bailed—on the level of, 'Well, they're a big band now.'

"When I see these other new bands come in, and they get played on both AOR and alternative—since they have no legacy, there is no way they can possibly sell out. And so they're accepted on both levels; both stations discovered them. Whereas alternative really discovered us. And I'm just sitting in my own isolated position with one hit song that I'm starting to look at as being my 'In the Summertime' by Mungo Jerry. But I have no idea about this stuff. I'm still just trying to keep my band afloat."

FLASHBACK, SEATTLE 1994: Chris Kirkwood is 34, intelligent, hyperactive, funny. When I tell him the vocal harmonies of sibling performers—the Everlys, the Roches—are, to me, almost unnaturally sublime, he seems to agree. "It would be a lot easier for me to sing if I wasn't forced to smoke so much pot," he declares. "By the government."

Chris seems that curious oddity envisioned by Timothy Leary years ago: A fully functioning, socially adept acidhead. His conversation mirrors his runaway train of thought: Why bother with points B, C, and D when it's just as easy to go from A to E? Talking a mile a minute, the bassist drops song quotes into the dialogue whenever vaguely appropriate: an a cappella rendition of Todd Rundgren's "Elpee's Worth of Toons" pops up during our

discussion of what he calls "the business side" of being a Meat Puppet. Likewise surrealistic are the many bizarre sketches he regularly produces.

"I draw compulsively," Kirkwood explains. "I'm an epileptic and compulsive behavior is typical of epilepsy. I started having seizures about four years ago. It came out of one of those friendly knocks Curt gave me on the noggin or something. After I started having seizures, the drawings got a lot more complicated. I had the ability to make them a lot more complicated." He leans back in his Travelodge chair and considers.

"I won't pound him," he says about fights with his brother. "He's never had a kidney, he had his kidney taken out. I grew up being told, 'Never hit your brother, you'd kill him.' Plus, I don't want to hit him. The whole reason the band has been together this long comes from, like, the dodo wisdom of why not get along? It's not that hard."

An especially memorable milestone in the band's career?

"Easy," says Chris Kirkwood. "Derrick's first tooth."

AS IT happens, it's the day after Jerry Garcia died, as I sit talking to the man whose band has more than once been called, however appropriately, the Grateful Dead of punk. Our dinner is winding down, and Curt Kirkwood notes Garcia's loss with surprising passion.

"Jerry's my biggest hero," he says. "It was a totally indescribable loss to me. Him, John Lennon, and George Jones. But Jerry is the guy. I wouldn't be in my own band if it hadn't been for the Grateful Dead."

What made Garcia so special to him?

"He was a voice I could really relate to," says Kirkwood. "And I found a dialect that I could understand. I mean, I'm not way into a lot of guitar players. I loved James Burton, and I loved Grady Martin, who played with Marty Robbins—there probably wouldn't be a Jerry Garcia if there hadn't been a Grady Martin. But it's really a lineage. There's a lot of supposed things like that—from Phish to Blues Traveler, we'll name names here—but there is no other guy, nobody even comes close. Nobody picked up on that dialect."

I point out to Kirkwood that when we'd last spoke he barely mentioned liking other guitar players. He was way more into songs.

"It's the truth for me," he repeats. "I love so many different kinds of music. I still love Michael Jackson, I listen to rap, I listen to opera, I listen to anything.

"And I listen to the Grateful Dead—and I won't let anybody sit there and from their naive standpoint tell me that they don't like the Grateful Dead, because they don't know. If people tell me, 'Oh, I hate the Grateful Dead,' I'll go out of my way to say, 'You just didn't know, you didn't see 'em live, you didn't see 'em on a good night.'

"I'm just dying to hear some right now," says Curt Kirkwood. "I wanted to hear 'The Wheel.' I don't come out of the closet hard very often; I'm pretty nonchalant by and large. But hell, the fucker died."

The conversation lightens up. Garcia had Rick Griffin; Curt Kirkwood's own daughter designed the cover to *No Joke!* "She just drew this little guy and wrote *No Joke!* on it," he tells me. "I have no idea. We got a picture of a guy with worms coming out of his eyes and nose, and holes in his face. . ."

He looks down at my plate—the remains of pasta with squid cooked in ink sauce—looks at my face, and then decides to sum up the interview.

"Hey Dave," he says. "You've got ink on your lips."

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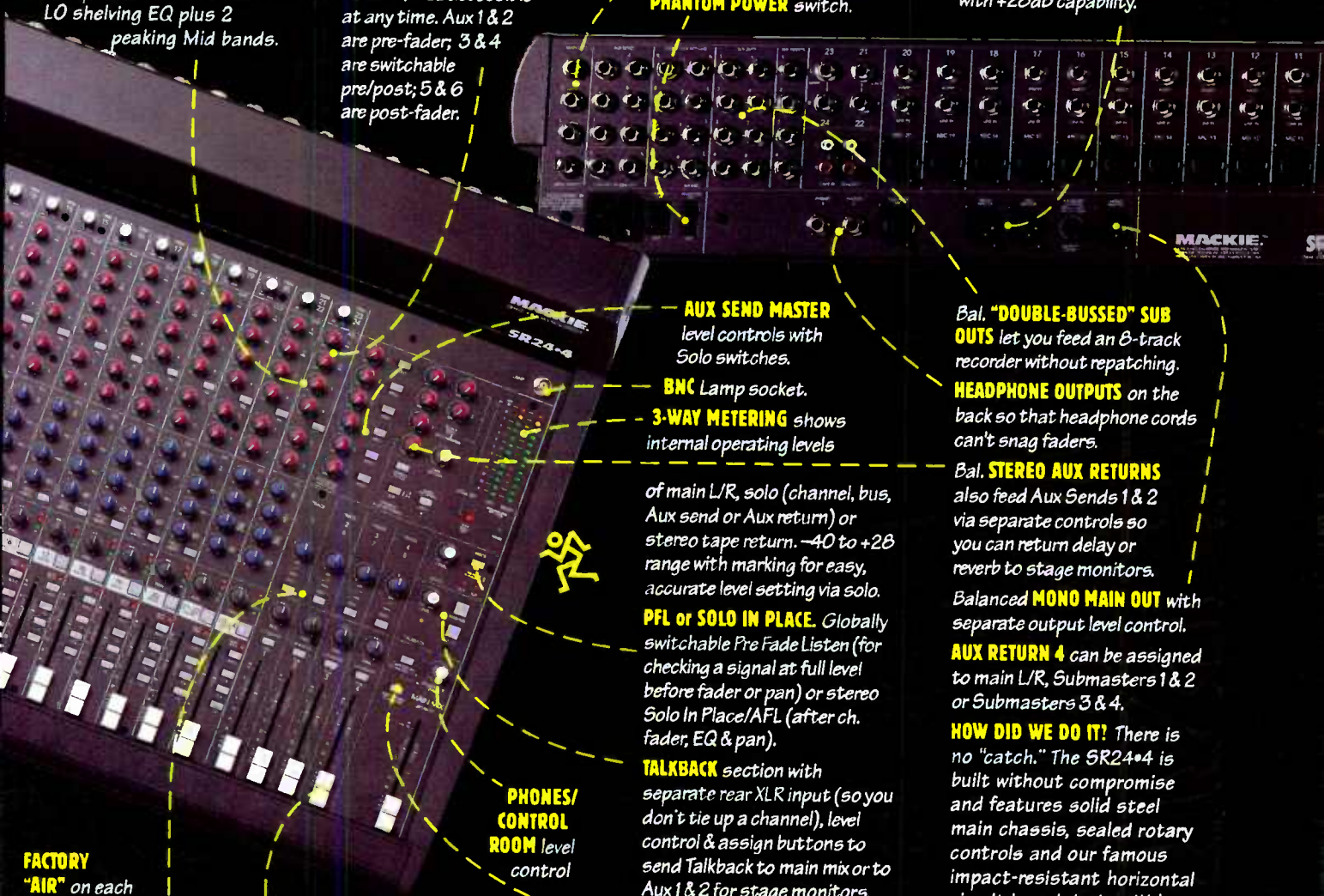

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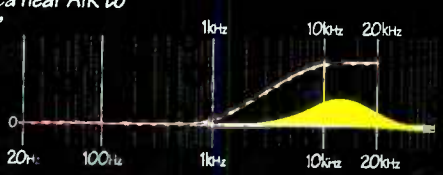

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The Outside story

DAVID BOWIE AND BRIAN ENO EXPLAIN IT ALL FOR YOU

HANDLETTERING BY BERNARD MAISNER

BY MARK ROWLAND PHOTOGRAPHS BY JULIAN BROAD

SO, WHAT'S THE MOST maddening misconception of who you really are?

"Well, that people might think I'm stuffy," says David Bowie. "That really irritates me! I'm the most childlike person I know. I hate people thinking that I'm so punk-faced and cold," he says, abashed, sounding slightly hurt at the thought. "That really offends my vanity."

"I guess that probably comes closest for me as well," Brian Eno suggests. "People thinking, 'He's passionless . . .'"

"The prof!" Bowie cracks.

"Yes, because in rock music, if you haven't had a serious drug problem in the last 30 years, you're suspicious, you know." A half-smile begins to take shape, betraying Eno's amusement at the problem. "Or if you haven't read a book."

Bowie and Eno are sitting in a hotel in London's West End on the hottest day of the summer. The occasion is the forthcoming release of Bowie's new album *Outside*, the first of three planned collaborations with Eno, and their first since the now-famous *Low-Heroes-Lodger* trilogy of the late '70s quietly opened the door to a new set of possibilities of what pop music could become. The rippling effect from those albums can still be felt well into the '90s; listening to *Outside*—ostensibly a black-humored mystery tale about the investigation of a ritual-art mur-

der, but more seriously concerned, as Bowie says, with "surfing the textural chaos of the '90s"—one suspects a similar kind of impact, regardless of its commercial prospects.

But that's been their way all along, hasn't it? Most pop figures plow one or two creative furrows early in their career and then settle into what becomes a comfortable rut. Bowie and Eno tend to roam the cultural landscape like a couple of Johnny Appleseeds, ever on the lookout for virgin fields to sow ideas, moving along while others come in for the harvest. Twenty years after Ziggy Stardust deconstructed pop star theatricality, his theme became the centerpiece of U2's *Zooropa* tour; 20 years after Eno was told that his ideas about ambient music would never catch on, they've infiltrated entire genres from jazz to rave.

And even as they're being debriefed about *Outside*, an ambitious concept album that combines pop melodicism with a thicket of sonic and lyric subtexts, Bowie is plotting the theatrics of a new tour with Nine Inch Nails and his characterization as Andy Warhol in an upcoming movie about artist Jean-Michel Basquiat. Meanwhile, Eno is a week removed from finishing production on U2's new album and wrapping up his own LP with bassist Jah Wobble. He's also deeply involved with Warchild, an international organization devoted to helping the war-pummeled children of Bosnia.

BOWIE: PEOPLE PRESUME THAT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN SCIENCE FICTION. IT'S NEVER APPEALED TO ME.

For all their other forays, both artists properly regard their work together as something special. "We have as many opposite sides as similarities," says Bowie. "Where Brian will be happy to work with a minimal set of information, I always lean toward layering and fat, dense pieces. Brian borrows from pop culture and elevates up—I take from high art and demean it down."

"The way David describes our way of working," Eno chimes in, "is 'I'm 6B and you're 6H.' I don't know if you have these classifications for pencils in the States; 6H is an engineering pencil, it's very hard and does sharp lines. 6B is the closest thing to charcoal, it's very messy and fills in a lot of space quickly. So that's part of the relationship; we almost work alternately. I'll set something up and then he comes in and responds to it immediately. It's a fantastic thing to watch."

What they do share, as Bowie observes, is a resolve "to not duplicate what we see as the mainstream of pop." Like the *Low* albums, *Outside* is neither rock nor *not* rock; similarly, it's not a typical Bowie or Eno project—whatever that is—but a fusion of two powerful sensibilities which somehow engenders an identity and a life of its own.

Listening to Bowie and Eno talk together, you get some sense of how that might occur. Bowie, with his trademark exuberance, and Eno, with quieter but equally alert composure, follow and build upon each other's thoughts in a playful, relentless search for the original insight, the fresh angle, the droll wisecrack; worlds of art, politics, law and philosophy are traversed without the sense of crossing foreign borders. They are funny, warm, passionate conversationalists. Their engagement enlivens a room. There's nothing stuffy about them.

MUSICIAN: *Many fans will compare* Outside *with the* Low *trilogy. How would you compare those partnerships?*

BOWIE: I don't think the actual working method is that dissimilar—it's sort of an unpartnership. I think that Brian defined the way we would work together back in the '70s. He always imbued a very serious situation with a sense of fun and play, which is important in all the art forms. I know very few other people who work in this fashion. Some are starting to—U2 obviously. Trent Reznor from Nine Inch Nails I believe possibly works in a similar manner. But there aren't that many people working in this way.

MUSICIAN: *Which is what, exactly?*

BOWIE: Oh, ask Brian! [*laughter*]

ENO: Well, I think the way of working is to start by describing the universe that this thing falls into. The normal way of working on songs is from the inside: People say, I've got a B*b* followed by a C and a D and we'll have kind of a gap here and the thing builds up like that. I think what we've been doing—notalways, some of the songs did come about that way—is to say, which world is this that we're making? We start with some sense of that, and then the music grows quite easily within. But we don't really work *together* exactly. I do something, he does something, then I do something, and he does something.

BOWIE: We are all the architects. Neither of us is loyal to any particular genre of music. It's very easy for me, and I think the same applies to Brian, to float from a neo-classical piece to something which is almost punk. And everything in between seems accessible. I find no problem in being able to write any kind of music, because I don't see what the problem *is*.

The way we work is a bit like how Houston looks. You get this area of land and you say, we'll build all kinds of different houses in it, and the end result is this fascinating city of Houston, where everything is different. There's no singular thread. Style is something I think we stay away from. And what we *won't* do is very important.

ENO: A big "won't" in this case was, we don't want to make another record of a bunch of songs. That just is not an interesting thing to do at the moment. There's got to be a bigger landscape in play than that.

BOWIE: Writing a song and putting lyrics to it in that way is a lazy option, often. I don't see the point of doing anything if you're not driven in some way. It's a lot more adventurous and it stretches the intellect a bit to approach it from the outside as opposed to approaching it from the inside.

ENO: I was driven by an extremely negative feeling about what was going on in music generally: putting on one CD after another and

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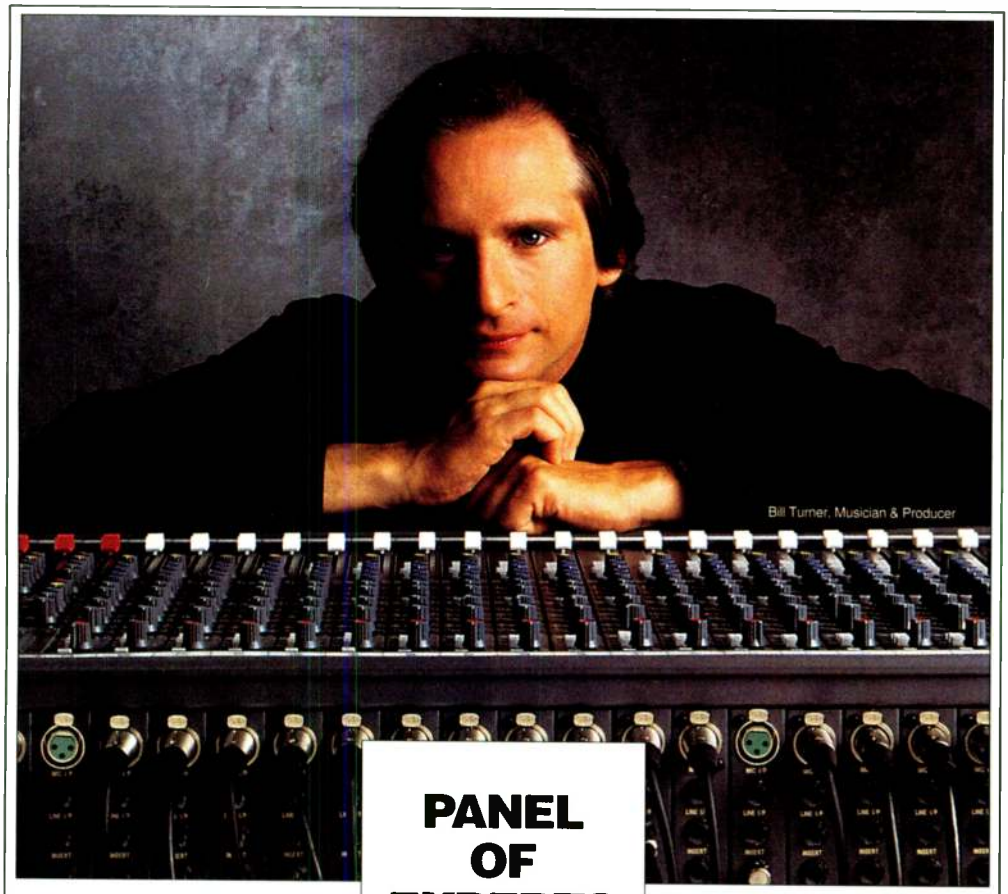

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hearing a succession of unrelated bits and pieces. It is, as David says, so easy to write songs now, you know, with sequencers and various programs—any idiot can put together an acceptable set of chords and a decent drum beat, 'cause you can buy them off the shelf. I think, what's the point of doing something that's so easy? It's only exciting to try to do something that takes you somewhere else.

So for me there was quite a lot of revulsion [*laughs*]—I just did not want to do that. I think David felt the same way, so quite early on we had developed the idea that, whatever this was going to be, it had to at least hint at a bigger world than that. I used this expression, I remember, in one of our early letters: The music had to sound like it couldn't fit on a CD.

Do you see what I mean? The CD is no longer the medium that tries to capture something, it's the medium that defines something. Now just before we had started talking about this, I had been looking at paintings a lot. And I was so thrilled by the range of things that painters could do. You know, you'd see a Frank Stella piece as big as this room, and then you'd see a little piece by somebody else just that big and just in inks. And you'd think, Christ, painters have really got such a great life! They can do anything.

Now imagine if you said to painters, "The only medium through which people will see your work is 8"x 11"color prints in art magazines." You know exactly what would happen. Frank Stella wouldn't bother to make those paintings this big, and in fact he wouldn't even make them. I felt that this is what had really happened to music, it had sort of funneled down to being not "music," but "stuff that could fit onto CDs."

BOWIE: Brian, you once said something very interesting about how a badly written song will stand out.

ENO: On a vinyl album. Because it's a significant part of a 20-minute listening experience. Remember with vinyl you were basically listening to 20 or 25 minutes, and then if you wanted to listen to the other side, that was a different idea, you know? So you had people composing in terms of 20 or 25 minutes, and to have a five-minute bad song, it makes a big impression. But it doesn't on a 60-minute "here's everything we did" CD.

MUSICIAN: *Well, you guys filled the CD on this one.*

BOWIE: We stretched to 75. But it was edited down—you're not going to believe this—from something like 22 hours of material. Not finished, necessarily. But something like 22 hours that we accomplished during the three weeks that Brian and I and the musicians worked. It was, I think, one of the most incredible experiences of my life in the studio.

ENO: Mine too.

MUSICIAN: *So how did that kind of musical combustion occur?*

BOWIE: Collage material from Brixton Market had an awful lot to do with it. Brian said, I don't like the way studios look, so I think I'll change what it looks like. He brought over bales of Caribbean, highly colored materials, and we spent the first day decorating, which put everybody in an interesting frame of mind.

MUSICIAN: *In a previous* Musician *interview, Brian talked about the effect of hearing music in different environments. So here you made a conscious attempt to change the music-making environment.*

ENO: That was the main part of the beginning of the project—to try to make a situation where we wouldn't feel like [*in a small, beaten voice*]: "We're people standing in a studio making a record." Get away from being in a room with tons of wires all over the floor. It's so grotty! The other thing about setting up *this* studio was that at one end of it David set up his painting studio. And it was not a very big room. The general feeling was a kind of arts lab, rather than [*beaten voice again*] "Here we are to do some songs."

MUSICIAN: *How did you decide to work together again?*

BOWIE: Brian and his wife were at my wedding in '92. I'd written music which was to become *Black Tie/White Noise*—it was mainly instrumental at that particular time, and I played some of it at the wedding itself and some at the party afterwards. Brian identified some of the textural things I was doing as an area that he was really interested in, and it occurred to us that we both wanted something that we weren't finding in music. The party turned into a bit of a farce because I kept stopping the DJ: "No, play this, I want Brian to hear this!" While people were in mid-dance, you know. So I think it was at that point that we knew we wanted to do the same kind of thing with popular music. Bring back a new sense of texture to it all.

One thing we were talking about when we first got together again was that the '80s had been particularly stale for both of us. I really thrive on a sense of competition, and I felt that so much was incredibly vacuous and awful in the '80s. A lot of my drive went because there was nobody to pit myself against. I really am very competitive; I love the friction of saying, fuck, I can top that, or, boy, he's taken it out so far—where can I go? I love the running. And if you're running and there's nobody running with you . . .

ENO: You're using the word competitive, which I think I agree with—I want to be part of an interesting conversation. What excites me is when I hear someone doing something and I think, "That's a bloody good idea but they could have done it better if they did this and this . . ." And in thinking about it you suddenly realize that you've got something new! It isn't what *they* did, it's something new. For that to be the case, you have to find the interesting scene.

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THE SIDEMEN

Reeves Gabrels and Carlos Alomar on Bowie, Eno and Outside

ADD TOGETHER THE TIME Reeves Gabrels and Carlos Alomar have spent as guitarists with David Bowie, and you'll come up with 22 years. Alomar started strumming for the Main Man in 1974, and stuck with him through Philadelphia and Berlin, serious moonlight and glass spiders. When Bowie formed Tin Machine in 1989, Gabrels took over as his chief plectrist; they've been a team ever since. Though Gabrels and Alomar have known each other for years, they'd never played together before Outside. The marriage of Reeves's daredevil virtuosity and Carlos's rock-solid rhythm turned out a shrewd match, and both have signed on for Bowie's fall tour with Nine Inch Nails. We caught up with the two axemasters during a break in preliminary tour rehearsals at New York's Complete Music Services, and got an insightful and often amusing perspective on working with Mr. Jones.


CARLOS IN SPIKIER DAYS.

MUSICIAN: Was the process of recording Outside different from work you'd done previously with Bowie?

GABRELS: For me, it was very different, because with Tin Machine I was the guy that everything started and ended with, from writing all the way through to mastering. I'd never had to give anything up before.

ALOMAR: What Reeves looks at as strange is for me the norm. One thing that was different: I got a cassette of the mixes two weeks before rehearsals. I have never received a cassette from doing a session with David in 22 years. I buy the record like everybody else. But with the bootlegs this man's had to deal with, it's understandable.

MUSICIAN: But if you're going on tour, it's helpful to know how the songs sound.

ALOMAR: Why? That's like saying, "Before I do your session, send me a cassette of the songs." You're not going to get either from David.

GABRELS: It is nice to know the part you're choosing not to play. [laughter]

MUSICIAN: Were there parts that didn't make the final cut?

GABRELS: Before Carlos came in, I spent two days in Switzerland working on serious orchestrated guitar stuff for "I'm Deranged," and . . .

ALOMAR: Where is it? [laughs] The same thing happened to me. Remember the first thing that we played, the nice three-part harmony? David said, "That's it," and we looked at each other, satisfied. But like any album, you do it, then you get it back, and what you played and what the album is are different animals. That's pretty usual.

MUSICIAN: Reeves, your solo on "Small Plot of Land" sounds like a cross between Adrian Belew on "Red Sails" and Robert Fripp on "Teenage Wildlife." Was that a conscious reference to earlier Bowie?

GABRELS: Emulation is one thing, imitation is another. I'm trying to pick up the spirit in which those people played, but not the exact notes. Having Carlos here makes it easier to get it right. When he came in, I knew exactly where my territory began, right from the beginning. We never had to discuss it, because I grew up listening to what he'd done with David.

ALOMAR: I'm not that old, man! [laughs] As a rhythm guitarist, I do my stuff knowing a lead guitarist will come in. So I stay away from certain frequencies, concentrate on making a sturdy frame. With Reeves at least, I had the pleasure of being in the room with him. With Fripp, it was just an

overdub; I never met the man.

MUSICIAN: Any observations on the Bowie/Eno partnership?

GABRELS: Brian was a blast. But I did find him somewhat resistant to ideas other than his. At one point, we were jamming and he was trying to conduct us into a change. I saw [pianist] Mike [Garson] and [bassist] Erdil [Kizilcay] look at each other like, "No fuckin' way." [laughs]

ALOMAR: I've been there too. It happened in Germany during Heroes. We're getting ready to play, then Brian comes in and we start talking. Two hours go by. At the end, we're looking at a blackboard with some elementary chords and he's pointing to them. And the chords suck! I said to David, "This is bullshit! Why don't we just play?" But you have to realize: What are you playing for without a concept?

MUSICIAN: It seems that by bringing the two of you together, along with Brian, Mike Garson and the others, Bowie is taking the best from his past.

ALOMAR: That's typical David. But whether this is the old Bowie or the new Bowie, I don't know yet. And I won't know until we're really working together. Doing a record isn't life. This [gestures around rehearsal room] is life.

MUSICIAN: Will the Outside songs be more guitar-oriented live?

GABRELS: I would hope so, and I don't think anybody can stop us. [laughs]

ALOMAR: You have a chance to remix this record live, every night. It's like, "David, you know that part you took out of the mix? Here it comes!" —Mac Randall

REEVES IN DIVE-BOMB MODE.

MUSICIAN: *So you feel a sense of competition now. You mentioned Nine Inch Nails—who else do you like out there?*

BOWIE: I've always found the music of Glenn Branca to be really inspirational. He's a great talent who hasn't really been recognized yet. I was really pissed that the Pixies broke up as they were a band that really excited me. At the moment, I'm listening more and more to hip-hop and jungle. Artists like Tricky, a Guy called Gerald and Goldie are my favorites. The sense of sonic ambience is fabulous, plus it's real sexy music.

ENO: I've just been working with a musician called Howie B. He's a young DJ in England, and the range of records he plays in clubs is absolutely bizarre, staggering. If he just showed you these records, you'd think he was going to get bottles thrown at him. But he's found a way of putting these things together, and suddenly people are much broader in their sense of what's acceptable musically than they used to be.

MUSICIAN: *You've said before that ordinary fans are more open to changes in music than musicians or critics or people in the industry who have a stake in the present.*

ENO: That's exactly right. They've made a big investment, and they're more likely to feel threatened by new things. Something new comes out which doesn't use any of the skills which they cherished—you saw this very much when rap appeared. Record companies always say to you, 'Oh God, nobody's going to listen to this. I mean, who are you doing it for—it might be interesting to a few nutcases taking a lot of drugs or something.' Of course, I heard this with ambient music—there was going to be no audience whatsoever for music that didn't have a beat, didn't have clear melodies, didn't have words, blahblahblah. Well, that turned out to have been wrong. People's receptivity is constantly changing. And as long as it's not presented in a way that's intimidating and arty, which doesn't say, 'Oh, you probably won't understand this,' but which invites people in, then what people are capable of accepting—actually, I don't know the limits of it.

MUSICIAN: *You both work seriously within various artistic media. In what sense does music allow you a unique form of expression that other media can't provide? Or is its main value simply as one variety of expression?*

ENO: Well, for me there are two things. First, music is the most well-distributed form of culture. All other art forms, even book writing, are relatively hermetic. They're quite small worlds. That doesn't mean that they're less valuable. But it means that music is capable of soaking up ideas from everywhere because everybody's listening to it. So it's very quickly evolving. It's like the tropics of culture.

The second thing is that music is most free from ideological baggage. By that I mean, if you write, you immediately put yourself

OUTSIDE EQUIPMENT

DAVID BOWIE'S studio equipment includes a Manley Gold Reference tube mike, Ensoniq, Korg and Yamaha keyboards, Gibson and Parker guitars, Selmer saxophones, and Mesa/Boogie amps. Onstage he switches to a Shure SM87 mike, also through a Mesa/Boogie. The core of the show is run by Macintosh computers using Opcode Software running Akai and Kurzweil samplers.

BRIAN ENO'S equipment boils down to this: a Yamaha DX7, a Korg A3, an Eventide H3000, a Lexicon Jam Man, an E-mu Procussion Module, a transistor radio with shortwave bands, a DigiTech whammy pedal, and a Tech 21 SansAmp. "They're my instruments of choice because I have a rapport with them. I recognize that they don't cover all the options in the known universe of sound, but I'd rather have six options in the known universe of sound that I understand than six thousand I don't know what to do with."

REEVES GABRELS' main axe is a Parker Fly, with both magnetic and piezo pickups. His signal is split by means of a stereo cable; the magnetic pickups run through a Mesa/Boogie Triaxis and Mesa/Boogie 290 into two Boogie Dual Rectifier 4x12s, while the piezo goes to a Fishman amp. His rack effects are an Eventide H3000 harmonizer, IPS 33B harmonizer, and a Lexicon Jam Man for loops. On the floor, he's got a Fulltone distortion, Roger Mayer Octavia, Unitron ("a bad imitation of a Mu-Tron"), and a CryBaby wah. The Reeves test: "If I can stand on one foot and hit everything, then everything's in the right place." Strings are Ernie Ball RPS Hybrid Slinkys, .009 to .046, picks Dunlop heavy purple tortex (Reeves files them to a point and serrates the back edge with sandpaper).

CARLOS ALOMAR also strums a Parker, along with his trademark Alembic (otherwise known as "the Bowie tour guitar") and various Epiphones and Gibsons. Carlos' Custom Audio preamp runs into a Simulclass Mesa/Boogie stereo amp and two Boogie twin 12" cabinets with JBL and Gauss speakers. He's also using a turquoise Continental amp ("It looks like Jetsons furniture"). Effects include a Tech 21 SansAmp, Rocktron Replifex, t.c. electronics 2290 digital delay, and Oberheim Echoplex. Strings are Dean Markley (light tops, heavy bottoms), picks Fender mediums ("They last a maximum of two songs each").

into an arena of intellectual and literary criticism. Music can slip in new ideas about culture, which I think this record does, and people don't notice it at first. [*laughs*]

MUSICIAN: *But you bring a passionate point of view to the creation of the whole thing, and you risk* that *being missed entirely.*

BOWIE: That doesn't occur to me to be a particularly important thing, that a point is missed. Especially with this album, I don't think there is a point of view. See, there's an overriding ambition, which is that this is one of a cycle of albums. What we felt we had a good chance of doing—especially as nobody else was doing it—is that we start arbitrarily at a very interesting point—1995—and devote a sequence of albums that go through to the year 2000, and virtually encapsulate a texture of what it meant to live through the last five years of this millennium. We thought, God, what a wonderful thing to have done! What a thing to look back on with one's grandchildren on one's knees and say, "Well, the '90s you see, they sort of sounded like this!" There is almost an unconscious, collective paranoia about hitting a brick wall at the end of every hundred years.

ENO: And then straight after it, liberation. Like at the beginning of this century, a sense of "it's all new, we can do anything."

MUSICIAN: *Do you sense that happening now?*

BOWIE: In a highly magnified form I think, yes. An intoxicating swirl of paranoia! It was hard enough ending a hundred years—how do you end a millennium? And the reverse of that is, imagine what a wonderful optimistic freeing experience January the first 2000 is gonna be, psychologically. Hopefully. One has to remain optimistic. And I do; even though the album is seemingly very dark, it actually pleads for an understanding that there is a through road to the next century. I'm very happy to have more children to add to the one I've got [*laughs*]—I'm quite positive about the future that way.

I can't stand it when people say young people are negative and nihilistic and indifferent. I don't think that's true at all. I think what's been happening is that they're going through a sort of transitory period where the new generations are learning to live within a new set of rules, and these are the rules of fragmentation and chaos. And what is the same is that we just don't understand them or what they're doing. They've got to adapt—it's their world that they're going into.

My son is a great illustrator of that, because he's so typical of his generation. He seems to be able to scan things so much quicker than myself. He can make sense of the surface of things. It gives him some foundation. My natural inclination, coming from a different time, is that I don't just want a surface image; I want to read depth into everything. And that isn't part of the vocabulary now in quite the same way as when I was young. My son can just whiz around it and get what he needs to get on to the next place. And it looks like lethargy. But there again, he's now doing a doctorate in philosophy. [*laughter*] So what I presumed was lethargy is not—it's all being internalized. He just doesn't assimilate things the way I think you're supposed to.

ENO: We grew up in a time when there was a real sense of priorities about what information was relevant and what wasn't. There was serious culture and there was popular culture, for a start. There was a very clear sense in our education about the hierarchy of things. That has so obviously fallen apart; people are getting their ideas from fashion and video games as well as from books.

BOWIE: And the pivotal decade was the '60s, because the '60s was the real establishment of the two principles of the 20th century. One was the morality, and the other was this losing of all inhibitions, of wanting to understand everything all at once. So on the one hand there was this idealism, that everybody should live in peace and love each other; and the other thing was 'Let go, there is no morality,' you know. The '60s were the argument, the debate of the 20th century.

And now we're drifting off. The sense of morality has been changed into this sense of understanding the other side of it, that the fragmentation and chaos is in fact what our reality is going to be. And we have to understand that the other side of the '60s, the peace and love thing, was kind of a 19th-century concept that is going to be replaced by something else.

ENO: It's not ever going to get decided.

MUSICIAN: *One hierarchy you've both helped alter is what I would call the hierarchy of technique. The feeling in the late '60s that if you didn't play guitar with the dexterity of Jeff Beck, for instance, then you had no business trying to express yourself in music. You've expanded the notion that techniques can involve systems of ideas as well as scalar exercises.*

BOWIE: I remember a couple of interviews Brian and I did in the '70s where we got angry about the idea of virtuosos—that it

was one of the things that disgusted us about popular music. [*laughs*] I think we're a little more laissez-faire about it now. I think punk really proved us right. That's no longer an argument anymore, is it? But I think we did contribute to that.

MUSICIAN: *Punk was an interesting reaction, but it didn't allow moving laterally to discover new ways of expression either.*

ENO: It seemed to me so obviously a reaction. The lot before said, 'We will be virtuosos,' you know, and this lot said, 'No, we fucking won't.' And what we wanted to do was make any mixture of the above. We worked with very good musicians—we didn't assemble a bunch of retards who'd never picked up an instrument before. We worked with them in a way which said, the most interesting thing about a musician isn't how fast he can play. But we'll make use of the fact that somebody has a great rapport with an instrument.

BOWIE: Or switch their instruments. We asked each musician, what was the instrument that they really wanted to play when they were kids. Inevitably, it's always something else from the one they actually ended up with. Guitarists say, I always wanted to be a drummer . . . and so we made them do that. One track that came out of that was "Boys Keep Swinging"—nobody plays their correct instrument on that, they all full switched. And it's so full of enthusiasm. They all became 12-year-olds.

ENO: Funnily enough, I was listening to "Heroes" recently. And what Fripp plays on that is so simple and so incredibly beautiful that you'd have to be either a very good player or a very simple player to do that. Somebody in the middle wouldn't, 'cause they would want to be a little more impressive than that. So you can only get that kind of result if either it's the only thing you can do—you've hit on three notes that work, so you think, oh, great, I'll just keep playing that—or else, which is what I think happens with good musicians, your judgment has taken over from your skills. That kind of restraint in good players is what gives me the shivers.

BOWIE: And the three-note thing, the two examples I think of are the Troggs with "Wild Thing" and "Louie Louie" by the Kingsmen. I mean, they probably could never reach those heights again, but what they played was sublime, it was so unbelievably good.

ENO: And it's the same song!

MUSICIAN: *Were there guideposts of any sort during the sessions for* Outside*?*

ENO: The structure of those sessions was that we really improvised most of the time. There wasn't very much time spent doing songs that already existed. It ws nearly always, let's start something new. It was just playing and playing and playing. We recorded a lot of tape. In fact, Ampex should give us an award for keeping their business going for another decade or so.

BOWIE: Each day when we came in, generally, Brian had a new system of rules.

ENO: Laws.

BOWIE: Yes, absolutely. The first time we did it in the '70s, there was a lot of animosity, wasn't there? A lot of, "I'm not doing that, that's what children do." One thing that really broke everybody's bottle was the blackboard with the chords on it. [*laughs*] In the studio Brian had written chords on a blackboard and then had a pointer that pointed out chords he wanted them to play, and these sulky, angry musicians were like children in a classroom looking at teacher.

This time around I really handpicked musicians I knew would fall into the flow of things and they would anticipate each day

with a degree of excitement: "What are we doing today, sir?" [*laughter*] And Brian would say, "Today you're all going to be different characters." He would give them flash cards, for instance, that would have a little characterization on each card. They had to adopt that character before they started playing, and then play within the character on that card. Or to play a song without using any blue notes, for instance. These kinds of little directives, which might seem stern and severe, actually were very freeing. It's that old thing about, once you know the rules it's much easier to break them.

MUSICIAN: *Which seems a bit like the way you use futuristic imagery—that you can cast a keener angle on the present that way.*

BOWIE: Absolutely. People presume that I've always been interested in science fiction. I couldn't care less about science fiction! It's never ever appealed to me. It's the idea of writing from "outside" myself to say, what's the easiest state to be in that resembles a drug state or a state where you're not responsible to the "nowness" of everything? Where you can take real liberties with reality. Well, it's the future, I guess, because we don't really know what's going to happen there. I'm not interested in what's going to happen tomorrow, that's the last thing. But the idea of being in the future and looking back on today, I think is really interesting.

ENO: And I think "not responsible" is a big part of it as well. One of the reasons for inventing games for people to play is that a game says to somebody, you are now not responsible for your behavior. Because you are now in character, you are not you any longer. As soon as you do that, people don't mind failing. They don't mind doing things which are slightly absurd or clumsy or so on, because it's part of the rules.

BOWIE: And I'm very sympathetic to that attitude. It semi-explains why in fact I prefer remaining in character. I can explore things a lot more fully than if I were to just do it as David Jones/Bowie. It is another way of distancing.

MUSICIAN: *When you're creating these "games" in the studio, how do you overcome the self-consciousness of appearing silly in front of other musicians or even yourself?*

ENO: First of all, I don't present myself as a musician. I come shrouded in apologies anyway. And when I'm with good musicians, like I was there, I recognize that there's no competition on that level, and I think they recognize that I really respect their skills and talents. I'm completely amazed by them in fact, in many cases.

So the only thing that could make one nervous is the feeling that you were trying to put one over on them, you know. That they thought, "What's this guy trying to do, is he just trying to piss us off or something?" Well, I think it's pretty clear quite soon that I'm not trying to do that. And plus, I don't do this the first day I walk in. I wait 'til some kind of rapport is established. But then, I start tentatively doing it—little bits of ideas. [*laughs*] And the results tend to bear it out. Something good starts to happen and everybody knows that that probably wouldn't have happened any other way.

BOWIE: The important thing, as Brian once said, is knowing that art is an arena where one can crash one's airplane and walk away from it. There are few other situations in life where this can happen. When it's understood that any otherwise stupid or insane idea is perfectly acceptable for consideration, then the idea of letting go of "taste" happens. Taste is the killer of art.

MUSICIAN: *You've both had amazingly varied careers. Is there any thread* [*cont'd on page 94*]

WHY ARE RECO

And other odd twists of the CD revolution. When Rob Laufer was reading the contract to make his first major label album, with Jac Holzman's Discovery Records, he made a

BY ROY TRAKIN ILLUSTRATION BY LARRY GOODE

RDSTOOLONG?

rather startling discovery of his own. Among other things, the deal required Laufer to make an album at least 50 minutes in length. The idea disturbed him for two reasons. For one thing, "to make a longer record I would have had to pay more for studio time," he notes. More to the point, "I'd rather have a strong 40-minute record than a 50-minute record with ten minutes of filler. You're being compromised in some way."

As it turned out, Laufer was able to ameliorate his situation. First he negotiated the length back to 45 minutes. And when the album was completed, "the company ended up taking off two songs they felt were weaker. They were more interested in a strong record than a long one. So it turned out to be a 40-minute record anyway."

But Laufer's contract clause, far from unique in the industry, typifies one of the changes the CD revolution has wrought on the *process* of making records. To paraphrase Gloria Swanson in *Sunset Boulevard*, it's not that records

are getting smaller, it's that the information they hold is getting bigger. Pete Howard, editor/publisher of the CD newsletter *ICE*, estimates that in the ten years since the compact disc first entered the marketplace in significant numbers, the average album has "probably crept up in time about ten minutes or so."

But does quantity equal quality or something closer to its reverse? Thirty years back, *Meet the Beatles* set a standard for LP excellence—twelve songs, 30 minutes in length. Through subsequent decades, an album twice that long was literally a double album, and received as—an extraordinary and ambitious project. You could tick off the successful ones on two hands: *Blonde on Blonde, Exile on Main Street, Layla, Sign O' the Times*—and a precious few others. And even these classics caused plenty of controversy at the time, with many believing that whittling the material down to one disc would probably have resulted in a stronger record.

These days, when a CD can hold up to 80 minutes of information, a 60-minute album is almost the norm. Such length provides obvious marketing advantages to superstars like Janet Jackson, who are expected to spin from five to ten singles/videos off each record, thus extending the life of the record for years and turning each release into an event. But the phenomenon of longer records also has to do with the challenge of keeping up with the Joneses—or in pop terms, the Red Hot Chili Peppers—and giving the public more bang for their buck. The 17 tracks on the Chili Peppers' last opus, *BloodSugarSexMagik*, clock in at a robust 74 minutes. That's actually longer than *Blonde on Blonde* or *Exile on Main Street*—both of which, by the way, were re-released as single CDs.

Producer Rick Rubin says he didn't want the Chili Peppers record put out on one disc.

"From the start, I thought it should have been a double CD," says Rubin. "We had something like 24 songs we loved and wanted to be on that album. I believe it would have been a much more palatable listening experience if there were two CDs with 12 songs on each. People would have had more songs, but in a more digestible form. But the record company was adamant about it being on one disc. We chose to give people as much as we could. And we had a hard time deciding what not to have on it."

Rubin admits his experience with *BloodSugarSexMagik* affected his approach to recording the new Chili Peppers album, which they cut down from 73 minutes to 61. "And I still think it's too long. Not because I don't like everything on it—I do. It's just hard to get through this format."

But why *should* records be longer anyway? No one claims that a 500-page novel is by definition better than a 300-page book. And when it comes to pop music, the evidence suggests that longer often means weaker.

"Music seems to be getting less and less substantial," complains Laufer, "in the size of the format, the album graphics, the method of reproduction. More music on the record seems to make each track less important."

Pat Lucas, executive VP and GM of EMI Music's Film Soundtrack Division, says that record labels often cut pro-rated deals with music publishers for reduced mechanical royalty rates when an artist turns in more than 40 minutes of music, literally diminishing the value of music per minute. "The publishing companies will go along with it if their client's a superstar act or someone who did the majority of the writing on the album. You certainly don't want to jeopardize that artist's relationship with the record company."

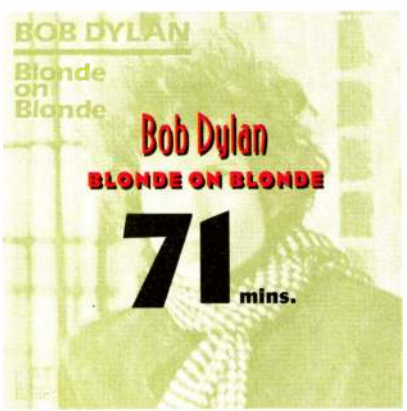
Laufer puts it more bluntly: "The labels want the records to be longer, but they're only paying you for publishing on ten songs."

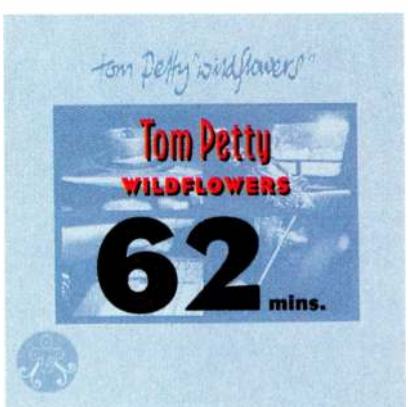
Still, the main reason why artists are stuffing as much music as possible onto single CDs is their belief that they're offering more value—a dubious notion, according to Capitol A&R executive Matt Aberle. *Born to Quit*, the new album from his label's punk band Smoking Popes, is a throwback at barely 30 minutes long.

"There's this indie mentality to give the consumer his money's worth," says Aberle. "If you have all this space, why not fill it up? But I don't know very many records, aside from maybe a *London Calling*, that have an hour's worth of great material all the way through. Bands can give their fans good value by writing unbelievable songs. That alone should dictate how long a record should be."

Aberle explains that the Smoking Popes' album was a re-release of their indie label record, and the group didn't want to add any songs to it for fear "they'd alienate the 5000 fans who bought the original. But I'd never ask a band to write additional songs just to fill up a CD. Bands have to be concerned with making a full record. I can't think of anything over 70 minutes I've heard over the past year that has sustained my interest throughout."

Cars leader Ric Ocasek, who produced Weezer's popular debut disc, says that Weezer's leader and chief songwriter Rivers Cuomo





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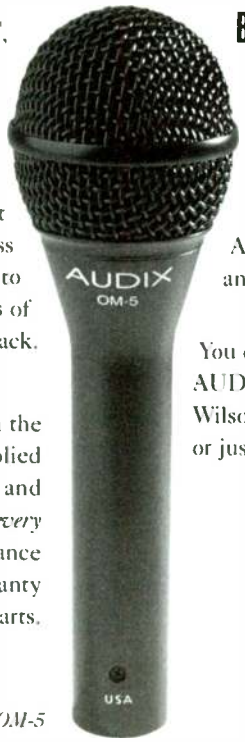

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was adamant about wanting to make a shorter record too. "In fact, we almost did just nine songs, which would have been perfectly fine with him," says Ocasek. "We ended up doing ten or eleven, but not because of any pressure to make it longer; it was just that the songs were really good and it would have been hard to keep them off."

For veteran engineer/producer Denis Degher, president of the Burbank-based Red Zone Studios, records are getting sloppier as well as longer. "We used to edit to cut out waste; now that's not even a consideration," says Degher, who has worked with such bands as Pharcyde and Thermador, an alternarock supergroup featuring members of Pearl Jam, the Chili Peppers and Rob Rule.

"People used to try to keep vinyl records under 20-25 minutes a side to avoid the loss of low-end levels, because of the low-frequency excursions of the grooves. Of course, you could always turn the level down to get more on each side, but with the CD, none of those considerations are even applicable. You can put as much bottom end on as you want now without having to thin them out.

"With the lengthening of records, musicians have the same amount of money to spend and not as much time to spend perfecting what they record. So there seems to be a loosening of standards for what's considered an acceptable release in terms of production values. Records are rougher these days, which may well be because of the grunge and rap movement, but they are a lot looser than they were five years ago, performance- and editing-wise. People are letting things slide they might not have let slide before.

"There is a bit of laziness, too. People are just letting things run longer without restricting themselves in any way. Editing is an important element which is being overlooked right now. People are leaving things a bit more raggedy. You hear more trash-can endings on songs these days. People just let it fall apart. Which I see as a rebellion against some of the '80s technology, with all that tight dance music, British house and American R&B. Once drum machines came in, people expected perfection, and I think you're really starting to see a rebellion against that in today's recording studios. It's a melding of high tech and low tech."

"Digital and keyboard equipment has gotten so clean these days," agrees Ocasek, who has also recently produced post-punk albums by Bad Brains and Maverick recording group Johnny Bravo. "The technology's so much more available. When the Cars were making records back in '86, the Fairlight was the newest keyboard. Now, you can buy a digital 8-track Tascam for $3000-4000, record on it, and it'll sound just as good as being in the Record Plant."

Each advance in recording technology and software, though,

comes with the inevitable extinction of something once held dear. While the vinyl vs. CD battle is basically over, many CD buyers lament the loss of analog's "warmth," two-sided vinyl and album cover art.

"A lot of low end is lost in the translation to CD," says Degher, who started out in the business as a disk-cutter and mastering engineer. "Where we used to filter the low end to get more time on vinyl when I was mastering, nowadays we actually go for an exceptional bottom end because people are pushing that to compensate for the loss of that range on CD. Where I would have rolled off some lows in the past, I just let it all rip now . . . and maybe even add some."

Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong says he misses the "geography" of the old two-sided album, and since his band still releases its records in vinyl versions, that's still a consideration in recording.

"I always think of taking it side by side, but that doesn't become an issue until after the recording is done," says Billie Joe between sessions at L.A.'s Ocean Way for the band's follow-up to their 8-million seller *Dookie*. "The last thing we deal with is the sequence. It's not like I'm thinking, 'I'm now writing the third song on the record.'"

"I still buy vinyl records," says Capitol's Aberle. "I still get off on holding the piece o'art in my hand and looking at the liner notes. That's part of the experience of getting into a band. It's like sitting at the breakfast table while you're eating your cereal and reading the box to find out how much riboflavin is in there. The artwork is too small on a CD. It doesn't work.

"People don't even listen to albums all the way through anymore. Songs become numbers and all you have to do is program your favorite cuts. Before, you had to get up and physically pick up the needle and place it back down to skip a song. There was an effort to picking out the right song. CDs make it too easy."

"I love the accessibility of CDs," insists Rick Rubin. "If you want to hear a track again, bam, you hear it. But having that option, you're more likely to focus on the stuff that catches your ear on first listen and skip the rest. You don't spend the time getting through it all and having different songs become, at various points, your favorites. It's just too easy to get to the songs you like and so hard to get through the whole body. In the case of *BloodSugarSexMagik*, there might have been songs that didn't get the attention they deserved. The same goes for Tom Petty's album *Wildflowers*, which we narrowed down from 30 finished songs we really liked to *only* 15. More for listenability than

for time."

Adds *ICE*'s Howard, "The dynamic of a side one and side two was a subtle, hidden experience we didn't realize was there until it was taken away. The second halves of CDs are listened to much less than the first halves, a phenomenon which is much more prevalent than when you had LPs, where you could just drop the needle on side two."

Capitol's Matt Aberle laments, "People don't know song titles anymore. They refer to them as 'Track 7' or 'Track 3.' Something is lost because it's so damn easy. There's no effort involved with listening to music anymore."

Increased CD capacity has provided obvious advantages in certain formats, such as compilations and reissues. And we've come a long way since 1984, when Columbia squeezed Bob Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde* onto a single disc by chopping off several of the fades, enraging fans. These days, niche companies like Rykodisc have repackaged the catalogs of David Bowie, Frank Zappa and Elvis Costello by adding on to the original albums almost as much unreleased and live material culled from the same time period. Ryko's reissue of Elvis Costello & the Attractions' *Imperial Bedroom* has nine new tracks, resulting in 78 minutes' worth of music, a boon for fans and collectors alike.

"On the up side, in the days of vinyl only, there were a lot of great B-sides which were lost that are now appearing on CDs," says Howard. "The down side is, probably a couple of songs end up staying on albums that should have stayed off."

Of course, B-sides themselves have become an anachronism in this day of single-sided CDs. And some CDs may be endangered by the possibility of downloading music and graphics directly into your home computer or TV.

"That will probably be the next phase," says Ocasek. "Everything is being geared towards buying from your TV or computer without even leaving the house. I don't particularly like it, though. I'd rather go to a record store and look around. I don't know if we need another reason to sit in front of the TV all day."

"It may be important to the middle-to-upper demos that grew up on the experience of handling records and buying them in stores," says Howard of the retail record environment. "But for our children, who have nothing to compare it to, a line will be drawn. Maybe the convenience of getting music directly into the home via fiber-optic lines will outweigh any of the things which will be missed."

And for those who still want to hold something in their hand, enhanced CDs, CD-ROM and CD-Is, which turn album graphics into on-screen images, will surely be an option. Will they eventually replace today's music-only CDs?

"That's the $64,000 question," says Howard, perhaps adjusting for inflation. "It's entirely possible that all the accompanying graphics will emerge as an imporant element of the musical experience itself, or it's equally possible that the music will remain the thing. It will be fun to see where it goes. It's what's in the grooves," he concludes. Or rather, what's in the binary code.

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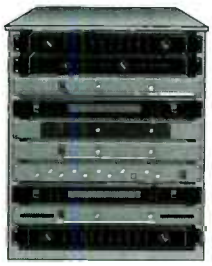

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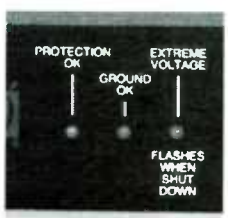

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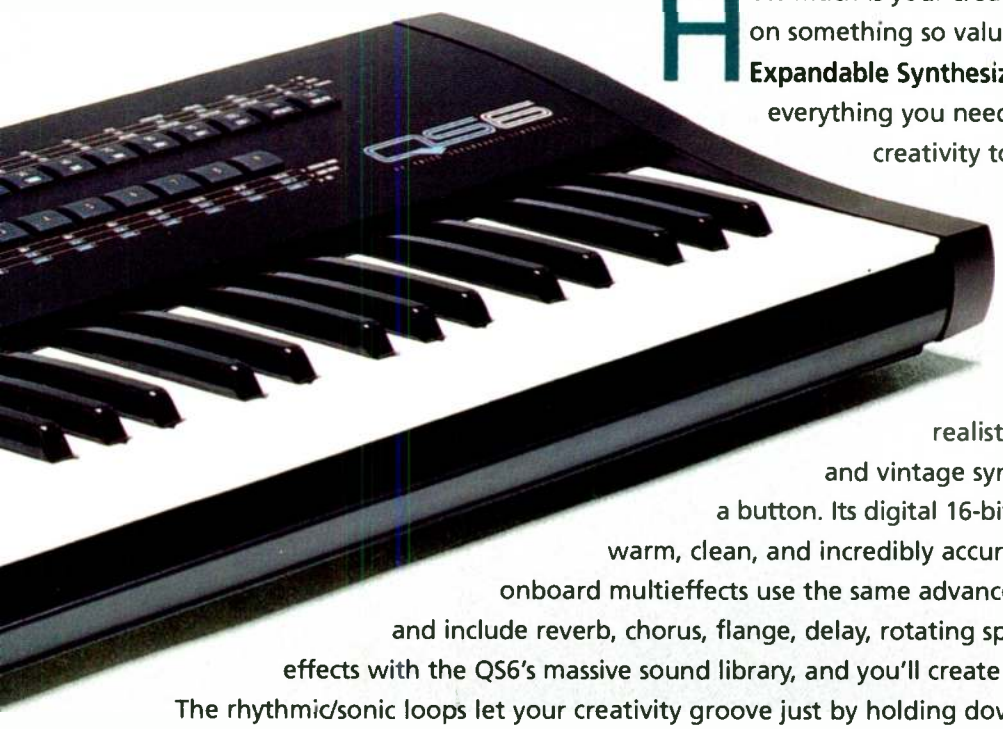

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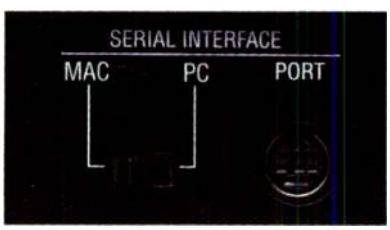

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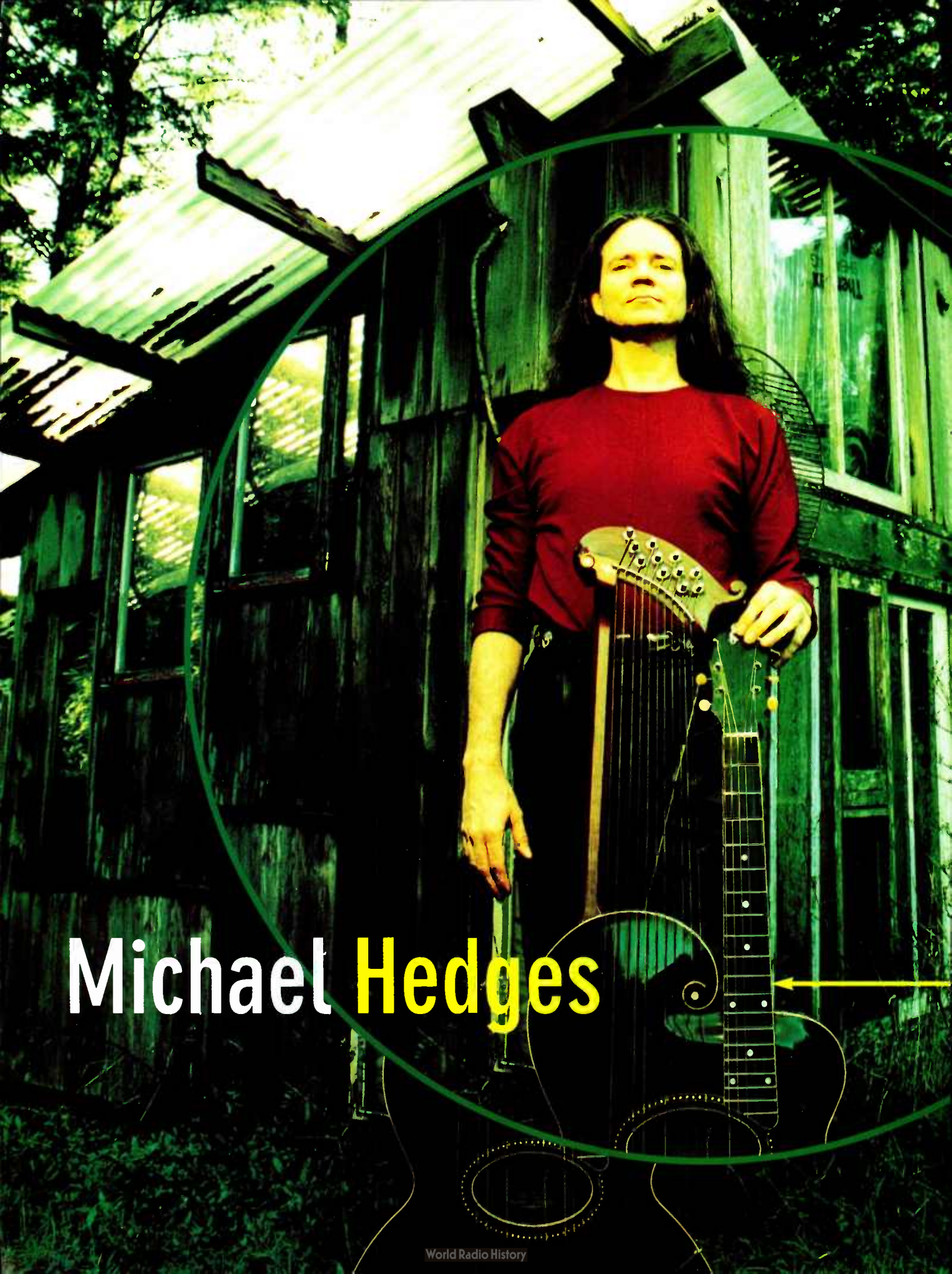

Goes with the Flow

A HUGE female peacock shook off the rain from another of Northern California's eternal storms, one that's kept most of the seaside villages wet since the year began. The flapping hissed through a misty silence outside Michael Hedges' studio—over a garden, through a tangle of trees and past a dilapidated school bus permanently backed up to the stairs of his recording complex. Inside, seated in the middle of the hardwood floor with one ankle lodged behind his neck, Hedges let out a loud hiss of his own; in a Taoist yoga exercise, he exhaled a day's worth of pent-up *chi*, or energy.

"All the thrash musicians and computer operators do repetitive motions, where they build up muscles in a limited range, and the energy gets caught," he said dreamily. "This yoga releases that energy. My problem is the right side of the neck, because on tour I really play hard. I work on releasing the shoulders so the energy flows throughout the whole system." He motioned to his stomach and inhaled again. "When I think about my *chi*, which starts here in the 'stove,' and I breathe out, I press all this energy out. If I do enough *chi kung* to get my *chi* to flow, I loosen up and my rhythm improves. Sensitivity increases. So there you go—anything that'll help my musicianship, I'm gonna do it."

BY MATT RESNICOFF

Hedges unravelled himself and stepped outside into the moist dusk air. As he leapt from the studio porch into the open rear of the school bus, he stopped to explain the presence of a waist-high wooden box, apparently either a small oven or a mammoth glove compartment.

"It's my sauna," he said, "the womb sauna."

He wasn't persuaded by the argument that a loaf of rye bread would be claustrophobic in such confines. "It's completely dark," he responded, "so it might as well be the biggest space."

Such a cosmic defiance of obstacles—from transporting an interstate steam bath to fingering the most uncommon chord—has put Hedges in a creative space of his own. Contortionism is, after all, a helpful skill for a musician whose unearthly compositions have fomented a disfigurement of conventional techniques. He's spent at least ten years as the acoustic guitar's most important innovator since Leo Kottke (who has said he *wishes* he could play Michael's "Hot Type"). The revolution hasn't been quiet: Inventing tunings to extend his harmonic range, using brutally percussive slaps and chiming, piercing textures, and filtering it all through an open-ended fascination with music from AC/DC to Schoenberg, Hedges has advanced his craft beyond classification.

For all those accomplishments, he isn't exactly bullish on agendas. Every so often he likes to make a beautiful vocal record, like 1985's *Watching My Life Go By*, or last year's turbulent confessional *The Road to Return*; he has no problem letting his muse win out over the high boardroom demand for guitar spectacles like *Aerial Boundaries* and *Taproot*, an album whose title somewhat incongruously graces the license plate of his maroon BMW in

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIM STRINGFELLOW

the wooded alcove out front. The leisurely pace of his album-in-progress, *Phoenix Fire*, which he has chosen to record and orchestrate as a one-man band, represents another aspect of his perpetual creative incubation.

Pick any of Hedges' guitars and it seems amazing that he isn't befuddled by their wildly different tunings. But Hedges' world *is* his tunings, his belly-dance bells, the ocean crashing over the dunes surrounding his house. It's a world where, apart from finishing a record, the most stressful task is determining whether burdock root is a yin or yang vegetable. As much as anything musical, this is Michael Hedges' *chi*.

As a performer, Hedges has a remarkable presence—part granola-encrusted troubadour, part classical modernist, part purveyor of a style he has dubbed "savage myth guitar." He has a voracious appetite for songs, and regularly slaps and pings his way through Dylan, Townshend, Sheila E., Neil Young or Neneh Cherry along with his own tunes and jaw-drop instrumentals. As a result, his label, Windham Hill, has been sizing him up for what's known as the AAA, or album adult alternative radio format, home of Shawn Colvin, Bonnie Raitt and Suzanne Vega.

That placement may depend on the types of songs Hedges composes. In his move from live solo recordings toward multi-instrumental production, his work has assumed mainstream characteristics, but he resists the idea that he should stake his career on anything but instinct. "I may decide to get a band and try to move up to 2000-seat halls," he muses, "or even try and make a gold record. Who knows? To me, the dreaming is in the music. Look at all these bands that come and go; they've got great producers but can't make a record on their own. And they can't tour without a hit record. They're sunk. You put your head right in their rope and they can tighten it if they want."

The Road to Return suggests a transitional record, an opportunity to bridge the gulf between composition and pop. Recently, he's been getting back into guitar. "What do you do after *Taproot*? Songs like 'Ritual Dance,' 'The Rootwitch'—like, how much can you slap your guitar?" he laughs. "Windham Hill was like, 'We want another *Aerial Boundaries*! We want another *Aerial Boundaries*!' So I give 'em *Taproot*—'Too New Age,' they said. Then *Taproot* does well: They go, 'We love *Taproot*!' So you start thinking, how much attention should I pay to anybody? That's why I did *Road to Return*. It's an atmosphere about what's going on in some guy's head; it's not an external record. Anyway, that record's gone. I just wore myself out, because I didn't know how to make a multitrack recording. Now I'm a bit more experienced."

In the studio control room, Hedges has set up what he calls "old testament" drums, a collection of big skins arranged on the floor, Indian style; he says he finds it important to get down and stretch his legs when he plays, for a real workout. He crouches to pound some rhythms, then wanders over to the tape machine and turns on a song which came out of some recent experimentation at the piano. "The mix sounds a little too much like Journey for my taste, but"—he's cut off by the blast of the music, which is a more rock-oriented arrangement than anything he's recorded previously.

"It was like, 'How am I gonna do this song?' " he recounts. " 'Well, I haven't done any fuzz guitar in a long time; don't I have a Rockman? Oh yeah.' So I go get my Steinberger electric guitar, which I haven't played in a year. I do the demo, listen to it and say, 'Oh, this sounds like a generic song. And the tone is, like, too'—who's the guy who made the Rockman?—'Boston! So trash it, maybe I should use an oboe.' That's what shaped this record. It's a chance to work in a really raw form. You spend a lot of time getting a demo 'just right,' and then something pretty basic sounds wrong. You say, 'Why didn't I just get in there with a microphone and buckle down and see what comes out?' "

> "I WAS A PAT MARTINO WANNABE. I STILL THINK ABOUT PAT WHENEVER I PICK UP AN ELECTRIC GUITAR."

He cues up "Death to Distraction," on which he double-tracked falsetto and normal vocals of lyrics written with Frank Zappa's daughter, Moon. During a lull in the playback he said, "This is the 'Quiet Storm' song," referring to the easy-listening radio format. "It probably should have a. . ." Ripping guitar solo? "Ripping guitar solo, yeah, instead of this flute. I also want to improve the percussion; there's some chromatic jazzy harmony, so it needs orchestration. But it's new, and I've got all this energy to work on it because I wrote the music in two days. It's exciting to listen from a purely 'production' standpoint and not have attachments to the textures. I feel like spending a whole winter just goofing around."

Here at the studio in the woods, where a gospel piano tune might mutate into a 7/8 Bulgarian guitar rhythm on the whim of its composer, the only distraction is technology—the composer, playing all the instruments, is the same person responsible for recording them. "The price you pay for freedom, man. I have mobility. I don't have to worry, 'Oh, I wanna do something else now, but so-and-so's in there

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waiting for a take.' It could be that the best thing for *me* would be to go practice maracas for five minutes and then get that maraca feel in the take, but you don't want them to think you're *crazy*! Like, Hendrix would never let anybody see him do vocals. They'd always have to put up a screen so nobody could watch; he had to have that womb."

In the corner of his garage sits Hedges' library, with titles organized and labeled by subject, bookstore-style. The other belongings are somewhat less organized—countless scrapbooks, kung fu magazines, bizarre statues, a motorcycle. One photo shows Hedges being hung in effigy during a concert in Old Saybrook, Connecticut where a local

Floating Over "Aerial Boundaries"

THIS INTRO SECTION to Hedges's most famous solo guitar piece sounds as ethereal as the title suggests. Yet its inspiration lies somewhere beneath the starry heights, near the corner of Broadway and Columbus in San Francisco's earthy North Beach.

by Robert L. Doerschuk

"When I first went to the Casbah Club in '81, it hadn't been turned into a strip place yet," Hedges remembers. "It was still just belly dancing, with a Middle Eastern band. I had never even heard a *dum-bek* before, then here comes this rhythm at me. It just infected me, even more than the voluptuous dancing. In fact, some of the dancers were giving me dirty looks because I was paying more atten-

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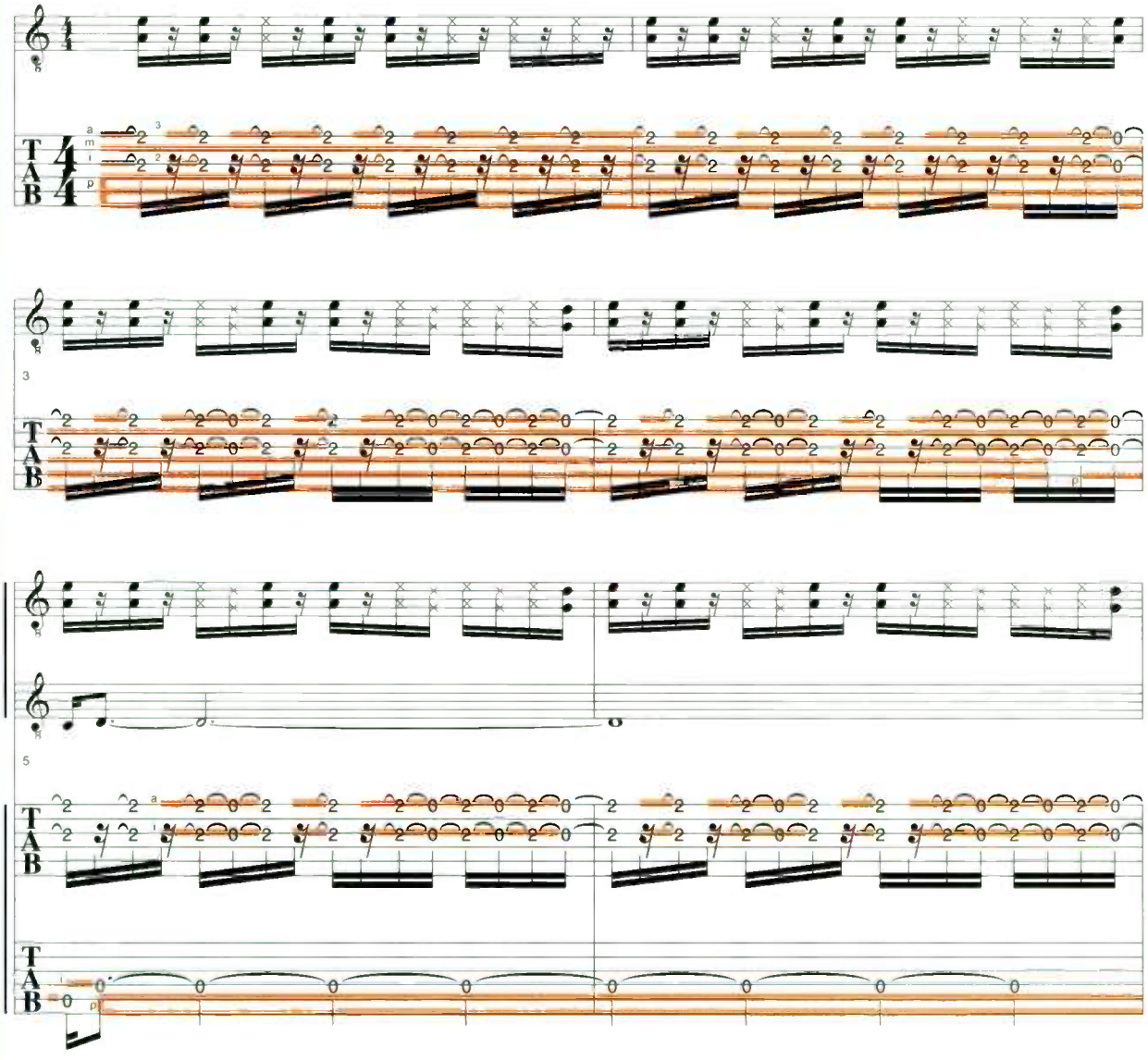
AERIAL BOUNDARIES

MICHAEL HEDGES



dance company had choreographed *Aerial Boundaries*; in another, his huge harp-guitar case is bungee-corded to the roof of a Roman taxicab. There are high school pictures of his marching bands, and Windham Hill package-

tion to the band than to the shimmy."

The syncopated pattern of the *dumbek*, an hourglass-shaped drum being thumped that night in the Casbah, and the feel of Steve Reich's minimalist reiterations guided Hedges as he composed "Aerial Boundaries." The first six bars, as heard on his '84 Windham Hill album *Aerial Boundaries*, were transcribed by John Stropes and published in his book *Michael Hedges/Rhythm, Sonority, Silence*, published last August by Stropes Editions, Ltd. (1132 Lake Ave., Racine, WI 53403-1925, 800/733-2520).

To capture the subtleties of Hedges's playing, Stropes came up with a few notational twists. The independence of the guitarist's hands, for instance, is reflected in the addition of a second treble clef staff in bar five; the notes in the upper staff were played by the left hand and, you've probably already figured out, the ones in the lower staff were played by the right.

"An orange line in the tablature indicates right-hand string stopping," Stropes explains. "Your right-hand finger should be resting on the string from the time the orange line begins until it ends. In bars 1-4 right-hand string stopping is used to help define a line that is being articulated entirely by the left hand. The short slur in the tablature indicates that you hammer on without having previously articulated the string."

But you don't have to be a guitarist to appreciate "Aerial Boundaries." Hedges insists that the piece is piano-friendly, and makes the point with a bit of anthropological rumination: "For a long time they thought the chimpanzee was the closest link to Homo sapiens. Then they found this other primate, called a bonobos. It's closer to Homo sapiens in its behaviour and genetic structure. For instance, they're the only primates aside from us who have sexual intercourse frontally.

"In the same sense, I'm trying to make a new breed here. I'm working with my guitar to make it whatever the music will have it be. This is more than just guitar music; it's open to everyone. And if anyone wants to lock me into the guitar pigeonhole, I'll make like a pigeon and crap on their windowsill."

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IF I KNEW THEN. . .
197

LED ZEPPELIN
165

NIRVANA
180

END OF THE MUSIC BUSINESS
182

GETTING SIGNED
177

STEVE VAI
178

NEIL YOUNG/PETER BUCK
174

BOOTLEG INDUSTRY
191

FRANK ZAPPA
184

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tour snapshots with artists like Shadowfax and Liz Story. There's also a series of recent photos of Michael in full drag, shaved legs and all, which he enacted to facilitate the writing of the song "Sister Soul." "Shaving your legs," he smiles, "oh yeah, that's really a trip. Have you ever done it? You gotta try it."

Hedges' background includes extensive formal composition studies at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, where he supported himself as a solo club performer before heading west and being discovered. He's been active in chamber music, electronics and hard rock. "I've never really copied anybody, except I really wanted to be Neil Young," he says. "And Pat Martino—I was a Pat Martino wannabe. You know when you pick up a guitar and you don't think about yourself, you think about what you've heard somebody do? I *still* think about Pat when I pick up an electric guitar.

"But at the same time, I was listening to Todd Rundgren's *A Wizard/A True Star*, not just for guitar, but for harmony, and polychords. And Joni Mitchell, everything up to *Mingus*." It's pointed out to Hedges that *Mingus* contains the song on which Mitchell grabs and violently snaps the detuned low E string on her guitar. "Yeah—'The Wolf That Lives in Lindsey.' And I was really into Eberhard Weber's compositions, as well as 20th-century stuff. At the same time I discovered ECM Records, I was discovering Anton Webern. And Tom Waits' *Bone Machine* is one of my favorite records of all time. So none of it was a phase. I try to do as much as I can, but still, steel-string guitar seems to be my secret weapon. I'd like to keep that strong forever; I live vicariously reveling in all this music. Besides, you can't make a living writing contemporary music; you have to go to Hollywood and write it for a film score. All the serious free composition is in the mystery movies."

As a composer, Hedges has blithely pushed aside barriers. A Milwaukee music teacher named John Stropes was inspired enough by him to transcribe and assign individual parts of one Hedges piece to an entire class of students; he then invited Michael to hear his own solo work, performed en masse. Stropes has since written out five more Hedges tunes for his excellent new book, *Rhythm, Sonority, Silence*, which dissects his creative approaches and techniques in such detail it required a six-page glossary of special notations to capture the unorthodoxies of performance. [*An excerpt from Stropes'*

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Savage Myth Guitars

Hedges played a Les Paul through Fender amps in his young days as a blues-rocker. His guitar room lately contains acoustics like a double-cutaway Martin and an old Gibson harp guitar; electrics include a Dean, a Riverhead, a Steinberger bass, a Fender VI with vibrato, and Gibson's Super 300 and Trini Lopez. He also used old Neumann mikes, D'Addario strings, and an array of belly-dance, bells, flutes and whistles.

book appears on page 56.]

Though it's not discussed in the book, Hedges is deeply committed to Taoist yoga as a way to smooth creative pathways. He met his instructor Paulie Zink through Steve Vai, a Hedges fan who often filled in for David Lee Roth at martial arts lessons when Roth had to miss an appointment. Zink, a scrappy little fellow whose feats include touching his toes—with his forehead—has also appeared onstage with Hedges, performing acts of wince-inducing flexibility to the sound of Hedges' flute or guitar. "Cultivate the spirit of the dog!" he entreats Michael on a video of their first lesson together.

The benefits exceed the merely physical. After some intense early sessions, Hedges felt ill, as though he were experiencing a sort of toxic purging. "You see this with any therapy," he explains. "You wake up on a massage table feeling energized, then you get weak. It's growing pains. Maybe a lot of the stuff that was stored in me wasn't good. Like, there are certain hip moves I *know* I can do, but there's some kind of fear in me that won't really let me relax. You can't overdo it or you make yourself sick—all that garbage took 35 years to get in there! So, as with music, instead of 'practicing,' I try to be present with it all the time. You don't compartmentalize yourself with guitar and *chi kung*—it's an integration of a whole lifestyle."

Everything stops cold, even an interview with a terrific music publication, when Michael's manager Hilleary Burgess storms the room with news that Joni Mitchell is performing live on the radio *right now*. What to do? The artist and manager rifle through a trove of Hedges' own irreplaceable concert recordings to find one that's eraseable. It's odd, yet touching, this image of such a defiantly original artist wanting so badly to capture a hero's moment. As they select the show to be sacrificed, Michael [*cont'd on page 95*]

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FAST FORWA

LEXICON PCM-80 PROCESSOR

Those strange rumblings on the fifth floor of Nashville's Stouffer Renaissance Hotel last July can now be explained. It was the folks at Lexicon showing off their PCM-80 digital processor ($2495) with a sound called "...And the Gods," a stunning replication of the tape manipulation effects on Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland* opener. The PCM-80 has 200 presets (the optional Dual FX card [$249] has 225 more), combining reverbs with either four- or six-voice stereo effects. With a handy three-level user interface and a wide range of parameter modulation controls, this was the box to beat at Summer NAMM.

◆ Lexicon, 100 Beaver St., Waltham, MA 02154-8425; voice (617) 736-0300, fax (617) 891-0340.

GRETSCH GOLD SPARKLE JET

The brightest entry at NAMM? No question: Gretsch's Gold Sparkle Jet ($2000). The gorgeous sheen of its finish dared patrons to look, even those who would rather have averted their eyes from the glare. A semi-solidbody with dual FilterTron pickups, master volume control, and Bigsby vibrato tailpiece, the Gold Sparkle Jet was just one of six Sparkle Jet models shown in Nashville. Champagne, black, red, green and light blue pearl rounded out the line.

◆ Gretsch, P.O. Box 2468, Savannah, GA 31402; voice (912) 748-1101, fax (912) 748-1106.

RD

YAMAHA 02R CONSOLE

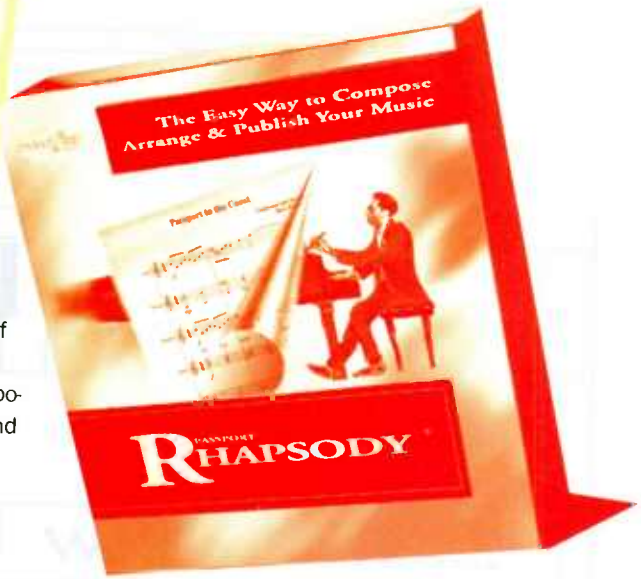
It's fair to say that everyone who saw the unveiling of Yamaha's 02R digital recording console (price TBA) at Summer NAMM in Nashville was impressed. The more technically inclined admired the 44 input channels, eight buss outputs, eight aux sends, 16 direct outputs, four-band parametric EQ, 50 dynamics processors, graphic display screen and open architecture design (allowing insertion of up to four eight-track digital I/O cards). The rest of us just watched in awe as the fully automated faders moved up and down to the tune of "02R-Land," a jingle specially written for the occasion which, once heard, can never be forgotten. ◆ Yamaha, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622-6600; voice (714) 522-9011, fax (714) 522-9832.

KURZWEIL MARK 150 PLUS

Built into an actual Young Chang grand piano cabinet, Kurzweil's Mark 150 Plus ($11,995) features trademark Kurzweil sounds, 32-note polyphony, a recorder/sequencer, and new Version 2 software with improved General MIDI compatibility. Adding to the reality are an 88-key weighted keyboard with three-degree tilt, sustain, sostenuto and soft pedals, and a seven-channel audio system designed to emulate the sound of an acoustic piano with opened or closed lid. Believe us, it sounds just as slick as it looks. ◆ Kurzweil, 13334 Alondra Blvd., Cerritos, CA 90703; voice (310) 926-3200, fax (310) 404-0748.

PASSPORT RHAPSODY SOFWARE

Professionals, amateurs, hobbyists and multimedia producers alike can find interest in Passport's new Rhapsody notation software for Windows ($249). Rhapsody transcribes any standard MIDI file, making it compatible with virtually all available MIDI sequencers. It allows for the creation of 32 staves of music, which can be entered live or through a computer keyboard. Other features include part extraction, automatic transposition, guitar chord diagrams, and playback of coda phrases and repeats. ◆ Passport, 100 Stone Pine Rd., Half Moon Bay, CA 94019; voice (415) 726-0280, fax (415) 726-2254.



NEW TOYS AT NAMM

Ah, July in Tennessee. 100 degrees in the shade at midnight . . . what more need we add? Plenty more, actually, if you were among those frequenting the comfortably air-conditioned confines of the Nashville Convention Center for the National Assocation of Music Merchants (NAMM)'s summer show. Three madcap gear-filled days left us with enough material for at least two and a half Fast Forward sections. But never let it be said that we give you anything but the best. The preceding two pages spotlighted five special show favorites; below, we note the other standouts at Summer NAMM.

GUITARS & BASSES

Of the several frequently recurring Nashville motifs, the most unavoidable were old-style guitar models with famous people's names on them. **Gibson** introduced the Jimmy Page Signature Les Paul, which featured a light honeyburst finish on a flamed maple top, gold hardware, a compound radius neck based (so the experts say) on the actual feel of Page's favorite Paul, and a few modern updates such as coil tap and series/parallel pickup options. They also debuted the Graceland Limited Edition guitar, a semi-hollowbody based on the King's custom J-200, complete with mother-of-pearl fretboard inlays that spelled out ELVIS PRESLEY in no uncertain terms.

Not to be outdone, **Fender** gave us the Buddy Guy Signature Series Stratocaster, James Burton Standard Telecaster, and Waylon Jennings Tribute Series Telecaster. Of these, the Waylon model, with its light ash body and hand-tooled white leather inlays, was the most eye-catching. In the non-celebrity categories, Fender's New American Standard B-Bender Telecaster, with built-in Parsons-White B-Bender, was manna for devotees of twang, and its new bass series, divided into three groups—American Standard, Deluxe and Custom Shop—offered slicker versions of old favorites. Collaborations with **Lyrrus** and **Roland** yielded the G-Vox Ready Stratocaster and the American Standard Strat Roland Ready; the former's design allows Lyrrus' G-Vox pickup to be installed directly on the guitar, enabling a direct link with either a Mac or IBM/Windows-based computer, while the latter features a built-in Roland GK-2A pickup for direct access to a Roland GR Series guitar synthesizer.

Speaking of Roland, their VG-8 V-Guitar System was the gadget that every guitar player wanted to try most. The VG-8's COSM (Composite Object Sound Modeling) takes all aspects of a guitar sound—body, pickups, amps, speakers, even mike placement—and builds a computer model of the sound. Plug your Roland Ready Strat into the VG-8 and you could get anything from a Rickenbacker 360 to a vintage P-Bass, a Fender tweed to a Marshall stack, miked up close or somewhere down the hall. No wonder it was so tough to find a seat in the Roland booth.

Other guitaristic highlights: The **Conklin** M.E.U. (Mobile Electric Upright) bass straps on like an electric but rests in perfect upright position, and its 34" scale makes it simple for electric players to learn standup. **Parker** introduced a line of limited-edition natural-finish Fly Deluxe guitars in hand-selected woods like curly maple. And for the retro enthusiast, there was **Jerry Jones'** Electric Sitar, an update of the beloved Coral featuring a redesigned "buzz-bar" bridge, a separate pickup for sympathetic strings and, most importantly, that authentic "gator" finish. ◆ *Gibson, 641 Massman Dr., Nashville, TN 37210-3781; voice (615) 871-4500, fax (615) 889-5509.* ◆ *Fender, 7975 N. Hayden Rd., Ste. C-100, Scottsdale, AZ 85258; voice (602) 596-9690, fax (602) 596-1386.* ◆ *Conklin, P.O. Box 1394, Springfield, MO 65801; voice (417) 886-3525, fax (417) 886-2934.* ◆ *Roland, 7200 Dominion Cir., Los Angeles, CA 90040-3696; voice (213) 685-5141, fax (213) 722-9233.* ◆ *Parker, 89 Frost St., Westbury, NY 11590; voice (516) 333-9100, fax (516) 333-9108.* ◆ *Jerry Jones, P.O. Box 22507, 913 Church St., Nashville, TN 37202; voice (615) 255-0088, fax (615) 255-7742.*

KEYBOARDS & MIDI

The **Korg** Prophecy, a 37-key solo synthesizer featuring Korg's DSP-based Multi-Oscillator Synthesis System, has gotten a big thumbs-up from Rick Wakeman. If you heard its wailing analog-like tones at NAMM, you'd know why. Also new from Korg: the Trinity DRS workstation series—four keyboards, each equipped with a 60,000-note, 16-track MIDI sequencer—and the X5D synth, which incorporates all the sounds and features of Korg's X5DR half-rack module. ◆ *Korg, 89 Frost St., Westbury, NY 11590; voice (516) 333-9100, fax (516) 333-9108.* ◆ **Yamaha**'s P150 digital piano boasts 12 Advanced Wave Memory (AWM) instruments, dual and split voice modes, 32-note polyphony, built-in digital signal processing and authentic piano touch for all 88 keys. Designed to be the heart of an expanded MIDI system, the P150 has one especially interesting feature: programmable organ parameters, including percussion and drawbars. ◆ *Yamaha, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90620; voice (714) 522-9011, fax (714) 522-9832.* ◆ Continuing with the organ theme, **Oberheim**'s OB-3 drawbar MIDI expander provides all the necessities for a hyperrealistic organ sound. Besides nine ratchet-stop bars in the traditional footages, the OB-3 is also equipped with rotary speaker, keyclick and overdrive simulators. ◆ *Oberheim, 732 Kevin Court, Oakland, CA 94621; voice (510) 635-9633, fax (510) 635-6848.*

AMPS & SPEAKERS

Marshall's three new Valvestate combos were designed for the entry-level and small club player. The VS15 and VS15R are 15-watt, single-channel amps with a 1x8 Celestion speaker; the VS15R has a built-in spring reverb. The 30-watt, 1x10 VS30R features two footswitchable channels. Marshall also introduced two new bass combos at Nashville, the BS30 and BS65, featuring Valvestate tube-emulation circuitry. ◆ *Marshall, 89 Frost St., Westbury, NY 11590; voice (516) 333-9100, fax (516) 333-9108.*

MIKES & MIXERS

Electro-Voice's N/D157B neodymium alloy powered microphone features a dent-resistant grille screen, elastomeric shock mount, and extended frequency response for fast cutting through the mix. ◆ *Electro-Voice, 600 Cecil St., Buchanan, MI 49107; voice (616) 695-6831, fax (616) 695-1304.* ◆

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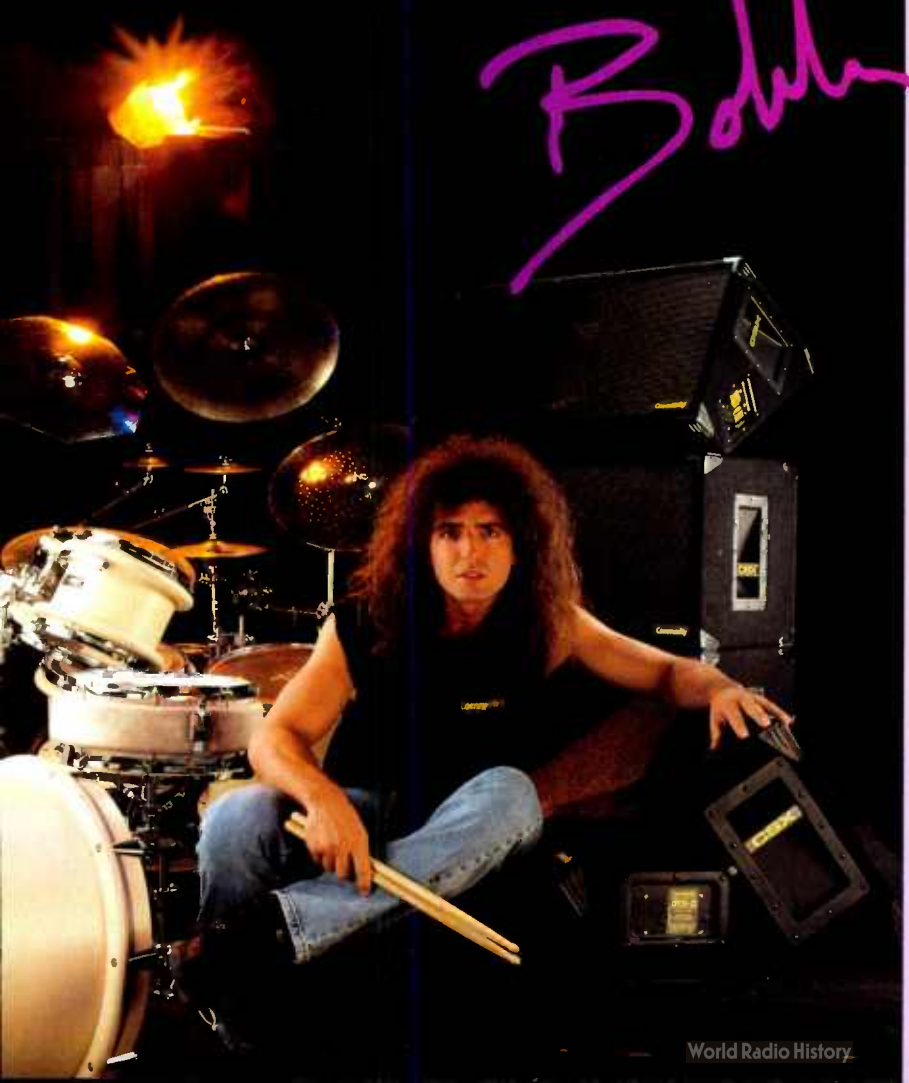
Bobby Rock



Explosive, no-holds-barred drummer Bobby Rock is known among musicians as the most powerful, punishing performer on the road today. Bobby plays non-stop in countless clubs, arenas, recording sessions and drum clinics around the world. And despite the pounding and the pace, Bobby's Community monitors haven't failed him once. If you need a system that sounds great and works as hard as you do, go see your Community dealer!

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Precise supercardioid patterns, featherweight membranes and voice coils, and spring capsule suspension to reduce handling noise are hallmarks of the **Sennheiser** MD735 and 736 dynamic mikes. ◆ *Sennheiser, 6 Vista Dr., P.O. Box 987, Old Lyme, CT 06371; voice (203) 434-9190, fax (203) 434-1759.* The **Peavey** XRD 680 Plus rack-mountable powered mixer boasts eight channels, a 24-bit digital effects processor, and 600 watts of total output power. ◆ *Peavey, 711 A St., Meridian, MS 39301; voice (601) 486-5365, fax (601) 486-1278.*

SIGNAL PROCESSORS

They call it the Hotbox, and it lived up to the name at Nashville. **Matchless**'s new two-channel tube preamp pedal, powered by two 12 AX7s, is more than just an overdrive control. Its gain, bass and treble controls cover a range that's nothing less than psychedelic. More high-tech mind-melting was provided by the **Sony** DPS-V77, a digital multieffects processor that allows a player to "morph," or cross-fade, one effect into another. Heavy, man. ◆ *Matchless, 2885 S. James Dr., P.O. Box 51327, New Berlin, WI 53151; voice (414) 784-8388, fax (414) 784-9258.* ◆ *Sony, 3 Paragon Dr., Montvale, NJ 07645; voice (201) 930-1000.*

DRUMS & PERCUSSION

You can hit it as hard as you can, but a drum equipped with the **Quiet-Tone** drum mute won't get any louder for even an instant. Easily attachable to any part of a drum set, Quiet-Tone mutes look, sound and play just like a real drum, only 90 percent quieter. ◆ *Quiet Tone, 12 Vine St., Freehold, NJ 07728; voice (908) 431-2826.*

RECORDING & PLAYBACK

E-mu's DARWIN eight-track hard disk recorder was another palpable NAMM hit. A stand-alone unit featuring screen-based workstation-style recording and editing, DARWIN has got all the controls familiar to tape users, but its random access capabilities go way beyond tape. E-mu's hourly live DARWIN demos, featuring two guys just jammin' around over prerecorded tracks, were both great fun and a nifty presentation of the recorder's easy usability. ◆ *E-mu, 1600 Green Hills Rd., P.O. Box 660015, Scotts Valley, CA 95067-0015; voice (408) 438-1921, fax (408) 438-8612.*

ACCESSORIES

◆ **Diamond Tip** 3S Drum Corps/Marching Band drumsticks feature an extra large angular tip on a 16 1/2" x .700" hickory shaft, designed for articulation, clarity and projection on all types of field snare drums. *Diamond Tip, P.O. Box 4416, N. Hollywood, CA 91617; voice (818) 995-6208, fax (818) 981-2487.* ◆ The locking clamp design of **Digital Revolution**'s Bird of Paradise capo allows guitarists to apply the capo to any guitar neck with one hand. It also looks cute. *Digital Revolution, P.O. Box 10741, Rochester, NY 14610; voice (716) 381-7089, fax (716) 381-6480.* ◆ The pickup section of **Highlander**'s IP-1 integrated pickup and preamp fits under the saddle of any acoustic guitar. Constructed like a piece of coaxial wire, the pickup is sensitive along its entire length in every direction, picking up the body of the instrument as well as the direct sound of the strings. The all-transistor preamp mounts on the endpin jack and is designed to drive sound to an amp or P.A. without adding noise or distortion. ◆ *Highlander, 305 Glenwood Ave., Ventura, CA 93003; voice (805) 658-1819, fax (805) 658-6828.*

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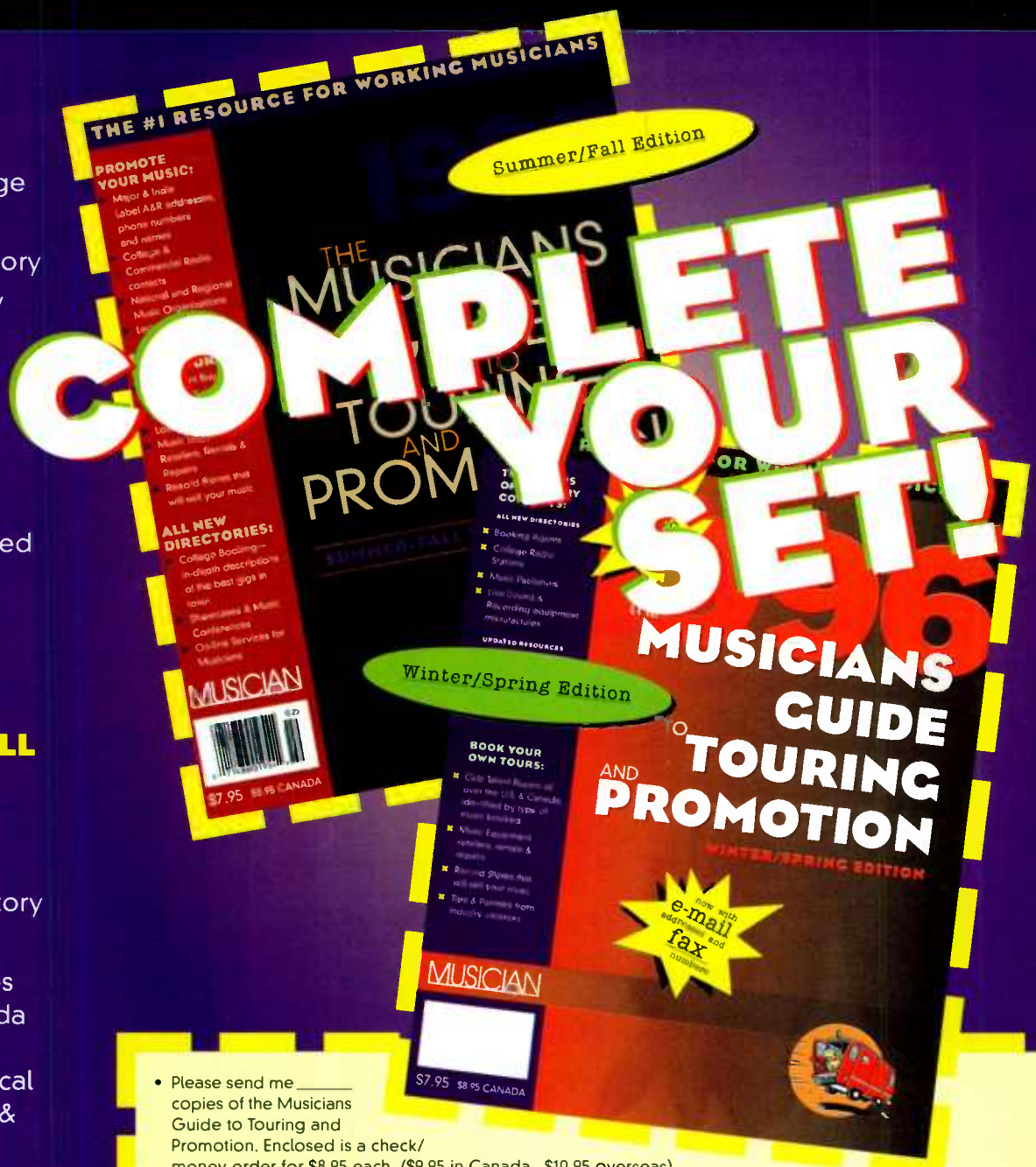

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[ALSTG – R]

THROW IT ALL OUT?

Notes toward the definition of music's future as seen at San Francisco's VISCOMM show.

BY STEPH PAYNES

"Everything we have now we'll throw out. In the history of mankind, this is a blip, a hiccup."— Kai Krause, Executive Vice President, HSC Software; Keynote Speaker, VISCOMM WEST '95

What I wanted to know was how new computer and telecommunications products might affect my life as a musician. So I went to the Multimedia and Design Conference at VISCOMM WEST '95 in San Francisco (VISCOMM stands for "Visual Communications"). The place was packed with mouse-happy conferees—photographers, designers, authors, animators, voice-over artists, publishers, game manufacturers, virtual reality hackers. Talks with titles like "Spinning Your Web Presence: Design, Publishing and Advertising on the Internet" went standing room only. Make that breathing room only.

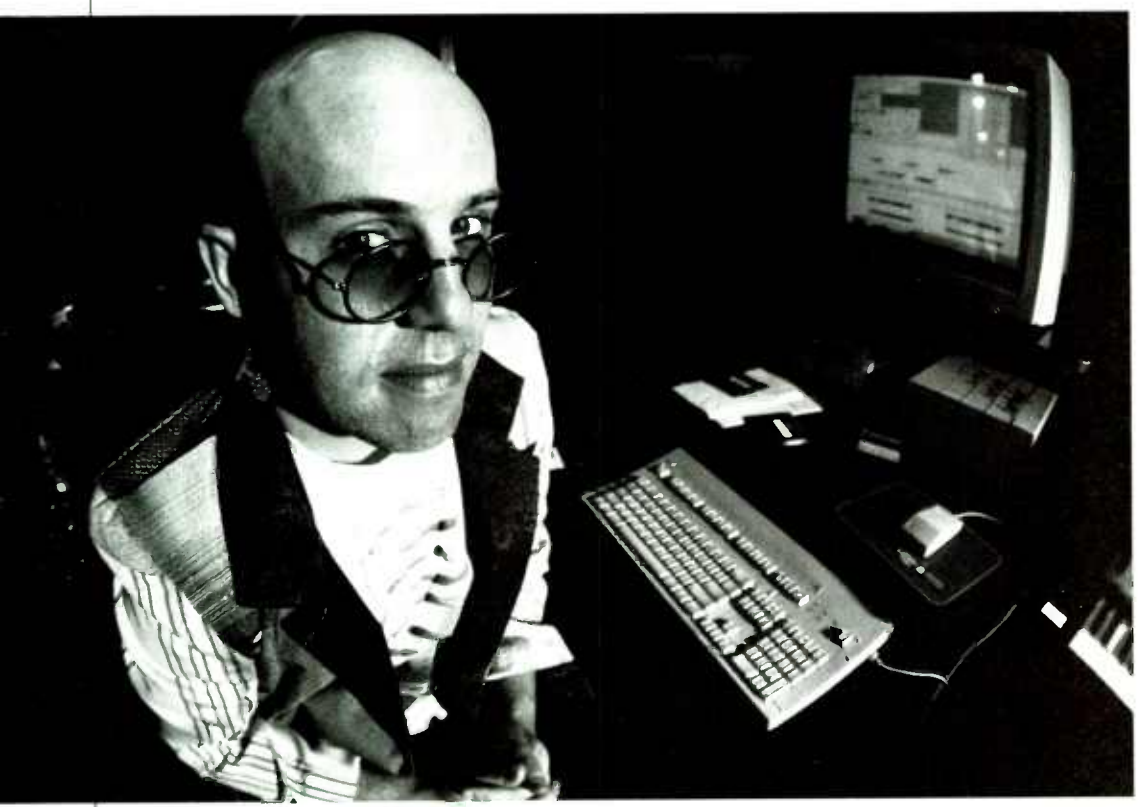
During four days of seminars, workshops and exhibits, just about everybody said that the rise of affordable multimedia systems, the rapid proliferation of on-line services and the new standard format for enhanced CD will have major global implications. Sure, sure. But what exactly can I do with it? Being a musician, a member of that tough and adaptable breed, I stand ready to change. I am, in fact, already on-line. How can all this impending "interactivity" help me, or my band, or my next record?

I never really found out. There was so much new product, and so much hype, and so much willingness to suspend disbelief that after a while, everything became a blur. I'm still not sure whether I can make a living with this stuff. That being the case, I don't think it's proper for me to try to advise you what new equipment to buy, or what new career to pursue, or what new image you should have of yourself in the Age of Interactivity. As the philosopher William James wrote while nearing death, there are no conclusions. So let's just call this piece Notes Toward the Definition of the Future of Musicians as Adumbrated by VISCOMM '95, and I'll tell you what some people said.

One panel, entitled "Sound Brights: More Tips from Music Visionaries," discussed how the success of IUMA (Internet Underground Music Archive) and other individual and local music sites may bring on the erosion of the huge music conglomerates' real-world edge. Special guest Thomas Dolby said that the Internet has the potential of finally changing the old "economic model that has been handed down to musicians since the age of the Beatles."

"With the Internet," Dolby said, "another piece of the puzzle that was previously missing is now in place. Before, even if you recorded at home, you'd still have to get a record company to manufacture a disk, get it out there, and go promote it. Now, the idea that's popped into the heads of a lot of musicians is, 'I can get directly to my fans. I can take this digital master that I made at home, upload it, and disseminate it all over the world. That means I cut out the A&R process, I cut out the manufacturing process, I don't have to worry about radio programmers, record retailers, all the guys in the middle . . . I don't have to worry about impressing them first, before my music gets heard by my audience.'"

So it may appear to the casual observer. But I couldn't help wondering what I might do once the telephone lines making all this progress possible have themselves been taken over



VISCOMM panelist Thomas Dolby pops the big question: "How should the Internet sound?"

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RULES

No purchase necessary. All entries must be received by December 31, 1995. Entrants must not be signed to a recording contract. Artists retain all rights to their material, however tapes cannot be returned. If chosen, artist is responsible for final mix to appear on CD. All decisions are final. Employees of Musician Magazine, JBL Professional and Disc Makers are not eligible. Void where prohibited.

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1) Entry Form
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by monoliths, a situation that appears to be the logical outcome of actions being taken in the U.S. Congress as I write. It looks like the Internet is becoming the newest site for the ongoing battle between anarchy and totalitarianism, between the vibrancy of art and the mercantile conservatism of big business. Art may win, as Dolby believes, but right now it's too early to tell.

The question constantly asked by composers at VISCOMM was: How will the multimedia format change the nature of my work? The "Sound Brights" seminar delved into such issues as moving from large pieces of audio to smaller samples, compressing 16-bit audio to 8-bit to make the most out of present CD-ROM storage capabilities, and creating interactive musical scores as a new form of musical composition. Joy Mountford, who heads a multimedia development team at Interval Research Corporation, talked about a new authoring tool called Pixound, which applies musical rules (such as key and time signatures) to images and turns video into sound. She tried to impress upon the audience that one of the most positive aspects of multimedia—including sound—is its potential as a non-linear form. The score of a multimedia piece can conceivably be just as interactive as the visuals; it need follow no pattern other than the prevailing mood. If the mood changes abruptly, the music can follow suit. This idea isn't new—just think of the seemingly random brilliance of Carl Stallings' cartoon soundtracks—but it's something most musicians have yet to explore.

Dolby, who is currently working on software called AVRe (pronounced "aviary"), which he claims allows the soundtrack to respond to the user's actions, suggested that "the units of music that we've become familiar with are going to break down. A good thing for musicians to think about would be, how should the Internet sound? How should multimedia in general sound? It's an area where music is really underrepresented."

In his keynote address, Kai Krause, executive vice president of HSC Software and designer of such eye-popping computer imaging tools as KPT Bryce and Kai's Power Tools, confessed his disappointment in what musicians have accomplished so far with the available technology. "There are a lot of people trying to hook up sound with pictures," Krause said. "But there's another meta-synchronicity, which is not just about having the bass drum trigger some frantic thing; it's about expressing the beauty of the piece. I envision something simple, like a slide show that has music with it. The MTV approach is only one way of going. Why not set a slow classical piece to a very slow evolution of patterns and colors? People underestimate the beauty of slow change, metamorphosis over time."

Krause's point is well-taken. But perhaps the reason why so little of multimedia's potential has been realized as yet is because many of the artists who could do something truly creative with it don't have the dough to shell out for the necessary gear. Just a thought.

Going from workshop to workshop, it was clear that, in Krause's words, "some of the new hardware and software coming will be sick" (as in "way sick, dude"). But it was also clear that real artistic innovation can only arise once we've revamped the traditional structures of old to suit the new, paperless, vinyl-less, borderless multimedia world. Take [con't on page 95]

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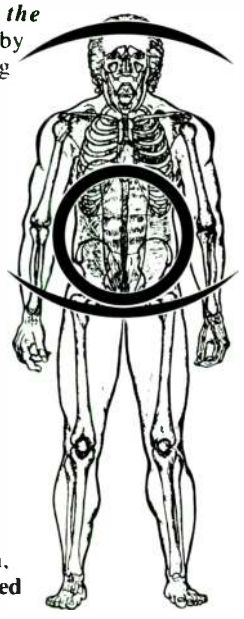
As Bartolommeo Cristofori transformed and augmented the harpsichord through percussion, by inventing the hammer action on the string to create the piano, so Robert Gansert transforms and augments the acoustic singing voice through percussion, by harnessing the Abdominal Muscles in Dual Fusion for imposing a Beat Frequency on the conventional voice, enabling the singer to sing on the "belly laugh" to create the Gan-Tone sound.

Since science operates within the structure of law and requires allegiance to law, the Gan-Tone Principles that create Vocal Percussion are explained in great detail in the textbook: ***SINGING ENERGY in the Gan-Tone Method of Voice Production*** by Robert Gansert, which has been selling **WORLDWIDE** for the past 14 years.

In order to give the reader another version as well as a quick idea of the Laws of Vocal Percussion for more rapidly spreading the news of this great discovery, ***THE SCIENCE OF VOCAL PERCUSSION in the Gan-Tone Method of Singing*** presents a concise summary of the Gan-Tone Laws through **64 QUESTIONS & ANSWERS** designed to concretize **THE GAN-TONE VOCAL INSTRUMENT** that makes the singer **A VOCAL PERCUSSIONIST** for producing **GAN-TONE: Transformed, Energized Singing Without Electronics** brought into existence by **Imposed Vibration** created by the **Abdominal Muscles on Body Fusion**, evolving the singing voice to an **Unprecedented Level of TIMBRE, POWER, RANGE, NUANCE, CONTROL, & BRILLIANCE** made possible by a higher level of vibrational consciousness!



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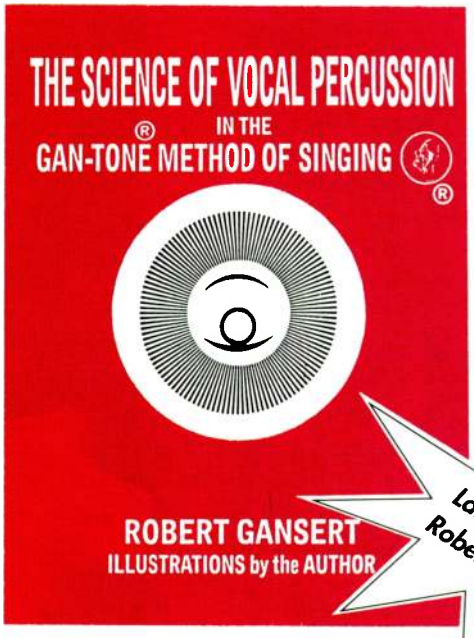

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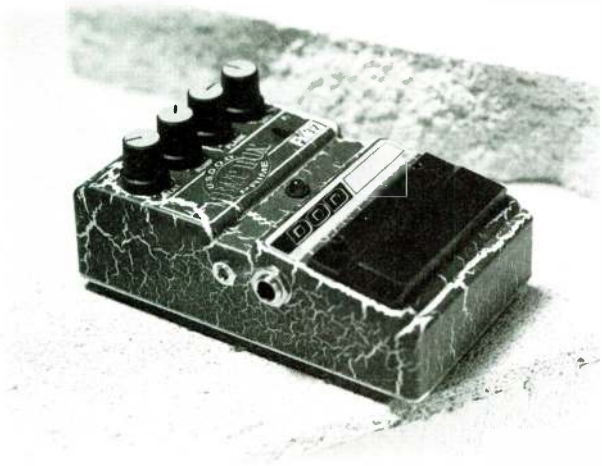
EIGHT UP, EIGHT DOWN

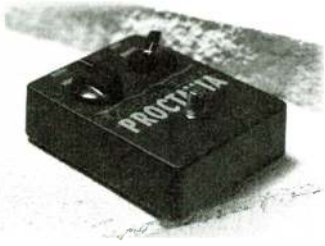
Hit new heights! Reach new depths! After years of neglect, octave effects are coming back.

BY STEVE WISHNIA



OCTAVE DEVICES—effects that produce a tone an octave above or below the note you're playing—have long occupied an obscure corner of the stompbox pleasure dome. This is a little surprising. After all, Jimi Hendrix used an Octavia octave fuzz, and virtually every other piece of gear he plugged into became a sonic icon. Nevertheless, just a few years ago, the market was nearly devoid of octave boxes.

That's all changed with the arrival of grunge and the ensuing demand for sick 'n' twisted tones. Now music stores are awash in octave dividers, octave fuzzes, subharmonic generators, and mutants of distortion like DOD's Buzz Box and Dunlop's reissue of the MXR Blue Box. Here's a quick guide to what's out there.



From top: DOD's Meat Box, Dunlop's Blue Box, Voodoo Labs' Proctavia, Prescription Electronics' Experience

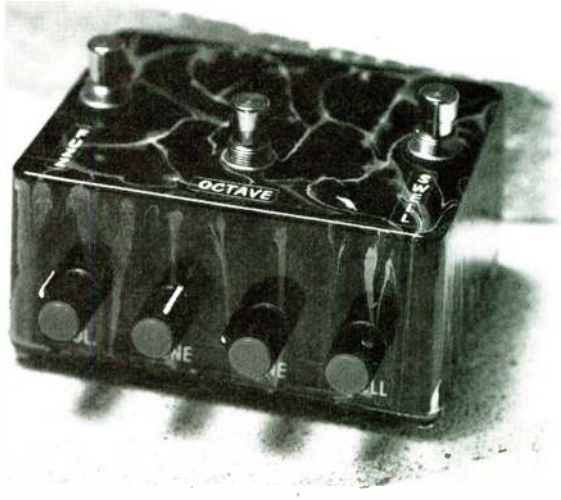
Octave fuzzes generate a tone an octave above the note you're playing. Their advantage over a regular fuzzbox is that the high note adds clarity to an effect prone to either muddiness or what Carlos Santana once called a "frying hamburgers through the amp" tone. Their sound recalls that circa-'69 era when "heavy" wasn't necessarily synonymous with "metal"; think early Stooges.

Lower-priced units like Voodoo Labs' Proctavia ($120) and Dunlop's Jimi Hendrix Octave Fuzz ($124.99) handle leads best; both tend to blur when used for fast rhythmic chording. (Voodoo Labs recommends using the Proctavia for lead lines on the neck pickup.) But what you lose in chordal clarity you gain in single-note intensity and presence. Both work well for riffs like the Stooges' "TV Eye" or Hendrix's "Hear My Train A-Comin'," or for transmogrifying light arpeggios into a hefty wall of sound (example: Mudhoney's "In My Finest Suit"). The Proctavia has more gain, the Octave Fuzz is a little brighter.

The rhythm dilemma can be resolved for a bit more money. Fulltone's sunburst-finish Octafuzz ($189) puts out a well-defined buzz and doesn't blur even under barre-chord onslaughts. Their Ultimate Octave ($219), which adds a tone control and octave-off switch, is the sweetest-sounding fuzz I've ever played. I had a migraine when I checked it out and still wanted to hear more. Fuzztones in general teeter between tuneful abrasiveness and pure noise; these two are distinctly musical. Roger Mayer's reissued parabolic-spaceship-shaped Octavia ($225) also handles rhythm well, but has a more brittle tone.

Prescription Electronics' Experience ($199.95) redefines "heavy." Even at low settings, power chords sustained forever. Its distortion is euphonious, its tone control wide-sweeping, and it also has a "swell" switch for bowed and quasi-backwards effects. Their Clean Octave Blend ($159.95) takes a different approach, blending the clean guitar signal with a distorted octave. It sounds especially fine through a moderately dirty amp; I got a fabulously trashy Chicago-blues sound with a Telecaster and a Fender Twin and a majestically roaring Hank Williams weeper with a Gibson SG and a Marshall JCM 900.

Note: All seven of these pedals lack post-1980 stompbox conveniences. You have to take the back



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cover off to change batteries, and only the Hendrix Octave Fuzz has an LED to indicate when it's on.

DOD's Buzz Box and Dunlop's Blue Box (both $109.95) are **distortion boxes** that add a tone two octaves below the one you play. If you dial in more than a minimal amount of that extra tone, you're largely limited to high-note leads, as both boxes have trouble tracking in low registers.

DOD engineer Jason Lamb calls the Buzz Box "a vacuum cleaner in a box." With a little suboctave mixed in, it yields a slightly detuned heaviosity; with a lot, it sounds like a metal housefly. Without the suboctave, it's a great distortion box, resembling Kurt Cobain's *Bleach* guitar sound with overtones of early Metallica. "You're not sending this one back," my wife said minutes after I plugged it in. (Paradoxically, it seems better with small amps—playing it through a Marshall was overkill.) The Blue Box's main value is its sheer bizarreness. It makes high notes sound like a cross between a koto and a primitive analog synth. (Original Blue Boxes, probably the least-used effect in MXR's '70s line, now fetch up to $300.)

Octave dividers and **subharmonic generators** create a tone one octave below the one you play. The difference between the two: octave dividers provide a lower octave no matter where you are on the neck, while subharmonic generators cut out above a given frequency (usually somewhere in the region of 80-100 Hz).

Octave dividers, originally marketed to guitarists—one '70s manufacturer claimed theirs would make you sound like Eric Clapton and Jack Bruce together—actually work better for bass. They track single notes cleanly, but have problems with chords and bends. On bass, they fit well in more electronic music: DOD's OctoPlus ($99.95) puts out a piano-like sound that's very early-'80s Goth. Slide up a fourth to the seventh-fret B or E and it's "Atomic Dog" in a box, fat and synthy. Boss's OC-2 Octave ($154.50) is similar, with the added option of another tone two octaves down. The Swedish-made EBS Octabass ($170) has a fuller low end, perfect for a tune like Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues."

Subharmonic generators are more likely to be useful for bassists. At lower settings, they give a subtle thickening effect; turned up, they take you to a low-frequency wonderland of sanctified cathedral-organ tones and dub-reggae sounds fatter and heavier than a stone fertility goddess.

◆ **Boss**, 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90040; voice (213) 685-5141, fax (213) 722-0911. ◆ **DOD**, 8760 S. Sandy Parkway, Sandy, UT 84070; voice (801) 566-8800/(800) 999-9363, fax (801) 566-7005. ◆ **Dunlop**, Box 846, Benicia, CA 94510; voice (707) 745-2722, fax (707) 745-2658. ◆ **EBS**, c/o R2 Musical, 213 Ashland Pl., Ste. 1, Brooklyn, NY 11217; voice (718) 797-2047, fax (718) 797-2162. ◆ **Fulltone**, 3815 Beethoven St., Los Angeles, CA 90066; voice/fax (310) 397-3456. ◆ **Furman**, 30 Rich St., Greenbrae, CA 94904; voice (415) 927-1225, fax (415) 927-4548. ◆ **Prescription Electronics**, Box 42233, Portland, OR 97242; voice/fax (503) 239-9106. ◆ **Roger Mayer**, 17 Salisbury Rd., Worcester Park, Surrey KT4 7DF, England; voice (011) 44-181-330-4800, fax (011) 44-181-330-4700. ◆ **Voodoo Labs**, Digital Music Corp., 5312-J Derry Ave., Agoura Hills, CA 91301; voice (818) 991-3881, fax (818) 991-4185.

DOD's Meat Box ($109.95) is the stompbox version, painted to resemble well-marbled past-its-prime beef (it comes with little fly stickers). It works in a narrow range—the volume drops precipitously if you turn the mix ("meat") past 5 or the volume ("lbs.") below 4—but fattens your sound beautifully. It has a slight tendency toward boominess (my first four-stringed love was a '69 Gibson EB0, so I don't mind), but with special low-end EQ ("rump," 10-42 Hz, and "flank," 44-76 Hz), it's easy to get a good tone.

Furman's Punch-10 ($299) is a stereo rackmount unit with a separate output for a subwoofer. Originally developed for dance-club PAs (according to late-'70s legend, subharmonics below the limit of human hearing gave discogoers severe intestinal distress), it's been adopted by bassists. Unlike simply turning up the bass EQ, it adds depth without burying the mids and highs. Gentler picking yielded rich organ-like sustain while rattling the radiators in the rehearsal room. If big bottom drives you out of your mind, these are worth checking out.

Thanks to Rudy's (169 West 48th St., New York, NY 10036; (212) 391-1699) for letting us check out some pedals that would have otherwise been unavailable.


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WARREN G'S HOM

FAST FORWARD

CONSIDERING THAT producer/rapper Warren G specializes in creating remarkably fat grooves and undeniably hefty hip-hop arrangements, his home studio environment seems a bit undernourished. His essential gear is set up in a tiny, tidy room of bare white walls, with the only flash of the producer's wide-ranging personal tastes coming from a couple of vinyl LPs left on the floor—Al Green's *I'm Still in Love with You* and Rudy Ray Moore's *This Pussy Belongs to Me*.

It turns out that Warren G, né Griffin, hasn't had much time to leave a personal stamp on his studio, as he's just transferred it in toto from a home in Long Beach to his new apartment in a Los Angeles high-rise. After a week of moving in, he's just begun to put his re-assembled music room to use and start building tracks for his next record. So far, no complaints have been heard from the new neighbors.

Warren G—a boyhood buddy of rapper Snoop Doggy Dogg and the stepbrother of notable producer/rapper Dr. Dre—came into his own with last year's multi-platinum debut album *Regulate...G Funk Era*. The album used hard-edged gangsta rhythms to support smooth, R&B–style sounds spawned mostly from live performances rather than samples. It proved to be a stunning showcase for the producer's home-grown studio talents. But for all the sound he packs into his music, Warren G favors a streamlined, straight-ahead studio setup. And while he's comfortable with the gear he's been using, he feels that what's up in his head is more important than what's in his rack.

"I think I could buy anything and get some good sounds out of it. It's not really in the machine, it's how you arrange the sound. I could work with just my **Yamaha SY 77** and get something done. I've seen a lot of people with gangs of equipment—just too many toys. It gets nasty."

Warren starts simply enough, building his beats by programming samples with **Akai** drum machines. He recently began using an **Akai MPC 3000**, finding that its 16-bit sampling offers better quality when he's after a particularly clean sound. But when he wants a drum track with some gritty character, he still frequently relies on the 12-bit capabilities of the **Akai MPC 60**. When he's happy with his beat, he adds a bassline, often bringing in a bassist to play directly into his **Mackie 32•8•2** 8-bus mixing console ❶. If Warren wants to play his own bassline, he does it on one of a variety of keyboards: a

BY CHUCK CRISAFULLI

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS CUFFARO

Roland JX-3P, a **Roland PG-200**, or, in conjunction with the Yamaha, a **Roland JV-1080**. If the vibe of the track-in-progress hits the producer just right, he'll pull out a vintage **Minimoog**—a gift from Dr. Dre. "I don't burn out the Minimoog," says Warren. "But I use it. I'll listen to a track and once in a while something will tell me, 'Warren, it's time to use the Moog.' It's a pretty cool tool."

Once bass and drums are in place, Warren goes to work layering the appropriate keyboard sounds. In his main rack of gear, hooked up with the Yamaha SY 77, he's got a **Studio Electronics SE-1** rackmount Minimoog clone, **E-mu Vintage Keys** ("one of my best weapons"), and the JV-1080. ("There's a lot of stuff here that's lovely," says Warren. "The JV-1080—that's lovely.") He's also got a 2 1/2-octave **Roland SH-09**, which has a sonic range fairly close to the SE-1, and he'll occasionally bring in an actual **Fender Rhodes** or a **Clavinet** for a day if the simulated sounds aren't cutting it. When he brings in guitarists, they play into the board, often through a small preamp and a wah-wah.

Warren's expanded his Mackie 32•8 with a separate **Mackie 24•4** board ❷, and with all the busses from the expander going to the same busses as the main board, the two function as one 56-channel board, drawing power from a pair of **Mackie** 220-watt power supplies ❸. For monitors, he favors **Tannoy System 12 DMT IIs** ❹, powered by a **Yamaha P2700** power amplifier ❺.

Close at hand, in a **KK** audio cabinet ❻, Warren houses everything else he needs to bring the music to life. His sound sources are protected by a **Furman PL-8** power conditioner ❼, and his effects units include a **Roland SDE-3000A** digital delay ❽, a **dbx 160A** compressor/limiter ❾, an **Anthony DeMaria Labs 1000** tube compressor/limiter ❿, an **Ensoniq DP/4** parallel effects processor ⓫, a **Lexicon PCM-70** digital effects processor ⓬, and a **Lexicon LXP-15** ⓭. Compression is used primarily for guitar and bass tracks; most other effects are used only on vocals. The Ensoniq is used primarily to add some echo during playbacks. Warren feeds his mixer outputs into four 8-track **Alesis ADATs** ⓮, which can in turn feed a **Sony TCD-D7 DATman** ⓯ or a **Denon DRW-840** dual tape deck ⓰. The ADATs are controlled with an **Alesis** BRC controller ⓱.

The unit Warren G relies on most frequently is a human one—his longtime engineer Greg Geitzenauer. Geitzenauer recorded *Regulate...G Funk Era*, and is now a constant fixture in the producer's home studio. "I get the tracks written and I work the knobs and get the EQ right," smiles Warren. "But I leave the other stuff—the compression and the reverb and so on—up to Greg."

At the moment, vocals are being recorded in the closet, although Warren's planning to bring a portable soundbooth in. Whether recording vocals at home or anywhere else, he uses the same mike—an **AKG C3000**. "It's not an expensive mike," says Geitzenauer, "but it's one we can move from studio to studio to keep the vocal tracks sounding consistent."

For those breaks when a little Al Green soul or Rudy Ray Moore profanity might help the mood, Warren relies on a **Technics SL 1200 MK-2** turntable. He's also got a **Panasonic SL-4300** CD player handy.

Whether he's working as producer or rapper, Warren G applies the same ultimate test to his home work: does it literally move him? "If I'm here sitting still and trying hard to listen to the playback, something may be wrong with the track," he explains. "But when I sit here and bounce my head like this"—he begins gently nodding—"I know it's going to be good."

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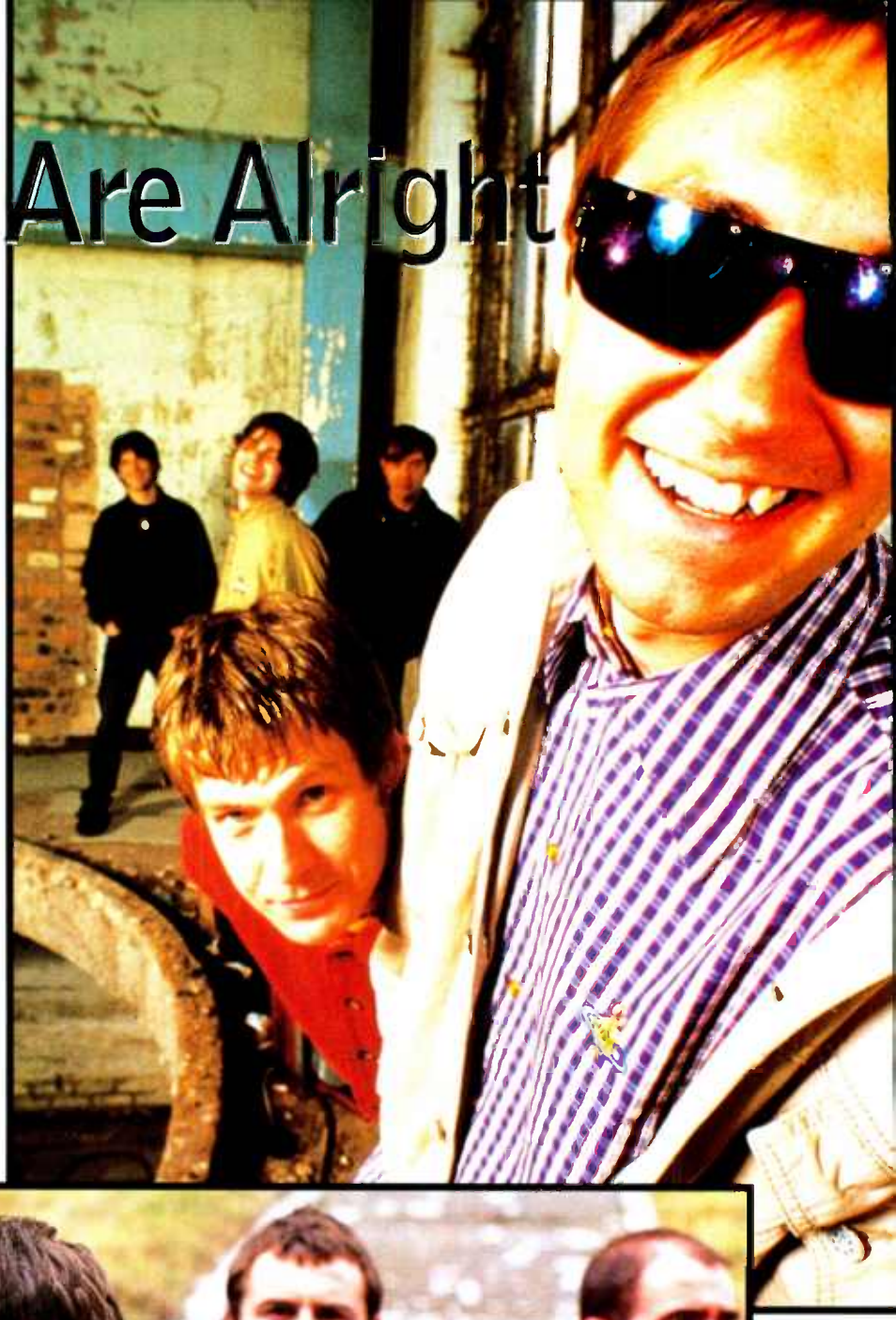

AT THE END OF THE '80s and the peak of the English dance/rock uprising that was "Madchester," an oft-repeated quote tumbled from the lips of a stoned Ian Brown, Stone Roses' lead singer. "It's not where you're from," he proffered. "It's where you're at." Six years on, the Charlatans are testament to that: Despite their start amid Madchester's baggy heyday, they've outlasted 90 percent of their scene-mates (Happy Mondays, the Farm, etc.) and evolved into a super-solid rock 'n' roll outfit currently making better records than even the Stone Roses, their one-time mentors.

Last year's *Up To Our Hips* was dark, funky and loose. Similarly, the songs here sound as though they grew out of late-night jam sessions, after which the Charlatans' pop sensibilities kicked in. They've taken all the best bits and crafted them into vibe-y, hook-filled songs, teeming with white-boy soul. Pushing himself, singer Tim Burgess has developed a confident and inspired vocal swagger, his voice higher in the mix than ever before and strutting through lines like "Want to build my Rome and get high/But I can't find the matches" ("Just When You're Thinkin' It's Over").

While there's less Hammond B-3 (replaced by more guitar and acoustic piano), the Charlatans have still kept an ear on dance music—this much is evident in their loping rhythms and percussive beats (as well as B-side remixes from the much-in-demand Chemical Brothers). But they've also mined a record collection's worth of classic rock: An obscure yet blatant Pink Floyd riff, the chorus from the Stones' "Torn and Frayed" and references to Lennon, Crazy Horse, Sly Stone and the Small Faces to boot.

Then there's Oasis. Similar only in the fact they are also from Manchester and owners

KAREN MASON

HOW JOAN JETT BROUGHT EVIL STIG TO LIFE

AFTER GITS SINGER Mia Zapata was raped and murdered by an unknown assailant in July 1993, Joan Jett and Bikini Kill's Kathleen Hanna collaborated on a song about the assault called "Go Home." The single, in turn, inspired the surviving members of the Gits to ask Jett's help in raising money to hire a private investigator to solve Zapata's murder. Jett agreed not only to join the Gits onstage during a benefit concert in Seattle, but to record the set. That's the basis for *Evil Stig*, a tribute to Zapata that mixes songs by the Gits with a smattering of Jett's own material.

Recording the album was fairly easy. "All the basic tracks were live," says Jett. "There were some guitars that we put on, and some vocals when I missed the microphone, things like that. So there's a good deal of it that is live, but also a good deal that was done in the studio.

"I didn't really fix anything," she adds. "All my mistakes are basically there. But the other guitar player had some problems on some of the takes, so he had to fix his guitars. Like when his guitar would come unplugged or totally went dead. So we'd have a really good take that suddenly had no guitar in it. If that was what you wanted to use, you'd have to put a guitar on." For the most part, they tried to get as close as possible to the stage sound, but, says Jett, "it was nice also if you did get a different sound, to flesh it out."

If making *Evil Stig* was a breeze on the technical end, it was quite draining emotionally. For one thing, Jett found eerie echoes of Zapata's death in songs like "Guilt Within Your Head," "Second Skin" and "Sign of the Crab."

"Some of the lyrics parallel the things that happened," she says. "It was pretty intense to be singing this music, definitely. And then doing the actual recording in the studio — Avast, up in Seattle — where the Gits had recorded their first album, *Frenching the Bully* ... I guess you could let it freak you out.

"Or you could use the whole situation to your advantage, and that's what I tried to do. I tried to make it a really sacred space, seeing that Mia had sung there, and instead of getting nervous about it, I actually was calmer before singing some of this stuff than I am when singing some of my own things. Just because I felt I had to make myself like that in order to get a good performance out of myself."

Above all, Jett came away from the sessions with the sense that real good would come out of the project. "We're raising money to pay the investigator so we can find the person that killed her," she says. "And it was made with real good intentions. We had no idea what was going to happen, or how we were going to feel. But everybody was grinning from ear to ear, and it just really made me feel good that they were smiling like that. I felt like we were really doing something."

—J.D. Considine

of an equally impressive record collection, they've wasted no time in managing the near-impossible: In just over a year, they've released more than a dozen non-album B-sides, an epic string-laden single ("Whatever") and a second album (recorded in just 15 days) as exciting and chock-full of insta-classics as their wake-up call of a debut, *Definitely Maybe*.

Beatles fans can still play spot-the-reference ("Don't Look Back In Anger," "Wonderwall" and "She's Electric" pay tribute to Lennon, Harrison and McCartney, respectively). But it's important to remember that songwriter/guitarist Noel Gallagher (who sings lead on two songs while younger brother Liam handles the rest, sounding less arrogant and more mature this time around) was a pop music fan before he was a musician. Clever production tricks and chord changes are Gallagher's passions. His lyrics flit between inane and ingenious—less concerned with highbrow poetry than with escapism and the way certain words sound—but every last one fits snug as a puzzle piece.

Derivative, musically correct reference points do not a great band make, of course—although one could easily argue the old theories about how it's all been done before, popular music is cyclical, good artists imitate while great ones steal, etc, etc. What makes Oasis and the Charlatans two of the best English bands at present is their undeniable talent for making references their own by infusing them with a style, groove, personality and character that ultimately leaves no question as to who they are when you listen to them. Not to mention a rock 'n' roll spirit that is quite convincingly genuine. Besides, everybody knows it's not where you're (borrowing) from, it's where you're at.

—Dev Sherlock

THE FLAMING LIPS

Clouds Taste Metallic

(WARNER BROS.)

WHEN THE FLAMING LIPS RELEASED THEIR self-titled debut EP on their own Lovely Sorts of Death label in 1985, they hardly seemed like a band tooled for the long haul. The Oklahoma City–based group, like so many indie-punk outfits of their time, looked like prime candidates for the typical regimen of two or three records followed by the inevitable songwriting burnout and a quiet retreat to day-job drudgery.

Ten years, seven albums, and a Warner Bros. contract later, the Lips are having the last laugh. Laughs, in fact, have proven crucial to the band's endurance, as they've played up the sort of "wacky" lyrical sensibility best epitomized on their college-rock hit "She Don't Use Jelly." But while this heavy-handed approach to com-

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edy may play well with knucklehead frat boys slumming in what they imagine to be America's punk underbelly, it adds up to little more than novelty for more discriminating listeners.

Clouds Taste Metallic, the Lips' latest, is a middling affair that probably stands as their best Warners album. On great songs like "This Here Giraffe" and the Syd Barrett-ish "Brainville," frontman Wayne Coyne finally locates the distinction between sophomoric self-indulgence and creative playfulness. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for "funny" work like "(Taking Drugs On) Christmas at the Zoo" or meandering tracks like "They Punctured My Yolk" and "Lightning Strikes the Postman," the latter of which would actually make a nifty pop tune in a less overblown version. At this point, the Lips could use a bit more discipline, but nothing in their history suggests they'll be exhibiting it any time soon. —**Paul Lukas**

RANDY NEWMAN
Faust
(REPRISE)

THAT'S RIGHT—*THAT* FAUST—THE ONE WHO makes a deal with the Devil, gets in over his head and brings down enough tragedy to share with some innocent bystanders. It's a story that's been told in many versions since its origin as a medieval cautionary tale, evolving with the times from humanistic tragedy (Goethe) to expressionist horror movie (Murnau) to Nazi parable (Mann) to comic Americana (Newman). Newman's take is almost unified by that kind of arch-nostalgic music which is his trademark—almost, because with its mood swings from bawdy cakewalk to wistful love songs, from *faux* rock to *faux* show-biz, it never quite hangs together. But then this was conceived as a stage production, and like most cast albums, where much of the plot takes place between the songs, it's spotty by nature.

Newman plays the Devil, which is choice casting on his part. Clear-eyed and insincere, his Devil is a satirist too curdled to even believe in his own cynicism. Heaven, he says upfront, is "bullshit"—but he spends the rest of the play trying to get in. It's a juicy comic turn, as you'd expect. More surprising is James Taylor as God. I was anticipating something remote, maybe even a little dour. However, Taylor not only holds his own with Newman but, when given the spotlight, chews the scenery quite nicely. I can't recall him ever projecting this much presence. And funny, too (honest!). If he ever tires of piney balladeering, he may have a future in musical comedy.

The rest of the superstar cast is hit and miss. Don Henley has a surprisingly small part in the title role, though his entrance, announced by bodacious Spinal Tap guitars, is cool. Linda Ronstadt does the pure hearted Margaret straight and lovely, but Bonnie Raitt as bad girl Martha sounds restrained and rote-like. And Elton John wanders in for a little puzzler, a song about England that seems to be from another play.

It's a bit of a mess then, but a likable one. It could use some tightening up (lose Elton and at least one ballad). And the ending is pretty lame—jokes about Las Vegas are beyond tired. But it is a very modern *Faust*—the Devil is kind of personable, Faust is a schmuck, and God just wants to have fun. —**Richard C. Walls**

P.M. DAWN
Jesus Wept
(ISLAND)

CALL ME A CYNIC, BUT I MISTRUST PEOPLE WHO pepper their speak with the word "spiritual," even when it's in music. Pop songs are meant to be easily digested, not taken as gospel. If they become religious experiences, that's because they genuinely strike a chord with the listener, not because the artist wills it.

I mention this because hippy-drippy P.M. Dawn are calling their new album *Jesus Wept* an "alternative spiritual." Kicking off the opus are

samples about believing in God and seeing beyond surfaces, but the only pure and unadulterated thing found in this slickly esoteric package is pop—the kind that's tailor-made for Top 40 radio.

P.M. Dawn may infuse their paisley, soulful ditties with cryptic messages about self-realization and faith, but what the act truly worships is Prince and the Beatles. Lyrically, the group tries to cap each of its songs with something quoteworthy. But a line like "Why does everybody want me here but no one here can give me reasons why?" from "My Own Personal Gravity" sounds more like those *Saturday Night Live* "Deep Thoughts" than anything else. Unlike his idols, Prince Be seems incapable of revealing the simple truths found in real-life descriptive stories. Instead, his choruses are full of hollow and eventually meaningless cliches like "You could be into you but/You don't know what you're like," from "Downtown Venus."

"Soul brothers" Prince Be and DJ Minutemix are perhaps the only artists vying for a place in the hip-hop world who are influenced by George Michael and Spandau Ballet. While there's nothing in *Jesus Wept* as obviously derivative as the group's breakthrough smash "Set Adrift On Memory Bliss"—which sampled "True" ad nauseam—there is "Apathy... Superstar," which begs to be as fashionably stirring as Michael's "Freedom." In fact, with lyrics about personal deception, the hollowness of fame and fortune, and love of God, laced with the psychedelic melodicism of *Sgt. Pepper*, the hooky choruses and funky beats made famous by the Purple One, mournful soul croonings à la Seal and Tracy Chapman, and plenty of overproduction, this album begs to be something grander than it really is. But would you expect anything less from a lead singer and DJ whose nicknames are The Nocturnal and The Eternal? Still, if you favor the swirling pop sound of P.M. Dawn, you'll enjoy this sonic swizzle-stick. —Marisa Fox

TARNATION

Gentle Creatures

(4AD/WARNER BROS.)

SON VOLT

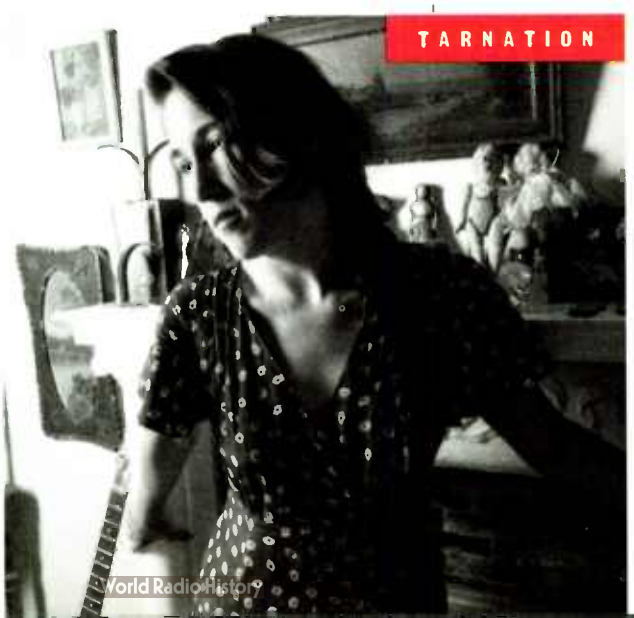
Trace

(WARNER BROS.)

SADLY, MUCH OF THE HIT PRODUCT CURRENTLY emanating from Nashville is old-fashioned pop crap in shiny new duds. Although optimists may cite Clint Black or Alan Jackson as stars who manage to bring some distinction to their work, the search for what Son Volt's Jay Farrar calls "a truer sound" inevitably leads to the fringes, where folks prefer confronting demons to shifting units.

Spooky vibrations are Tarnation's specialty. Don't be fooled by singer Paula Frazer's apparent calm or the leisurely tempos, both of which might inspire lazy comparisons to the self-conscious lethargy of Cowboy Junkies and Mazzy Star: this San Francisco quartet captures amour's last gasp with a quietly crazed intensity. Having grown up in rural Georgia and Arkansas, Frazer easily slides into a blue yodel that makes her sound like the saddest gal in the world, while the quaint grooves of "Two Wrongs Won't Make Things Right" and "Yellow Birds" recall wonderfully morbid oldies like "Angel Baby."

At their most eloquent, Frazer and company achieve a mythic resonance. The surreal "Big O Motel" visits a classic loser's haunt, complete with "drive-through bar"; the otherworldly "Game of Broken Hearts" uses just acoustic guitar, stoic vocals and plenty of echo to demolish a faithless lover. However poised, Frazer spends her time either begging forgiveness or struggling to accept bitter realities, creating an overwhelming sense of desperation. Closer to Jimmie Rodgers than Garth Brooks, Tarnation drinks from a universal well of misery that transcends genre.



The second band to spin off from Uncle Tupelo (after Wilco), Son Volt covers less offbeat roots turf. In a sane

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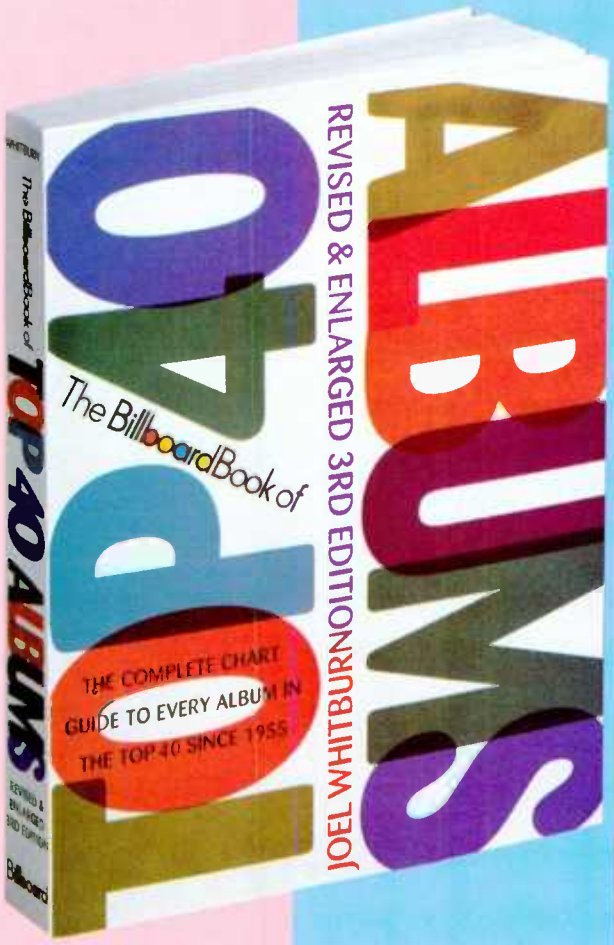

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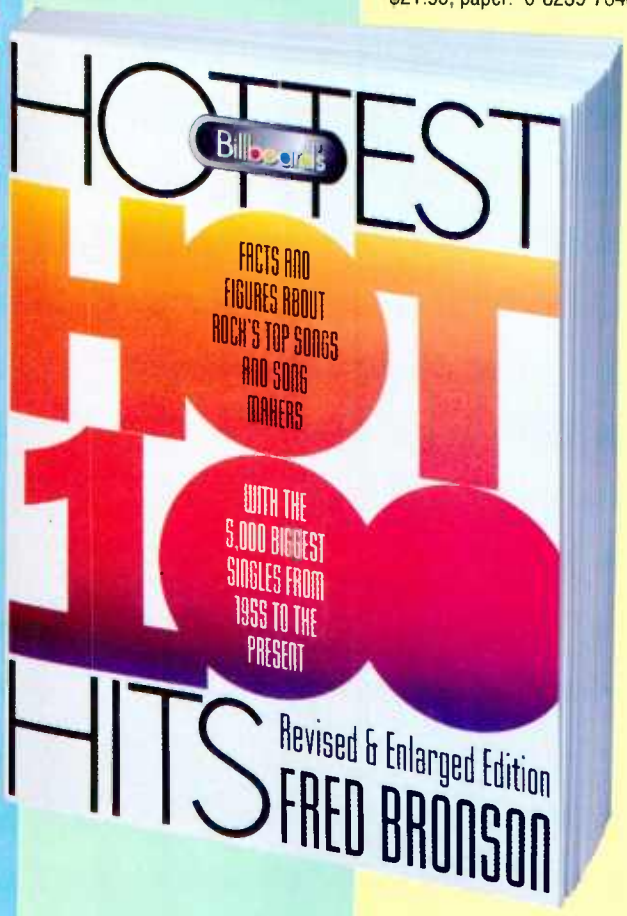

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universe, Jay Farrar's gang would be rich and famous, thanks to his soulful, toe-tapping songs and sad-sack vocals. Whether pondering decadence to the Stonesy stomp of "Route" or moanin' alongside Dave Boquist's sorrowful fiddle in the genteel "Out of the Picture," Farrar plays a luckless ol' boy with self-pitying flail. Lovable tunes like "Windfall" and "Tear Stained Eye" boast rich, tasty melodies, enhanced by the occasional spiffy aphorism. ("Too much livin' is no way to die," he observes wryly in "Loose String," rebounding from painful mixed metaphors.) Not weird enough to match Tarnation's dizzying mind excursions, but accessible in the best possible way, Son Volt is a welcome antidote to the new country blahs.

—Jon Young

JOHN HIATT

Walk On

(CAPITOL)

JOHN HIATT HAS MADE SOME FINE ALBUMS SINCE *Bring the Family* in 1987, but none has matched that breakthrough set's thematic consistency and melodic grace—until *Walk On*. Hiatt's first effort for Capitol reestablishes his status among the singer/songwriter elite. Hiatt told me recently that he wrote this album during his 1993-94 tour behind his final A&M studio album *Perfectly Good Guitar*, and the songs here certainly reflect his peripatetic life during those months: They burst with romantic longing, and with the dislocation and darkness encountered by a soul adrift on the road.

Walk On begins, bang-bang-bang, with three unshakable compositions—"You Must Go," "Cry Love," and the title track—that encapsulate the road-weary ardor and footloose passion at the album's heart. Several other numbers in the same vein, almost equally superlative, follow. The best of these include "I Can't Wait," a Hi Records-derived groover on which Bonnie Raitt shares lead vocals; the hymn-like "The River Knows Your Name"; and "Mile High," a slow-burner with a bit of startling heroin imagery. Hiatt has not abandoned his storytelling songs, however, and the album contains two beauties, "Good As She Could Be," about a young Texas oil heiress on a tear, and "Wrote It Down and Burned It," a *noir* tale that sounds torn from a small-town newspaper's crime columns. While a somberly introspective mood prevails, he has maintained his singularly loopy sense of humor: See "Ethylene," a bumptious stomp-along about redneck lust, and "Shredding the Document," a Beatlesque critique of America's passion for invasive telejournalism and cheap confession.

Walk On is played as splendidly as it's written. Hiatt's touring rhythm section of bassist-vocalist Davey Farragher and drummer Mike Urbano have been joined by multi-instrumentalist and former Camper Van Beethoven member David Immergluck, whose arsenal of mandolin, slide guitar, lap steel, and stick adds a blinding palette of colors to the show. Hiatt himself has seldom been this limber vocally, and he handles emotional gear-shifts from the sedate to the manic with blithe ease. *Walk On* has the weight and depth of a classic-in-waiting. The only walk you need to take is directly to the record store, cash in hand.

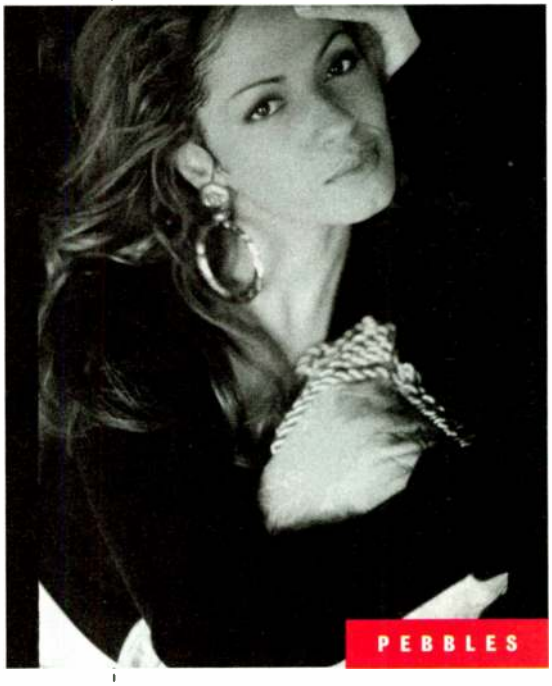
—Chris Morris

PEBBLES

Straight From the Heart

(MCA)

PEBBLES HAD A LOT TO PROVE ON THIS, HER FIRST album in five years. It's also her first release since her personal and professional split from L.A. Reid, who teamed with Babyface to write and produce her hits "Girlfriend" and "Giving You the Benefit." Pebbles must have felt a lot of pressure to turn in a flashy, trendy album to show that she could Make It On Her Own. Instead, she had the confidence to deliver an understated disc that's more Quiet Storm than New Jill Swing.



Straight From the Heart is all silky grooves

and subtle rhythms, songs with the unforced soulfulness of Janet Jackson's "That's the Way Love Goes." Pebbles opens and closes with "Club Laid Back," which places the album in an imaginary nightclub in her hometown, Atlanta. This clever framing device sets up both the live sensibility and the after-hours ambience. She further establishes the album's mellow mood with a classy version of "I Can't Help It," which Stevie Wonder co-wrote for Michael Jackson's *Off the Wall* album. At times, the album has the under produced charm of a demo, but this low-gloss approach puts the spotlight on Pebbles' warm voice and the melodic and memorable songs. The album is so intimate that it comfortably accommodates a tender ballad ("Angel") in which Pebbles pays tribute to a dead cousin who died.

Though there are no overtly uptempo tracks, the album never drags. The first single, "Are You Ready," sports a gritty edge and tangy vocal. Pebbles also includes a spirited singalong, "Long Way to Travel," that could become the "Love Train" of the '90s. One song even incorporates a low-key rap: "Soul Replacement" sits at the exact midpoint on the seldom traveled road between hip-hop and adult contemporary. Overall, her music has matured in the seven years since she burst to stardom as R&B's answer to Debbie Gibson. This album makes a strong case for Pebbles—was there ever a more unfortunate stage name?—to be taken seriously. —Paul Grein

URGE OVERKILL

Exit the Dragon

(GEFFEN)

URGE OVERKILL HAS SEEN THE FUTURE OF ROCK 'n' roll and it lies in records that were made two or three decades ago. Of the young bands out there carrying on as if the '60s and '70s never went away, this Chicago-based trio—singer-guitarists Nash Kato and Eddie "King" Roeser, drummer Blackie O—is among the few to parlay its retrophilia into fresh and forward-thinking sound. Roeser, who pens most of Urge's material, is a more inventive songwriter than most of his peers, for one thing. And he and Kato show a flair for setting familiar guitar tricks in new contexts—not just dusting off old riffs and polishing them with state-of-the-art studio techniques, but adapting classic rock textures in ways that steer clear of classic rock cliches.

On *Exit the Dragon*, the follow up to Urge's 1993 major-label debut, *Saturation*, they evoke influences ranging from the Stones to Cheap Trick. "The Break" is fueled by the most deliciously grainy, insinuating guitar lines you've heard since "Brown Sugar," while "Somebody Else's Body" suggests a lost Donovan ditty as performed by a latter-day power pop band. On "The Mistake," Kato's sly, breathy vocal and an aggressively trippy arrangement offer shades of T. Rex, though the song's sober message—a warning to musicians against the seductions of road life, particularly drugs—is a long way from Marc Bolan's seminal glam decadence. "Be careful what you take," Kato croons, over a wall of groaning, droning guitars. "You've got so much at stake . . . Beware the overdose."

Clearly, Urge has cut back on the kitsch that saturated *Saturation*. *Exit* is an album in the contemporary tradition of buoyant pop with serious, often dark lyrics. It may be difficult for some to comprehend that the nihilistic "This Is No Place" and the delicately earnest "View of the Pain" were written by the same guy who two years ago devoted a tune to soap opera vixen Erica Kane. But in general, Urge avoids getting mired in gloomy Generation X ennui as handily as it shuns hippy-dippy sentimentality. When Kato sings, "Don't wanna hang out with

your crowd," on the driving, infectious "Need Some Air," he could be addressing every young musician in love with his own angst. Now there's an attitude worthy of imitation.

— Elysa Gardner

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

Peel Slowly and See

(POLYDOR)

SOMETIMES CONTEXT IS CRUCIAL. I STARTED sketching out this review alone on a porch in the woods, as the crickets were chanting. It was a tad before 1 a.m. and a long while since I'd listened to "Pale Blue Eyes" and "Jesus." I'd forgotten the strength of their psychic undertow. After an hour, there was no writing being done, and damn if the crickets didn't chill, too. Lou's prayers got to 'em.

The next morning, "Who Loves the Sun" made big sense in the same spot, while a rooster crowed in the distance. Its lyrics may lament, but its music glows with optimism. By the time "Head Held High" and "Train Round the Bend" came rolling by, that cheer had morphed into the auspiciousness of unabridged promise.

Reminding us how well the Velvets balanced those two impulses—the meditative yin and the flamboyant yang—is one function of this five-disc set, which unites the band's entire studio output with well over an hour's worth of previously unissued demos. The work tapes help to convey just how disparate some of the band's sources were. If you'd previously asked me whether or not the premiere New York ensemble of the late '60s, whose hallmark was articulating the destitution and transcendence of scag life, ever used a kazoo, I'd have assured you not. The skiffle sound on "Sheltered Life" proves otherwise.

That's the kind of specific lesson these archival career overviews can teach. *Peel Slowly and See* also corroborates the notion that the Velvets were big-hearted art fucks perceptive enough to trust the logic of blue-collar ethics. A Hubert Selby fan aware of the authority in Dylan's broadsides, Reed was always a word guy. But if the only tunes we'd ever heard from him contained the protest vibe of the newly issued "Prominent Men," his stuff would have been filed next to Phil Ochs. Where the Dock Boggs version of "I'm Waiting for the Man" would sit, I can't say.

Thankfully, noirish madrigals like "Venus in Furs" expanded his persona. John Cale sings it for 15 minutes on the first disc, trying to evoke the proper disposition of jeopardy and gloom. Likewise, the jaunty acoustic takes of "All Tomorrows Parties" make Cale and Reed sound like existential Everly Brothers. Hearing new versions of such definitive tracks is revelatory, like discovering Gram Parsons' vocal on "One Hundred Years From Now" from that Byrds box of a few years back.

Peel Slowly also refutes the premise that the Velvets were practitioners of East Coast psychedelia. Heard with modern ears, their grizzled guitar extrapolations didn't strive for escapism, they burrowed into and boldly italicized the most interesting cultural anomalies of the day. "Heroin" and "Sister Ray" were character studies as much as social assessments. Frenzy may well be one of the band's most highly touted hallmarks, but neglect the Velvets' tender side and you've only got half the picture. Perhaps that's why Yo La Tengo fill their shoes in the upcoming film, *I Shot Andy Warhol*. Only those who know the topography between reflection and menace could do the job right.

Influence? As drastic and discrete as Low's *I Could Live in Hope* and Neil Young's *Arc*. Value? Immeasurable. Even if they'd found a way to freak out with that kazoo, it'd probably be alright. Be alright now. — Jim Macnie

ET CETERA

JON DURANT
Three If By Air
(ALCHEMY)

DO-IT-YOURSELFER guitarist Jon Durant teeters between impressionistic prog rock, ambient tendencies, and airy fusion, slight return. Durant is at his best when dealing with stylistically vague tone poetry, as in the opening cut, truthfully entitled "Pale and Crystal," or the more pulsating, quasi-minimalist machinery of "Final Frontiers." "Shadows Beginning to Fade" slips into a clumsy 3/4 swing groove that reveals Durant's wooden sense of jazz phrasing. The best is saved for last: Durant floats along notes wrapped in silk-toned distortion, à la Robert Fripp or David Torn, on the closing tune, "Alien Communications Technique," an ambient anthem that leaves things up in the air, in the best sense. (61 Surrey Dr., Cohasset, MA 02025) *—Josef Woodard*

MICHAEL WOOLF
Jumpstart!
(JIMCO/ALLEGRO)

ON HIS SECOND solo album, the former *Arsenio* bandleader edges closer to credibility as a jazz pianist, showing strong chops and a broad grasp of post-bop structure in a trio setting. Tony Williams's unobtrusive drumming is a triumph of good taste. Most, but not all, of the time, it compensates for bassist Christian McBride's heavy touch. Though Williams' inferred grooves invite interplay with the bass, McBride too often sticks to conventional patterns; only on "Shades of Grey" does he stop walking and start trading ideas with his rhythm partner. Despite a sprightly right hand, Woolf does little to lighten things up. Even on "Ballade Noir," a lovely tune with angular Carla Bley-ish chords softened by voicings from the Bill Evans school, he subverts the mood by comping inflexibly on all four beats with his left hand. Competition is tough in the jazz den, where young lions prowl. It'll be a struggle for Woolf to fight his way to the head of the pride. *—Robert L. Doerschuk*

BUJU BANTON
Til Shiloh
(LOOSE CANNON/ISLAND)

BUJU BANTON'S 1993 BREAKTHROUGH *VOICE OF Jamaica* was one of the most hardcore major label dancehall releases up to that point. With *Til Shiloh*, his latest, the deejay with the jagged-saw voice brings us a few surprises.

On the opener, "Shiloh," we find the 23-year-old Buju, who was talking about girls, guns, and gay-bashing just a few years ago, singing about the merits of the East versus the West and his spiritual home, Ethiopia, over Nyabinghi hand drums. Banton—like dancehall dons Capelton and the late Garnett Silk before him—has become a Rasta, and is attempting to introduce more consciousness and positivity into the dancehall. The murder

SHORT TAKES

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

DRIVIN' N' CRYIN'
Wrapped in Sky
(DGC)

TO CALL THEM a roots-rock band doesn't really do Drivin' N' Cryin' justice. Sure, all the elements are there—the boogie licks, the drawling vocals, the echoes of country music, Appalachian balladry and blues—but where most roots-rockers are content just to weave those threads into a rough, musical fabric, this band sees that material as the canvas for their own, larger vision. Maybe that's why there's so much life in these songs, from the romantic irony of "Right Side of Town" to the real-life politics of "Indian Song." But the words don't carry all the weight; in fact, some of the album's most eloquent moments are purely musical, as with the melodic push-and-pull of "Leader the Follow" or the Who-like finale to "Light."

B-TRIBE FEATURING DEBORAH BLANDO
Suavo Suavo
(ATLANTC/LAVA)

NOT-SO-DEEP forest.

SELENA
Dreaming of You
(EMI)

THIS IS THE album Selena was working on at the time of her death—her first entirely in English—and its debut at the top of the *Billboard* charts is being heralded as proof that her crossover dreams were about to come true. Maybe so, but before celebrating the Latin market's emerging strength, it's worth remembering that apart from the tracks recapped from other albums, *Dreaming* is totally devoid of ethnic flavor, opting instead for the colorless charm of generic Madonna and Paula Abdul imitations.

LEFTFIELD
Leftism
(COLUMBIA)

ENTERTAINING THOUGH THE current crop of British guitar bands may be, if you're looking for real imagination and innovation, you're better off looking at the British dance music scene. Like Massive Attack and Tricky, Leftfield takes a decidedly eclectic approach to dance music, drawing from a variety of influences instead of relying on a single style. Not only does that keep the groove from becoming predictable, but it allows the band to indulge a wide range of musical moods, from the pastoral pulse of the dub-inflected "Release the Pressure" to the doomsday overdrive of "Open Up," which boasts a delightfully apocalyptic vocal by John Lydon.

GARBAGE
Garbage
(ALMO SOUNDS)

IF THE COMBINATION of Butch Vig and a four-piece guitar band conjures images of well-groomed grunge, think again. Despite its decidedly standard instrumentation, there's nothing conventional about Garbage's sound; live guitars sit cheek-by-jowl with samples and synths, organic interplay gets the cut-and-paste treatment, and the textures are as pliable as silly putty. Yet for all its sonic manipulation, the album never loses sight of the basic values of melody and groove. Credit for some of that belongs with guitarists Duke Erikson and Steve Marker, who fill the likes of "Vow" and "Queer" with sly, tuneful fillips, but it's singer Shirley Manson who ultimately steals the show, making the most of pop material like "Supervixen" and bringing admirable emotional strength to "Only Happy When It Rains."

of his friend Panhead was Banton's impetus; you can bet he's addressing real issues on the anti-gun song "Murderer."

Delving deep into the roots of dancehall, Buju revives slower, heavier riddims on "Chuk It So" and "What You're Gonna Do," a golden oldie which recalls the early '80s Jamaican sound system circuit: a deejay chatting over a dub plate. "Complaint," on which Garnett Silk appears, is a version of the Anthony Red Rose favorite "Tempo," while on "Champion" (which includes a hip-hop remix as well), Buju rides a bouncing computer riddim, proving without a doubt who is Jamaica's top toaster.

But the most surprising track on *Shiloh* is "Untold Stories," a poignant, acoustic guitar–driven ode to the poor, on which he says, "Opportunity scarce, scarce commodity/In these times I say, when mamma spend her last to send you to class/Never you ever play." He should know, having clawed his way to the top from the ghettoes of Kingston. Now it's his turn to shine.

—S. H. Fernando, Jr.

BOWIE/ENO

[*cont'd from page 41*] *which remains consistent?*

ENO: Yes, one or two things. One is an interesting sensuality. Even though I'm probably quite an intellectual person in the way I think about things, my decisions are nearly always guided by my sensual responses. I have to be seduced by them in some way. No matter how intellectually defensible they are, if they don't work on that level, then I think something's not right about them. A friend of mine used to say, "The body is the large brain." I really believe that. I want to think with the whole organism, not just with the bit that knows that it's thinking.

The second thing is a concern with the particular question of "unlockedness." A lot of the work I've done has been to do with putting things together, but not bolting them to one another. Now I've done this in purely physical terms with ambient music, where the different layers float freely over one another. But I've also tried to do it in emotional terms as well, where contrasting and incoherent emotions—emotions which don't cohere with each other—are allowed to exist together in the same piece and no particular attempt is made to resolve them. So one interest is seeing what happens if you put things together and don't try to make them compatible. And then, see what you have to do to satisfy the first requirement, which is: I want sensual response from all this.

BOWIE: If there is anything consistent about what I've done, then it's the realization, to me at least, that I'm most comfortable with a sense of fragmentation. Whenever I've worked in a straightforward narrative fashion it has produced work that I'm not particularly happy or fulfilled by. The idea of tidy endings or beginnings seems too absolute. It's not at all like real life.

FIUCZYNSKI

[*cont'd from page 16*] down a fret. Fiuczynski's chordal experimentation doesn't end there. While working recently with singer Christina Wheeler on an adaptation of Thelonious Monk's "Ugly Beauty," Fuze came across a couple of piano chords featuring note clusters that couldn't be duplicated on guitar by the left hand alone. So he added another note with the right hand, which allowed him, as shown in Ex. 2, to play E, F *and* F# in one chord. The F in Ex. 2 and E*b* in Ex. 3 are covered by the middle finger of Fuze's right hand; he strums the chord with his pinky. "It still sounds a little too harplike for my taste," he says, "but I'm working on it." As for what to call these chords . . . well, D is the root of Ex. 2 and A is the root of Ex. 3. The rest is up to you. —*Mac Randall*

MADIX

[*cont'd from page 15*] power and headroom. If you've taken out more than the four or five most offensive frequencies, you may be strangling the system. Exercise judgment and a sensible dose of restraint.

4) Don't forget to mix. I've seen dozens of engineers (including myself) spend the show with their head buried in the drive rack searching for that low-mid frequency that's driving them nuts, only to emerge for the encore to find the lead vocal swimming in reverb and obliterated by guitar. In mix engineering, balance is number one. If everyone can hear the vocals and guitar solos, you're half way home!

Remember, you are not loading into a club as an acoustic consultant, you are there to deliver your show. Strive for ways to present the music and the sound in the context of the venue, and achieve musical balance along with tonality. Don't frustrate yourself wishing Joe's sounded like Carnegie Hall.

HEDGES

[cont'd from page 61] stands in front of a large poster of Rundgren, the same one that hung on the wall of his first recording room.

Hedges says he hasn't given much thought to working with a producer but might consider it if his music warrants that direction: "What if I made a record for $200,000 with a 'name' producer and it did okay, but not enough to really take me over? I don't know if it'd be worth it. I guess it would depend on how much I would learn. Even though it may boost sales, that's not necessarily growth."

On the tour to support *The Road to Return*, Hedges broke up his solo pieces with interpretive dances, including a performance-art reading of "Jabberwocky." By most standards, the shows were "out."

"Did you think those were out?" he asks. "I'm not as serious about out harmony as, say, Anthony Braxton. I think of myself as *texturally* and *arrangementally* innovative. I've gone past feeling I have to be groundbreaking. That press was following me around: 'I've never seen anyone play like that.' It didn't seem that big a deal. I spend a lot of time alone. It's like being on Galapagos and you keep evolving, then you see somebody who was your neighbor a million years ago; you realize how you've changed your morphology.

"But I would hate to hear what would come out if I spent all that extra energy *trying* to be anything," he continues. "You get enough positive feedback, enough little plaques to make you confident enough to just keep at whatever you felt like doing before, but with no pressure. Like 'New Age'—I got these *horrible* reviews on *Road to Return* because they said it was New Age. Well, god, it's just what came out! Aah, it's only guitar fans saying I should shut up and play my guitar. Hey, I'm just doing what I like. That's what got me where I am."

VISCOMM

[cont'd from page 72] the time-honored structure of a rock band, for instance. Thomas Dolby: "I think the Internet will drive a wedge between the kind of band that can actually set up in a room and play, and the kind of music that is made by one, two, three or five people who have a somewhat amorphous identity—a virtual band, after the British model, where you can't match faces [to names]. I think those guys generally are going to find it easier to adapt to the requirements of this new system."

And what about those once-envied musicians who can actually set up and sweat? Well, there's always the option of slapping a great live video into the multimedia track of your new enhanced CD. Or pick up a copy of *Careers in Multimedia* by Vivid Studios (Ziff-Davis Press), which offers an excellent overview of some of the new gigs out there: sound producer, game soundtrack composer, sound effects specialist, or sound editor.

No one could go through a multimedia extravaganza like VISCOMM '95 without being impressed—the possibilities are amazing. But it remains to be seen what can actually be made of them. One thing is clear, however: to quote Kai Krause, "We have a lot of completely new problems on this earth that require new solutions." And it would be far better if we musicians solved them before the Blue Meanies do. So let's get to it.

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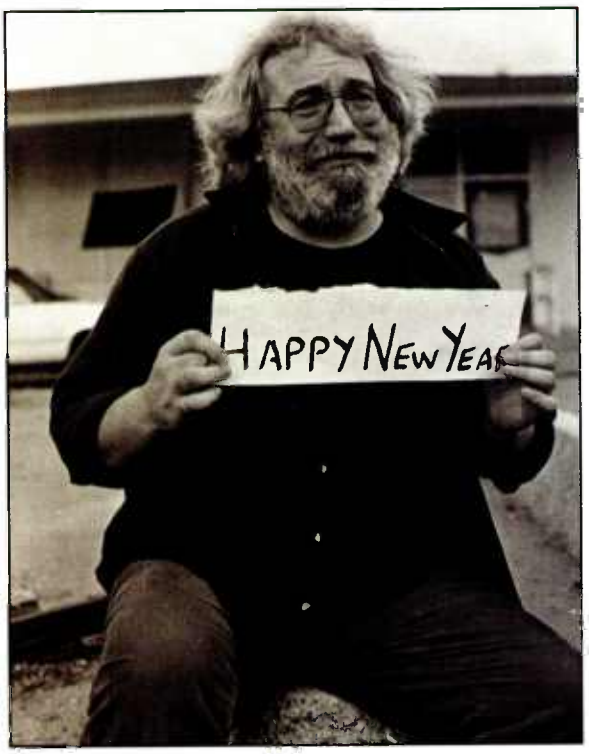
GOODBYE, JERRY

Tribute from a friend

The death last August of Jerry Garcia ripped the veil that shielded Deadheadism from mass media scrutiny. You never saw Garcia's furry face on billboards or butting Madonna's mug for a place on the cover of pop-cult rags. Yet the news of his passing shook the world and forced the likes of Peter Jennings to grope for enlightenment from hastily recruited spokesfolk from the Deadlands. Musicians, though, understood what it all meant. No matter how you feel about Garcia, his band, and their constituency, their uniqueness is beyond dispute and now (perhaps) a matter of history.



Many thousands "knew" Jerry Garcia from the vibe he emitted through his beatific ways and silvery, singing guitar lines. Fewer were privileged to know him close-up, as a musician and a friend. One was Merl Saunders, keyboardist and leader of the Rainforest Band. He was already a pedigreed jazz and studio musician, with credits including Miles Davis, B. B. King, Lionel Hampton, and dozens of other top artists, when he took a session date one day in San Francisco with a guitarist he had never heard of before.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

"I had just left New York and come back home to San Francisco in the early '70s to be a bachelor father. Nick Gravenites heard about me, so he called me to do this session for Warner Bros. with the singer Danny Cox. I came to the date, and here was this guitar player sitting in the corner, with a beard and a big smile. As soon as we started playing, we had this chemistry happening. If I made a mistake on keyboards, he made the mistake with me on guitar. And if he made a mistake, I made it with him. So, really, from the first time Jerry and I played together, there were no mistakes. I was like, 'Damn, this hippie is a mother! He's just like Eric Gale: He understands feeling, he understands what air is in music.'

"I was kind of middle-class in those days, with my alpaca sweater and my pumps with pennies in them. I looked like I had just walked out of Yale. But when we started to play together at the Matrix and then at Winterland, people began to see me change. They saw the beard and the hair grow, the tennis shoes come. It was like *The Body Snatchers*. That came from Jerry. He taught me that it's not what you wear that matters. What matters is that you love music like I love music. Forget about the rest of that shit. Forget even about the money. Let's just play.

"All the years I knew Jerry, he never stopped wanting to learn. If there was something he didn't understand, he wanted to do it. He'd say to me, 'What's that tune you're playing, Merl?' I'd say, '"My Funny Valentine."' And he'd immediately say, 'I want to learn it.' It would take him a couple of months to get it together. Then we'd start playing it out, and it was incredible. Another time he asked me, 'That run you did on that song. What was that?' I said, 'That was an Art Tatum run,' and I played it for him, very slowly. Then, maybe a week later, as he was taking a solo at this gig, he turned around, looked at me, played that same Art Tatum run, up-tempo, and smiled at me like, 'Yeah! Thank you, man.'

"When I wrote songs, he understood them right off the bat. He'd say, 'How about if I do this?' and play a line. And it would be perfect, exactly what I was thinking. We wouldn't see each other for two or three years, but when I'd call him to come to the studio, bang, he'd hit everything there on the first take. Some of Jerry's finest playing was on *Blues for the Rainforest*, and we hadn't seen each other for three or four years, but every cut was a first take. We had two days to do the album, but we played through everything with no hassle and spent most of the time just hanging out and talking.

"Sometimes we'd play things together that were so unbelievable that we'd just start laughing onstage. Or we wouldn't be playing anything, and he'd turn around, strike one chord, and we'd take off, on the same song. Or, when we'd be playing a stadium gig, he'd point to the top of the highest row, then he'd hit this note so clean that you could actually see it bounce off that row like a home run. Man, he blew me away. He was a superstar."

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAY BLAKESBERG

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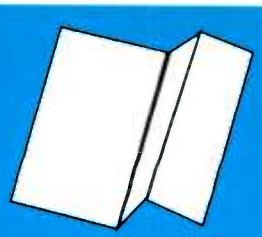

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You only need one piano. That one-of-a-kind that makes you play and sound your best. Yamaha gives you three. The P500. P300. And P150.

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