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# MUSICIAN

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THE MUSICIAN INTERVIEW



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54 95 CANADA ISSUE No 239

World Radio History

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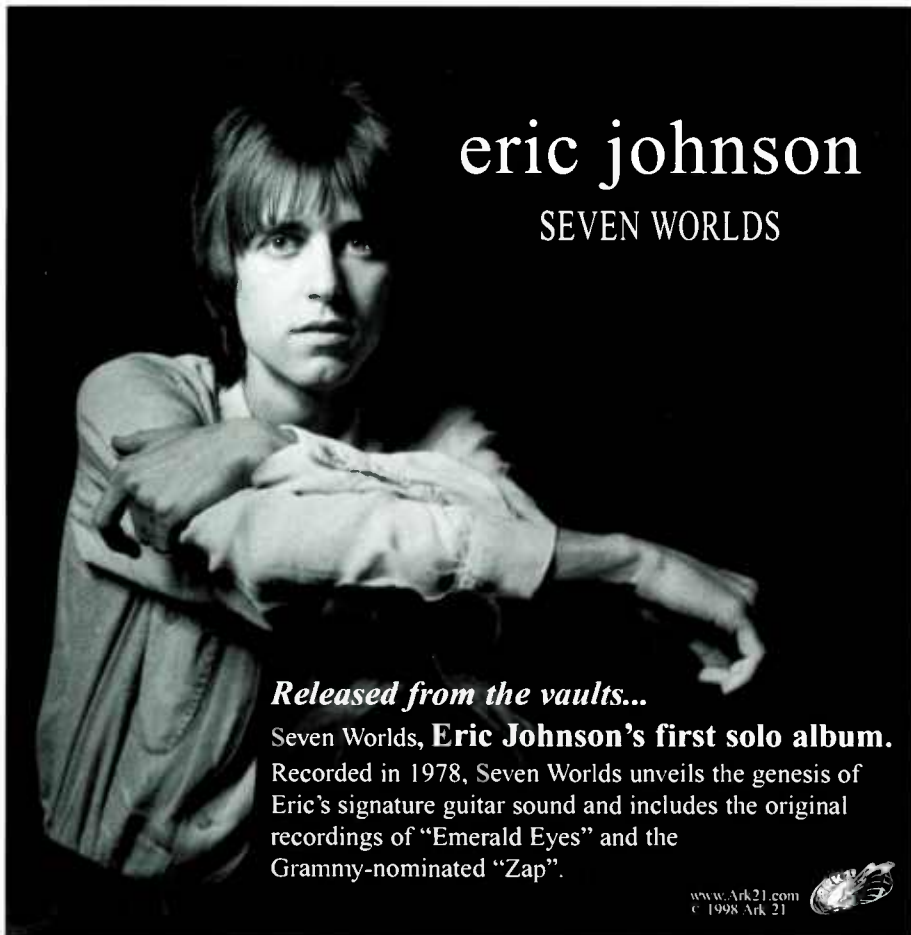
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# eric johnson

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# letters

## radio, radio

I must react strongly against "John Doe"'s article about radio programming ("The Truth About Radio," Headlines, Aug. '98). The apathy of commercial radio towards quality music (and local artists) may be overwhelming, but if everyone with a chisel took a chip at it, there would be hope. Instead, "Doe" simply says, "Screw it, it's too big, if you can't beat 'em . . ." There are solutions, and the local original artist can get his or her music out there, thanks to the Internet. I work for a company that strives to help the unknown original musician get his or her music heard and make money in the process. Check it out at the address listed below. I hope more will take up this cause rather than wallow in their own indifference.

Kudos, however, to you and Frank Filipetti (Studio Techniques, Aug. '98) for acknowledging that a great record is not about the price tag on the mic, but about the heart in the performance. Continue exposing the myth of "album quality."

**jon gillespie**  
editor@geneses.com

My husband is so fed up with radio that he bought a portable CD player and carries that to work on public transit. And you can bet he doesn't use it to play the drivel that so-called capitalists spew from their radio stations.

As for Doe's suggestion that we get used to all this, well, I say fuck that. Besides CDs, there are university-sponsored radio stations and music on the web as alternatives. Boycott the hogs who are feeding at the radio trough and trodding on our culture.

**ann safron**  
safron@concentric.net

## give the soundman some

I just saw Jason Zasky's story on how to deal with house soundmen (Working Musician, Apr. '98), and it's great advice for musicians. When I worked as a house soundman, the level of professionalism I set for myself prevented me from intentionally sabotaging a band, but I didn't enjoy working with guys who had an attitude of "I'm a star and you're nobody, so fuck you!" While it may have subconsciously affected my work, I always told myself that these one-hit wonders would be long gone while I was still making a living as a professional sound reinforcement engineer.

I also met a lot of famous entertainers who had great attitudes, were easy to work with, and came into my club, kicked ass, thanked the crew, and left. These guys got

preferential treatment the next time 'round. What about the assholes? Well, I never saw many of them again; I guess they were back to flippin' burgers.

By they way, check out "The Soundman" website at <http://home.sprynet.com/gowebway/ssy2594>. Thanks.

**craig stepp**  
aaaudio@mailexcite.com

## we all whine on

I've never experienced such a bunch of belly achers as those in your July '98 Letters page, which features a group of frustrated musicians (oxymoron) that, in some sick way, enjoy bitching about things like "not getting signed." As the late, great Frank Zappa said, shut up 'n' play yer guitar. If the music business has got you down, *Musician* reader, get a job selling hot dogs in New York City.

Also, although I'm a fan of Ice Cube (Frontman, July '98), I think he's been out in the sun too long. His response to your question about the cost of music licensing would leave one with the impression that Mr. Cube feels he's getting the sour end of the deal when he has to "pay a fee" for the use of samples in his songs. Jeez, the nerve of some people. Imagine wanting to get compensated for your music.

**dean miller**  
Deanrsv@aol.com

## reality in music

Brooke Ely's insistence that "people should only 'make it' when they are fully developed as artists, doing music that is truly them" (Letters, July '98) is a beautiful ideal. Unfortunately, the music business and society in general don't seem to have the time to wait for bands to create the next *Dark Side of the Moon*. Fact is, we musicians feel constant pressure to put up the goods as fast as possible, all in the name of the almighty dollar. I've tried hard to stick to my guns of originality, but after seventeen years of playing and writing music, I'm starting to feel lonely in my quest for musical salvation.

Keith Richards once compared the music business to selling candy bars. The operative word is *selling*. That says it all.

**paul knapp**  
colonial heights, VA

**Send letters to: Musician, 49 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203.**  
Email: [editors@musicianmag.com](mailto:editors@musicianmag.com).



I first joined the Musicians Union when I was about twenty years old, but as the son of a musician who began carrying his card back in the Forties, I had been aware of the organization since I was old enough to reach up and start picking at the piano keys. From my dad's point of view, the Union represented all that was noble about the fraternity of musicians and, beyond that, people whose labor helped line the pockets of the sleazy elite. Which, I have to admit, puzzled me a bit as I got older. I heard stories from my father about union guys shutting down recording sessions and ordering people off of bandstands for the crime of declining to join the AFM. I had trouble squaring this picture of authoritarian gig police with the image of working-class heroes who were fighting for the very people who, it seemed, they were hassling.

Through my early playing years, when I was spending my days in classrooms at the University of Texas and my nights firing up the B-3 in bars all over Austin, I was strictly non-union. With fifty bucks in my pocket after a four-hour set, I figured, who needed to join? What didn't occur to me was that I was earning that money instead of passing the hat precisely because of the union's clout back in my father's day.

Later, when I went on the road, I carried a card from the Austin local. Since then, I have gone hot and cold on the organization, mainly based on my needs at the time. I've rationalized taking cash work, and I've applied for insurance coverage offered by various locals. It's not something I'm especially proud of, but I suspect it's a fairly typical example of how today's musicians and the union relate.

This is why I asked Mark Rowland to write his excellent profile of the Musicians Union in this month's issue. It's a complex, provocative, and enlightening piece. In many ways it's clarified my own position, which is why I'll be signing up with the Nashville local soon. My suggestion for you? Dig into Mark's story on page 50 and draw your own conclusions.

—Robert L. Doerschuk, editor



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*"I only have to sing well enough to sing my songs."*

# Elliot Smith



**B**efore your appearance on the most recent Oscar telecast (for the Good Will Hunting soundtrack), you were a respected but not widely known musician, so I'd imagine that experience gave you a jolt of "frontman" reality.

I was kind of blown away by it. It was so unexpected and unlikely. People like me just don't play on the Oscars. I don't know if I learned very much from it, though. It was so surreal. I thought it was pretty fun in a way that those things can be fun because they're so bizarre, but it wasn't hard to do. It didn't make me really nervous. It makes me more nervous to play for people who came to see me play than it does to play for people who don't know who I am, because I want to play well for the people who come to see me.

*Obviously you didn't want to fall on your face at the Oscars.*

Right, but I also think there's a place for doing that. Part of my complaint with some of the music that's on top of the charts is that it can be kind of inhuman.

*Has the experience of writing music for a soundtrack and gaining so much acclaim as a result of it changed the way you looked at songwriting for your new record, XO (Dreamworks)?*

No. All that stuff about more people knowing who you are really doesn't help you do anything. It's more about *being* something than *doing* something, and I'd rather *do* something. I just wanted the record to sound good in a way that surprised me, that didn't sound like something I already knew I could do.

*How do you do that?*

By trying things and going on how much you love different things about music, and by not getting totally bogged down in predicting

how it's gonna appear to other folks. I wrote "Oh Well, Okay" while we were recording, and it was barely a song when we started recording it.

*It has a glorified home recording sound to it.*

Part of the reason is that I'm not the kind of singer who's totally slick and nails every note. I try to sing as well as I can, but it's not important to me to sing as well as somebody else. I just have to sing well enough to sing my songs.

*Your chord progressions sound like they were written by someone who's obsessed with harmonic resolution. Do you try to fulfill that need, or can you leave some movement unresolved?*

[Laughs.] I can, but I don't usually end up putting songs like that out. Usually I record way more songs than are on the record, and some of them are more experimental—to me anyway. Whether they'd sound more experimental to anyone else, I don't know. To me, things don't have to resolve, but they have to at least *appear* to resolve or it makes me kind of edgy.

*Is that ever a hindrance as you write?*

Oh, sure. The less I can be trapped in the little box that is tradition, the better. But in a certain way I don't want to get out of it.

I like it when things resolve, and I'm not particularly driven to be experimental. I'm happy if I can be original, but to me the point is much more simple: Playing music is its own end.—**Michael Gelfand**

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To read more of Michael Gelfand's interview with Elliot Smith, visit Musician Online at [www.musicianmag.com](http://www.musicianmag.com).

## sideman

**W**hat kinds of session calls are you getting these days?

I'm getting a lot of calls to play Hammond organ, which is my favorite instrument. I had an unbelievable few weeks while I was recording *Beautiful World* [Carrack's recent solo album on Ark 21]: I had calls from—ready for the name dropping?—Elton John, Eric Clapton, and B. B. King! I've been lucky to be invited in to play on records by lots of artists. Some of 'em I've been paid for, some of 'em I haven't. I just turn up and they say, "Fancy to play a bit of organ?" I don't know whether I should send them an invoice or not.

*Was it intimidating to record with Clapton and Elton John?*

Yes, funny enough, it was. It's just because these guys are so famous; it's kind of unreal. When I went to the Clapton sessions, I thought, "This should be a piece of cake, play a bit of blues, I can handle that." Then one of the first songs he wanted to do was a ballad with a million chord changes, and it completely threw me off. Actually, that song didn't make it onto the album. I relaxed after that and really enjoyed the rest of the session.

*Given your pop orientation as a songwriter with Squeeze, Mike + the Mechanics, and your own projects, is it a stretch to play bluesy dates with Clapton?*

Well, the funny thing is, anything kind of rootsy, bluesy, or rhythm-and-blues comes quite naturally to me. What I don't understand is why I keep trying to write these pop songs [laughs]. I sometimes wish I'd gone that kind of road, because I can live in that company quite comfortably, but for some reason I tend to write these little ditties and I don't know where all that stems from.

*When you go into a session, do you bring a tone-wheel Hammond organ or do you play sampled or simulated B-3 sounds?*

I'll take in the real one. I've got a B-3, which I bought while I was on tour with Squeeze from a wedding chapel in Chicago. There's no substitute, really. I've got a couple of things that I use on the road now, like a Roland CK-7, which is not bad and is much more convenient than lugging the Hammond. But when I go into the studio, I actually tend to rent another organ, a [Hammond] C-3, which is my favorite. I believe it used to belong to John Lennon, and now it's owned by my friend Mr. Tiny Evans.

*Do session calls ever involve asking you to bring in original songs?*

Sure. A few years ago I got a call from Don Felder of the Eagles, before they had agreed to get back together. He asked me if I would be



**"I don't understand why I keep writing these little pop ditties."**

### résumé

Nick Lowe  
Squeeze  
Roxy Music  
Ace  
Eric Clapton  
Elton John  
Mike + the Mechanics

# Paul Carrack

interested in getting involved with him and Timothy B. Schmit and some other people in a vocal band project. I made several trips to California, and one of the songs I took with me was written by Dick Vale, Jim Capaldi, and myself. They loved it, so we made a demo of that with me singing. There was some excitement about this band coming together, but it fell through when they decided to get the Eagles back together. Damn. But then Timothy called a month later and said he needed a song to record for the new Eagles album, and would it be okay to do my song. I said of course, and that's how they cut "Love Will Keep Us Alive."

—David John Farinella

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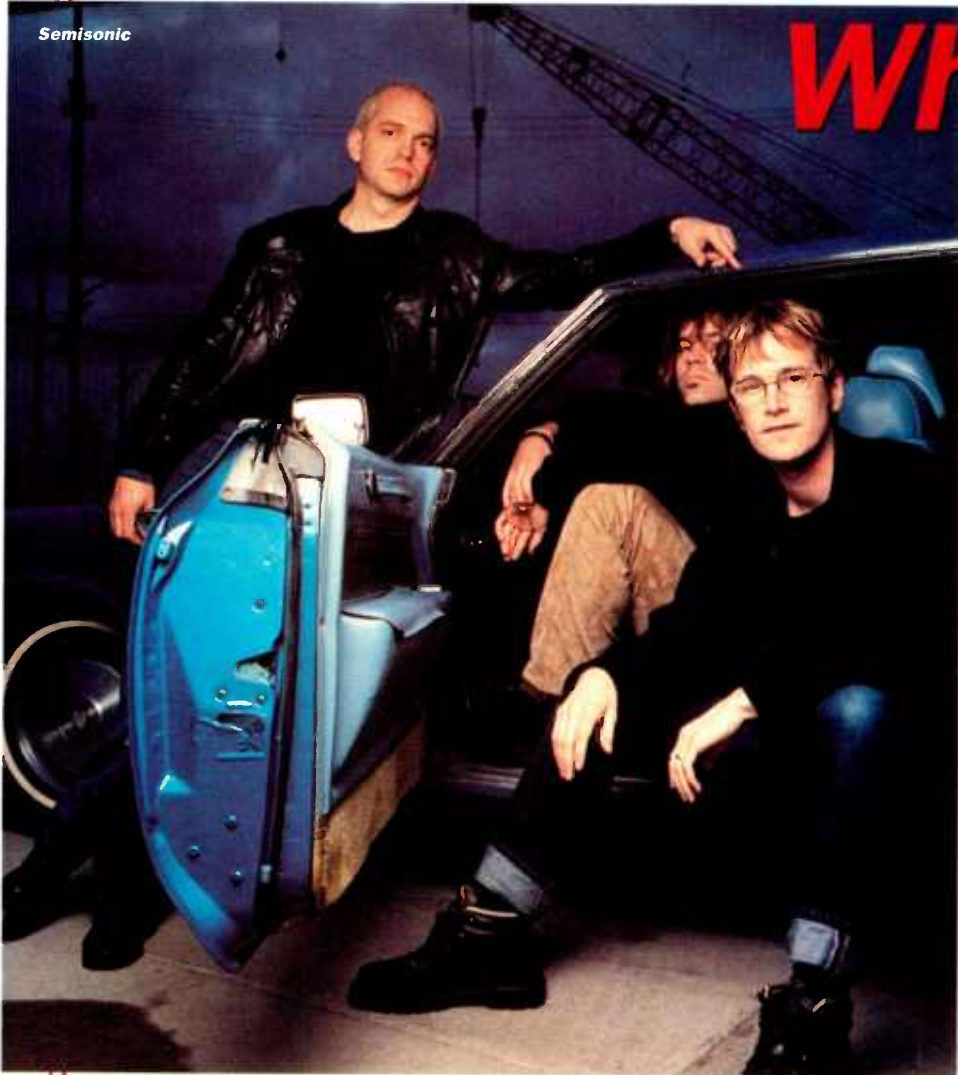
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# working musician

## Who Needs



Semisonic

**A**nyone who saw the recent Rolling Stones tour knows that it's not impossible to add another, say, seventeen or so musicians into the fold. Of course, when you're the kings of rock & roll, anything is possible—but would, say, a trio like **Semisonic**, whose use of synthesizer lines on their latest release, *Feeling Strangely Fine* (MCA), be forced to become a foursome in order to faithfully reproduce their album in live situations?

Singer/guitarist Dan Wilson thinks not. "I've seen stadium shows where people did that. I understand why they do it: You just can't get enough thickness and warmth out of just one guitar in a stadium. At the moment I'm just not into it. When you change the dynamic of a band, even by having someone who's performing with you, somebody ends up unhappy. It changes the whole internal workings of the band."

That said, Wilson and his bandmates are doing the best they can with what they have while on the road: Drummer Jake Slichter adds piano parts (the keyboard is to the right of his kit, above the floor toms) to the songs "Singing in My Sleep" and "Secret Smile," and triggers a number of samples and loops on top of keeping time, while bassist John Munson combines his bass chores with the electric piano parts of "Closing Time." ("I

### JOHN LURIE OF THE LOUNGE LIZARDS

## IF I KNEW THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW...

We had done *Queen of All Ears* (Strange & Beautiful Music) originally with David Byrne [Luaka Bop Records] and Warner Bros., and honestly, if I knew then what I know now, I would have just made the record myself and never had them in the process. I would have saved a lot of money, and the record would have been out two years earlier. What ended up happening was that I put up the money myself, so I would have just taken my money and taken the band into the studio and started the label two years ago, and I would have three albums out now instead of this one.

[So] we started a label [Strange & Beautiful Music], we got distribution everywhere, and it's working. I was nervous that it wouldn't work; there's a lot of

bureaucrat stuff to get through running a label, which I don't like too much. I'm pretty much on the phone with them all the time, [talking] about this and that. Our biggest problem is making CDs sound good, because they sound very shrill and hard to me in general. You leave the studio after you mix with this thing you love, and you go to have it mastered, [which adds] a little bit of that digital sheen to it, and it gets kind of clean somewhere. Then you take the master, and then they make their test disc, and then it [sounds] a little harder again. Then they mass-produce it, and it's a little harder and brighter and less soulful again, so if I knew now what I'm going to know *later*, I'd be a lot happier.

The thing about digital all being the same [as analog] is shit. Four generations later, you could blindfold me, and I will tell you every time which is which. There's a whole level of overtones that never get caught in recordings. They just disappear. So I really don't know if I want to do the next record digitally or not. I really don't know.—**Michael Gelfand**

# a 3rd Wheel?

finally get to use those piano lessons my parents forced me to take," he explains.)

In Wilson's eyes, all this multi-tasking adds more to the band's show than it detracts. "We've discovered we can do this, and I think it's fascinating to watch," he insists. "There's a bit of the contortionist thing going on, but it's still musical. If it sounded bad, then it would be a gimmick, but because it sounds so fucking groovy it is not a shtick—it's this amazing thing we've discovered how to do."

Where Semisonic stands pat on its showmanship, the **Lonesome Organist**, a.k.a. Jeremy Jacobsen, is merely living up to his name. Jacobsen, who plays drums, keyboards, and guitar simultaneously—while singing—in his performances, laughingly admits he had thought about bringing someone into the studio with him while he was recording his debut release, *Collector of Cactus Echo Bags*: "I had considered it, actually. There were a few people I was looking at, but I had committed myself to the name of the act, for one, and I thought it would be more interesting to see

what I could come up with myself."

To perform his one-man act, Jacobsen sits at his drum kit with sticks tied to each wrist, a mic hung around his neck, a guitar balanced on his knee, and keyboards situated to one side or another. (Harmonica occasionally finds its way into the mix.) Jacobsen built his rig via experimentation while trying to see which combinations created the fullest sound, gave him the fastest payback, and afforded the most musical opportunities. "Live, it's a little silly, really. It's changing these days, but it has been a coordination festival or something. It's funny, but I'm making a sound that's relatively impressive to viewers."

Though MIDI would make his life easier, Jacobsen has avoided it until recently. "I decided early on that I wasn't going to use MIDI equipment, but I've kind of turned around and I'm trying to develop some new stuff with samplers," he says. "I want to get a solenoid contraption together where I can have MIDI control over solenoids for drums. I think it would be fun to build and it might give me another option." —**David John Farinella**



John Lurie



**Y**ou may not know it, but musicians who play electric instruments are constantly exposed to the threat of injury—and even death—due to electrical shocks. The most common shocks arise from the interaction between a sound system and hand-held electric instruments, but you can prevent these unpleasant events if you follow a few simple safety precautions.

- Make sure that your amplifier's AC plug is in good working order.
- Look out for stage AC boxes that look as though they've met with too much abuse. Always bring a ground lift, heavy-duty three-prong AC cables, and an AC extension box with individual plug receptacles.
- Do not use worn cables or zip cord.

If you get shocked by a microphone, try switching your guitar's cable. If that doesn't work, use a foam windscreen on the mic or try singing within a foot of the mic without touching it. (This method is imperfect, however, and can still leave you tingling from small electrical jolts.)

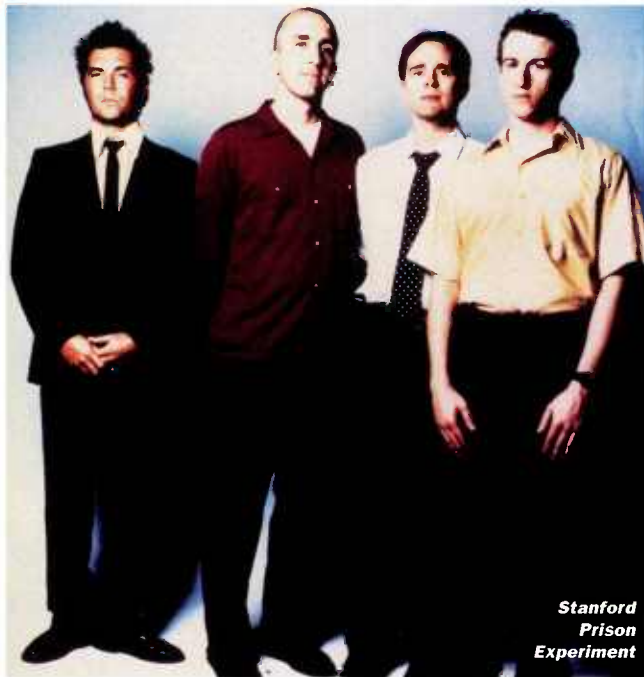
If you're a keyboardist who also sings, be careful with how you handle program switches. If your lips are on the mic when you touch one of the small screws on the switch plates of your keyboard, you could create a ground loop that produces a shock.

Electricity is the first order of business when it comes to playing electronic equipment, but it can be dangerous. Always think of and respect the power it possesses. —**Dinky Dawson**

It's almost impossible to avoid being creatively influenced by your heroes, but how do you make sure you don't end up paying too much tribute to them—especially when you get the opportunity to share the bill with them? The **Stanford Prison Experiment** was confronted with just that problem when they toured with the Jesus Lizard back in 1994, but now that they're out on the road with them again, Stanford can look back and see how the first experience helped shape them: They've absorbed the Lizard's influence and overcome it to find their own voice.

"When we first toured with them, it was like going to rock school or something," says Stanford guitarist Mike Starkey. "Those guys just kicked so much ass and rocked so hard every single night, it was definitely inspiring. We're considered to be a live band, and they really set us up to be the band that we are."

Starkey acknowledges Lizard's influence in Stanford's recordings: "They definitely had an effect on us, especially on our second record [*The Gato Hunch* (World Domination, 1995)] with the bass guitar, and [Jesus Lizard guitarist] Duane Denison had an influence on me with those flat-five types of chords." But



## Hero Worship?

with one of these really great bands, you should just try to watch them as much as you can and understand the nuances of what they're doing. Then bring that knowledge up into your own music."—**Mike Bieber**

Stanford's latest effort, *Wreckreation* (Island), finds both Starkey and his band sounding more like themselves than anyone else. "It was kind of like, what can we pull from both of our previous records to make something different but that sounded like Stanford," he says.

For his part, Starkey's own musical evolution documents the challenge of finding one's "voice" with one's respective instrument. "It's one of the hardest things to do," he says. "For me, sometimes when you play something, it really strikes me like, 'Wow, this is really me!' It just resonates like it's truly you coming out of your guitar or whatever. I think that the key to finding that is to not be afraid to try new stuff."

Touring with the Jesus Lizard remains "rock school" for Starkey and the rest of Stanford Prison Experiment. "It's not like we're looming in their shadow because, at this point, I think we're pretty different from them," he says. "It doesn't feel like they're a better version of us, or something like that. But really, if you're touring

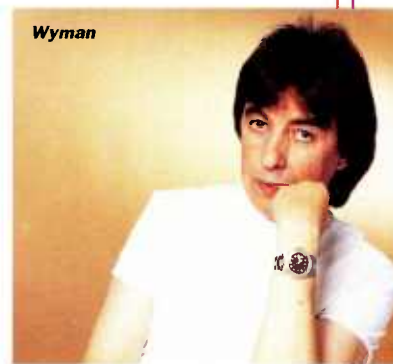
## Parting Ways

The decision to leave a band is never an easy one. Insecurities and uncertainties abound. You might lose the support group and sounding board to whom you once turned. But the tradeoff is that you can gain back your creativity and the ability to be your own boss.

While most musicians don't stick with a band as long as **Bill Wyman** played with the **Rolling Stones**, the bassist still encountered these same problems in deciding to quit after 31 years. "It was a situation where I knew there was no room for any other songwriters," explains Wyman. "Mick and Keith hogged that, so there was no encouragement or help as there is in most bands. It was a closed door. If you had musical ideas, you had no vehicle to do them, so I had to do solo recordings and movie scores. Otherwise, I was frustrated."

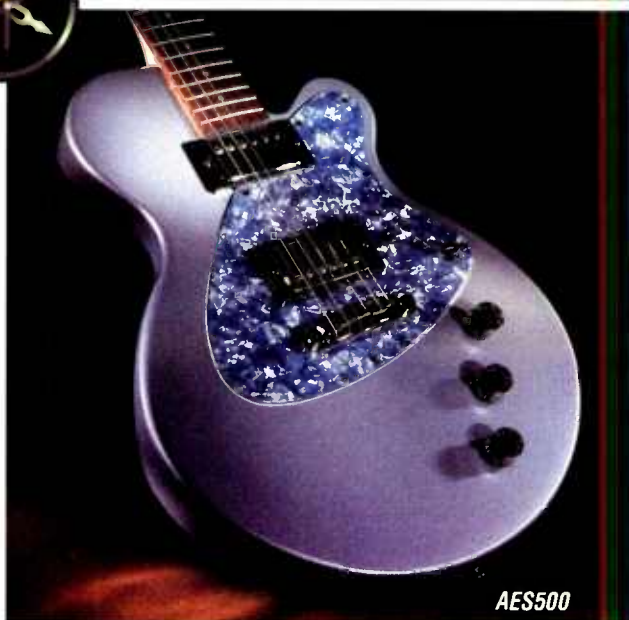
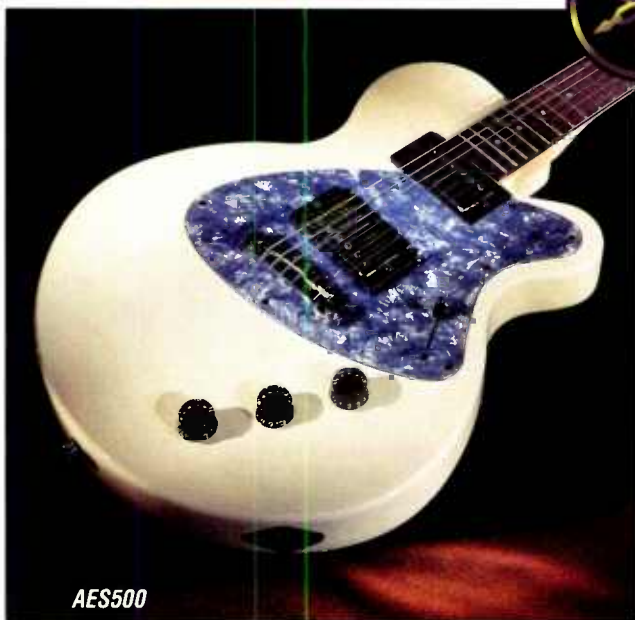
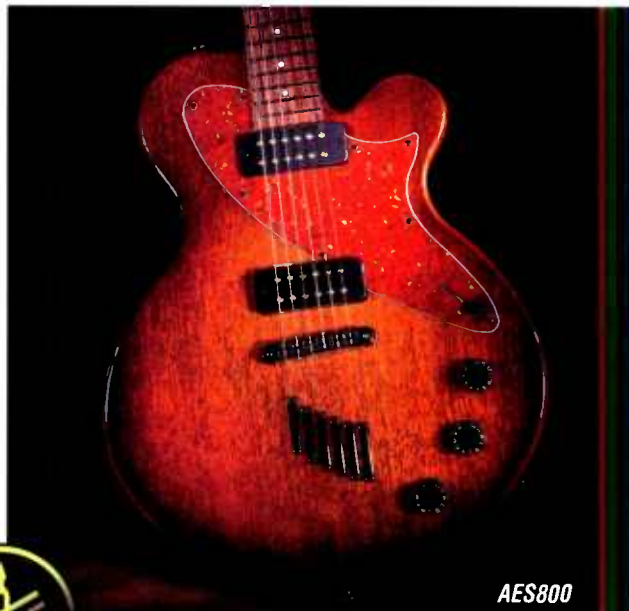
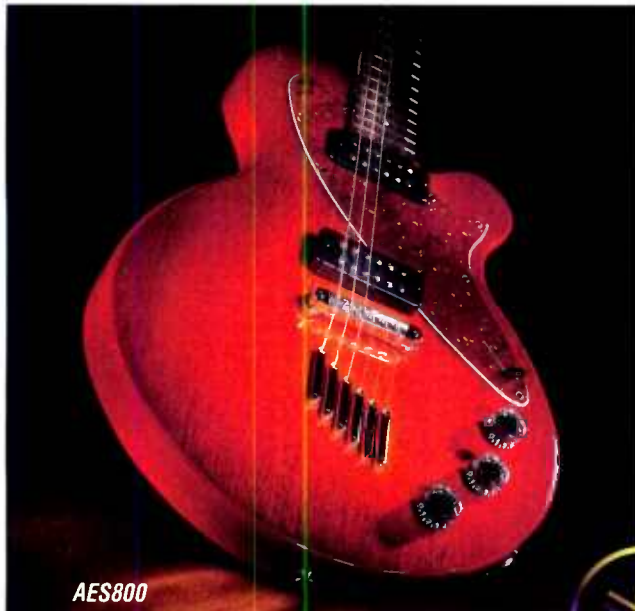
Working on solo albums and side projects kept Wyman from leaving the fold earlier than he did, but once he finally quit the Stones he began to feel more fulfilled by his work. Instead of recording *Strutting Our Stuff* (Verve), his latest project, in dribs and drabs, he was able to see it all the way through. "I could focus in and concentrate on it 100 percent and get it done in one whack," he says.

So it doesn't have to be like losing a band when you go your own way; it can be more like gaining your Self.—**Karen Bliss**





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**Zach Danziger  
shows how to  
break down the  
breakdown.**

*by ken micallef*



# **the rules of jungle**

**I**f you build it, they will come. This motto from the movies holds true for a handful of drummers who are invading what was once considered the jungle programmer's exclusive domain. Jungle, or drum 'n' bass, with its sonic assault of booming bass, interstellar sound effects, and hyper-speed drum loops, sounds like music incapable of purely human reproduction. But drummer Zach Danziger and his band, Boomish, are recreating jungle in their own image.

Danziger, a 26-year-old New York veteran who has worked with Eddie Gomez, Wayne Krantz, the Bob Mintzer Big Band, Michel Camilo, Walt Mink, and Vaganza, brings hefty drumming technique—along with a deep knowledge of jungle programming—to the jungle

genre. Danziger approaches jungle drumming not simply as an exercise of blowing fusion phantasms over double-time loops, but as a language with specific rules, roots, and guidelines to be learned.

"It's important to know the primary breakbeats used in jungle, and to be able to identify them," says Danziger, in his Manhattan studio. He plays a rare, 45 single of the most used drum loop in jungle, "Amen, Brother," by the Winstons (flipside, the Sixties hit "Color Him Father"). The song's breakdown drum groove, which recalls Bernard Purdie, is funky, raucous, and reverberant, the perfect candidate for looping. Danziger also plays a sample CD, *Jungle Frenzy* (Time and Space), that has two more popular drum loops: "Apache" by the

Incredible Bongo Band, and "Soul Pride," which sounds like a James Brown or Maceo Parker groove.

From these inspirational grooves, Danziger creates his own live drum patterns, records them via the sampler, and then the computer takes over in the form of a sequencer.

"Programmers take the grooves and dice them up with the sequencer," he says. "They cut the beats into pieces, slicing up the quarter- and eighth-notes. They reprogram the chunks on a keyboard, then they open their sequencers up and store the moves in a drum machine-like pattern."

With the sequencer, Danziger breaks down his original drum pattern over a sixteen-key, two-octave range. He then relearns his own groove by concentrating on the fragments that are now assigned to the individual keys. By learning either the sound of a single key repeating or looping—or a combination of keys—he imitates the sound of the machine, though the original source is his own groove. To approximate jungle drumming, Danziger learns its language, which is drum patterns looped from sampler to sequencer.

"I'm not thinking I'm gonna just blow. I'm looking at the fragments of my groove," he says. "First piece (or key) is two bass drum notes (See Example A), second key (Example B) is snare note, hi-hat, and grace note. I learn the pieces just as the sequencer has broken them down over the keyboard."

"The computer takes my groove, looks at it, then goes chop-chop over the keyboard. I approach jungle drumming like the programmers look at the chunks. I try to replicate the different chunks of notes just like they program chunks of notes into a new groove. I'm not thinking like playing a typical drum beat. It's not a stream-of-consciousness groove, but chunks of notes repeating themselves." Playing his small kit

to approximate the pitch of sped-up loops, Danziger plays repeating, machine gun patterns that reflect the static uniformity a drum loop. "The drumming has a cut-and-paste feel, which is synonymous with jungle music. It might become a four-bar pattern, but you are thinking in terms of the chunks and learning how to play them with precision. What you're playing may be between the primary notes of a drum pattern (Example C), however the computer breaks it up.

"And instead of playing the chunks with feel or variation, you want it to sound like a piece. It's like you are imitating a broken record. You want the pieces to sound accurate, like you're triggering the same piece over and over again. You have to make the attack of each strike very uniform and precise to make it sound like a loop."

Drum tuning, drum size, and choice of cymbals also play a role in replicating the jungle sound. Danziger's drums-on-helium set consists of a 10"x4" snare drum, 16"x14" bass drum, and 8" and 10" toms. In place of toms he sometimes uses electronic pads from which he can trigger spoken word samples (such as Mr. Rogers asking "Are you having the egg salad or the tuna fish?") or loops.

"You can use electronic drums," he recommends, "or use mic pickups on your acoustic drums to trigger electronic sounds. Then you get the real feel, but with the electronic sounds."

Danziger has been busy giving clinics across the U.S. that feature his own cymbal design, the Remix series by Zildjian. "Remix cymbals are smaller and hammered in a way that maintains fullness; they're not splashy, but it is a tighter, smaller sound and they punch quickly."

## JUNGLE VARIATIONS

### A. Uncut Groove

(●) = ghost note

### B. Variation One

Here's the second beat of the A pattern extracted and repeated.

### C. Variation Two

Here's the second beat and one-half of the third beat from the A pattern extracted and repeated again.

Hi-hats are 12", crashes are 12" and 14", the ride is 17". I don't enjoy playing pads for cymbals; they don't give you any rebound. You need that acoustic feel in a club, and an electronic drum pad won't give you the bite of a real drum or cymbal."

"For the first time in my life, I want to sound like a machine," says Danziger, sounding surprised at himself. "My biggest inspiration are guys like Photek, Squarepusher, and Plug. I respect the style so much I don't just want to blow my fusion chops over it or record my drumming and speed it up. I want to understand the rules before I break them. One day I'll do something original with it, but I want to know where it came from. You have to understand what they did, then you can build and move on from it."

*"I've been using GHS strings for a really long time—ever since they came out in the 60s actually. And after all these years, I still enjoy using GHS strings, so I guess it's pretty obvious how I feel about them. I hope you enjoy them as much as I have."*

**PAT MARTINO**

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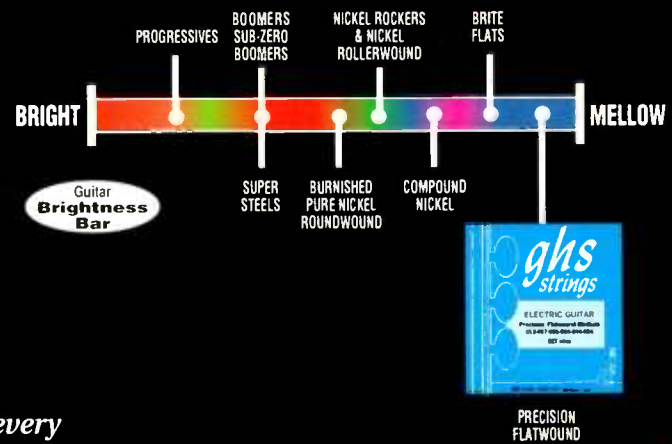
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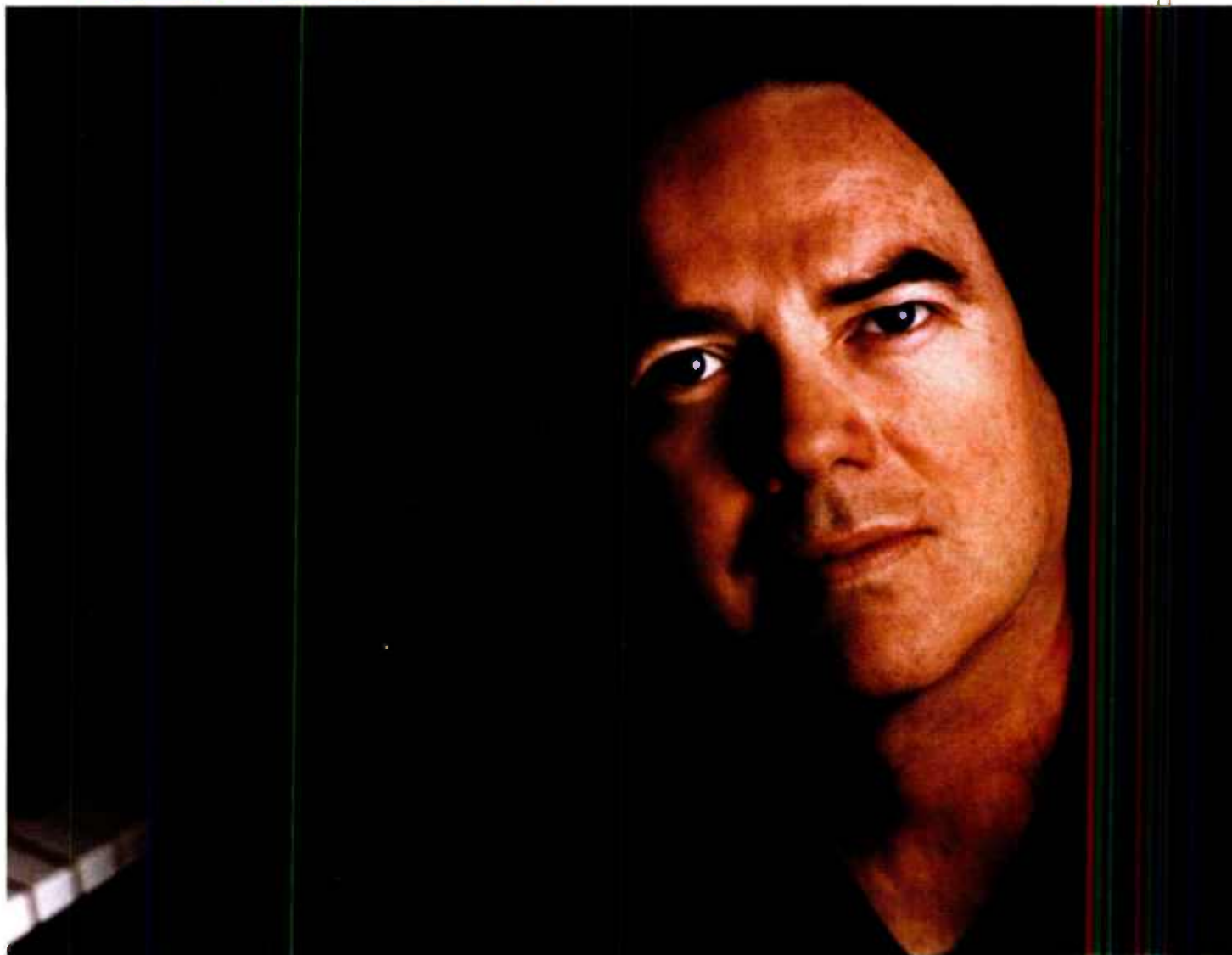


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World Radio History



# The Song in a Single Word

*A treatise in writing lyrics, from an upcoming book by Jimmy Webb.*

**S**eptember marks the publication of perhaps the finest book about songwriting of our time. *Tunesmith: Inside the Art of Songwriting* is the self-deprecating title of this memoir and method book written by Jimmy Webb, whose grasp of his art and ability to document its processes extends far beyond mere smithery. In its pages Webb examines melody, structure, and variation in the pop context, the intangible essence of inspiration, the impact of a ruthless marketplace on creativity, and

other important issues. This month we offer an excerpt from *Tunesmith*, in which Webb considers the fundament of lyric writing—the word—and reflects on its application in song.

The first element of “form” is its smallest subdivision: the individual word and its nearest relative, the rhyme. These will be our timbers and nails. With them we can build an endo-skeleton or frame for our building. . . . It is fair to say that some words will be more useful than others for our purpose, and that one of the writer’s most effective tools in the construction of a lyric is the plain old dictionary. We could think of it as a list of inventory for the different materials stored in the lumberyard.

The architect imagines the kind of building he wants to construct, and his mind plays with the wide variety of materials available. In the dictionary he finds oaken words, words of stone and paper, plywood words, and words like steel beams, words of ironwood and ash, rich resonant words of mahogany and cherry, rococo words that swirl like burlled walnut, simple pungent pine words, heavy words of dark ebony, ephemeral, silly words of balsa, everlasting words of marble and granite, and translucent words like colored glass along with blunt pragmatic words made of lead and cement.

A writer who attempts to write prose, poetry, song lyrics, or automobile advertising without a vocabulary of suitable depth is entering a tournament of wits unarmed. I will go one step further and say that if there is any intrinsic merit in curiosity, then we should read at least one dictionary, from “aardvark” to “Zwolle” (a city in the Netherlands). At the very least we should be on the lookout in our reading and conversation for that unfamiliar word with an intriguing sound, the one whose meaning we have always guessed at but about which we are not certain. A few pages in the back of the songwriters’ notebook can

be set aside for scribbling these down, particularly words of a descriptive or evocative nature, along with a brief definition.

Is there any advantage in seeking out unusual, interesting words and in using them in preference to the mundane and commonplace? Let’s look at the prevailing point of view first. It goes something like this: “Song lyrics should be as simple as possible. Multi-syllables or any hint of subtlety or nuance should be zealously

the writer inexorably toward cliché. Why so? Because generations of industrious *rhymers* have already applied themselves to wringing out the possibilities of such standbys as “love” (above, dove) and “heart” (start, apart) and “eyes” (cries, tries). The cliché is waiting in the tired rhyme with a Cheshire cat grin.

A general rule would be: When deciding on a title or a hook line for a proposed song, try to include a key word that offers the greatest number of rhyming possibilities. I have been recently working on a song called “Just for Now.” Let’s look for a moment at Clement Wood’s list of possible rhymes for the word *now*:

Allow (usable, but brings to mind “all that heaven will allow”—a bit sappy); Anyhow (usable, but not a very attractive word and definitely overused); Avow (archaic and probably unusable); Bough (ditto); Bow (takes me in the “take a final bow” direction—don’t like); Bow-wow (really!); Brow (nobody really says “brow” anymore—they say “forehead”); Chow (I wasn’t really thinking of writing a comical song); Cow (she’s ugly, but not that ugly); Dhow (arcane, perhaps might find a home in special material); Disallow (smacks of the IRS); Disavow (legalese); Endow (more legalese); Foo Chow (?); Frau (she’s not German); Frow (a variation on “froe”—a cleaving tool); Hankow (in China?); Hoosegow (it’s not a Western

either); How (usable); Howe (her name isn’t Howe); Kowtow (no comment); Kwangchow (definitely in China); Landau (she’s not a car); Mow (a piled-up stack or the sound a Chinese cow makes); Now (identical); Overbrow (Hm-m?); Plough, Plow (a rough word, distinctly out of place in a romantic song); Pow-wow (unusable); Prow (arcane and unusable); Row (comedic); Scow (ugly); Slough (a mass of dead tissue separating from an ulcer); Snow-plough (they’ve already listed plough—why “snow-plough?”); somehow (usable, but

**“A writer who attempts to write song lyrics without a vocabulary of suitable depth is entering a tournament of wits unarmed.”**

avoided. Assume that your listener has the equivalent of a sixth-grade education and you won’t be far wrong.”

From a commercial standpoint—whether or not this assumption about the mental capabilities of his listener is accurate—the writer would appear to be on safe ground by adhering to this commonly-held, preemptive doctrine. In practice, however, there are a couple of major pitfalls.

One is that the consistent use of overly familiar language in line after line nudges

eliminates "anyhow"); Soochow (somehow I don't think it looks much like Nashville); Sow (what I call her when she calls me a pig); Swatow (Poland?); Thou (distinctly archaic, with religious overtones); Upplow (not even defined in Webster's); Vow (Dudley Do-right—smells moldy); Wenchow (a buxom Chinese barmaid of easy virtue); Wow (!).

So out of this impressive-looking list of 44 rhymes I have five entire words to work with. Depending on the direction the song takes, this might be cut down to three. Which shows that perhaps I either need another song title or that I might write the song in such a way that I do not repeatedly need to rhyme the word "now", or that I go to a thesaurus, the second most important songwriting tool, and find a word that means the same as "now" or a similar phrase ending in a different word that essentially means the same thing (syn.: present, today, at once, directly, forthwith, immediately, instantly, right away, promptly, expeditiously, quickly, speedily, swiftly).

Let's say that after perusing this list of possibilities from the thesaurus I decide that it would do just as well to call the song "Just for Today." Now, according to Clement Wood, I suddenly have a list of 258 rhyming possibilities.

The almighty thesaurus gives us a higher court of appeals to resort to when the going gets tough. If the word we have chosen doesn't make a true rhyme—or any kind of rhyme, for that matter, or offers few, if any, useful alternatives—we can refer to the thesaurus, very quickly find a *synonym* for that troublesome word, and go back to the rhyming dictionary to search for a new rhyme that may succeed in completing the same thought. For instance, in the same work-in-progress I have written a line: "while the rain falls and the (blank) (blank) -alls." The music fairly cries out for this rhythmic resolution. I have experimented with "and the siren calls" but find it unsatisfactory, suggesting Greek mythology or cop cars. So I change "falls" to "comes" and arrive at: "when the rain comes and the thunder drums." This process should go on constantly during the construction of the lyric in a fluid give-and-take of trial and error.

When I wrote my song "Adios" about leaving California to move East I supposed I

could have come up with some "title/idea" incorporating the word "goodbye." Other lines in the song would almost inevitably have ended with "cry" or "try"—perhaps the dreaded "I feel like I could *die*" or the equally noxious "and now it's time to *fly*." Because of my "adopted" mother's Hispanic heritage I decided on "adios," an alternative that gave me both a moody, mariachi-flavored musical framework and access to some unusual rhymes. I actually rhymed the word "morose," whose inclusion seems to have amazed a great many folks. I was also led to the little-used "close," which is a fuzzy-warm word that fit perfectly. I was safeguarded to some extent from cliché by my decision to shy away from "goodbye" as my premier rhyming choice.

In a recent effort called "Time Flies," a somewhat fatalistic view of the way human beings perceive or fail to perceive the passage of time, I observed that "picnics on warm Julys" become strangely, almost without our noticing, "deep *umber* autumns and winter goodbyes." There is an extensive palette of names for colors almost as diverse as the colors themselves. Skies do not have to be either "blue" or "gray." Sunsets are not by definition "golden." (There is a sunset in "Adios" that is "blood-red," 'nuff said.)

Even if writers are successful in using commonplace words and rhymes, utilizing them without indulging in innocuous clichés, they may deprive themselves of an enormous source of inspiration and opportunity in doing so. The interesting choice of word leads to the unique rhyme. The unique rhyme to an extraordinary line. The extraordinary line to an original perspective that makes a song stand out from the rest. By varying our word choices and being biased slightly in favor of the unusual, by giving our listener the benefit of the doubt in our assumptions of his or her intelligence, we grant ourselves the potential to create original and significant works, songs that will make a reputation for the writer as an innovator—someone to be taken seriously. It is such a writer that producers and recording artists listen to almost without question if for no other reason than curiosity. ♪

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# Making Money With Your Music May Be Easier Than You Think.

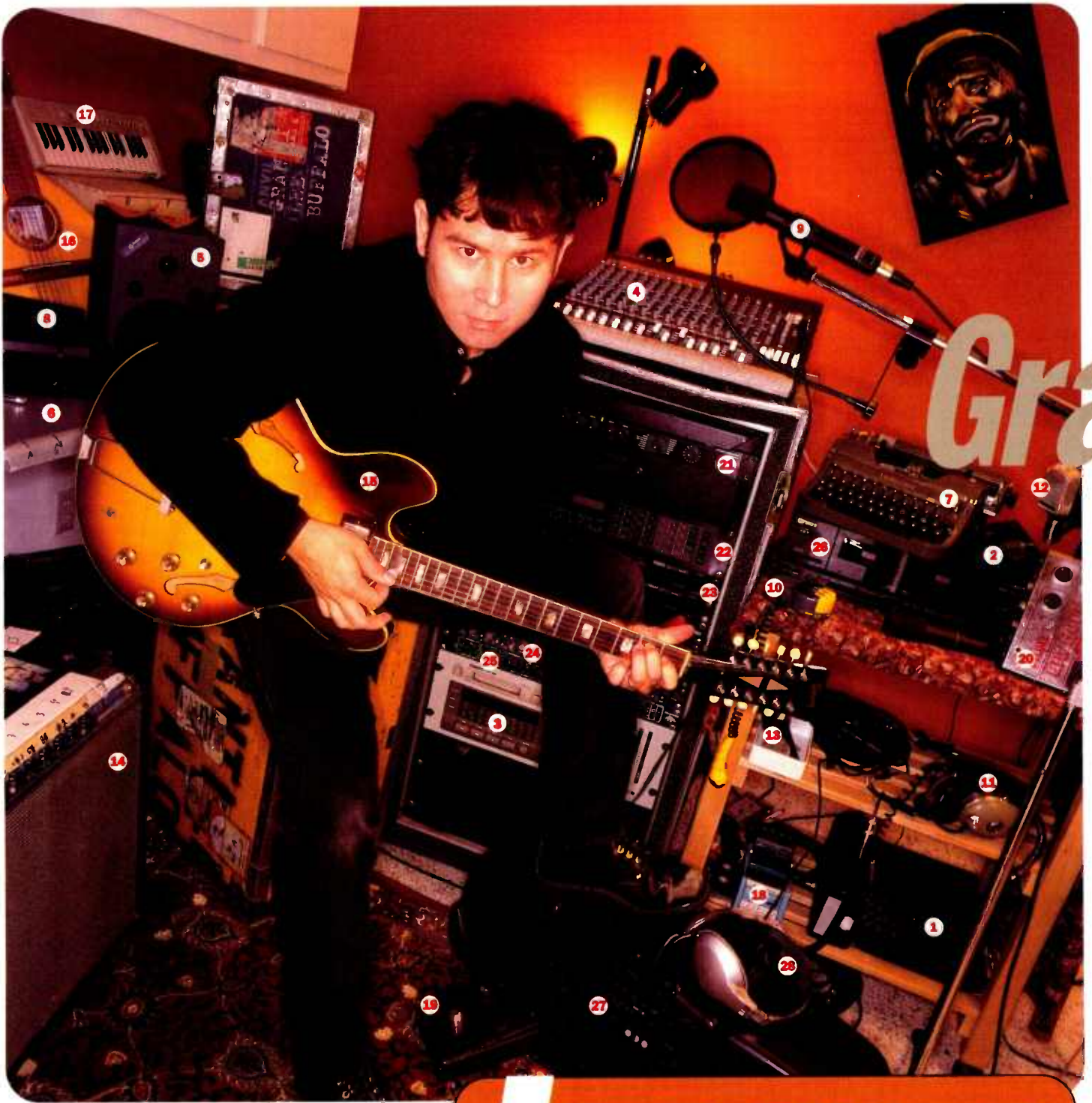
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# home studio

by alan di perna  
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**G**rant Lee Phillips confesses a fondness for arcane and obscure musical instruments. "Because they're not as dependable as more state-of-the-art instruments, it creates more of a rapport or conversation—or, better yet, more of a wrestling match—between the musician and the instrument," he says. "It makes for a conflict: something interesting. That's probably the theme to bear in mind as you look at these instruments here. You have to realize that there's a struggle going on."

Many of Phillips' creative struggles take place in a detached, converted garage in the back yard of his Burbank, California home.

record was pretty much delivered from me straight into a tape recorder."

The process would often begin by laying down a click track from Phillips' **Boss DR-550 MkII Dr. Rhythm** ⑧. From there, anything could happen.

"A lot of times, I'll turn on the tape machine early in the process," he says, "when I have nothing but a chord and a melody. Then it's a case of me moaning or whining into a microphone and then deciphering it later. It's a kind of tape recorder divination." Said moaning, whining, and howling is usually directed into one of Phillips' **AKG C-1000** microphones ⑨.

"I've been using these for a while," he says. "They're affordable.

I got them when I was working on four-track. I got a new Shure mic the other day—one of those Fifties Elvis mics [a 55SH Series 2, not shown]. I've got another one of those that I've had for ages, passed down from my grandmother. I've been taking one of those microphones and processing it through a SansAmp [not shown]."

An unrepentant fan of novelty vocal effects, Phillips will cry real tears if deprived of his **Mega-Mike** ⑩, a toy given to him by L.A.-based multi-instrumentalist Jon Brion, who also plays on *Jubilee*: "It's low on batteries right now, but it has the sound laughter, sirens, spirits. . . . Yeah, it does it all. With a built-in lo-fi mic. And these **Koss** headphones ⑪ were also passed on to me. The idea is you sing through them, rather than using them to monitor. It's another way of processing a vocal. These sounds don't always make their way onto the final product. But when I tinker at home, I'm such a novice that I really enjoy breaking all the rules, turning all the wrong dials and making mistakes along the way. It's a way to work through ideas."

Other mics include an **AKG D-12E** ⑫ on loan from David Lowery of Cracker and used for kick drums and bass guitar cabinets. A **Shure SM58** ⑬ is often placed in front of a miniature Marshall amp [not shown] for what Phillips describes as "the largest guitar sound ever."

Alternately, he'll use his Seventies **Fender Twin Reverb** amp ⑭. Two vintage Twins, an Electroplex, Mesa/Boogie Heartbreaker, Marshall JCM 800s and Vox AC30s [all not shown] were used in various places on the album.

Phillips' '66 **Gibson ES335** twelve-string ⑮ is used mainly for slide guitar work. One doesn't hear much slide twelve-string these days, but Phillips is all for the idea: "You get that extra high octave. It just kind of sticks out. It always finds a place in a mix."

A fairly stalwart Gibson man, Phillips has a '68 ES175 as his main electric axe and a beautiful '67 Hummingbird acoustic. He's also been known to strum a Deering six-string banjo, Baldwin electro-acoustic, Kramer electric bass [all not shown] plus a variety of odd stringed instruments from pawn and antique shops around the world. One of these can be seen at the upper left of the photo ⑯.

"I think it's called a bandelero," our man offers. "It's like a miniature, sawed-off twelve-string. I found it in a music shop in Eugene, Oregon years ago. 'Lonestar Song' on our second album was written on that. Just little shimmering chords."

Also important is a tiny

# Grant Lee Phillips

## of Grant Lee Buffalo

This is where he writes and demos songs for his group Grant Lee Buffalo. "I was fortunate in that the fellow who lived here before me had gone to the trouble of soundproofing some of this space. Although what he did was more MIDI-oriented, with banks of keyboards. I'm not so versed in that stuff."

What Phillips specializes in is verbally adroit meta-pop. Over the course of four excellent albums, Grant Lee Buffalo have won a place in the hearts of critics and savvy listeners. While the music is basically guitar-driven, the arrangements turn unexpected corners in delightfully unforeseeable ways. Phillips' co-Buffalo Joey Peterson is the kind of percussionist who'll pick up anything from a pot lid to a djembe in the pursuit of groove innovation. Humble little sounds deployed with grandeur—that's the Grant Lee Buffalo agenda. Their newest album, *Jubilee* (Reprise), has already yielded the modern rock hit "Truly, Truly." "It actually began with a bass part," Phillips says, humming the song's six-note intro bass riff. "And then it was a matter of setting that to a metronome and then filling in the chords around it—finding you could set majors or minors to whatever melody is being played in the bass. So it was working backwards, in a way. A few of the songs on this album actually began with bass lines."

Phillips started out doing his demos on a **TASCAM Porta 07** cassette four-track unit ①, mastering to his **Sony DAT Walkman** ②. But when Grant Lee Buffalo put together a rack system for recording live gigs, Phillips' demo capabilities moved up a notch or two. When the band's off the road, the rig lives in Phillips' studio. He now works on a **TASCAM DA-88** digital eight-track machine ③ with a 16-input **Mackie 1604** mixing board ④, monitoring through **Alesis Point Seven** speakers ⑤ driven by an **Alesis RA-100** reference amplifier ⑥.

There's no single writing method that's best for Phillips. The songs arrive by varied routes. He's even been known to bang them out Raymond Chandler-style on his vintage **Underwood Champion** typewriter ⑦. "For our third album, that was my machine," he says. "I purchased this in Boise, Idaho in '93. But the most recent

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# Liquid Soul

From left: Ron Haynes (trumpet), John Janowiak (trombone), Dan Leall (drums and percussion), Tommy Sanchez (guitar), Williams (saxophone), Showalter (bass), Simone (vocal), Newt Cole (percussion), Dirty MF (MC), Ajax (DJ).



**Artist interviewed:** Mars Williams

**Home Base:** Chicago

**Style:** Infectious, horn-driven nouveau funk

**Latest Album:** *Make Some Noise (Ark 21)*, released May 5

## What is the secret to successful touring?

I delegate jobs to every person in the band. For instance, Ricky Showalter, our bass player, does the technical advance work for all the shows: We rent backline equipment—guitar amps, drums—for our shows, so he makes sure that's covered; he finds out what time the soundchecks are, and all that stuff. Tom [Klein], our guitarist, takes care of the merchandising: He makes sure that our stock is kept up so we can bring enough stuff to each show, and he makes sure that all the sales we get are recorded through the club and then sent to SoundScan. I do all the management. If you do all the advance work, you don't need a tour manager; all you need is a good travel agent.

It's always good to call the club where you're gonna play, because most clubs have deals worked out with certain hotels. You can usually get a cheaper rate through the venue or through corporate rates, which is one reason why I formed a corporation. I also get a corporate discount on renting the vans; I can get a cargo van for \$35 a day. But it's hard to get a fifteen-passenger van without having to pay miles, and paying 25 cents a mile over the limit can really add up. So if we're driving a thousand miles in a weekend, we'll rent minivans and cars, for which you can get unlimited miles.

We book our tours so we hit the major markets first, so we fly into a base. Let's say we're gonna do the East Coast. We fly into

New York and rent two vans. We'll do one show in New York, then drive to Boston the next day, where we'll rent backline gear for that show. Then we'll drive to Providence, rent the backline, and do a show there. We look for gigs within driveable distances, which is maybe seven hours. At the end, you return the vans and fly back home. And remember, if you're a big band like Liquid Soul, you can get group rates by booking tickets for more than ten people traveling together.

Also, most clubs don't want to book you on Mondays and Tuesdays, because they're not gonna make any money on those days. But that's what kills you—the down time. You have to get hotels for the days off, and you have to pay for the food. So if you're stuck on the road, you have to play a gig, even if it only makes you a couple of hundred bucks—and that's not even gonna cover your costs.

## How can you save time and money when recording?

By doing a lot of preproduction. Have your band completely together, rehearsed and ready to go. And know what works best for your band: Does the band work best by playing all together when they record? Should they be in isolation booths? Should the rhythm section play by itself, with the horns coming in early? Sometimes I'll have the whole band come in to record, even though I might redo the horns and the vocals, because I want the energy of the whole band, with the rhythm section cooking. On some tracks of the new album, I had the rhythm section together in one room, and I was the only horn player; I'd do a guide solo, just to get the rhythm section cookin'. It wasn't really the room I would have liked to record in, and maybe the microphones weren't right. But we kept the solo, because the rhythm section made *me* play better than I could have done if I was overdubbing and trying to recreate that moment.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

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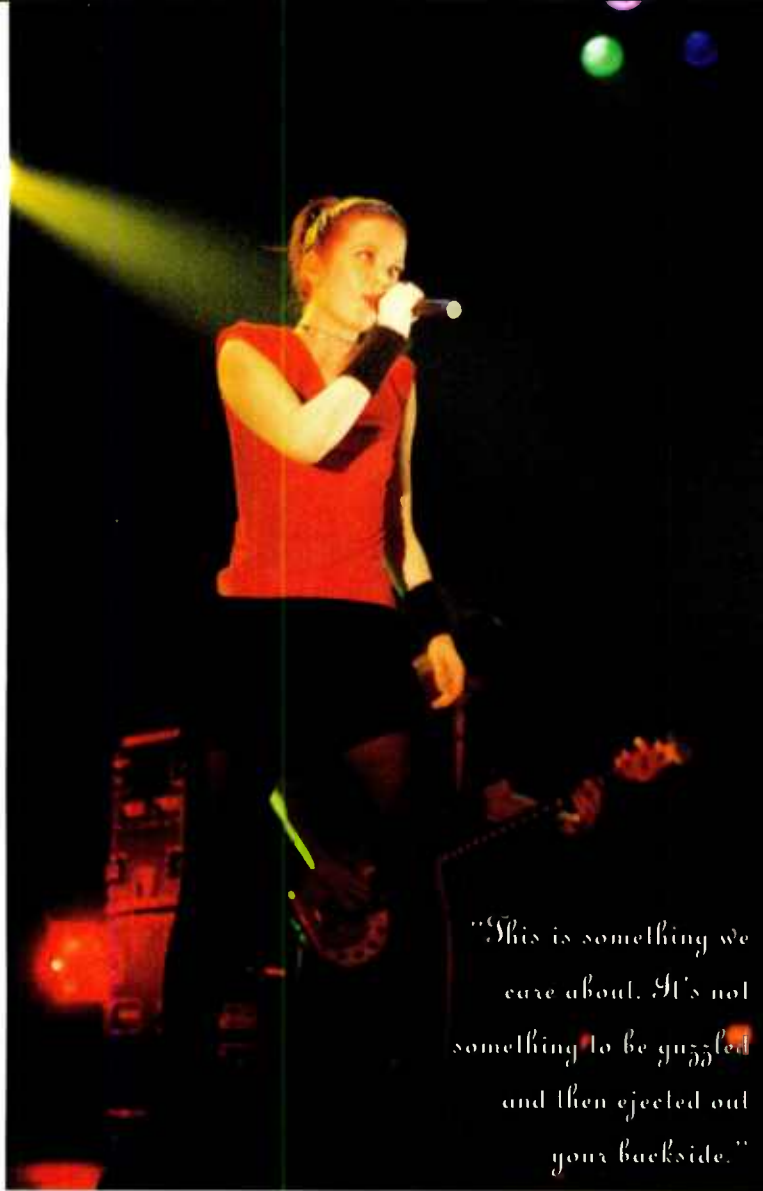


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"This is something we care about. It's not something to be guzzled and then ejected out your backside."

sense of perspective (and humor) about all the hype that swirls around them. Even more impressive is the sense of unity within the band. Collectively involved in all aspects of their music—songwriting, production, and performance—they have a tendency to almost spookily answer questions in a single voice, one band member finishing the thought of another.

Their equanimity is actually somewhat surprising, considering the amount of abuse they've had to endure from some quarters. Eschewing the traditional route of tour-first, record-later ("we've done it all backwards, that's for sure," Erikson observes wryly), Garbage has been accused of not being a "real" band, of instead being an artificial plaything assembled by Vig for his own amusement. This because: (a) Erikson and Marker are college buddies of Vig, and, (b) Shirley Manson was hand-picked to be frontwoman after she was spotted in an MTV video. Somehow, this is supposed to be unfashionable, even politically incorrect. But Erikson and Marker happen to be proficient, inventive guitarists, and all four bandmembers

have more than paid their dues on the road, slogging along in obscurity for years before finally convening in Smart Studios to begin the project that would ultimately become Garbage's debut album. And how much less contrived would it have been if they had instead "discovered" Manson singing in a dive down the road?

Like other groundbreaking producers before them, Vig and company treat the studio itself as a musical instrument, not only utilizing but pushing all the technological tools of the day—in this case, sample loops and the wonders of digital editing—to new limits. Their music is no sonic fast food; it's more like gourmet ear candy. *Garbage*, released in 1995, showed the band's enormous promise and yielded the instant pop classic, "Stupid Girl." Following a solid eighteen months of touring, the band started work on *Version 2.0*, seeking to hone their sound and make it, in Vig's words, "better, bigger, faster, more powerful." As a result, the Garbage signature is now even more clearly defined: dense stacks of polyrhythmic loops and mutated guitars, overlaid with Manson's passionate vocals, provocative lyrics, and hook after hook after hook. It's mainstream pop, it's alternative, it's dance music, it's techno, it's all of the above, wrapped in a glorious multilayered production that yields new surprises every time you hear it.

No, this is no fluke. This is the real deal. From now on, whenever someone tells you that your music sounds like Garbage, take it as a compliment.

*How do you feel the sound of your new album differs from the first one?*

**Vig:** This time around, all four of us were in the same room all the time. We felt more like a band. When Shirley joined us, it was really awkward. We didn't know how the [first] record was going to turn out; we had no intention to tour. Then everything got turned around after we spent a few months together. The new record is more unified, more cohesive, more focused. The tracks are tougher. Shirley's singing is more confident and direct. We hate using the term "jamming" 'cause we're the worst jamming band in the world, but we'd improvise and put all this stuff in Pro Tools. We'd take bits and pieces and cut it up and start creating song ideas over a long period of time. We couldn't have made this kind of record for the first album because we just didn't have that chemistry from living together for two years.

**Erikson:** Also, we wrote the lyrics by committee last time, went around the room a lot, all writing bits and pieces. This time, it's more Shirley. We all have a line here and there, but it's ninety percent Shirley's record lyrically. That wasn't really planned; it was just something that happened.

**Manson:** On the first record, I was too

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To read more of Howard Massey's interview with Garbage, visit Musician Online at [www.musicianmag.com](http://www.musicianmag.com).

frightened to try *anything*. Everything was really tentative, and I felt really inhibited.

*In fact, Shirley, this is the first of all the bands you've been in where you've contributed to the songs.*

**Manson:** Yeah. It's bizarre, really bizarre. And amazing. It's changed my whole life, it's changed me as a person. It's been an incredible experience for me.

*Obviously that chemistry we've been talking about pulled it out of you, because it had to have been inside you all along.*

**Manson:** Yes. I wrote on the first record, but I was really uncomfortable. I would have to go through one member of the band to share an idea; I would tell Steve quietly. He used to take me to the swing park, and to the rhythm of the swing I would sing lyrics to him and say, "What do you think?" On this record I had confidence; I felt, even if they said "We don't like it," I was able to handle it. And my voice strengthened so much from touring, to the point where, on this tour, we've had people come up and accuse me of not singing live but on tape. To me, that's like, wow, that's such a compliment! This is what I've strived to do my whole life—to be a fake!

*You've really taken the reverse to the traditional route, which is to tour forever, develop a cohesive sound, and then you finally make a record.*

**Erikson:** We've done it all backwards, that's for sure.

**Vig:** It's not that we all hadn't toured before in other bands and been a part of that. We knew what that was all about. Basically, we've come full circle from when we first began, since we were all in bands long before we were "producers."

*How do you define each person's role within the band?*

**Vig:** The line for us between producer and musician and engineer is all the same, it's all one thing. It's not like, okay, we're just producers, and he's just a guitarist, and Shirley's just the singer. We all kind of wear the same hats, all at the same time.

**Manson:** We don't demo like other bands. Most bands make their demo, then bring it into the studio and try and recreate it. And, like, they're insane about it. You can never get that demo feel again; in fact, "demo-itis" is a common joke. We don't have that process, so what you hear is the demo. We don't practice, we do it.

*So in your case it all merges into one—not just the boundaries between musician and engineer and producer, but the boundaries between songwriter and recording artist.*

**Marker:** Exactly. The end result is the songwriting process.

*The band has been described as operating as a "dysfunctional democracy." What does that mean?*

**Manson:** In a lot of bands, there's a dictator who has an almost psychopathic projection of how he or she wants something to sound. In this band, we can appreciate the fact that

there is a multitude of ways you can make a song sound, and none is better or worse than the others; it's just a different day, different scenario. We're all willing to move with the flow rather than just stay put. That's how so many bands collapse, why they can't function without bickering, pettiness, and ego clashes.

**Marker:** We're all there all the time; it's a four-way thing. Every song is written together. If there's something that one person hates and the other three really love, it gets thrown out.

**Vig:** We fight all the time. But we're somehow able to go, "Okay, correct this part if it sucks. Come up with something else." It can be difficult. Sometimes we can spend a lot of time working out an idea in the studio—sometimes for days—and then we'll listen to it and decide it's not happening, so you delete it and start again. You just have to deal with it, to take criticism and deal with it in constructive ways.

**Marker:** Amid all the different ideas swirling around, at the core is the song, and we're all always looking at that. It's not Steve's fabulous guitar solo or Butch's amazing little loop—it's always the song. If something doesn't work, if it doesn't serve the song, it's gotta go.

**Manson:** It can be easy to make a soundscape, to make something sound cool. But to actually write something that embeds itself in somebody's brain so that, when they're walking to work, they can't get away from it, that's really difficult. And fascinating to us. At this point, that's the challenge.

*Did you meet Brian Wilson when you got clearance to use "Don't Worry Baby" in "Push It"?*

**Vig:** No, unfortunately, we didn't get to meet him. We just got a tape to him through our publisher.

*To me, there's a parallel between what you do and some of his middle-period "pocket symphonies," in terms of starting with a strong melody that embeds itself in your subconscious, and then taking that melody to new places. Your records are filled with constant surprises coming out of left field, but the thread that ties it all together is still a three-minute pop song with a melody you can hum.*

**Erikson:** I think that's always been our favorite kind of record. All of us really like the kind of multi-layered records that work on a lot of different levels, musically and lyrically, where you hear something different every time you go back and listen to it. Some little noise or lyric you didn't hear before, or a melody buried underneath the main melody, so it draws you into the song and you hear it differently every time. Where it slowly evolves as to how you interpret the song.

**Vig:** A lot of people still think pop is fluff. We think pop can have depth to it. Whatever that means, whether it's that the lyrics take on different meanings each time you listen to them or whether you might hear this shiny melody underneath these things that are twisting a little bit. We tried to do that a lot on the first album, even moreso on *Version 2.0*.

"A lot of people still think pop is fluff. We think that pop can have depth to it."

—Butch Vig



# Bush-League Engineering

Billy Bush is Garbage's onstage guitar tech. He's also, in Butch Vig's words, "super-smart." Clearly, Vig and the band have supreme confidence in Bush's abilities—so much so that they entrusted him to record their all-important second album despite the fact that Bush had never engineered before!

*This is a hell of an engineering debut. How does it feel to jump from being a guitar tech to being the engineer of a hit album?*

It was kind of weird, actually. It wasn't a sudden thing, it was an evolving process. Originally, the band asked me to take care of the logistics during preproduction—getting the gear in and set up, that sort of thing. Then, once they got into Smart Studios, I was originally only supposed to be around for six weeks to teach them how to use Pro Tools and the new sequencers and samplers. I guess they just got used to having me around.

*Had you done any assistant engineering, or was this literally your first time behind the board?*

It was pretty much my first time behind the board. I had a concept of how everything worked in the studio, but I'd never done anything at this level. Initially, most of my work was programming. As time went on, we got into more of the recording process.

*On the road, are you still the guitar tech or are you doing sound?*

I'm the guitar, bass, and keyboard tech, and I do the majority of the programming for the live show.

*I understand there were more than 100 tracks on some songs.*

Yeah, there were 120 tracks on "Push It."

*What's it like to mix 120 tracks of music?*

It's kind of crazy. You end up submixing a lot of things. Then you start mixing the song and it's like, oh fuck, you've submixed like twenty tracks of drum and percussion loops down to two tracks, and all of a sudden the shaker's too loud with this mix. So you have to go back and remix the submix and print it again.

*Could this album have been mixed without automation?*

Hell, no [laughs].

*How are you recreating the sound of the record onstage?*

There are lots of samplers. Butch triggers a lot of loops off the drum; there are triggers on the kick, the snare, and two toms. There are also four different pads that he uses to trigger sound effects and loops. Also, both Duke and Steve have keyboard samplers onstage.

*Does Butch play to a click on every song?*

It depends on what the loops are like and whether we need to have multiple things firing at the same time so they need to lock. A lot of it is free-flow. We're also using the click to trigger a noise gate on the guitars for some of the staccato stuff. It allows the guitars to be a little more sequence-sounding.

*Are all the guitars being played live?*

Yes. There are no taped guitars, but there's a lot going on at FOH. And the fact that we have the guitars in iso boxes makes it really cool 'cause you don't have it all roaring down the vocal mic. So you can really start doing some crazy stuff with it, like having different EQs on the guitars or different effects.

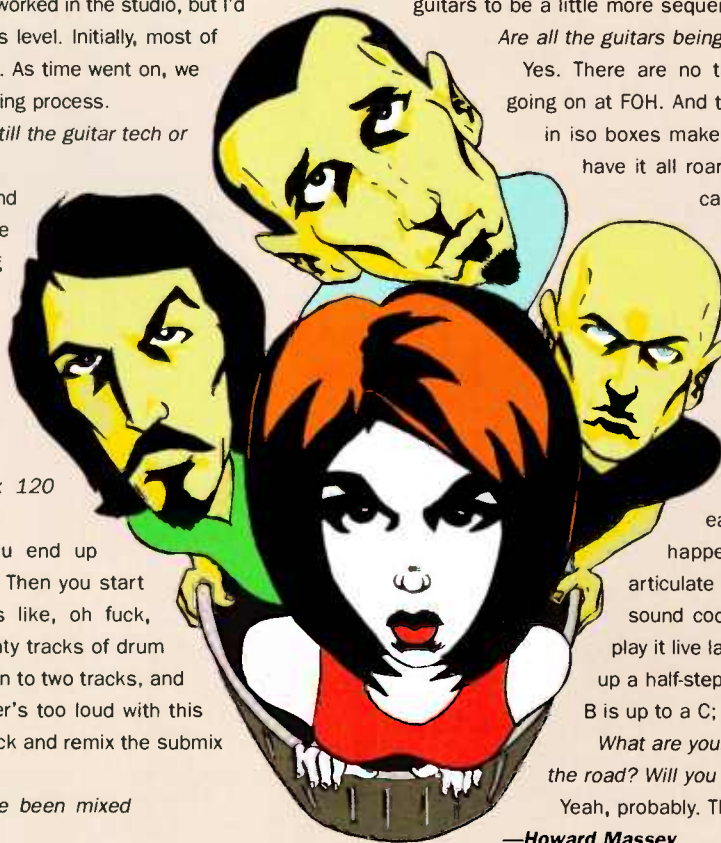
*Do Duke and Steve use alternate tunings?*

Yeah, we've got a lot of bizarre tunings. When we were recording, a lot of times we would just figure out the easiest way to make the melody happen—you know, how can we articulate the notes properly and make it sound cool, and we'll worry about how to play it live later. A couple of guitars are tuned up a half-step; one is standard tuning, but the B is up to a C; another is a dropped-D tuning.

*What are your plans when Garbage comes off the road? Will you do more engineering?*

Yeah, probably. That's what I'd like to do, anyway.

—Howard Massey





*The technology does allow you to do a song a hundred different ways, but at the end of the day somebody's still got to say, "This is the way I want it in the bridge, this is the way I want the chorus to be." Is that also a democratic decision? Do you always agree on how you want to take things?*

**Manson:** Well, we try things. Usually you can feel if something's right. Rarely do we disagree. I think that's why we came together as a band: because we share the same sensibility. We can't define what it is; it just exists between us. Sometimes we'll listen to a song on the radio, and something will happen in the music and all of us start to laugh. And we all know what we're laughing about: We don't actually have to say, "Oh, God, that guitar sounds really, really bad." We'll just start to laugh about it, not even having to resort to verbalizing what it is that's disgusting us.

**Erikson:** Beyond all that, we're friends. We've become closer friends too, because of all we've been through together. If you can't get along, if you don't like one another, what's the point? We've had to work at that every now and then, because

you're in this compact, really intense situation. I mean, just living in a tour bus for eighteen months is a ridiculous experience. You either explode or you come closer together, and we've managed to do the latter.

**Marker:** It's a sick rat-pack mentality. Of all the bands we've been in, and of all the bands I've produced, I think we operate in the purest sense of how cool a band can be.

*Let's talk about the new album. . .*

**Erikson:** I think it's a bit off-putting to people when we admit that it took us a year to make this record. But in reality we wrote and recorded and mixed and conceived the whole thing in the space of a year, which is really not that long of a time.

*It's just a third of the time Fleetwood Mac takes, so I wouldn't worry about it. . .*

**Manson:** Well, we never worried about it; that's the peculiar thing. If anything, we felt we got it out pretty quick. We hardly took any time off after getting off the road; we went straight into it. All these other journalists are going [*posh voice*], "Oh, why did it take so long?" Well, excuse me, I didn't realize I was



working in a meat factory. This is something we care about, something we love and enjoy. We savor it. It's not something to be just guzzled and then ejected out your backside. It's supposed to be enjoyable, a process you take care over, where you have time to potter about and make mistakes.

*Was the record company putting pressure on you at the end to finish it?*

**Manson:** I put pressure on them. *Ah ha ha ha!* There has to be a cutting-off point, and I was the one to call it because I was the one who was living in a hotel for a year. I got sick of it eventually, and that's what drove us to finishing. I could see this going on forever. I was never going to get laid and my husband was about to leave me. *Ah ha ha ha!*

**Vig:** We knew we needed to get it done. Otherwise, left to our own devices, we'd still be in there poking around.

*So do you feel you stopped at just the right time? Or is the record over-finished—or under-finished?*

**Manson:** Well, you never feel that you're finished. Also, your idea of perfection changes from week to week. That's the problem: Your own goals are constantly shifting. It's an impossible task to fulfill yourself completely.

**Vig:** When we finished, all we knew was that this should have been noisier, this should have been poppier, this should have been darker, this should have been faster.

You're just hypercritical of every little thing in there. You try to make it perfect, but you never even get close, that's the thing. So you just have to make your peace with it.

*Producing your own record is a tall order, because there's nobody who's got that space, that distance, that an outside producer can provide. It sounds like Shirley serves that function here, at least regarding technical aspects.*

**Manson:** I couldn't sit in the control room all day, every day, like they can. I would literally kill somebody. I sat outside of the room, so I had a clearer head at times. At the mixing, Butch is the one at the board for the most part. We're all sitting, barking at him from the couch, complaining and pissing [*little-girl voice*]: "Ooo, I don't like that! Change that! It's too much!"

*That's why he gets the big bucks.*

**Vig:** I wish. On this record we used an engineer, Billy Bush, who's our guitar tech on the road. He's super-smart. He never

engineered a record before, but he really knows computers, he knows guitars. He helped us set up our Pro Tools system; we were going to use it to put in all our ideas from our jams. He was going to be at it for, like, three weeks, but when we heard what he was doing, we said, "You're not leaving until we finish this record!" A year later, he hasn't gone home or seen his family or anything. . . .

**Manson:** They totally ruined his life for a whole year and three months. It was terrible. . . .

**Vig:** No, I think we ruined his life, period.

**Manson:** [*giggles*] And now we've taken him out on the road with us.

**Vig:** So that allowed us to take a little step back. On the first record, we were pretty much behind the board all the time. On this record, he could take care of some of that stuff, which allowed us to be a little more creative and less technical, so that was a bit liberating.

*These days everybody seems to be an engineer, everybody has his or her own studio. There's been a real blurring of roles.*

**Marker:** We've all had really bad experiences working with bands, where the [record] company thinks they have to hire a top-notch producer, and the guy comes in and he has no concept of what you're about, and it turns into a disaster. Now the musicians are the producers. It results in a stronger product, 'cause you don't have this "highly-paid professional" trying to get this incredible snare sound on your time.

**Manson:** It's just like anything, I suppose: You want to take more control over your own life. More and more bands are realizing this is something they have to do, that they are capable of doing it.

*But isn't there also the danger of lowering the bar, lowering the acceptable level of quality?*

**Vig:** But if something's good, people are going to notice. That hasn't changed. If you write a great song, it doesn't matter if it's done in a low-fi sampler in your basement or in a 48-track studio. If there's any justice, somebody's gonna hear it and figure out a way to get it out, whether it's on the Internet or putting out a club record.

**Manson:** Also, just because something's expertly done doesn't mean it's going to sound any better. Sometimes the lowest recordings—the ones that are all fucked up,

where people have done things by mistake or through lack of knowledge—are the ones that come up with the most inventive sounds. I don't necessarily agree that the quality of recordings is going to drop just because amateurs are dabbling in it. I think quite the opposite's going to occur, and innovation will take place.

*"The next Bob Dylan could be a techno artist in a basement in Hoboken."*

— Duke Erikson

**Erikson:** It should never be elitist. There should never be a wall put up where it's intimidating to make music and be creative. When we started making records, that's what it was like. Then the whole do-it-yourself thing happened, and that's what inspired us to start a recording studio. We haven't looked back since. The next Bob Dylan could be a techno artist in his basement in Hoboken.

*You use techno in a way many artists don't: You assimilate it but you don't embrace it; you make it part of a hummable pop melody.*

**Vig:** A lot of electronica and techno music is awesome. But when you get up in the morning and hear it over a small speaker, when the environment's changed, it doesn't translate. If you don't have that song, something to draw you in, to resonate in you, it's not going to connect the same way.

**Manson:** A lot of it becomes faceless and personality-less. It just sounds much the same as anyone else, it's difficult to differentiate between the artists, it's just more techno music. Some of it's amazing, but there's a lot of it that's just absolute pish. And I feel a real impersonal, cold syndrome around a lot of drum 'n' bass. It morphs so much that people are unable to get a handle on it so they're unable to criticize it, too frightened to say, "I don't like this." So instead, people just say, "Oh, it's drum 'n' bass, so it's cool." They're not differentiating between a great drum 'n' bass track and a bad one.

**Erikson:** The last thing we want to do is be part of some trend. We're not even interested in being the forerunner of some trend. We're just doing what we want to do.

**Manson:** We just don't like being categorized, that's the thing. I think we've confused a lot of people because we've refused to be pigeonholed. We take what we feel works the best in every genre and pool it into our own microcosm, make it work for us rather than try to pour ourselves around a particular genre of music and be restricted by that set of rules. We have elements of all kinds of music running through our records, and it pisses people off. Because you're supposed to do things the way the industry wants you to do them. You have to be an alternative band, you have to be a rock band, you have to be a hip-hop band, you can't cross boundaries—God forbid that you should. We feel very much like we're kicking against the constrictions that people try to impose upon you as a band.

**Erikson:** A lot of that's imposed by the media, too. It's an angle.

*Okay, blame me.*

**Manson:** Yes, we've decided it's your fault. [*Lame attempt at Noo Yawk accent*] Fuck you, asshole! *Hee hee hee.*

**Erikson:** That's why we call ourselves a pop band. If you look at bands like the Beatles or Roxy Music, who we consider to be pop bands, you can do *anything* within the context of pop music.

**Marker:** That pisses people off too, because they assume that's a derogatory term: "You mean, you call yourselves pop?"

*Did any of the songs on Version 2.0 start as a basic acoustic guitar/vocal or piano/vocal?*

**Manson:** "Medication" started on an acoustic guitar.

**Erikson:** "You Look So Fine" did too. That's the beauty of being in this band. We're very careful not to have any rules. We don't have one single process that we

## The Garbage Heap

There's no shortage of gear when Garbage hit the road or lock themselves into the studio. Here's a breakdown:

### Live

**Shirley Manson. Mics:** Audix OM-5 microphone w/ Samson UR-5 wireless system.

**Guitars:** Fender Custom Shop Shirley Manson Stratocaster, Fender Custom Shop Venus. **Amplification:** Matchless Hurricane into 1x12 Matchless cabinet.

**Butch Vig. Drums:** dw kit, Zildjian cymbals, ddrum triggers, pads, & controllers; Pro Mark 5A hickory sticks.

**Duke Erikson. Guitars:** '64 Fender Jaguar, Fender Custom Shop Stratocaster, Guild Starfire III, Gibson Custom Shop ES-335, Gibson SG reissue; Ernie Ball .10-gauge strings.

**Amplification:** Matchless C-30s into Matchless 2x12 combos. **Effects:** Eventide DSP4000, DigiTech GSP 2101 & 2112, Behringer Denoiser, Intelligate, & Composer, Mu-Tron Phase III, Big Muff, Prescription Electronics pedal, Wringer pedal, Caesar Diaz Tremodillo pedal, Tech-21 XXL, Crybaby remote wah, Digital Music GCX Expanders, Ground Control pedal.

**Steve Marker. Guitars:** Guild Bluesbirds, Fender Custom Shop Strat; Ernie Ball .11-gauge Slinky strings. **Amplification:** Matchless C-30s into Matchless 2x12 combos.

**Effects:** TC Electronic G-Force, M2000, DigiTech GSP2101, Behringer Denoiser, Intelligate, & Composer, Roland RE-501 chorus/tape echo, Matchless HotBox, Electro-Harmonix Microsynth, Digital Music GCX expanders, Ground Control pedal.

**Daniel Shulman. Basses:** Fender Custom Shop P-Bass & Jazz Bass.

**Miscellaneous:** Shure UHF wireless system, Korg DTR-1 tuner, Boss Bass Distortion pedal, SVT Pro preamp. Two Rapco DI's (no cabinet).

### Smart Studios

**Consoles:** Harrison 56x32, Trident 80C, Mackie 1604VLZ, Mackie 32x8, Mackie HUI.

**Monitors:** B&W 808, Genelec 1030A, Yamaha NS-10, Auratone 5C. **Analogue recorders:** Studer A-827 & Sony APR-24 2" 24-track, Studer A80 1/2" 2-track. **Digital recorders:**

Digidesign Pro Tools, TASCAM DA-88. **Computers:** Apple 9500/200, 7300/200, 7600/120 Power Macs. **Signal processors:** Summit TLA-100 compressor, Dual Program EQ, TPA 200A preamps, Eventide DSP-4000, GSP-4000, & H3000 Harmonizers, Daking 91579 compressor & 52270 preamp/EQ, API 512B preamps & 550B EQs, Neve 1081 preamps/EQs, Lang PEQ-2, ADL 1000 compressor. **Mics:** Telefunken E LAM 250, Neumann FET-47, KMS-150, TLM-193, & U47, prototype Audio-Technica 4060 tube mic, Audio-Technica 4050s, 4030s, & 4041s, Shure SM-57s, 58s, Beta 57s & 58s, B&K 4006, Calrec Soundfield 451. **Synths & samplers:** LinnDrum, Alesis D-4, Kurzweil K2500RS & K2000S, Nord Lead, E-mu Planet Phatt, Vintage Keys, Orbit, & Proteus/1.

use when we write or record. We try to keep it wide open.

**Manson:** And then it gets dismantled when it goes back into the studio; it gets rebuilt.

*Why did you decide to use real strings on the record?*

**Vig:** When we started *Version 2.0* we didn't want to reinvent ourselves. We wanted to take everything that we discovered as being part of our persona and make it better, bigger, faster, more powerful. So the pop gets poppier, the electronica gets more electronic, the noise gets noisier, whatever. And we wanted to use more organic instruments, more acoustic guitar, piano, cello, violin. We wanted to use that dichotomy where you have a hundred chattering sequences going on against a single cello or violin. That juxtaposition is really interesting to us.

**Marker:** Also, the strings in our sampler sounded like shit.

*Was the album recorded in both digital and analog?*

**Vig:** Pretty much everything was recorded in Pro Tools, though we used a lot of old pedals and tube things in the recording process to get analog into the system, to get some

"The secret to the  
Garbage sound?

Pink pedals."

- Steve Marker

of that tape saturation sound in the rhythm tracks and bass. In the end, we mixed to analog.

*So it was primarily the rhythm instruments that were recorded analog?*

**Vig:** All of the key elements—Shirl's vocals, key effects and loops—were printed to tape.

*Did you use the new 24-bit Pro Tools system?*

**Vig:** We started with the 20-bit version, then went to the 24. At one point, we had three 48-track systems going. We had two rooms in the studio, and we were doing rhythm tracks in one room or these guys would be doing guitars, and we'd be doing vocals and edits in the other room. Poor Billy Bush was running around like a demon, swapping hard drives. We're not meticulous note-takers, and Billy would be saying, "Who the fuck was in here?"

**Manson:** I would be in the room between the two studios, and [giggling] you would hear Duke go, "Billy!" and then you'd hear Butch go "Billy!!" So poor Billy was running between the two rooms, bouncing between engineers. He'd be pulling his hair out, saying, "I can't believe this! We just did



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this!!" It was so funny...

*I gave one listen to the album with analytical ears, just trying to focus on the sounds...*

**Manson:** [interrupting] Boo, hiss...

*...and one thing that really surprised me is that there's a ton of wah guitar on this record. I mean, I haven't heard this much wah guitar since Shaft...*

**Manson:** Sigh...

**Marker:** Well, we found this wah pedal laying in the basement and we just had to use it.

**Erikson:** Seven hundred times.

*I presume most of your guitar effects come from stomp boxes rather than outboard processors.*

**Vig:** Yeah, just lo-fi pedals. When we'd have a day off on tour, we'd go out to the pawn shops and find these weird things, stuff we'd never heard of.

**Manson:** Billy used to go out shopping with me, and I'm a really pathetic techno-head 'cause all I go by is how things look. He'd take me to the music stores and I'd go, "That looks cool. Let's get some of those." *Ah ha ha ha!* It's really sad, you know: "That's pink. It matches my guitar. Let's get it." It was with great glee that I found this one pink pedal, because I thought it looked so cool. Then I found out that Steve had stolen it and was using it—even though they were all slagging me for picking it on its aesthetics alone!

**Vig:** What was it called? The Big Daddy-O?

**Manson:** The Big Daddy-O, yeah.

**Marker:** So there's the secret to the Garbage sound: pink pedals.

**Manson:** I thought the term "Big Daddy-O" was rude.

**Vig:** We also used a lot of Roland Space Echo. It's so cool, that analog tape slap.

*A lot of your vocal effects also sound like they're derived from a stomp box instead of a \$3,000 processor.*

**Vig:** A lot of them are. Cheap-assed gear.

*They remind me of the classic John Lennon stories, where he'd try any means of processing his voice, like wanting to be suspended from the ceiling by a rope and swung around the room...*

**Vig:** Yeah, he hated the sound of his voice. A lot of singers are that way: It's hard for them to hear themselves back.

When Shirley would finish doing her vocals, we would kick her out of the room. She would go insane listening back, saying, "I can do it better." We'd say, "No, no, it's really good. Just leave. Now."

**Manson:** [low voice of authority] Please. Leave.

**Marker:** [passable WC Fields imitation] Go away and don't bother me...

*I'm going to ask a question that may piss Shirley off...*

**Butch:** Good [laughs].

*...but I'll ask it anyway. Have you given any thought to remixing Version 2.0 for surround sound?*

**Vig:** Yeah, it would be really cool to do that sometime and to spend the time to put the music in a totally open 360 degrees...

**Manson:** [bored] Why bother? Let's just make another record...

**Erikson:** Actually, when I first heard a surround system, the first thing I thought was that what we do would really be appropriate for that, just because of the layers and all the things going on at once.

**Manson:** And you didn't piss me off.

*On the intro to "Special," is that a Ricky 12-string?*

**Erikson:** Yes, it is.

*Did you use a Hofner bass on that track?*

**Marker:** No, but it was supposed to sound like one.

**Vig:** That was just a regular [Fender Precision] bass through an [Ampeg] SVT with severe eq. But that was the effect we were after. We were telling our bassist, "C'mon, you gotta get that McCartney sound out of this thing!"  
*The way the album ends, the way you take your leave of the listener with the orchestral outro in "You Look So Fine," is absolutely compelling.*

**Vig:** That was all Shirley's idea. We had literally printed the final mix, and she goes, "I've got an idea," and we all said, "Fuck!"

**Marker:** But she was right.

**Manson:** We'd had a visiting journalist come to the studio and I took him out to the movies. We went to see *Titanic*, but that's another story—I just wanted to scoop my eyeballs out from boredom. And I was all kind of rattled up because I thought the movie was shit, and I came back into the studio and they

had been working on the mix for "You Look So Fine." I was all grumpy about it, saying "I don't like it" and "There's too much reverb on the vocal." And then I said, "I think we should do this orchestral thing." And there was this instant horrible, really bad atmosphere that went down in the studio. They were, like, "What?? It's four o'clock in the morning!" or whatever time it was. They were really shattered, and they were really in a bad mood, but I think they knew instinctively it was a good idea. So we tried it and it was really cool; it worked.

*So many artists tend to bury the weak tracks at the end. I always feel that the mark of a really good album is how it ends, not just how it starts. How it leaves you feeling for those two or three minutes after it finishes playing.*

**Erikson:** We knew "You Look So Fine" was going to be the last track, with a slightly cinematic feel. But the ending almost sets you up for what's going to happen next. . . .

**Manson:** Like you're waiting for something else to happen. . . .

**Marker:** Like back to the beginning, flip it back to side one.

**Vig:** The other cool thing about that song was in the middle section. Duke and Steve had layered all these guitars in the middle break, but it needed something extra. Shirley came up with these Karen Carpenter-like *abhhs*, and all of a sudden the song just takes off on a different level. It's just an amazing pop moment, with eight tracks of vocals.

*Every time I hear "When I Grow Up," I think about my fourteen-year-old niece, who, I am sure, spends a good part of every day thinking to herself, "I'm going to get even with them all one day."*

**Manson:** You know, we've been accused of mocking adolescents. But that song is the complete opposite: It's celebrating that state of being. If we as adults are healthy and functional, I think nobody really loses that sense of, "Tomorrow I'm going to lose weight, tomorrow I'm going to nail that boy I like, tomorrow I'm going to be a better person, I'm not going to be cruel to my friends anymore." Everybody is striving to be something. It's about dreaminess, about hoping and wishing; it's not about revenge. It's about, keep kicking, don't make do with second-best, don't just play it safe. It's about striving for those things that you always hoped for and wished for and want.

*Are those electric sitars floating in the background of "The Trick is to Keep Breathing"?*

**Vig:** No, it's a cymbalom. It was played by this street musician who we happened to see outside the NAMM show in Los Angeles, playing in the parking lot. His name is Michael Masley.

I picked up his card and wrote him, and after we had some of the basic ideas sketched out for several songs, we had him come in and improvise on the tracks. Have you ever seen a cymbalom?

No.

**Vig:** It's almost as big as a table, with a hundred-something strings. You play it with these claws and it builds up these unbelievable harmonic resonances.

**Erikson:** There actually is an electric sitar on the record, on "Push It."

*The lyrics of "The Trick is to Keep Breathing" are unusual in that they're written in both the third person and the first person.*

**Manson:** That came from us playing together, just improvising. I came up with the melody and the lyrics just came out. There was a middle eight into which I put "The Trick is the Keep Breathing," and that became the title. I'd always wanted to use that line because I thought it was amazingly descriptive in a funny way but really ambiguous. You don't know quite what it means, but it pulls you in. The line came from a novel by a Scots writer named Janice Galloway. It's a heartbreaking book, but one about survival.

*Is it possible that your memory of the book subconsciously worked its way into the lyrics of the song?*

**Manson:** I don't think so, but I think the line really worked for that song. The song is really universal, even though it was originally written for my friend. It's not just about her anymore, it became a song of reassurance and affirmation. What I liked about the book is that [Galloway] runs a subtext down the side of the page, and I'd never seen that done before; I thought it was really clever. I loved the fact that she

had two things going on at once: her conscious and her subconscious. It obviously triggered something in me.

*Had any of the other bandmembers read the book before writing the song?*

**Erikson:** No, we hadn't read it, but I think the reason the music complements the lyrics so well came from us all playing together, so the whole vibe was there. One reason I like that song so much is that its inception was really easy, it just sort of flowed. It happened very quickly, the arrangement and everything; we were all there and we were kind of picking up on what Shirley was doing. It was really nice.

**Manson:** A lot of people think that our lyrics are fatalistic and morose. I think they're the complete opposite: They're about triumph, they're about survival, they're about hanging together and moving forward. It amazes me that people don't pick up on that.

*"We wanted to use that dichotomy where you have a hundred chattering sequences going on against a single cello or violin."*

- Butch Vig



*The* Po  
*of* Teamwork



How creative alliances  
beyond the community  
of musicians can  
advance your career.

by Peter Spellman

ower  
work

**G**uitarist Stevan Pasero honed his craft through years of hard work. From a foundation of classical discipline, he built a style that he felt would appeal to a broad audience of listeners, then captured on a beautiful solo album, titled *Heartsongs*.

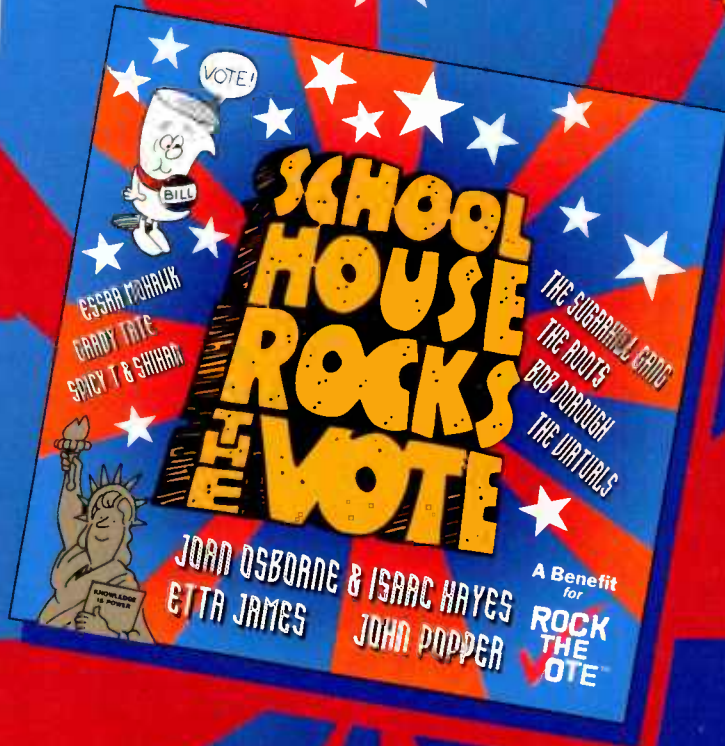
But there were a couple of problems: The California-based artist wasn't interested in touring. Not only that: He didn't have the money or interest required for any kind of promotional push to radio, press, retail outlets, publishers, and record labels. He did, however, want to earn his living as a musical artist. So what's a musician to do?

Pasero had an idea. He called a friend who had had marketing and business training. Together they formed a label, called Sugo Music, and developed an alternative marketing strategy for his record. They decided to target large business with a plan they dubbed an "executive gift program." Following this strategy, Pasero began contacting large companies and inviting corporate executives to buy his CD and tape to give as gifts to customers and incentives to employees. One of Pasero's first clients was Apple Computer, which happened to be seeking a special musical gift for its executives. They liked Pasero's initiative and creativity—as well as his music. The result? Nine thousand orders.

There's a happy postscript too: Since inking similar deals with other companies, the feisty Sugo label was picked up by Allegro for national retail distribution in 1993.

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World Radio History

This story illustrates an approach that more and more musicians are taking today, which is to team up with others whose skills complement and enhance their own talents in order to break into an increasingly crowded music marketplace.

Partnering is nothing new for musicians. Songwriters collaborate with each other, musicians form bands, performers work closely with producers, and recording artists sign up with record labels, all in hopes of creating a synergy whose sum result is greater than the singular parts.

Synergies occur on all levels in the music business. In corporate parlance, they have many names: mergers, joint ventures, subsidizations, development deals, limited partnerships, co-ops, strategic alliances, and so on. Big companies do this sort of thing all the time, with the same goals that Pasero and his partner had: The mergers of *Time* and Warner in 1989, Viacom and Paramount in 1994, and Disney/ABC and Westinghouse/CBS in 1994 were each about increasing business by joining different firms whose production, distribution, and creative resources could cross-fertilize.

There's a lesson in all this for musicians: Teaming up can amplify the results of your creativity and move your career forward more quickly than going at it alone. And exploring beyond the traditional artist/label, artist/management, and artist/agent alliances opens up new possibilities for success in the DIY era.

Take, for example, the band Everything, a group that puts out an infectious blend of new rock, funk, and R&B. After meeting at James Madison University, they began playing there and on nearby campuses like Virginia Tech and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 1992 they decided to make music their full-time job and moved to nearby Sperryville, Virginia, where they began renting a renovated farmhouse that they still call home.

Randy Reed, a friend and musician from James Madison University, fell

into the role of managing the band. Other friends came aboard to handle tour management, stage management, and office administration. "We didn't really sign any contracts with each other," says Reed. "The setup is almost communal, with a family-like feel." Eventually the band and its staff decided

to incorporate and make everyone on the team a shareholder. As Reed explains, "Responsibilities are written down and agreed to, but not 'signed off on.'" When the band is home they schedule frequent business meetings. Everyone sends agenda items to Reed before the meeting. "It's very organic,"

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acknowledged in Acronym's next release as well as at shows where they make themselves known to the team. Bottom line: One hand washes the other.

## What Can You Do?

If you're thinking about going into business with a friend or several friends, you're actually about to subscribe to the basic American dream of running your own show, being your own boss, and grabbing some control over your economic destiny. Beyond these goals, creative partnering can produce an intoxicating energy and enthusiasm. And, looking ahead to the amount of work you'll have to do to make it happen, it's a lot easier to arrange time off if you have partners than if you're trying to run a business all by yourself.

Those who choose to run their own company will almost inevitably go through periods of stress. Their survival will depend on how well and how quickly they master all sorts of new skills and tasks. When it was clear to Reed that the Internet was a viable channel for promoting Everything, he took a course in HTML programming so he could update the band's website himself. "If you're looking for someone to take over management duties, look for a friend who knows you or the band you're in," advises Reed. "Specifically, look for someone who's a mix of the creative and the business, with a bit more on the biz side." Partnerships also have their own unique stresses and risks. Money can be incendiary stuff, and when you share money-making with someone else, that relationship can become pretty intimate. "This stuff has to be worked out on the front end," says Asbell. "Make no promises or financial commitments until you are sure the chemistry is right."

There is, of course, a potential downside to the team approach. "Patience is the key," warns Asbell, "and understanding that people have their own lives." These words come from experience, as everyone in the Acronym project has outside careers; Asbell is the only full-timer. "Sometimes I need to be a hard-ass when I feel someone isn't pulling their weight," he admits. "That can be difficult."

In anticipation of these pressures, Acronym early on drafted a "sanctuary agreement" that states that all of the group's business partners are first and foremost friends. Each teammate displays a framed copy at home as a reminder of what it's all about. Says one, "If there is a conflict, we remember this agreement and we back off."

In addition to all this, consider these guidelines as essential steps in forming a strong team to support your band:

- Find someone whose strengths complement your weaknesses. Set up a trial period to see whether you can work well together. The key is chemistry, and chemistry involves experimenting with different combinations of elements until you find the right formula.

- Define who will contribute the cash, property, or expertise. Each is needed, and each has a value.


- Communicate regularly to avoid power grabs and misunderstandings. Talk openly and honestly with your partners. Never let potential problems build up to the point of explosion.

- Specify the percentage of ownership each person will have. Define how, when, and in what order the profits will be distributed to partners.

- Prepare a business plan and financial forecast for the life of the partnership. This provides a map and an agreed-upon route to your goals.

- Provide a way to remove or buy out partners who fail to meet their obligations. Shit *will* happen. People fall in love and leave town, another band snatches your drummer, a job with a steady paycheck becomes too irresistible. People change. Prepare for this beforehand and you'll save countless hours of heartache and stress later.

- Never forget that you're dealing with friends. "Don't let the stupid biz stuff and tedium get to you," Asbell counsels. "Stand back from the petty conflicts that inevitably crop up, and try to see the big picture."

It all boils down to a statement found on the Acronym Music website ([www.acronymmusic.com](http://www.acronymmusic.com)): "This company was founded on the ideal of mutual support for creative endeavor." That about says it all. 

*Contributors: Peter Spellman is career development coordinator at Berklee College of Music and director of Music Business Solutions. You can find him at [www.mbsolutions.com](http://www.mbsolutions.com).*

## Partnerships: The Fine Print

Partnership can take a variety of legal forms, such as general partnership, limited partnership, limited liability corporation (an interesting hybrid of a partnership and a corporation), and limited liability partnership. It's beyond the scope of this article to compare and contrast these options. For insight into this subject, check out an excellent primer on business alliances: *Teaming Up: The Small Business Guide to Collaborating with Others to Boost Your Earnings and Expand Your Horizons*, by Paul and Sarah Edwards (1997, Jeremy Tarcher/Putman).

# MUSICIAN MAGAZINE'S 1998 BEST UNSIGNED BAND COMPETITION

*we have a winner!!!*

**Chuck Nash: lead vocals/ guitar**  
**Rob Piazza: drums/ background vocals**  
**Bruce Stewart: bass/ background vocals**

Songwriter Chuck Nash describes Kingpins sound as "acoustic-based modern pop," citing Bruce Springsteen and Freedy Johnston as two of the band's influences. Formed over a year-and-a-half ago by Nash and Piazza, the trio now plays around 25 dates a month at clubs in Florida and Georgia. They are currently seeking a record deal while cultivating a following with their live shows.



**KINGPINS**

**St. Augustine, FL**

Here at *Musician*, we take pride in being the publication for active, working bands and artists. Our Best Unsigned Band Competition exemplifies this tradition. We began our 1998 version of this contest many months and 1,600 tapes ago. Now, we have arrived at 12 winners who survived three rounds of critical judging. Submissions ranged from metal to country, pop to hip-hop. The first step was to send the tapes to a team of judges who carefully screened each entry, paying special attention to the musicianship and songwriting of the submissions. Judges included respected music industry professionals, journalists, and several *Musician* writers. This first round yielded a talented crop of acts who were subjected to a second round of judging. The resulting 25 finalists were then sent to our artist judges—Eric Johnson, Joe Perry, Moby, Keb' Mo', Ani DiFranco, and Art Alexakis—who helped us determine our twelve winners. These select bands/artists will be assembled on a CD manufactured by **Atlantic** records and distributed to 500 of *Musician's* A&R contacts. And of course, the grand prize winner will receive the \$10,000 **Yamaha/Fostex** gear package which includes: a Yamaha O3D digital mixer with digital i/o card, a Yamaha P1600 amplifier, a pair of Yamaha NS10M studio monitors, a pair of Yamaha RH5M headphones, a Fostex CR200 CD recorder, and a Fostex D90 8-track hard disk recorder/editor. Congratulations to our winners and thanks to all who participated. Special thanks to Warner Hodges of Jason and the Scorchers for all his help. Be sure to look in our upcoming issues and on our website for details on the 1999 BUB Competition.

turn the page for the rest of our winners

# HERE ARE MUSIC 1998 BEST UNSIGNED BAND Grand Prize Wi



*Big Guitars from Memphis, IL*



*17 Reasons Why, OR*



*The Vague, OH*



*Greazy Meal, MN*



*The Housemarys, IN*



*The Barrys, VA*

**Fostex**

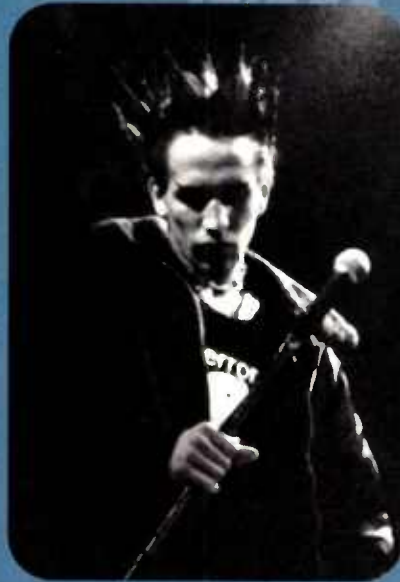
World Radio History



# MUSICIAN MAGAZINE'S BUB COMPETITION WINNERS Winner...*Kingpins*



*Trophy Wife, FL*



*Shiverhead, WI*



*Michael Lord, CA*



*Dal-Dil-Vog, BC*



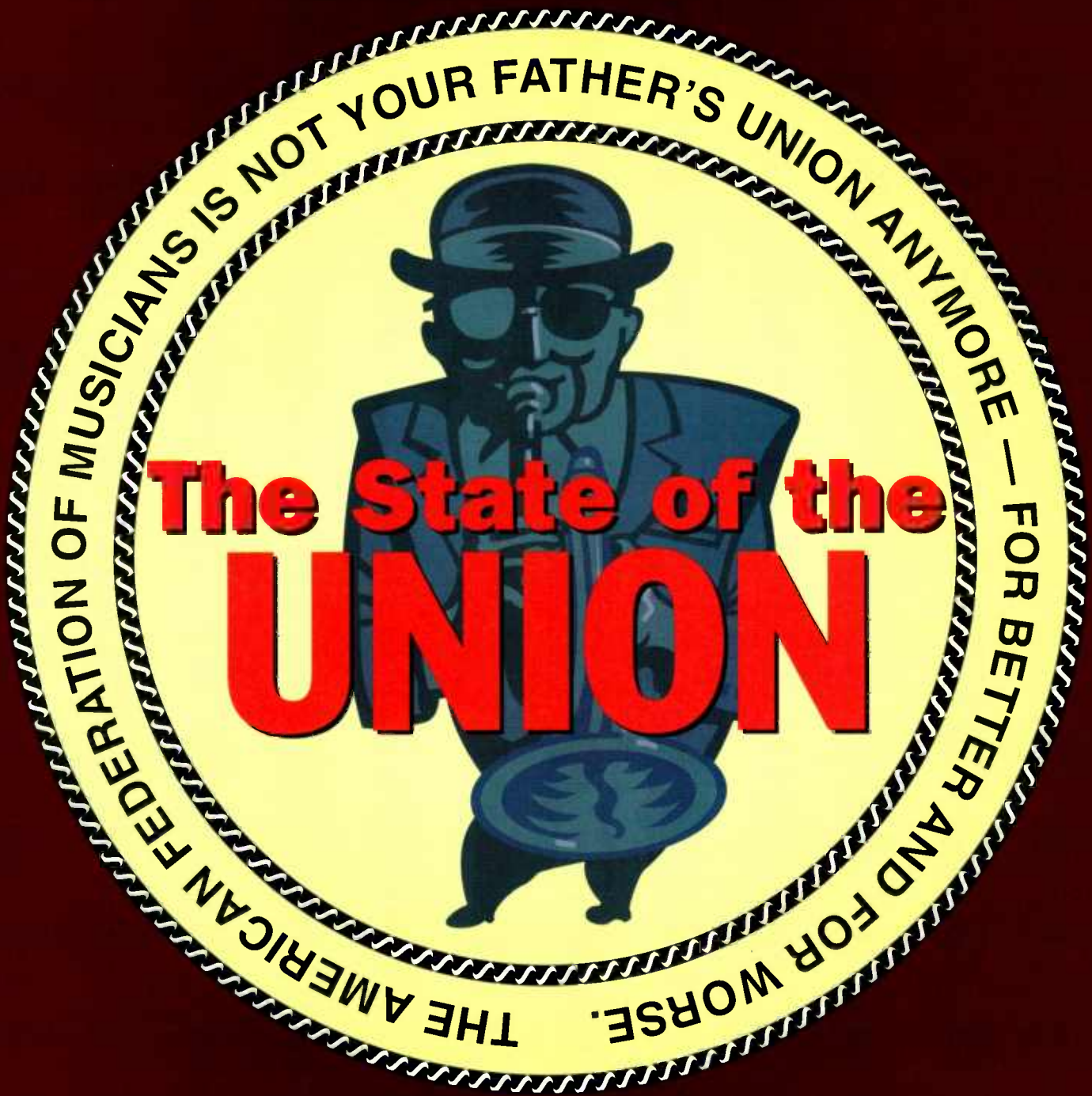
*Violin Road, RI*

Look for news on the 1999 BUB Competition in future issues  
and on our website at [www.musicianmag.com/bub](http://www.musicianmag.com/bub)

**MUSICIAN**

World Radio History

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The State of the  
**UNION**

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS IS NOT YOUR FATHER'S UNION ANYMORE — FOR BETTER AND FOR WORSE.



## BY MARK ROWLAND

hen the Doors first played Hollywood's Whisky-A-Go-Go on a Monday night in 1966, they were a local band with no record deal, struggling to make a name for themselves in a highly competitive rock scene. But the Whisky paid them nearly \$500 that night for their efforts.

These days, you can still go to the Whisky on Monday

evenings and watch struggling local bands try to make a name for themselves. Wages, however, have changed dramatically. According to the club's booking manager, bands who attract more than fifty customers usually earn between \$50 and \$100 a night; bands who attract less get zip.

Why the difference? In 1966, the Whisky had a collective bargaining agreement with the American Federation of Musicians. These days, they don't. Indeed, if the AFM even tried to negotiate an agreement with the Whisky or any other nightclub today, the AFM would be in violation of federal law.

Nope, the musicians' union ain't what it used to be—for better and for worse. It's an organization that boasted 330,000 dues-paying members in 1976 and claims a national membership of about one-third that number today. A federation, so powerful in the Forties that it twice held strikes that shut down the entire recording industry, now settles for reduced percentages of the financial pie from major record labels and rarely manages to negotiate contracts with indie labels at all. A union that recently celebrated its centennial anniversary and was founded on the classic principles of trade unionism—as in “all for one and one for all”—is now increasingly disinclined to even call itself a union at all.

“We want to soft-pedal the word ‘union,’” explains Hal Espinosa, the vice-president of Los Angeles' 10,000-member Local 47. “When you read about strikes in the paper, people think, ‘Oh, unions,

they're just no good.’ So we changed our name to Professional Musicians Local 47. Now, when these kids come out of school, they can say, ‘We're going to become a professional musician.’”

Espinosa has a point. Though the problems that afflict the AFM these days are partly of its own making, they also reflect larger social and political upheavals. The ‘generation gap’ of the Sixties alienated traditionally trained musicians from young rock & rollers, who came to view the union as just another intrusive authority. In the Seventies, growing anti-labor public sentiment was mirrored by court decisions that diluted the AFM's legal bargaining power. In the Eighties and Nineties, advanced technology wiped out jobs or made them so amorphous that traditional bargaining agreements are in danger of becoming obsolete.

For all that, the AFM remains the oldest and biggest non-profit organization of its kind, and the

idea behind it—musicians banding together to improve their lot—remains a good one. Now, in places like Local 47, there's a movement afoot to redefine the union as a service organization that can improve the lot of today's working musician in limited but practical ways, providing everything from theft and medical insurance to cheap recording facilities to seminars on how to make it in a business that generally seems to run on chaos theory.

"The concept of a union remains very sound, maybe now more than it ever was," says Jay Rosen, a member of Local 47's board of directors. "But you need to dress it up, to make it more contemporary. What we're doing here are things unions should have been doing for the past thirty or forty years, but haven't. I think it's our last chance to survive."

Bobby Joe Holman had been playing harmonica in blues bands around the country for twenty years or more when he decided, in 1993, to join a musician's union. "And all the players I knew said, 'Why the hell would you want to do something like that?'" Holman laughs. "Because for a lot of years the union was not handled properly and just didn't do anything for you. The old cats would lock onto the jobs. But I just had a premonition that things were gonna change. And I wanted to be around professional musicians."

Holman was living in Rialto, a town about sixty miles east of Los Angeles, so just driving to the Local 47 office was a chore. "But the second time I came in I looked in the gig book and there it was: 'Harmonica instructional video.'" Holman made the call, which eventually led him to make a best-selling instrumental video for Hal Leonard, titled *Play Blues Harmonica in One Hour*.

"Talk about hitting a gold mine," he laughs. "It changed my life. People say, 'How'd you get that gig?' I say, 'I got it through the musicians' union.'"

A trip to the offices of Local 47, on Vine Street in Los Angeles, might leave you wondering why any musician *wouldn't* join the union. The place is a beehive of activity, with rehearsal rooms, an ADAT-equipped recording studio, a make-your-own-video facility, a hefty gig book (if you play bagpipes or mariachi music, you're covered), a program that actively works to get your CD heard on radio stations around the world, access to legal assistance, credit unions, insurance plans, informational services, and an enthusiastic staff to guide you on your mission. Not a bad deal for dues of \$140 a year—and no audition is necessary. "I don't think we're even worried about a criminal record," cracks staff member Stephen Cox.

Still, it's pretty clear that most of the members hanging in and around the rehearsal rooms on this day are . . . well, not young.

"There was a time when rock musicians were really big in

the recording industry, and the Federation dropped the ball by not going after them," Espinosa admits. "They were just trying to maintain the jazz and classical and big band realm instead of reaching out. But that's what we're trying to do now. You know, the big rock musicians who make millions, they don't need pensions or insurance; they've got it made. But the young kids, the wannabes, they're the ones we want to watch out for, 'cause they're being used and abused by club owners. When you can unite people with the same common goals, you have more strength."

Holman, 50, is understandably evangelical in his support of Local 47. "I've personally brought in five members," he says, adding that he's been able to parlay his instructional video success into gigs and sideline into films and commercials, even some acting work. But he claims that the main benefit of

membership was the change it brought to his own mindset. "If you want to be a professional player, you need to be where those professional people are," he says. "I just wish someone would have said that to me when I was a kid."

There was a time when it was impossible for a young musician *not* to know about the union. Founded in 1896 on the premise that "all men and women playing musical instruments and receiving pay therefore from the public must, in order to get just wages and decent working conditions, form a labor organization," the AFM grew rapidly. By 1913, the union represented 64,000 members in 636 local chapters, which enforced such scale wage agreements of the times as rates for playing at a theater (\$23 a week for nine performances), parades (\$4 for four hours on a Sunday),

and funerals (\$5, including the march from the cemetery). With numbers came muscle: Over time, collective bargaining agreements were struck with many of the traditional forums for musical performances, such as major hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs.

Membership dove in the Thirties, when the enormous popularity of movies with sound helped kill the demand for vaudeville orchestras and silent picture organists; meanwhile, the growing popularity of phonograph records was viewed by union leaders as a sinister trend that could reduce the market for live performances. To counter, the AFM launched highly effective strikes against the recording industry in 1942 and 1948, during which no new popular music was recorded or released. The '48 strike was settled when major record labels agreed to deposit a percentage of every recording sold into the Musicians Performance Trust fund, a non-profit pool that was used to subsidize thousands of free concerts while paying those performing musicians scale wages.

For a decade or so, this classic trade union enterprise worked well: The public loved the free concerts, the AFM enjoyed

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**"As a member I could get fined for producing indie punk records—so I quit the union."**

—David Kessel,  
guitarist/producer/label head

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unprecedented clout, and most of the members embraced the policy. But as with many other unions riding the wave of American prosperity into the Fifties and Sixties, success bred discontent within the ranks, and the AFM's unity began to fracture. Though hardly sinking to the level of, say, the Teamsters, the AFM was not untouched by corruption, and some successful session players chafed at the notion that money from "their" recordings was financing MPTF concerts by players whose connections with local chapter leaders often outstripped their talent. An AFM ruling in 1956, to transfer *all* film music reuse payments from the musicians who played on the original sessions back to the MPTF, sparked a rebellion. Members of Local 47, which has always been something of a maverick union and a bellwether (in 1953, it became the first local to combine previously segregated black and white unions into one chapter), led a successful revolt against this policy; this uprising apparently marked the limits of the musicians' union as a purely collective enterprise. (The MPTF, however, continues to this day.)

Even as the AFM continued to grow its membership through the Sixties and Seventies, it tended to fritter away its power in rear-guard actions to protect traditional "jobs" that were inevitably being lost to automation, while turning up its nose to an entire generation of players who were leading a pop music revolution. "The attitude was, rock and country players weren't 'real' musicians because there was no schooling behind it," Espinosa admits. "Some high school kid can get in his garage and learn a couple of chords and jump up and down and make big money, and the musicians going to college and getting trained were kind of looking down on them and saying, 'That's not music.'"

Conversely, Sixties and Seventies rockers often regarded the union less as a brotherhood than as a form of Big Brother, exemplified by representatives who prowled studios to make sure that recording sessions went down according to a raft of arcane regulations.

"We had long hair and dug Cream and the Who, and those people

## Look for the Union Label

There are hundreds of local branches of the American Federation of Musicians, but all entitle members to the AFL-CIO Union Privilege program (loans, credit, legal services) and a subscription to the monthly publication *International Musician*, among other benefits. Dues vary according to chapters, but usually fall in the range of \$75-\$200 annually. The AFM main office is located at 1501 Broadway, #601, New York City, NY 10036. For general information or for local chapters, you can phone (212) 869-1330, or access their website at [www.afm.org](http://www.afm.org).

A partial listing of some major local chapters, with addresses, phone numbers, and web sites where applicable:

### **Los Angeles - Professional Musicians Local 47**

817 N. Vine St., Hollywood, CA 90038  
(213) 462-2161  
[www.promusic47.com](http://www.promusic47.com)

### **Chicago Federation of Musicians Local 10-208**

175 W. Washington, Chicago, IL 60602  
(312) 782-0063  
[www.livemusicchicago.com](http://www.livemusicchicago.com)

### **Nashville Association of Musicians Local 257**

P.O. Box 120399, Nashville, TN 37212  
(615) 244-9514

### **Portland - Musicians Mutual Association Local 99**

325 NE 20th St., Portland OR 97232  
(503) 235-8791

### **Boston Musicians Association Local 9-535**

130 Concord Ave. Belmont, MA 02174  
(617) 489-6400

### **San Francisco - Musicians Union Local 6**

230 Jones St., San Francisco, CA 91402  
(415) 775-8118  
[www.afm6.org](http://www.afm6.org)

### **Dallas-Fort Worth Professional Musicians Association Local 72-147**

1939 Stadium Oaks Court, Arlington, TX 76011  
(817) 469-6040  
[www.musiciansdfw.org](http://www.musiciansdfw.org)

### **Seattle - Musicians Association Local 76-493**

2620 Third Ave., Seattle, WA 98121  
(206) 441-7600

dismissed that kind of musicianship," recalls Harvey Kubernik, now an independent producer of spoken-word albums and a cultural historian of the era. "When I was invited to Phil Spector sessions in the Sixties, it was 'sit behind the microphones 'cause if one of those union characters sees you in the room there could be trouble.' You could jeopardize the session with an infraction just by being there. There was very little encouragement."

Even the vaunted union "audition," a rite of passage in previous eras, was viewed by rockers with suspicion. Though it's hard to find accounts of anyone who actually failed the audition, one rock musician in a touring company of *Beatlemania* recalls their manager paying off a union rep to avoid an audition he thought the band might fail. Apparently, their ability to perform the entire Beatles songbook wasn't enough to set such fears to rest.

British Invasion bands of the early Sixties sometimes found their tours stymied by union regulations that were designed around the turn of the century to prevent European orchestras from coming to the New World and stealing work from American groups. David Carr, a keyboardist and arranger who once played in the English band the Fortunes, remembers that the group lost its chance to play on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1965 just as its first hit, "You've Got Your Troubles, I've Got Mine," was riding high on the charts. "They hung us up because they had to swap us for the Sir Douglas Quintet and another group—they always wanted two groups in England for every one that played here—and while they were dickering, the Sullivan gig came and went. Maybe it wouldn't have made any difference in our career," Carr shrugs, "but you always wonder. It certainly didn't do the Beatles any harm."

If the Sixties rockers wrestled with the union and sometimes achieved an uneasy peace, the Seventies punk bands ignored it completely, performing in clubs and recording on tiny independent labels that were outside traditional music biz channels. Guitarist David Kessel, son of the famed jazz guitarist Barney Kessel, had grown up in the world of session players and appreciated the union for providing a "barometer of consistency" for both money and quality on recording dates. But when he began producing punk and new wave acts for indie labels in the Seventies, Kessel found himself fighting the union. "Union reps would show up at the studio like Jack Webb in *Dragnet*, saying 'Are you in the union?' and look you up. As a member I could get fined for producing those records—so I quit the union.

"Nobody ever went to the younger folks and said 'What can we do to grow?' or 'What are your needs?'" he observes, noting that the AFM has only recently established lower, more

equitable rates for low-budget recordings with smaller distribution. "And if an independent producer used non-union cats and those masters got picked up [by a major label], they had to put out phony re-recording dates."

Perhaps the biggest blow to the AFM's authority came in 1978, when a ruling by the National Labor Relations Board established that individual band leaders or artists who contracted gigs with hotels, restaurants, or nightclubs would henceforth be classified as the employers of record, rather than the owners of the clubs or hotels where the gigs took place. This affront to common sense not only wiped out all such existing contracts but, thanks to provisions in the Taft-Hartley labor law (1947) that banned strikes against "secondary" employers, effectively removed the AFM as a bargaining agent for any future agreements.

As the NLRB is the final arbiter of labor disputes—the equivalent of the Supreme Court—this ruling is not subject to change unless the U.S. Congress passes an amendment to that effect. There is a bill that will do just that: the Performing Artists Rights Labor Act, which has several congressional sponsors. But taking into account the relative lobbying power of the national restaurant and hotel associations vs. the AFM, and that both houses of Congress currently enjoy Republican majorities, don't expect it to see it land on saxophonist "Prez" Clinton's desk any time soon.

"The Taft-Hartley act does grant exemptions and modifications to trades with similar deals, like the construction trade," explains Local 47 treasurer Richard Totusek, a former AFM International Executive Board member.

"But at the time everyone *knew* the club was the employer, so no one thought it would every apply to us. The NLRB settlement says in a nutshell that the union will not act toward the 'purchasers' of music as employers and exercise legally coercive means. In other words, we would have to picket the residence of the band leader, not the club. So we are no longer able to negotiate terms of employment with the person who is paying the bill—this in an industry with a two-week turnover."

Could things get worse? Sure they could. As sound films wiped out vaudeville orchestras in the Thirties, so did synthesizers and canned music eliminate steady work for many musicians in theater productions and nightclubs in the Eighties—a trend helped along by some union musicians working so-called "dark dates" to record the music that would inevitably put members out of work. The development of MIDI and other digital technologies made every musician the potential king of his or her own home studio, but it also further eroded the ability of the union to negotiate recording agreements. Back in the Twenties, AFM leaders were fomenting against the dangers of phonograph records. By 1982, then-AFM

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"The average age of our new members was 'deceased.'"

—Jay Rosen,  
board of directors, Local 47

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president Victor Fuentelba was telling *The New York Times* that synthesizers posed “the most serious threat to professional musicians today,” an analysis that spoke volumes about the AFM’s inability to glide on the winds of change. The union was growing older—literally—but not wiser.

Jay Rosen, fifty, is a violinist whose extensive résumé includes sessions for more than eight hundred movies, along with theater productions, jazz recordings, and tours with the Rolling Stones. “I was one of the fortunate ones who has always had plenty of work in Los Angeles, and I wanted to give something back,” he says of his decision to join Local 47’s board of directors four years ago. What he discovered was a union that was well on its way toward calcification. “The average age of our new members was ‘deceased,’” he says dryly. “Fifty members a month were dying, and about twenty were joining, usually transfers whose average age was about sixty.” For Rosen, the challenge seemed twofold: “recognizing the problem and then doing something about it.”

The main thing to do, of course, was to make the union attractive to younger players again. So Local 47 began emphasizing such benefits of membership as low-cost theft insurance, cheap rehearsal space, a referral network and legal assistance, and a medical plan subsidized by record company payments. Annie Miles, a young singer/songwriter who was running the membership department at the time, created an ad for publications that were geared to younger players, touting the union’s ability to provide “the survival terms you need.” The idea, she says, “was to make musicians see that your membership dollar gives you more than what you pay. What we were doing as a local was more visible than anything in the AFM.”

Membership in Local 47 has been growing slowly but steadily: According to Hal Espinosa, by the beginning of this year the L.A. chapter had passed New York’s Local 802 as the largest in the country. “They called us up and asked what we were doing differently to get more people here,” he smiles.

But it didn’t happen without a fight. “Old-line members would complain, ‘We’re in danger of turning into the largest employment service in L.A.’” Jay Rosen recalls. “I’d think, ‘What’s wrong with that?’” Confrontation came to a head a few years back, after the board voted to build its own recording studio and rent it to members for \$30 an hour, including an engineer. In its first year, construction and purchasing expenses far outstripped income generated from drawing new members, and some of the old-line board members demanded that the studio be shut down. “The meeting to decide the issue was extremely well-attended, and there were 100 to 150 young musicians there I’d never seen before,” Rosen remembers. “Each of them would get up and say, ‘This is the best thing the union has ever done.’”

A vote to keep the studio won overwhelmingly that day. “And after the vote,” Rosen says, “the guy who’d led the opposition got up and said, ‘Hey, this is what a union is all about.’”

John Morris Doyle, a twentysomething rock guitarist who recently joined Local 47, agrees that there’s been a change in

attitude there. “I have younger friends coming in, and there’s a buzz of ‘Join the union,’ rather than ‘Don’t bother.’ You can tell the vibe is that they’re trying to get younger players to join, that they want you around, rather than, ‘Uh, are you a cello player?’”

Not every union official is sanguine about transforming the AFM from a militant trade union into a warm and fuzzy service group. “Will the members we’re drawing in because they can get good insurance someday be willing to walk a picket line?” wonders Denise Westby, president of Portland, Oregon’s Local 99. “There is still a group of us who want this to be a *union*. And to start being a union you have to start organizing. But it’s still hard to get musicians to see themselves as laborers,” she concedes. “You’ll hear them say, ‘I’m an artist.’ I’ll say, ‘Well, what do you want to be, a starving artist or a laborer who makes some money?’”

“Unfortunately, that is a weakness of musicians,” Hal Espinosa agrees. “Musicians want to play first. They don’t ask employers, ‘Are you going to file a union contract?’ They say, ‘Where, what time, and what do I wear?’”

For all its problems and missed opportunities, the AFM is far from toothless. The union boasts an impressive record of past accomplishments and current benefits, especially if one compares the situation of freelance musicians with, say, writers or illustrative artists. Right now, after all, musicians at every major label recording session are entitled to union scale payments (union membership, of course, is mandatory), while a percentage of all record sales over 25,000 per album rebounds into both the MPTF and a “Special Payments” fund that is distributed back annually among *all* musicians who played on union recording sessions that year. Record company payments also fund the AFM’s sizable Employers Pension Fund, which currently boasts assets of \$1.4 billion. Several of the bigger locals provide medical insurance as well, though differences in state law make such a plan difficult to implement through the national AFM office.

But can an organization that has been slow to adapt to the changing conditions of the music business throughout this century deal with even more accelerated changes in the next one? David Kessel, now president of IUMA’s Internet Offline Records, doubts it. “I think it’s darn swell that they’ve figured out that there’s kids with long hair coming out of England,” he says acidly. “John Lennon once said, you grow with music or the music outgrows you. I think that applies here.”

But thirty years after getting jobbed from *The Ed Sullivan Show*, David Carr remains a loyal union member. “I’ve been through this relationship of ‘love the union, hate the union,’” he says. “They screwed me in the Sixties, but on the other hand, their credit union loaned me the money I used to buy my car. They had a strike in the Seventies that put a lot of film scoring people out of work, but I’ve gotten a couple of nice checks from the Special Payments fund. It’s easy to second-guess what they’ve done, but we all make mistakes.

“You know, there is a lot of money in the music business that goes to people who don’t have *anything* to do with making music. It’s good that there’s a union.”

by Fred Koller

**S**eptember, 1962. 10:30 a.m. The young manager of an aspiring rock band has put on a good suit and is sitting in the office of a song publisher. He has been patiently there for over half an hour to play a new song for someone who seems to have forgotten their appointment. The manager checks his watch. He has other meetings scheduled. He walks out of the office of the first publisher and down the street to Dick James Music.

Dick James might have made the manager wait too. But James' teenage son has informed him that the manager's group sounds "great." So the manager is quickly welcomed into James' office. After hearing the new song, James rings up the producer of a television show and plays him the song over the phone. The TV show contact agrees to book the band right away. The manager is impressed. A publishing deal is made. James, the manager, and the rock band—the Beatles—agree to form a new company called Northern Songs. The agreement gives James 55 percent of the group's new songs, with the remaining portion divided among the band's main songwriters—John Lennon and Paul McCartney—and their manager, Brian Epstein. Within the first four years of this contract, the Lennon and McCartney turn over to James 159 new songs, even though their contract only requires six songs a year. Lennon and McCartney lose control of these copyrights.

We all say we'd never sign a deal like that. But time and again one reads an interview with a musician we respect, only to learn of another bitter dispute between a publisher and a songwriter who are speaking to each other through their attorneys in court. Luckily, these nightmarish deals are the exception, and can be avoided by learning how to properly evaluate what publishing deal is meant for you.

What is a publishing deal? Mostly, it's a gamble: The songwriter agrees to sign away a percentage of the songs he or she has created

in exchange for an advance against future royalties from those songs. The publisher is betting that those songs will garner enough performances and sales to repay their investment. They have probably done this hundreds of times and have acquired a huge catalog of songs in the bargain. Earnings from this back catalog provide the money needed to invest in new songwriters. You, the new songwriter, just want the best deal available.

But do you really need a publisher? A songwriter like myself, who spends most of his time writing songs that will be pitched to other artists, can benefit greatly from a team of people who will constantly explore ways to create revenue, in return for a sizable chunk of royalties. A songwriter in a band, who doesn't expect his or her songs to be recorded elsewhere, might be much better off hiring a publisher to simply administrate their catalog in return for a much smaller percentage of the royalties. But we'll get to that case later. For the moment, let's assume that you are writing songs that have the potential to be covered by other, established recording artists. You probably could use a good publishing deal, but you don't know where to begin. What's a writer to do?

**Step One:** Contact BMI, ASCAP, or SESAC. Each of these performing rights societies has a writer/relations staff to listen to your songs and offer advice. Ask other musicians and songwriters if they already have a relationship with anyone from these societies who is attuned to the kind of music you are creating. Once contact is made, a performing rights representative will want to hear your music. If you're sending a tape to them, make the most professional recording you can afford. If you are performing in New York, Nashville, or Los Angeles, it won't hurt to ask if they can come to one of your gigs as well.

Once you send your tape, be patient. You can't mail it in on Monday and then leave four messages on Wednesday asking what they think of your music. If they hear something they like, they will let you know. At the same time, you've got to be dedicated. Just making a tape and then disappearing back into your basement studio to wait for the phone to ring doesn't help you or your songs. Ask the performing rights representatives about showcases they sponsor and other industry events where you can make the contacts you need to further your career. Performing rights societies can't promise you a fair publishing

It's cool to get paid for writing songs (as long as your publishing deal doesn't drain your creative future away).

# THE PERILS of PUBLISHING



World Radio History

# PUBLISHING

deal—but they will try to arrange meetings with publishers who they feel will best represent you and your music.

It's rare, though, for someone to get a publishing deal by just dropping off a tape. Contacts help. Many songwriters have gotten their first publishing deal through co-writing songs with either another songwriter or with an artist who is already signed to a publisher. An introduction from someone at a performing rights society, or the recommendation of a staff songwriter at a song publishing firm, is still the easiest way to get your songs heard by the person who can authorize a publisher to offer you a deal.

If you find yourself starving to death while waiting to be discovered, your performing rights society can often help you to find a publisher with a development program for writers and bands who are early in their careers. If they believe that you have the potential to be successful, they may offer a small monthly advance. This type of deal doesn't give you much leverage, but it will keep food on the table.

You may not get any interest from a publisher until you've signed a recording contract and completed your first album, however. At that point, your record label or producer may have a publishing company that they are associated with already. They may know which publishers are willing to work with them on video expenses and in providing other promotional help. Not all publishers have strong film connections, though, and your record label may want to steer you towards a publisher who has proven track record for placing songs in films. More than one artist has been discovered through a song on a soundtrack.

With or without a record deal in hand, don't be surprised if you're approached after a gig by a someone in the publishing industry who is interested in your material. Like a good poker player, they may play down their excitement at hearing songs that they believe could be hits. They invite you down to their offices. You are impressed with the music awards lining the walls and the offer of co-writing opportunities with the established songwriters they work with. It seems too good to be true.

But is it really something that you need at this stage of your career? Remember, you are already your own publisher and unless you have co-written the songs, you own 100 percent of both the writer's and the publisher's shares of any income those songs may generate.

Let's say your new friend the publisher offers you a thousand dollars a month for a year, with an option to renew for the following year. Sounds enticing—but before you get that first check, you must sign over the publishing rights to the songs you've written so far. Let's say that includes the ten songs you've spent the last five years writing. You will also be required to give the publisher any new songs created during the term of the deal; most contracts will call for a minimum of at least six new compositions. At the end of the first year the publisher will have advanced you \$12,000 and you will have given them at least sixteen songs. In other words, they will have given you \$750 a song. It's not much, but it keeps the cupboards stocked.

Now let's say that someone else scores a hit with one of your songs. Where does the money go? The current mechanical royalty rate is \$0.071 per unit sold. Your mechanicals will be applied against the money you have received from the publisher. If the single goes gold, which indicates sales of 500,000 units, that means a financial return of about \$35,000. Here, the publisher will immediately subtract the \$12,000 dollars they advanced to you along with any expenses for demos on your other songs that they have published during your contract. The remaining \$20,000 will be divided with you per the terms of your contract. Not a bad deal for the publisher.

Now let's assume that *your* CD went gold and you wrote ten songs on it. Multiply the above figures by ten. That's a lot of return on a \$12,000 investment—and we haven't even begun to calculate performance royalties, which will be equally divided between you and your very happy publisher.

All of which brings us back to the question: Do you really need

a publisher to do more than administrate your catalog? That depends on your situation. If you're in a band, maybe not. In the early Sixties, the Beatles changed the course of popular music away from groups who covered songs written by professional songwriters to songs that were written and recorded by the group's themselves. For a while, music publishers were able to convince groups that they still needed to give up the entire publisher's share of their creations in exchange for services such as

arranging sheet music deals and collecting royalties. Publishers who once spent time and money developing songwriters began shifting their focus to signing artist/songwriters who would record songs they created for themselves.

We have all read about some teenage pop group that has just signed a six-figure publishing deal. The publishing industry knows that there is less risk involved in investing money in a group that has a strong industry buzz and a recording contract with a major label. But did the group really get the best deal available? Most professional songwriters will probably admit to signing at least one publishing deal in their career that they have lived to regret. Just ask Paul McCartney.

On the other hand, publishers are making concessions today which were unheard of a few years ago. For example, publishers don't want deals in which the song rights revert back to the writers, for obvious reasons. But a band with a strong industry buzz can often receive a sizable advance *and* eventually get all of their copyrights back. A good publisher knows the risks involved. They also know that publishing is a very competitive business and that they must adapt to survive. But if you're making a strictly administrative deal, don't expect the publisher to actively pitch your songs. Make sure that you have a clear understanding of what services the publisher who administrates your catalog will provide.

So, what is the best deal for you? Tough to say. For one thing, no two publishing deals are the same. For another, it's hard to see into the future. If someone asked you today what your songs are worth, could you put a dollar figure on their potential income? Can any of us predict how many hit songs we might write over the next five years? I've seen publishing contracts that were forty pages long with

## Most professional songwriters have signed at least one publishing deal they've lived to regret.



wordings that baffled even seasoned music business attorneys. It's very heady stuff. Sometime a group will leave it up to their manager to find them a publishing deal, but that has risks too. Just ask Paul McCartney.

In any case, don't sign anything without consulting an attorney. Find one who is actively negotiating publishing deals. Though most contracts start with a boiler plate set of terms, the percentages can change drastically from one deal to another. The right lawyer will know what kind of advances and terms are generally being offered now. Have your attorney explain clearly what each point of the contract means. You need to know exactly how much of your songs you are signing away and for how long. Don't let a bad contract haunt you forever.

In preparation for this article, I talked with lawyers, managers, performing rights agencies and other songwriters. The advice that they all gave for anyone considering a publishing deal was this:

**Don't sign anything unless you really need the money.** If you are writing songs for yourself or with your band, you will be able to negotiate a much better deal once you have some leverage.

**A recording contract equals leverage.** Publishers' pockets get a lot deeper when they know that a major record label will be spending time and money to promote you and your music.

**Building a strong industry buzz about your band means even more leverage.** With enough leverage, you can receive a decent advance against your songs. Or you may prefer to demand a reversion clause that gives you back your songs after several years, thus leasing your songs to a publisher for an agreed upon advance, for a predetermined period of time. The latter deals are not as rare as you may think—but they aren't that easy to learn about, either. No publisher is going to show you the contract they have signed with another songwriter or band in their employ.

**It's okay to start small.** John Hiatt was signed to Tree Publishing for \$25 a week when he first arrived in Nashville in the early Seventies. Tree also provided him with access to a studio to do simple demos and a staff who believed in his songs. He wasn't getting rich but he was

able to devote time to his music. Within a few years, Hiatt had a recording contract with Epic, who gave his songs the exposure that led to a top ten pop hit.

By the way, it's a common misconception that getting a song released as a single guarantees you a publishing deal. There are songwriters who have had number one singles, who are still unable to land a staff songwriting position. A smart publisher is looking for consistency in the quality of your songs and realizes all too well that your first hit might have been a fluke—especially if it is a song that you co-wrote with the artist who recorded it. Unless you and that artist are constantly writing together, there's no evidence that you will be able to come up with another hit on your own.

**Do your homework.** Who are the other writers the publisher represents? Try to contact them and ask how satisfied they are with their deals. No songwriter alive thinks they are getting enough covers of their songs, but total apathy from a publisher is unforgivable. Great publishers will treat your songs as if they were their own creations, exploring every possible avenue to generate the maximum income.

**Keep an escape hatch.** Most publishing deals are for one year, with two one-year options. If you find yourself in a deal that isn't what you had hoped for, there is always a chance to try again with a new publisher once your contract runs out. If you can't find a satisfactory deal, you can always publish yourself.

I've had several publishing deals, and each one had its pros and cons. I learned that I could be just as successful publishing myself as I was working for a large publishing firm with offices around the world. A publishing deal doesn't guarantee that your songs will get recorded or become hits. But it's hard to create great music when you feel that you are being cheated or misled. It's up to you to find a situation where you are inspired to create the best songs you have ever written. ♪

*Contributors: Fred Koller has been a professional songwriter for over twenty years. His songs have been recorded by Peter Case, Dave Edmunds, Jeff Healy, Jerry Lee Lewis, and more than a hundred other performers. He is the author of How to Pitch and Promote Your Songs (Allworth Press, 1996).*

The Tony Rich Project

birdseye

Album in stores  
august 11th

THE TONY RICH PROJECT  
BIRDSEYE

Records

by howard massey

# Pickin' the Cream of the C

New products

**F**unny thing about the music business: You can never be too young, too rich, or too jaded. But just when you think you've seen it all, an event like the summer NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) show comes around and hands you a brand new perspective. This summer's extravaganza in Nashville may have been a little light on major new product announcements, but it was rich in what I like to think of as NAMM Moments, such as...

**NAMM Moment #1:** Legendary Hendrix producer Eddie Kramer chatting in a quiet corner with Mitch Mitchell and Billy Cox (two-thirds of the Band Of Gypsies), with all three clutching shopping bags stuffed with product literature.

**NAMM Moment #2:** Pope of Pop Phil Ramone good-naturedly roasting Frank Filipetti at an industry party ("Okay, Frank, it's official: you've got your two Grammys, now you can coast for a year...").

**NAMM Moment #3:** Euro-keyboardist and Yes veteran Patrick Moraz trading up-tempo blues licks on two Oberheim keyboard controllers with the editor of some music magazine (some "Dorshuk" guy?) before a packed house at the Gibson Café.

You get the picture. But it wasn't all fun and games in Music City. No, there were miles of aisles to tread, and, as always, you can count on us to bring you all the hot news about

NAMM's new product offerings. In this month's installment, we'll be looking at recording products, live sound, microphones, and MIDI hardware and software: next month, we'll focus on new guitar, bass, and drum products.

## recording products

You've undoubtedly been reading all the stories about the new high-resolution digital multitracks-products like Pro Tools 24 or the new Type II ADATs-that use 20- or 24-bit lengths instead of the once-standard 16.

**TASCAM** has now introduced the perfect complement to these new second-generation digital recorders: the DA-45HR, the world's first 24-bit DAT recorder. Priced at just

also record and play back 16-bit audio at standard speed.) Both AES/EBU and S/PDIF digital I/O is provided, so the DA-45HR can communicate with all manner of digital mixers, hard disk recorders and workstations, and its 24-bit A/D converter means that you can record high-res digital audio even via the analog inputs.

Another very cool product being shown by TASCAM was the DA-302 dual DAT recorder, also priced at \$1,999. It provides two discrete DAT transports in a single chassis, allowing you to dub DATs just as easily as you dub analog cassettes. Features include continuous recording and both half- and double-speed recording. What's more, both



TASCAM's DA-45HR

\$1,999 (about the same as you'll pay for a good-quality 16-bit machine), the DA-45HR uses a special double-speed mode to record 24-bit audio on a standard DAT tape. (It can

transports can record simultaneously, so you can create a master and backup at the same time—a boon when running mixes from an automated console.

and golden moments at the summer NAMM show.

# Crop

**Roland** unveiled the latest incarnation of its incredibly popular VS-880 hard disk recorder, the VS-880EX (\$2,195). This new model allows you to record up to eight tracks simultaneously (depending upon the speed of your hard drive), which makes it great for recording band rehearsals. In addition, there are improved A/D and D/A converters, six balanced analog inputs (instead of the four unbalanced inputs on the original VS-880), plus multi-effects, which were optional in the original VS-880, are now built-in. And, although **Fostex** may be part of the hard-disk recording scene, it hasn't abandoned the venerable analog cassette, as evidenced by its unveiling of the double-speed X-24 4-track cassette recorder/mixer (\$369), which includes both mic and line inputs as well as insert points.

Speaking of endangered recording formats, **Sony** hasn't given up on the MiniDisc just yet. Its MDS-DRE1 (\$1,199) is aimed squarely at the DJ market and is said to combine the best features of a turntable and a CD player-plus, it also records audio! A large scrub wheel allows you to scratch MDs to your heart's content, and eight "hot start" trigger buttons allow you to trigger sound effects on the fly. And you bargain hunters will be happy to hear that **Alesis** is reducing the prices of its ADAT-XT20 and ADAT-LX20 20-bit MDMs. You can now be the proud owner of an XT20 for \$2,599 (down from \$2,999), while the LX20 will fly out the door for just \$1,899 (down from \$2,249), marking the first time any ADAT has been available for under two grand.



**Yamaha's MSP5**

Houston, do we have a problem here? **Generalmusic** was showing prototypes of two new digital mixers: the Falcon (\$1,395) and the Eagle (\$2,595), both named after Apollo lunar landing modules, with appropriately futuristic user interfaces. The two models differ primarily in terms of the number of analog inputs and outputs (10 in, 6 out in the

case of the Falcon and 16 in, 8 out in the case of the Eagle).

**Yamaha** joins the quest for the perfect self-powered home studio monitor with the release of the MSP5 (\$599). Each of these little puppies includes a built-in 40-watt amplifier driving a 5" woofer and a 27-watt amp driving a 1" titanium tweeter—and the resulting sound is a whole lot bigger than what you might expect to hear from such a small package.

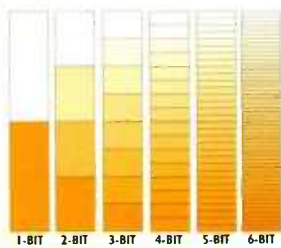
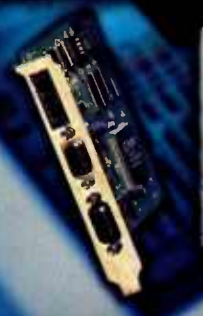
In the land of signal processors, **ART** extends its line of affordable tube products with the release of the Dual Tube EQ (\$449), which can be used either as a dual four-band or monophonic eight-band parametric equalizer. And the company's new Quadra/FX (\$349) provides four independent channels, so it can function as two independent stereo processors. There were also two new **DigTech** offerings for you studio cats: the S200 multi-effects processor (\$339) and the Quad 4 (\$479), which can handle up to four

separate input signals simultaneously.

Trying to get your home studio to sound less like a garage and more like the Hit Factory? You'll want to check out the **Auralex Acoustics** line of Metro sound absorbers and Sunburst-360 column/bass traps. The company also offers a series of Roominator

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# It's Not Science Fiction. It's Reality.



Every bit you add doubles the resolution of a digital recorder. Compared to 16-bit formats, ADAT Type II's non-compressed, linear 20-bit recording offers a wider dynamic range, less quantization distortion at low levels, more headroom and even lower noise. Result: detailed, full-spectrum audio fidelity that far exceeds the quality of any analog recorder.



Don't get fooled by the science fiction of some "24-bit" recording systems. Just read the fine print: the state-of-the-art ADAT Type II recorders offer audio specs that rival any 24-bit system, without resorting to tricks like data compression or track sharing.

While the rest of the world is trying to figure out the final frontier of recording formats, you need to make a decision. What's the best choice today that will keep you ahead of the game tomorrow?

The answer: ADAT Type II. It's the next generation of Alesis' award-winning digital audio technology that combines the proven power of ADAT with the astonishing fidelity of true 20-bit linear recording.

With the new XT20™, you get a serious improvement on the world standard for professional recording. The new LX20™ is the most affordable ADAT ever made. Both provide all the real-world qualities that made ADAT the most popular professional recording format: modular design, efficient tape-based media and complete compatibility with over 110,000 ADATs around the world. Plus, as the only modular digital multitracks that write 20 bits to each track of tape, the new ADAT Type II recorders offer audio quality that's miles ahead of any 16-bit system, period. And with the introduction of the ADAT-PCR™ interface card, you get the advantages of nonlinear editing on your Mac® or Windows® computer seamlessly integrated with ADAT format recording.

Most importantly, the intuitive ease-of-use, comprehensive features and incredible affordability of the ADAT Type II systems put no limits on your creativity. Because, after all, the final frontier is really your imagination.

## adat TYPE II

There are over 110,000 ADATs in use today, and the new ADAT Type II recorders are compatible with all of them. The XT20 and LX20 will work with your 16-bit ADAT tapes, and you can combine the Type II recorders in a system with any model of older ADAT.



If you think tape isn't as advanced as other removable recording media, think again. You'd need more than 30 Zip® disks to equal the 3.4 gigabyte storage capacity of just one inexpensive ADAT tape.

For more information on ADAT Type II, the XT20, the LX20 and the PCR, see your Authorized Alesis Dealer. Or call 800-5-ALESIS to order the ADAT Type II Systems video and brochure (\$4.95 for shipping and handling).

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Alesis Corporation

World Radio History

# ALESIS

RECORDING

ALESIS

# Twist of Fate

**Actodyne General's Lace Helix turns the tide of guitar design.**

by e. d. menasché

If Buddy Holly were to rise and walk through the music ghetto on New York's West 48th Street, he'd see a lot of things that might have seemed like a bent futurist's dream back in 1959. But he'd also be able to walk into any store and pick a familiar Stratocaster off the shelf without any hassle, because while the guitar may be the instrument of rebellion, guitarists as a group are a lot more conservative than keyboard players and computer musicians when it comes to their beloved axes. In other words, though the world has turned upside down over the past forty years, the electric guitar still dresses like a bobby soxer.

Not that we haven't seen some noteworthy innovations, such as the Floyd Rose locking tremolo, the Parker Fly (featured as our Aug '96 Editor's Pick), and the Buzz Feiten tuning system (our July '97 Editor's Pick). Like these products—and, in fact, like the first Teles and Strats—Actodyne General's new Lace Helix guitar (\$1,995) rethinks a lot of things we've long taken for granted about the electric guitar: the shape of the body, the position and contour of the neck, the use of wood as the body material of choice, the need for traditional pole pieces in the pickups—and, oh yeah, the idea that the old designs are always the best designs.

Most guitar development involves a subtle evolution of tested forms—a deeper cutaway here, an extra fret or two there, hotter pickups, lighter materials. But one look at the Lace Helix tells you that you've just jumped off the retro-evolutionary bandwagon. "We wanted to make the most ergonomic guitar possible," Don Lace explains. "We started with a clean sheet of paper and focused on the interaction between hands and body."

The model I tested had a light, fiberglass body, with deep cutaways and contours front and back to fit against torso and arm. (A rich black finish made the contours ripple in the light, as though the guitar had been cut from stone.) A dark rosewood fretboard and a trio of black Lace Sensor pickups complemented the finish; the frets, the fixed silver bridge (with roller saddles), and the set of six-in-line Sperzel locking tuners provided the only break in the



color scheme. Even the large black "mini data" knobs, which serve as master volume and tone controls, looked and felt different from the norm and seemed to emerge from the body rather than rest upon it. The output jack was located on the back of the body, where it's almost impossible to dislodge a cable by accident.

A sexy body with a pretty finish might attract a player to a guitar, but it takes qualities like a comfortable neck and a sweet tone to make the relationship last. No problem here: The Lace Helix's approach to comfort is nothing less than revolutionary. The 25-1/2" scale maple neck actually twists at a twenty-degree angle; the twist is so dramatic that you can easily see it as you sight down the instrument's neck.

The idea is to position the fretboard to the natural contour and disposition of your hand, especially down at the lower frets where stretching across a fretboard to form barre chords can be awkward and fatiguing.

After inspecting the guitar, I thought I'd have to make some big adjustments in my technique, but I was

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wrong. In fact, the neck felt natural and unobtrusive, especially when I fretted with the "wrapped thumb" position favored by most rock and blues players; when I placed my thumb on the back of the neck in a more classical style, I felt the effects of the twist less acutely. The best way to describe the effect might be to turn your guitar so that the fretboard points slightly toward the floor and play a barre chord. The more you turn it, the less you have to bend your wrist to reach the chord; the neck twists up so that you don't have to.

The twist seems to straighten out as you move up to the higher frets, again following the natural disposition of your hand. In fact, the Lace Helix has a compound radius that inverts as you move along the neck: Down by the nut, the radius measures 12" at the first string, a rounder 9" at the sixth; on the higher frets, the figures are reversed.

Accessing those upper frets is exceptionally easy, thanks in part to the Helix's equally deep cutaways and sleekly undetectable neck joint. Strapped on, the guitar hangs differently than the average axe, so that a larger portion of the neck is clear of your body. On many guitars—even those with double cutaways—when you reach for the highest notes, your arm is slightly encumbered by your own body. Not so with the Lace Helix. In fact, the facility with which I was able to tackle the skinny frets influenced my approach to soloing. Not only was I more inclined to reach out on the high strings, I used a more efficient horizontal approach to fingering. For example, if I would normally slide down to the tenth fret on the third string to play an F on my Strat, with the Lace I might play the same note on the twentieth fret of the fifth string without feeling cramped or worrying that the note would sound dull or weak. I could reach past the fifteenth fret without the need to arch my wrist or extend my thumb, and even up that high I could still bend and apply heavy vibrato with maximum power across all six strings. I sure can't do that on my Tele.

Twisting a guitar neck (as opposed to a guitarist's) is such a radical departure from convention that I had to ask Don Lace how the idea sprang up. "Twist necks have been

tried before," he says. "They tried to do it on some violin designs about a hundred years ago, but the designs were unsuccessful. We had to make sure the twist-neck would be playable all the way up the instrument."

Remarkable as the design is, I did find one drawback to the twist neck: Strings occasionally bottomed out on the frets when I executed deep bends below the seventh fret. It happened more on the middle strings (G and



D) than on the top pair, and mostly when I tried raising the string's pitch by more than two half-steps. (Admittedly, many guitarists don't bend beyond two half-steps, but some practitioners consider it an important part of their style.) The instrument I tested had exceptionally low action, and the interference might be mitigated by raising the action slightly.

According to Lace, the problem is inherent in the physics of the twist design, and eliminating it was part of the motivation behind the compound radius. "We've been tweaking the radius to improve string pulling. The production models have a slightly different radius than the prototype, and hangups are less of a problem." Either way, you'll do well to test the guitar as aggressively as possible to make sure it's not a problem for your playing style.

The Lace Helix's sound complements its shape and feel. Dense chords—which are easier to reach thanks to the neck and body design—come through with balanced clarity, each note distinct and well defined. Intonation was stable and consistent across the whole instrument, and the fiberglass body delivered a precise and detailed tone with a very sharp, percussive attack, sounding good when played with a hard or gentle attack. (The body didn't resonate as

much as some of the wood guitars in my collection, but it didn't sound dull, clinical, or lacking in harmonic richness.)

The electronics provide a wide array of useful tones. Lace Sensor pickups, best known as standard issue on modern Fender Strats and Telecaster Pluses, employ a unique design that eschews conventional pole pieces. (Magnetic pole pieces can tend to offer uneven response and impede string vibration, which reduces sustain. Sensors are quieter than most humbuckers, but they offer sonic detail reminiscent of single coils, with a slightly broader frequency response, stronger output and, because they don't exert much magnetic pull on the strings, increased sustain.) The five-way switch let me dial in a selection of Strat-like tones; the bridge humbucker drove my tube amps to fat distortion without

sacrificing detail or harmonic richness, while the neck humbucker sounded sharp and funky when open wide and jazzily mellow with the tone control rolled back.

The Helix's electronics really impressed me with the way they allowed the guitar to stand up to digital effects: Notes came through unmuddled, with the processing enhancing rather than overwhelming the sound. If your gig calls for heavy effects and timbral variety, the fiberglass Helix should hold up quite nicely. (Roots music lovers might find the sound a little too precise; according to Lace, the somewhat more expensive wood-bodied guitars retain the ergonomics of the glass model but sound quite different.)

When Leo Fender started building guitars, he had no notion of creating the sound that would rock the world. His main goal was to improve the lot of the average player. The impetus behind the Lace Helix is the same, and though I wouldn't call it the next Telecaster, it does have the potential to be an important and influential guitar. If the prototype's unusual shape and fiberglass body scare off the more traditional player, the principles behind the design—comfort, playability, and accessibility—should appeal to anyone who's hungry for more from his or her instrument.

# The Vintage Advantage

*Resuscitating your old tube amp.*

by **brett ratner**



**A**ll of the years bending strings on that reliable old guitar through your beat-up amp are finally paying off. Your calendar is filled with high-profile gigs, and the cassette in your answering machine is brimming with offers of session work. It appears as though things are good—so good that now might be the time to realistically consider upgrading your amp.

While you may have *wanted* a better amp a few years ago, such a purchase would have been based more on impulse than on real need. (And let's not even start talk about the whole cost-effectiveness thing.) But now, in the interest of a tone that befits your recently acquired stature, professional-quality sound is an obvious must. Of course that doesn't mean the issues of reliability and cost should be tossed out the window. After all, your gig money needs to be spent on rent, not a new rig (at least in theory).

Restoring an old tube amp—your own or the one that the local music store has been using as a lunch stool—may be your ticket to ride. Revamping an old tube amp can be a great way to get superb tone without blowing wads of cash, and while there are certainly advantages to buying a new amp (cascading preamps, channel switching, recording outputs and warranties, for example), a little familiarization with the vintage

amp market can help a prospective buyer make an educated purchase that pleases both the ears and the budget. (Please note that while there are many solid state guitar amps—both old and new—to choose from, these amps are typically less amenable to upgrades. You could replace the pots, or even the speaker(s), but there's not much else you could do to improve a solid state amp.)

"Used tube amps can be more than just a bargain—they can out-perform some new amps that cost three times as much," says Kye Kennedy, a vintage amp repair guru who services and restores amplifiers belonging to many of Nashville's best-known session players. "The most important way they can out-perform is in durability. A hand-wired, *i.e.*, vintage, amp's weakest link is its components [tubes, capacitors, etc.]. Conversely, a modern PC-board modular design's weakest link is the PC board itself. Other 'modern' weak links are ribbon cable, undersized resistors, and design flaws."

Many players believe that the "warmth" and "feel" of tube sound have yet to be successfully duplicated—although recent developments in physical modeling technology have brought digital approximations much closer to authenticity—and you'll still find that many studio players and road pros continue to

opt for tube-based amps even though they generate lots of heat, which can bake the innards of lesser-quality components.

Since the inception of tube guitar amplifiers, heat was not a huge issue because the internal wiring was hand-soldered (often referred to as "point to point"). Point-to-point wiring requires fairly intensive and expensive labor, but the end result is a very solid and durable connection between all internal components such as tubes and filter caps.

In the mid to late Seventies, many tube amp manufacturers (including Marshall) switched to "printed circuit board" (PCB) construction, which are commonly found in computers. From a manufacturing standpoint, there are many advantages to PCB design, including increased precision during assembly, elimination of human error, and significantly shorter wire traces (for higher fidelity sound). But let's face it, the main reason PCB design is featured in the vast majority of modern amp designs is that it's much cheaper. In other words, it's a corner-cutting measure. This may be fine in computers, but over time, the heat of tubes can literally fry many PC boards.

Before we give all PCB amps a bad rap, it's important to note that there are different

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grades of printed circuit boards. High-quality brands such as Rivera and Mesa/Boogie use very reliable "military grade" boards to provide pro sound, amazing features, and reliability at a reasonable price. Many discriminating buyers look to new, hand-wired "boutique" amps made by manufacturers such as Matchless or Victoria for the benefits of their no-compromise construction, but if you can't come up with the cash needed to procure a boutique rig, an upgrade may be in order.

According to Kennedy, manufacturers shouldn't be blamed for modern amp construction. "Tube theory has not been taught in schools since the Sixties, leaving qualified designers to fend for themselves," he says.

"Some have never looked in a receiving tube manual to see what parameters tubes require to work reliably. Additionally, corporations can't survive if they have to pay soldering technicians to 'hand assemble' amps. There simply wouldn't be enough of a profit to maintain a board of executives, much less a factory."

Amp manufacturers in the Sixties and early Seventies weren't faced with the same cost constraints, which explains why select models remain excellent bargains today. "With a few repairs and preventative maintenance, used amps can be a rewarding purchase for the working musician," says Kennedy. The key to transforming a dusty pawnshop piece into a tour-quality tool is to always assume that the amp in question is going to need a thorough restoration, regardless of how it cool it might look if left unadulterated.

According to Kennedy, the transformer is typically going to be fine because these are durable components that typically don't break down.

Tubes, filter caps, and speakers are another story. Kennedy advises to plan on at least replacing the following components: all tubes, electrolytic caps, the plate load resistor, screen resistor, control grid resistor, and filter resistors, because even if an amp were to sit in a closet untouched for thirty years, these components will deteriorate over time. "The screen and control grid resistors are particularly important because in most popular amps, they are mounted on the tube sockets, where they get cooked by the rising heat from the tubes like hot dogs over a fire," explains Kennedy. He also recommends that for safety

reasons, a three-prong electrical cord may also need to be installed on some older models.

When it comes to speakers, let your ears be the judge. Many players like the sound of an original Jensen (assuming it's not blown), but installing a new Celestion "Vintage 30," for example, can reinforce the low-end while eliminating the piercing high end associated with many old speakers. No matter what you are looking to upgrade, plan on paying from \$50 an hour (or more, depending on your geographical location) for a qualified tech (unless, that is, you have a working knowledge of electronics and are handy with a soldering iron).

Keep in mind that since most techs charge an hour minimum per job, it makes more economic sense to bite the bullet up front and globally restore the amp versus replacing the tubes now and changing filter caps a few months down the road. Basically, replacing everything at once eliminates time and money wasted on trouble-shooting problem components.

If you're interested in the collectability of an old amp more than its actual performance potential, Kennedy says you shouldn't restore it. By the same token, don't expect the amp to be a reliable tool for recording and gigs. "On a collectible amp, you have to make a decision as to whether you are going to play it at the club every weekend," he says. "Replacing all those parts may affect it's snob appeal, but let's be realistic: Would you take a '69 Impala on the road if it had the original tires, belts, and hoses? Old parts should be replaced before they ruin a gig, because they *will* blow during your big showcase for the record company."

A good example is how repair techs can modify an amp to accept Russian and Chinese tubes; vacuum tubes haven't been made in the U.S. for decades and "new old-stock" tubes are expensive, hard to find, and have often deteriorated over the years. Whether you choose to take this route is up to you, but a tube amp without working tubes is no more valuable than a glorified doorstep.

## finding the right amp


In terms of models to look for, vintage Vox, Marshall, and "tweed" or "black-face" Fender models are going to command high dollars. By contrast, many "silver-face" (post-CBS buyout) Fender models are identical in construction or can be wired to "black-face" specs. The best part is that they can be had for less than \$500,

sometimes less than \$400 (once again, depending on where you live). Throw in a couple hundred dollars for restoration and you have an amp that costs about the same as many lower-cost PCB amps, but one that features the same tone and quality of new "boutique" amps (which can cost several thousand dollars).

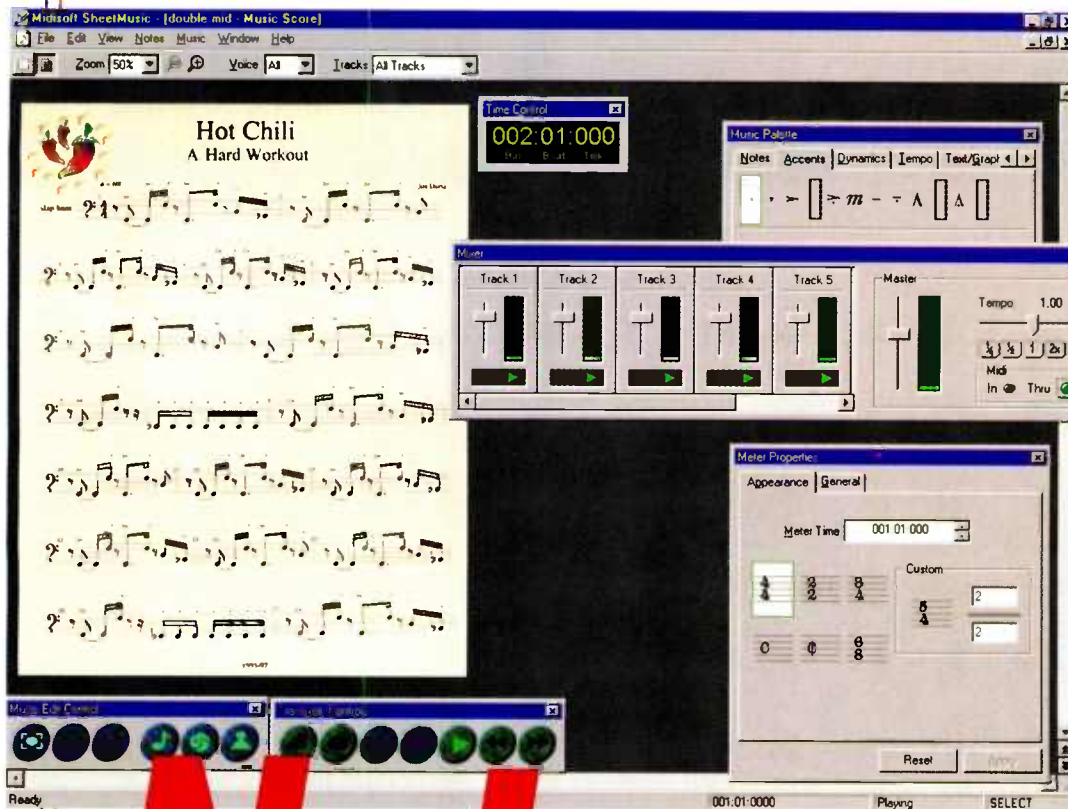
Every player and repair tech has his or her own opinion on what old tube amp is most suitable for an upgrade: Kennedy prefers silver-face Dual Showman Reverbs and Pro Reverbs, while Richard Koerner, a respected amp technician (and owner of Time Electronics in Union, New Jersey), suggests a variety of models for those seeking a sound a bit outside the norm. "I highly recommend the [silver-face] Fender Vibrosonic Reverb," Koerner said. "It's essentially a Twin Reverb, but with a 15" JBL speaker. This gives it a distinctive low end and great clean tone—which, interestingly, also made it popular for Rhodes piano. If you find one and it needs a new speaker, the JBL model E 130 is still available today."

According to Koerner, those seeking a groovy alternative to the Fender Super Reverb should seek out an Ampeg VT40 (featuring a 4x10" speaker configuration). Those who like stand-alone heads should check out an Ampeg V4.

If you're one who believes that there's no substitute for a Marshall but can't afford a "Plexi," Koerner recommends grabbing models made between '70 and '72. These models are easy to "hot rod" and, believe it or not, also make great bass amps. He also suggest that anyone looking to cop the sound of classic Pink Floyd or The Who should scour pawn shops for '70 to '72 Hiwatts. Compared to Marshalls, they feature a cleaner sound with a broader fidelity range. Finally, Koerner notes that the Fender Single Showman is a sleeper with its single 15" JBL. And bassists who want gobs of tube power but can't afford the big Ampeg SVT, should seek out a 400 watt Fender 400PS.

According to Kennedy, if you're looking for modern features like channel switching, line outs, and effects loops, check out the Paul Rivera-designed Fenders from the early Eighties. The Concert and Super Champ are both excellent amps that can be had for peanuts, though Kennedy suggests installing a beefier choke transformer. "These amps [and some other brands] are hand-wired," Kennedy said. "This makes them easy to rebuild over, and over again, much like an old Ford truck." 





◀  
**Midisoft's  
 Studio Recording  
 Session**

**Notable  
 notation  
 software is  
 on the  
 horizon.**

**by greg sandow**

# Noteworthy

**H**ere's a safe prediction—once you've used notation software, you won't go back to writing music by hand. Neatness and clarity are guaranteed, and, best of all, if you make mistakes, you can fix what's wrong in an instant.

If you're using Windows, you've got lots of software to choose from. And all of it's good—even the inexpensive programs. As we went to press, there was a hole in the market—Encore, a useful mid-price package, was about to disappear because the company that made it, Passport, went out of business.

That left only Finale, Coda Technology's high-end market leader (\$545) and a handful of simpler packages, some of which are easiest to find by phone or on the web. But here's the skinny—by the time you read this,

things will have changed.

We've looked at beta versions of two products due out this fall, and both of them challenge Finale. One, coming in at a lower price, is Overture (formerly marketed for the Mac by Opcode, and now redesigned by Cakewalk for both the Mac and Windows, probably \$349). The other, for sky's-the-limit customers, is Sibelius (\$600-\$700) from Sibelius Software. Sleek, British, and available up to now only on the obscure Acorn computer, Sibelius was so successful—Hollywood film composers bought Acorns just to get the software—that now it's being marketed for Windows too, and later for the Mac.

So now you need to know just one thing. Which program fits your needs?

**Do you want to notate something simple—a lead sheet, or a song?**

You can do the job with inexpensive software like NoteWorthy Composer (NoteWorthy ArtWare, \$39) and MusicEase (Music Ease Software, \$79.95), or you might look at two inexpensive MIDI sequencers with extensive notation built in: QuickScore Elite (Sion Software, \$79.95) and the improved Midisoft Studio Recording Session version 2.0 (Midisoft Corporation, \$149.95), with its notation capabilities available separately as Midisoft Desktop Sheet Music (\$129.95).

**Do the simpler programs have limitations?**

NoteWorthy Composer and QuickScore Elite can't handle rhythms more complex than

*(continued on page 71)*

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(continued from page 69)

triplets. Only MusicEase and the more expensive Quick Score Elite Level II (\$179) print guitar tablature. (For notation, Level II has no other advantages over the basic QuickScore.) If you want to move expression markings in your score (which is advisable if you use a lot of them) and don't want them to collide with each other, only QuickScore Elite gives you full freedom to drag them with a mouse. Only QuickScore and Midosoft automatically format your music as you add more notes; with other packages, you might have to enter special commands, even to enter barlines.

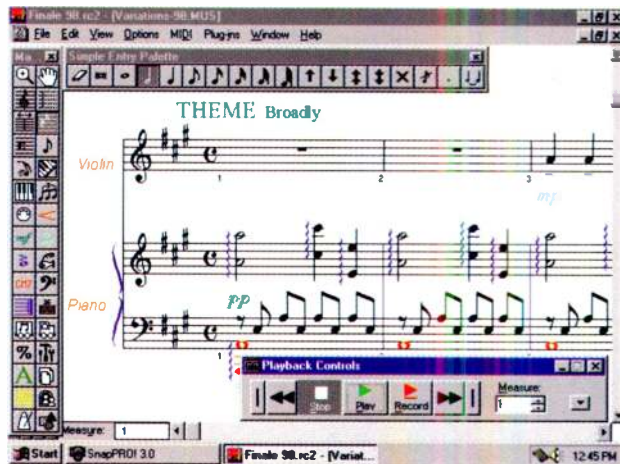
And then there's input. How do you get the notes into your computer? Some programs ask you to click them in place one by one with your mouse, or record them in real time with MIDI. MusicEase, however, has a faster, easier way—with a few basic commands, you literally type your notes, just as if you were typing words. You can do the same with Overture, Sibelius, and Finale, but they—along with NoteWorthy Composer—share the fastest

chords one note at a time—you simply play them, and watch them jump into place on your screen.

### Do you want to notate complicated music?

Don't rule out MusicEase Professional (\$179)—the upscale version of MusicEase—which offers a wide array of musical symbols and can quickly lay out a full orchestral score. Type for a while (with stops to reformat) and... pow! You're Stravinsky! (That said, the high-end programs reformat much more quickly and shine when it comes to layout and printing. They give you easy spacing of symbols and text, for instance, and remarkable flexibility in arranging precise note positions, stem heights, and many other tiny but crucial details.)

Overture—a good choice for working musicians who aren't notation fanatics—is nicely suited to pop and jazz, since it gives you



**Coda Technology's Finale**

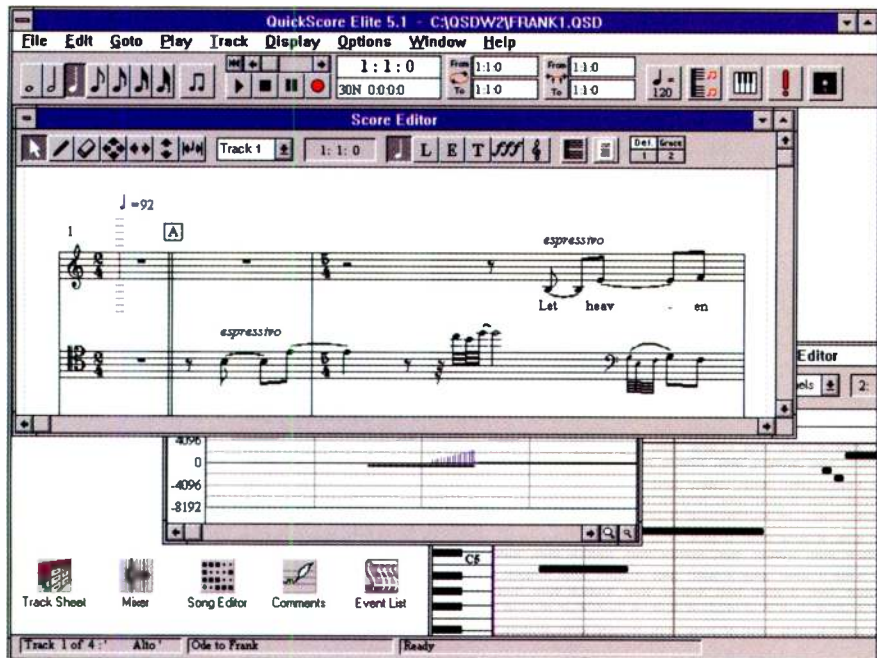
publishing firm. Sibelius, for its part, looks fast and lean in the early beta version we saw, and despite its strength seems transparently easy to use. Note that its high price gets you things nobody else offers—Sibelius will scan printed music, and can play your scores with uncanny, lifelike expression, thanks to MIDI and some stunning artificial intelligence.

One product we haven't yet mentioned—Copyist, from Sion Software (\$69.95)—can do nearly everything. But it won't format your music for you, as every other program does. Instead, you have to space every note for yourself, almost as if you were typing with a word processor, and had to place each letter on the screen with your mouse. (Copyist might work best as an add-on for Sion's QuickScore Elite, whose files it imports.) Can't I just notate with my sequencer?

All MIDI sequencers will display musical notation, but very few—Quick Score and Midosoft are dramatic exceptions—can do what a full notation program can. Cakewalk, a popular pro-quality sequencer, will print out reasonable scores for informal use, as long as the music is simple. At the extreme high end of the Windows sequencer market, Logic and Cubase (or at least the more expensive Cubase Score variant) can do fancy notation—fancier, even, than some of the simpler pure notation products.

But they offer no easy way to input notes, and real notation programs—which can transcribe MIDI files that Logic, Cubase, or other MIDI sequencers create—will be smoother to use.

So don't waste another moment. Spend what you can afford on one of these programs, and change your musical life forever.



**Sion Software's QuickScore Elite.**

method of all: You play the notes freely on your MIDI keyboard, not bothering about rhythm, but instead choosing the duration of each note with a computer command. You end up doing a two-handed ballet, with one hand on the ivories and the other on your numeric keypad, but the advantage is that you don't have to enter

an array of special jazz and guitar symbols. You can, however, buy a special jazz font for Finale, and if you want to be prepared for absolutely anything, you need Finale or Sibelius. Finale, always solid and reliable, resembles a giant box of tools; work with it long enough, and you'll have power enough to start your own music

(continued from page 63)

acoustical control kits, each of which include wedge panels, bass traps, and, in the Deluxe and Pro versions, diffusers for enhanced spaciousness and ambiance.

## live sound

In-ear monitors are becoming all the rage among touring acts that no longer want to be subject to the vagaries of onstage wedge monitors. **AKG's** premiere entry into that market is the IVM-1 (\$4,500 for a complete system), which uses a patented binaural processing system to deliver lifelike signal localization.

Wireless systems are also becoming increasingly affordable and therefore increasingly popular. **Audio-Technica** announced its 7000 Series UHF Wireless System (\$975 or \$995, depending upon configuration), which provides a choice of 100 channels for interference-free true diversity operation. **AKG** showed its new WMS 60 VHF wireless system (\$518-\$698, depending on configuration), and **Shure** unveiled its new UT Series of UHF wireless systems (\$625-\$1,037, again depending upon configuration). And **Yorkville** rolled out a new line of low-cost APEX products, including a VHF wireless system (\$525 and up, depending upon configuration), three headphone models (\$32-\$52), and a number of dynamic and condenser microphones (\$29-\$299).

Inna-godda-davita baby? **Mackie** debuted the heaviest-duty-to-date member of their FR Series power amplifiers: the M•2600 (price TBA), which delivers a whopping 2600 watts of peak power into 4 ohms bridged. And if you're looking to beef up the vocals in your act, check out **DigiTech's** Vocalist Access (\$479), which generates four-part harmony vocals, either from preset scales or from MIDI input.

**Sabine** unveiled a new line of full-featured signal processors optimized for live use: the GRAPHI-Q 3100 series (\$799-\$1,299). Each model provides digital graphic EQ with analog sliders, giving you the best of both worlds. Each unit also includes a digital compressor/limiter, a feedback exterminator, high- and low-cut filters, and up to one second of digital delay. **BSS Audio** debuted the newest addition to its Opal Series, the FCS-966 (\$1,095), a dual 30-



**The Audio-Technica AT4060**

band graphic equalizer with long throw sliders, high- and low-frequency contour knobs (which add "air" and "warmth" to the sound), and a sweepable high-pass filter. And **TC Electronic** showed the G-Card (\$149), a custom card (created by Eric Johnson, Trey Gunn, Vernon Reid, and other renowned axe-men) for the acclaimed G-Force guitar multi-effects processor.

## microphones

Prototypes of the **Audio-Technica** AT4060 tube microphone (\$1,695) have been circulating among world-class producers like Phil Ramone, Frank Filipetti, and Butch Vig for a while now, so you've actually already heard it on a number of records. But with its official

debut at NAMM, now even mere mortals like us can buy it! **CAD** countered with the VX2 tube microphone (\$2,295), said to have a bandwidth that extends beyond 100 kHz! (That's dog territory, bro.) And **Audix** introduced two affordable large-diaphragm condenser microphones, the CX-101 (\$499) and the CX-111 (\$599); the latter includes a -10dB pad and a bass roll-off switch.

## midi hardware

Neither **E-mu** nor **Ensoniq** attended the show, but that didn't stop them from announcing their merger. Henceforth, the two companies (both of which are owned by computer sound card giant Creative Labs) will be known as **EMU-ENSONIQ** (catchy

name, eh?). But even as the big companies turn into mega-conglomerates, the little guys are still hanging in there. Legendary Bob Moog had 'em dancing in the aisles with his latest inventions: the **Big Briar** Moogerfooger Ring Modulator (\$289) and Moogerfooger Lowpass Filter (\$299). Both are analog stomp boxes that add old-fashioned Seventies synth effects to any input signal—and yes, it's pronounced like the ten-letter word that got George Carlin banned from TV. way back when.

**Akai** has long dominated the sampler market, yet it raised more than a few eyebrows with the debut of two new extremely full-featured yet very affordable models: the S5000 (\$1,999) and S6000 (\$2,999). Both use WAV files—the Windows standard—as their native file format, and both are capable of playing back audio directly from any connected hard drive, making them more like hard disk recorders than traditional samplers. Polyphony is a very impressive 64 voices (expandable to 128), and there are multiple analog outputs—eight in the case of the S5000; sixteen in the case of the S6000. The S6000 also comes with a removable front-panel remote control, complete with large LCD display.

The **Alesis** QS6 keyboard has grown a .1, hence the new QS6.1 (\$999). Actually, although priced a hundred bucks cheaper than its predecessor, its internal sample memory has been doubled, and there are now two PCMCIA expansion cards instead of one. **Korg** debuted the Trinity V3 (\$3,550-\$5,200, depending upon model), which adds six voices of Z1 sounds to the Trinity (instead of the monophonic Prophecy sounds included in earlier versions). An upgrade option for older Trinity models is available for \$700. The company also introduced the N1R tone module (\$850), which features a whopping 18 Mbytes of ROM, and includes no less than 1,671 sounds, many of which started life in the M1, O1/W, Trinity and SGproX keyboards.

If you're into retro synth sounds but don't want the hassle of maintaining a retro instrument, you won't want to miss **Roland's** new JP-8080 Analog Modeling Synthesizer

Module (\$1,595). It features external audio inputs (both mic and line level) which can be used in conjunction with a unique Voice Modulator to create bleeps and bloops we haven't heard since, well, since Mr. Moogerfooger was just a little Moogerfooger. As an added bonus, all front-panel knob and slider tweaks can be transmitted via MIDI for automated sonic control via the sequencer of your choice.

**Yamaha** was showing new software (version 2.0) for its A3000 sampler. New features include a MIDI-syncable LFO, expanded filter options, and Loop Remix and Loop Divide, which allow automatic rearrangements and key mapping of sample data. Upgrade kits (price TBA) will be available shortly for owners of the original A3000. And just when you thought the world was at last safe from cheesy FM sounds, Yamaha takes us back to the Eighties with its new PLG100-DX plug-in board (price TBA) for the MU100 and SW1000XG PCI computer card. Sure, it's got those classic electric piano and tubular bell patches—but it also includes all those awful FM sounds we tried so hard to love back when Reagonomics was doing its trickle-down thing.

and playback of MIDI files, so you can finally figure out that weird-ass fingering that's been driving you nuts for so long. And although there was no official announcement, you can bet that other companies—such as Opcode, recently purchased by Gibson—will follow suit in the months to come.

Speaking of **Opcode**, the company unveiled Vision DSP (\$495), which combines many of the best features of its popular Studio Vision software with support for VST plug-in architecture. It also announced the DATport audio interface (\$199), which provides bi-directional input/output between S/PDIF digital audio and any computer equipped with USB (Universal Serial Bus).

**Steinberg** announced the release of Cubase VST/24 4.0 (\$799), which supports up to 96 tracks of 24-bit, 96kHz digital audio (depending upon host computer and hardware). The company also debuted two new plug-ins: the SPL De-Esser plug-in (\$399) and the Q-Metric 7-band parametric equalizer (\$499). **TC Electronic** unveiled TC Native Reverb (\$549), a VST-compatible plug-in reverb for Mac users of Steinberg Cubase VST, Logic Audio, or BIAS peak. **WAVES** showed its Renaissance Equalizer plug-in



**Korg's N1R tone module**

## **midi software**

Computers are just for geeks, right? Well, there were at least three manufacturers at NAMM who don't think so. **Roland**, **Fender**, and **Cakewalk** announced the formation of the Guitar Technology Alliance, a loose consortium determined to place technology squarely into the pickin'-and-strummin' hands of the 6,472 guitarists in Nashville and beyond. Their first offering is Cakewalk's Guitar Studio (\$199), an integrated Windows sequencer/digital audio package optimized for guitar controller input. It features a virtual fretboard that displays both real-time input

(\$300) for Digidesign TDM, Steinberg VST, Adobe Premiere, and native Macintosh processing environments, which is based on the same analog filter designs as its popular Renaissance Compressor. **Sonic Foundry** debuted nine new loop collections (\$39 each) for its very hip ACID software product.

And **Sibelius** showed the long-awaited Windows version of its renowned high-end notation software (described on page 69 in our Technology story on notation software). The product was developed in the United Kingdom for the now-defunct Acorn computer. (Hey, we got Apples, they got Acorns...). ☹



# fast fo

## 1 Lexicon Studio Series

So you've been hankering for your very own hard disk recording/editing system but couldn't see fit to fork over the five-figure sum needed to make it happen? Well, your prayers have finally been answered. The Lexicon Studio (\$3,000) is a line of professional hardware components that can be used with PCs and Macs to provide you with I/O options, signal routing, and synchronization for most software packages, and digital signal processing. The Lexicon Studio consists of the Core-32 full-size PCI card, which offers a 24-bit audio path and is capable of supporting up to 32 simultaneous voices; the LDI-12T Interface, which provides all your analog, digital, word clock, and time code connections; and the PC-90 dual stereo reverbs (with direct lineage to Lexicon's heralded PCM-90). Other expandable options will be available in early fall. ▶ **Lexicon, 3 Oak Park, Bedford, MA 01730-1441; voice (781) 280-0300.**

## 2 PCR Innovations Finger Pump Exercisers

At first glance, keyboard aficionados may think that the new Finger Pumps (\$19.95/per set of four) from PCR Innovations look like some of the more risqué jewelry worn by Liberace, but quite to the contrary, Finger Pumps are perfect for the guy or gal who's torn between tickling the ivories—or whatever instrument they play—and pumping iron. Weighing a mere 1.4 ounces, each zinc-based, nickel/chrome-plated Finger Pump is slipped onto a finger to ever-so-slightly increase the gravitational resistance on your digits; PCR says that those who use the Pumps while practicing will dramatically improve the speed, accuracy, agility, and overall muscular development of each finger. ▶ **PCR Innovations, 250 Gorge Rd., Ste. 6J, Cliffside Park, NJ 07010; voice (888) 397-8677**

## 3 JBL LSR28P Powered Nearfield Monitors

Monitors are usually the last piece of gear people think about when they're piecing together a home studio, but a good pair of monitors can make the difference between hi-fi and no-fi recordings. If you prefer the former to the latter, JBL's LSR28 biamped nearfield monitors (\$1,095 each) will make a great addition to your system; they employ proprietary Differential Drive technology to ensure greater power handling at high volumes and Linear Spatial Reference (LSR) technology to optimize the radiation pattern of sound coming from the speakers. Each LSR28P is loaded with an 8" woofer and a 1" tweeter; a built-in amplifier delivers 200 watts to the woofer and 60 watts to the tweeter. Frequency response is given as 37 Hz to 22,000 Hz, sensitivity as 90 dB. ▶ **JBL Professional, 8500 Balboa Blvd., Northridge, CA 91329; voice (818) 894-8850.**



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# rward

## 4 Spirit Folio FX8 Mixer

When it comes to buying new musical equipment, there's probably no better truism than the one that says you get what you pay for. That's what makes Spirit's Folio FX8 four-bus mixer such a steal—for a mere \$699.95, the FX8 is loaded with features that'll surely satisfy your needs in both live and recording applications. Features include eight mic/line inputs (with up to sixteen inputs available for mixing and switchable pre/post fader direct output), a sixteen-program Lexicon effects section with dual effects, user-definable, storable parameters, a three-band EQ with sweepable mids for each channel, and global +48 volt phantom power. ➤ **Spirit By Soundcraft, Inc., 4130 Citrus Ave., Ste. 9, Rocklin, CA 95677; voice (916) 630-3960**

## 5 Martin CEO-2 Dreadnought

Martin has been a highly regarded guitar manufacturer ever since they started building top-quality guitars back in 1833, but the results of their recent collaboration with Steinway—they of the world-famous pianos—ought to make their new CEO-2 dreadnought (\$2,900) a highly sought-after piece of history for hardcore, gotta-have-it gearheads. Some of the features of their limited edition CEO-2 include a Sitka spruce top, a specially selected Macassar ebony veneer for the back and sides, an abalone pearl rosette, a fine pattern herringbone top trim, scalloped bracing, a striped ebony fingerboard and bridge (both with hollow "hexagon outline" inlays), gold-enclosed Gotoh tuners, and a vintage tweed hardshell case. Electronics are optional, champagne and caviar not included. ➤ **The Martin Guitar Co., 510 Sycamore St., Box 329, Nazareth, PA 18064-1058; voice (610) 759-2837**

## 6 APC Back-UPS Pro 420 Uninterruptible Power Supply

It's rather easy to take certain things for granted—things like electricity, for instance. Without it, your amps, processors, and mixing boards won't operate, while too much electricity, *i.e.* surges, can destroy your gear. Bummer, eh? That's why APC's Back-UPS Pro 420 uninterruptible power supply (\$339) can be your new best friend. Equipped with six three-prong outlets (spaced to accommodate 9-volt wallwarts—yeah!), the Pro 420 features a user-renewable battery that'll provide roughly twelve minutes of backup power when your landlord pulls the plug, audible alarms for operational problems (overload, on-battery, low-battery), an indicator for faulty wiring, and a push-button recovery circuit breaker. Other models are available, depending on your power demands, and all APC Back-UPS come with a \$25,000 lifetime equipment protection guarantee. ➤ **American Power Conversion, 132 Fairgrounds Rd., Box 278, West Kingston, RI 02892; voice (401) 789-3710.**



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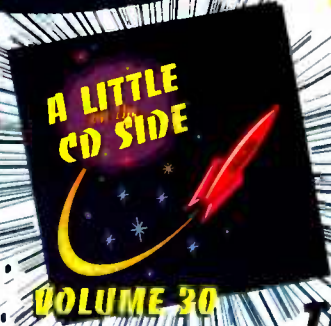
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## Lisa Germano

*Slide*  
(4AD)

**S**ardonic, self-lacerating meditations about relationships and one's own failings remain Lisa Germano's specialty on *Slide*. If this sounds like no fun at all, rest assured quite the opposite is true: Thanks to a rueful sense of humor, breathtaking melodies, and a wonderfully edgy voice that grows more expressive with each album, she turns grim psychodrama into an exciting thrill-ride. Better still, savvy production input by Tchad Blake results in Germano's first well-crafted record, without any loss of her usual handmade intensity.

In a different universe, Germano might be writing Top Forty hits for less challenging artists, so catchy are her tunes. The peppy "Turning Into Betty" has the herky-jerky rush of vintage new wave, although Germano's anxious attack suggests deep-seated distress. At first, "If I Think of Love" seems perfect for your favorite pinhead diva; it takes a little longer to notice the bitterness in lyrics like "better off/shut off." The mesmerizing "Woodfloors" finds Germano at the piano for a rainy-day soliloquy, but the up-front way her voice is recorded frees the song of sentimentality.

While such aggressive intimacy is nothing new for Germano, Blake has brought new depth and textures to her work. "Sonically it's bigger than her other records, which have no low end because she did them on ADATs at

home," explains Blake. "I'm a low-end freak. I like sounds to be right in front of your face, dry and up-close. I got her real close to the mic, so she was right in your ear. It's like you're hearing every muscle in her body, and that gives me the chills."

On most tracks, Blake used a Telefunken 251 "that sounds like no other. There's something wrong with it—it's a lot brighter than any other 251 I've heard. I combined that with a Neve mic pre and a Distresser compressor or an ADO compressor, which goes right to tape." His other contribution, Blake suggests, "was to help her do things a little differently, use some instruments she doesn't have access to. Mitchell [Froom, longtime partner] and I have been collecting percussion and keyboards for twelve years."

From wheezy pump organs and harmoniums to tantalizing mysterious background noises, evidence of this discreet handiwork is everywhere, though the frills never become the point. Even familiar noises are turned into compelling, almost subliminal effects, suggesting a lost time and place. In the wistful title track, Germano's distant violin heightens the sense of a sad, slow dream; on the plaintive "No Color Here," leaking vocals from an earlier take add a spooky urgency. As Germano herself notes, "Tchad's good at getting simple sounds that seem complicated."

Heart-rending, and best experienced on headphones,

*slide*  
show



*Slide* is also exhilarating, because everything works. It's easy to imagine the delight Germano and Blake must have shared as they created these haunting tracks. Germano eloquently depicts what she calls "sliding back and forth from trying to feel good to feeling bad," but being bummed out rarely feels, or sounds, so good.

—Jon Young

was first and foremost The Voice—a remarkable singer, a true original. Owing to his sheer longevity, enormous output, and consistently high standard, two major labels, EMI-Capitol and Warner/Reprise, in "an unprecedented collaborative effort," have reissued eight Sinatra CDs under the banner "Entertainer of the Century."

Attached to any other artist, the tag would be ludicrous; applied to Sinatra, it makes you stop and think.

Greg Geller, Warner/Reprise's vice president of A&R, explains the reasoning behind the campaign, which was in place months before the singer's death. "If you go to the Sinatra section of a record store, it's enormous," he observes. "The man recorded well over a thousand songs. It's mind-boggling for the uninitiated, and people inevitably gravitate toward greatest hits type packages. Yet Sinatra's most important works were these fully realized conceptual pieces."

What, you're wondering, do these "concepts" have in common with *Sgt. Pepper's* or *The Wall*? "I'm referring to conceptual in a fairly loose sense," Geller concedes. "Some albums will be conceptual right down to the point of view of the lyric—in the Reprise series, that would be *September of My Years*, while others would be somewhat looser. Different concepts are placed under the aegis of different arrangers and that gives the overall album a certain feel, like *Ring-A-Ding Ding* with Johnny Mandel, which has a very "up", jazzy approach. But you have to remember that in the Fifties,

most albums were collections of singles. I think that's why Sinatra is given such credit: The albums were really planned out in advance. In fact, his hit singles often didn't appear on albums, until later on."

Geller points out that bonus tracks which were added to *Ring-A-DingDing* when it first was reissued on CD were left off this time, in an attempt to retain the spirit of the original releases, though they also feature 20-bit digital mastering. The Reprise titles include original artwork and liner notes and the album's original date of release; Capitol's include recording dates and retrospective notes by the late Pete Welding from 1987. The cheesier elements of Capitol's inconsistent packaging—*Swingin' Session's* cover banner boasts "digital remastering"—are especially annoying, since this was truly Sinatra's prime time.

Reissuing such top-drawer works of art deserve, in Geller's words, "at least the same degree of care as put into it in the first place, and that's an extreme degree of care and attention to detail. I think that's true for every artist, but perhaps even moreso for Frank

Sinatra." Hopefully there will be more synchronization on the next batch of reissues, slated for September.

—Dan Forte

## Mark Lanegan

*Scraps at Midnight*

(Sub Pop)

**T**hink brown. Brown clouds of dust hanging on the horizon. Big brown rocks catching the last rays at sunset. Warm brown whiskey in a hip flask. Think open spaces. Hot wind. Think lonesome. Regretful. And just a little spooky.

The preceding paragraph is my weak attempt to convey a sense of what Mark Lanegan's music is about. As lead singer for the Screaming Trees, Lanegan submerges some of his more overt folk tendencies to work in a straightforward rock context. But on his solo records—1990's *The Winding Sheet*, 1994's *Whiskey for the Holy Ghost*, and now *Scraps at Midnight*—he turns down the volume and lets the spirit flow free. It's a distinctively American spirit, old as the hills, full of cobwebs, ghosts, and myths of the frontier.

Listen to the opening track here, "Hospital Roll Call," with its blasts of Morricone guitar, and the enigmatic chant of "Sixteen"; you can practically see the gunslingers facing each other across a stretch of dirt road, waiting for the chapel clock to strike high noon. Or hear the primeval country blues of "Waiting On A Train": There's our protagonist now, standing on an empty late-night platform in the middle of nowhere, heading for parts unknown, trying to keep the bad memories away but knowing deep down they're his companions for life. This is music of the plains and the tundra and the desert.

So it's almost too appropriate that *Scraps at Midnight* was recorded at Rancho de la Luna, a converted house in the midst of the Mojave at Joshua Tree, not far from the motel where Gram Parsons met his end. As on his previous solo efforts, Lanegan was aided by the production, arrangement, and multi-instrumental talents of Mike Johnson—that's him on the clenched-teeth guitar solo at the end of "Stay"—while Keni Richards helped out on drums and piano.

"The desert atmosphere contributed a lot," Lanegan acknowledges. "We recorded everything in just a few days; I haven't made a record that quick since the early Screaming Trees days. But it was a good exercise in not getting crazy about making a record. A lot of instruments were recorded at the same time with very minimal miking: We'd just throw one up somewhere in the room and record both harmonica and piano with it." The muffled piano sound on tracks like "Wheels" and "Praying Ground" is the result. "A sound like that suits my voice," Lanegan says, "because it's rough. You couldn't call my voice polished."

Perhaps not, but Lanegan's gravelly growl, which occasionally rises to a tortured wail, is certainly dramatic, especially on the album's epic drone-powered closer, "Because of This," where



### Frank Sinatra

*In the Wee Small Hours*

*Frank Sinatra Sings for Only the Lonely*

*Come Dance With Me*

*Sinatra's Swingin' Session!!!*

(Capitol)

*Ring-A-Ding Ding*

*September of My Years*

*Sinatra at the Sands*

*Francis Albert Sinatra & Antonio Carlos Jobim*

(Reprise)

**"F**or my money," Frank Sinatra was once quoted as saying, "Tony Bennett is the best singer in the business, the best exponent of a song." Lofty praise indeed—but it is the *speaker* rather than the sentiment that merits attention and gives that statement such weight. Because even if Bennett is the best singer in the biz, hey, he's no Sinatra.

And even if the martini-sipping, neo-lounge lizard crowd reveres him more as the Rat Pack icon/caricature that he admittedly was, Sinatra

# Hank Williams

## Turn Back the Years

**A**ny musician worth their salt knows who Hank Williams was and readily recognizes the tremendous cultural impact his songwriting has had, but for the sorry few who still think old Hank played in left field for the Boston Red Sox back in the late Forties, let's set the record straight:

Hank was the *original* real deal. He was the king of American troubadours, the progenitor of traditional country music, the archetypal hero for most of today's roots rockers, and a truly prodigious talent who left behind an incredible collection of songs that are as revered as much today as they were back in his day.

"That's what made *The Complete Hank Williams* such a logical product to do," says Kira Florita, senior director of new product and catalog development for Mercury Records and co-producer of the new ten-CD box set.

"We have all of his recorded music on one label [Mercury, a subsidiary of Polydor, purchased MGM—who already owned Williams' Sterling Records recordings—back in 1972], so we have his entire career, and he's one of very few country artists whose legendary stature and respect could justify such a comprehensive box set."

To put together *The Complete Hank Williams*, Florita and her co-producers (the Country Music Foundation and renowned Williams biographer Colin Escott) gathered together all of Williams' known recordings—including 53 previously unissued songs from official, non-session, radio and TV recording sessions—and set about constructing a definitive collection.

The biggest problem they confronted along the way was that audio recording technology was still in its infancy back when Williams was alive (he died in 1952), so the fidelity of his existing recordings was inconsistent at best. "Hank started recording to acetate in '46," says Escott. "There were only two studios in Nashville when he started [recording], and they were slow to convert to tape, so Hank only



recorded to tape for a couple of years." That being the case, the producers enlisted the talents of Alan Stoker (who made the original acetate and tape transfers at the CMF Studio in Nashville), Tom Ruff (who restored the transfers by removing clicks and pops with the help of Sonic Solutions' NoNoise software at New York's Sony Studios), and Joe Palmaccio (who digitally remastered all 220 songs at New York's Sterling Sound).

The results of their combined labors paid huge dividends, but the final product was hard won: Stoker worked with cracked and flaking discs and often had only one attempt at making the transfer before the acetate would flake off the metal, and even though Ruff used NoNoise to clean up the songs, there were limitations to what it could do. "When disc noise is equally as loud as the music, it's frustrating," he says, "but you do the best you can."

From the sound of this set, there's no doubt that Williams surely gave it his all. "What made him great was that he never lost the country in him," says Escott. "He always talked to the people he knew best; the people in the honky-tonk, people sweating over songs he dashed off in a half-hour in the back of his touring sedan. So if he's looking down on us, I hope he thinks we did right by him." —*Michael Gelfand*

it's enhanced by a spacy tremolo effect at strategic moments. His decision to use that effect came out of a chance occurrence in the studio control room: "Someone was repatching the vocal track while it was playing, and the signal cut in and out. I heard that and said, 'I want that sound!'"

As for the song's repetitious, pseudo-Arabic keyboard part, blame that on Bryan Ferry, sort of. "Keni Richards and I were listening to a Roxy Music CD one night and it began to skip," Lanegan says with a laugh. "We wrote a song around the part that was skipping, and that's the keyboard thing that Keni plays." In case you wondered if happy accidents can take place in the desert, *Scraps at Midnight* provides all the proof you need.

—Mac Randall

**Dave Alvin**

**Blackjack David**  
(Hightone)

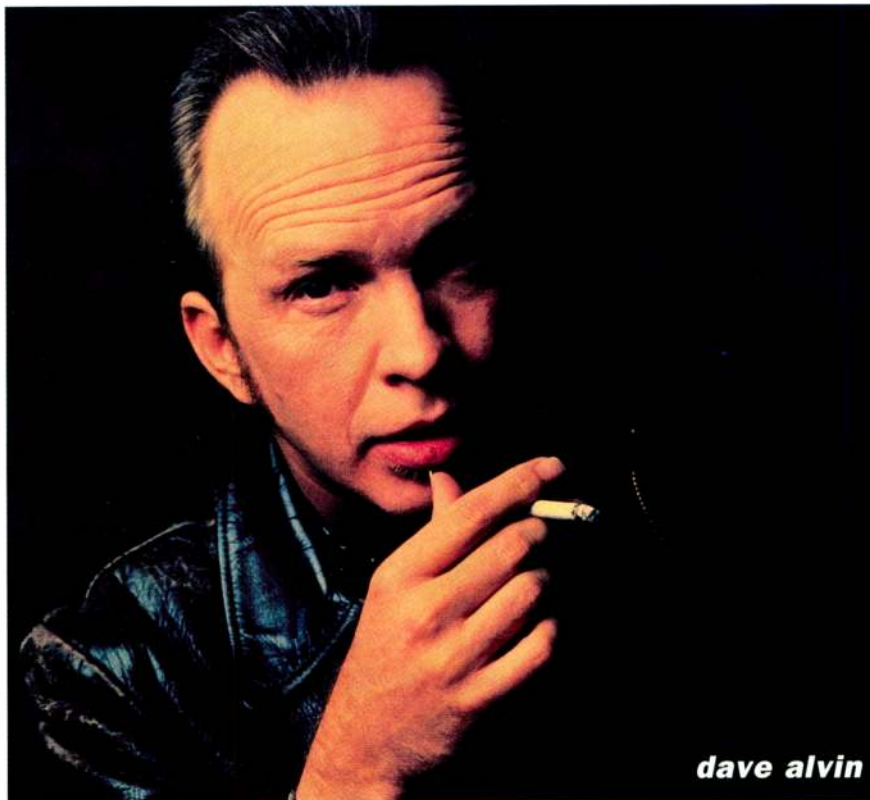
**E**ven in his high-octane days with the Blasters and, briefly, as Billy Zoom's replacement in X, Dave Alvin stirred narrative depth into the mix, an approach that reaches a powerful maturity on his fourth Hightone solo album, *Blackjack David*. Here, backed by his own spare guitar and a handful of accompanists, Alvin brings his tales to life in a voice that's as loose and intimate as your favorite old shirt.

There's enough textural variety to give each track on *Blackjack David* its own identity, yet the album flows in a single current across rapids of wry humor and into deep reflective pools. Subtle connections keep everything moving: "The Way You Say Good-bye" is a good-timey play on words all the way up to an unexpected minor final chord, which sets up the minor-key murder ballad "Mary Brown." The title cut sustains a similar dark mood up to its last chord, which echoes in the opening chord and subsequent key change of the following song, "Abilene." Even the production reflects a certain continuity; the Daniel Lanois-like shimmer of the opening and closing songs entice the listener to slip from the album's last notes back to the deep bowed bass that launches *Blackjack David*.

What makes this journey so compelling is its perfect wedding of arrangement and words. Alvin is a story-teller; his work grows from an objectivity that contrasts with the emotional overkill of many contemporary songs. His best lyric here, "1968," reads like a newspaper account, dry and factual, and Alvin delivers it without flourish.

The sound is similarly stark, with his clawhammer picking on a Martin 0018, and touches of fiddle and dobro. Yet for all the bareness of these bones, "1968," a laconic account of a tragic episode some thirty years ago, leaves a chill and demands a moment of silence as it passes by.

"Of all the songs on the album, that's the only one we went back and redid from scratch," says Greg Leisz, *Blackjack David's* producer and a multi-instrumental presence on most tracks. "Originally we tracked it as more of a Johnny



dave alvin

Cash approach, but it didn't turn out as good as my first impression of that song."

Alvin agrees. "I'd always heard it as a Carter Family kind of thing. When you think '1968,' you don't think Carter Family; people tend to think of the Democratic convention, social upheaval, and so on. But by putting it in a mountain-music context, you make it timeless."

This impression is reinforced by the absence of cutting-edge instrumentation. A harmonium, run through a Leslie speaker, is the dominant keyboard. Even Hammond organs felt too modern, according to Alvin: "The sound of a B-3 could define a track, where the harmonium, especially the way Dillon [O'Brian] plays it, can be very folkish if you turn the Leslie off, somewhere between Irish lines and Garth Hudson." There's only one prominent electric guitar part—a solo on "I Hate the Way You Say Good-bye," which Alvin played on a '64 Strat through a Fender Deluxe amp. And, with the exception of "Abilene," the musicians played everything live.

Alvin's rough, remarkable vocals tie the package together. Here, too, the key is in all the ways his singing violates the standards of modern pop. One performance, the title cut, was taken straight off what Alvin had laid down as a guide track for a demo. "It's interesting with Dave," says Leisz. "He has to get warmed up to the concept that he's gonna be recorded—you know, that whole thing with the red light. He could sing great on the first pass and create this whole vibe when he's performing live. But to capture that on tape, sometimes you have to get past

the part where he's thinking, 'This is a take.'"

It's not always about flash or virtuosity; sometimes it's about slowing down and taking the time to *not* perform, to let the music happen, as it were, by itself. *Blackjack David* proves the point.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

**Todd Snider**

**Viva Satellite**  
(MCA)

**O**nce in a blue velvet moon, a record comes along that pierces my heart with the force of cupid's arrow—without all the ensuing soppy angst. Reveling in the right music is like falling in love without expectations, and I have played Todd Snider's third record, the raunchy, sexy, pretty damn funny *Viva Satellite*, so many times it has invaded my bloodstream. Almost entirely written by Snider (excepting one song co-written with guitarist Wil Kimbrough, and Kimbrough's own "Godsend"), this album takes off with the kickass jolt of "Rocket Fuel" and ends with "Doublewide Blues," a wry examination of life in a trailer park. In between are some pretty pissed-off numbers about losing your lover and about staying out all night tearing up the joint. Snider advises on the liner copy to "dig more Dylan, crank more Skynyrd", which gives an idea of what's going on here.

It's a sound that sparks rabid devotion from fans, and producer John Hampton is first in line. 'I fight for artists like Todd,' Hampton says. "When I heard his first couple of records I thought, 'Really? They're trying to interpret him like *that*? He's an

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## records

enigmatic guy, but his whole approach to music is pretty reckless, so when we got together to make this record, the first thing I said was, 'Man, we've got to have some of that attitude!' He agreed with that and we got along famously."

Todd and the Nervous Wrecks moved into Hampton's Ardent Studio in Memphis for eight weeks. "I tracked most of this stuff through a VR-60 Neve, and I used the VR preamps," Hampton recalls, noting that all the backing tracks were recorded live. "Then we moved into the overdub mode and I set up part of the room for percussion overdubs, part for vocal overdubs and part for guitar amps stuff, and we'd piddle around between the three."

Sounds casual, but compared to Snider, Hampton's approach is downright refined. "The acoustic guitar I played was a piece of crap Yamaha," says Snider, "It's a learner's guitar that I left some seven month-old strings on, completely dead strings—to me, the Stones' *Beggars Banquet* record sounds like a big, fat, old guitar with dead strings. This Yamaha had good intonation and sounded real boxy. I want the acoustic to be low end, but the electric should take the middle end, and down with me in the low end is the bass guitar. The drummer should be in all ranges of the thing."

For his own electric playing, "my brother got me a Bruce Springsteen Telecaster and I had a Mesa/Boogie, and we tried to make it sound like Creedence. I learned how to play electric guitar making this record. I played on five songs—probably more than I should have," he laughs. "And my amp is blue!"

For Snider, the song's the thing, and while most of them are culled from painful personal experience, the sound and attitude is far from whiny.

"I get turned off to bands who just swim around in pain and darkness," he says. "I never thought it should be that way. When it came out of the south, there was a lot of reverence in rock and roll—telling people that there's hope, even when it doesn't seem like there is. At least on Friday night we should be able to get together and celebrate the victory that's comin' some day. Live and let live, love whoever you want to, and fuckin' play it." Otherwise, what's the point?

—**Pamela Des Barres**

### Dr. John

**Anutha Zone**  
(Virgin)

**M**ac Rebennack, a.k.a. Dr. John, has taken one of the more winding American musical journeys of the last forty years. From his classic Sixties albums to a

Grammy-winning Eighties' duet with Rickie Lee Jones on "Makin' Whoopee", his jellyroll/jazz/blues piano has graced sessions with artists as impressive and far-flung as Frank Zappa, Bob Dylan, and the Rolling Stones.

*Anutha Zone* finds John's bayou beard tangled up with the Brit-pack of Paul Weller, Supergrass, and Jason Pierce's Spiritualized. Sound like a bad acid time-trip? Dr. John's voodoo brings it all into sharp, funky focus. Singing of spirits celestial ("Hello God," "The Olive Tree") and sinister (John



Martyn's "I Don't Want to Know About Evil"). Dr. John sounds like a gris gris guru.

"I believe everything goes in circles," he explains. "This record is like stuff I've been doing for years. But these are songs that the labels wouldn't touch before, so I was surprised when [producer] John Leckie wanted to cut them. These songs have spiritual principles for me, with pictures of my roots and heritage."

Recorded at Abbey Road in London and Avatar in New York City, the album began as an experiment, first with Supergrass (the swamp boogie "Voices in My Head"), then with Spiritualized's Pierce, who infuses "Hello God (JP Mix)" with weary slide and off-key wah-wah guitars, plus an ominous horn section and a roaring gospel chorus.

"Jason and I argued about almost everything," Dr. John says approvingly. "I asked him, 'What are you playing here?,' and he stuck a match between the keys of a Farfisa organ and let the note ring. Then he sat back and didn't play a guitar note for a long time. He was trying

to get a point across, but he was arguing about it. But that is a positive thing, it brought some good energies out of me and him."

Pierce turns the spooky Creole bump of "John Gris (JP Mix)" into a mini-Hammer Horror epic, using sampled vibraphone, horns, scary flutes, and a ghostly choir within a wall of shimmering Farfisa organ and Wurlitzer piano. Working with Paul Weller, Dr. John found more bracing conflict. "Paul shocked me in the studio several times. He's got an attitude and I love that, it comes out in the playing better. He stuck to his guns. If it works, I'm cool with it."

It worked. "Party Hellfire" bumps and grinds like Weller's best performances, and "I Don't Want to Know About Evil," which Weller brought to the session, is *Anutha Zone's* glowing golden moment. Over a Claptonish guitar intro and Jools Holland's simmering Hammond, drummer Steve White works a dusky tom-centered groove. Dr. John's years of drug abuse seem reflected in his weary, been there/done that vocal reading. Simple and powerful, the song proves that what goes around does indeed come around.

"Music always comes back to where it's been before," Dr. John philosophizes. "The newest thing today is really some old shit. Spiritual understandings continue on. They might get a little distorted along the way, but it goes right along, like water." This record proves the point.

—Ken Micallef

## The Tragically Hip

*Phantom Power*

(Sire)

After five full-length albums and more than a decade touring together, the Tragically Hip are nothing if not self-sufficient. But after helming the production of 1996's brooding *Trouble at the Henhouse*, the band decided to enlist an outsider to produce *Phantom Power*. The Ontario-based quintet settled on Steve Berlin, multi-instrumentalist of Los Lobos, who'd joined the Hip on their Another Roadside Attraction festival tour last summer. "We wanted to work with a musician-producer as opposed to an engineer-producer," explains the Hip's bassist, Gord Sinclair. "We needed somebody to say, 'This song needs a bridge' or 'Why don't you try a suspended chord here?,' and Steve fit the bill perfectly."

As a producer, Berlin (Faith No More, Crash Test Dummies) complements the band's strong, melodic rock with such textural touches as his flute solo during the raucous rideout of "Save the Planet" and the sublime pedal-steel lines of guest Bob Egan (Wilco's touring lineup) which permeate "Bobcaygeon" and "The Rules." Perhaps more importantly, he tread delicately as a decision-maker during the recording sessions. "More than any other band I've dealt with, the Hip are like the U.N. Security Council," Berlin laughs. "They're full equals. While I tried to be no more equal than anyone else, I did have to be the one to say—very gently—"You're right, that

does sound good, but now let's try doing it from the other side of the room."

Berlin's diplomacy also required using gear that differed from the band's standard setups. "We should have every single toy everyone owns at our disposal in the studio," he reasons. "It's really just a matter of playing with colors—the things that make each song surprising and different from one another."

On the chirpy "Fireworks," that meant

substituting a Matchless amp (on loan from ex-Crash Vegas axman Colin Cripps) for the band's favored Mesa/Boogie stacks. "Usually when we record, we find one tone and stick with it all the way through," notes rhythm guitarist Paul Langlois. "But we brought the Matchless in on 'Fireworks' and I cranked out a real clean tone with it—the Calvin Klein Tone, as I called it. I'd never played that clean before, but it worked really well."

Adds Berlin, "During playback, it was quite

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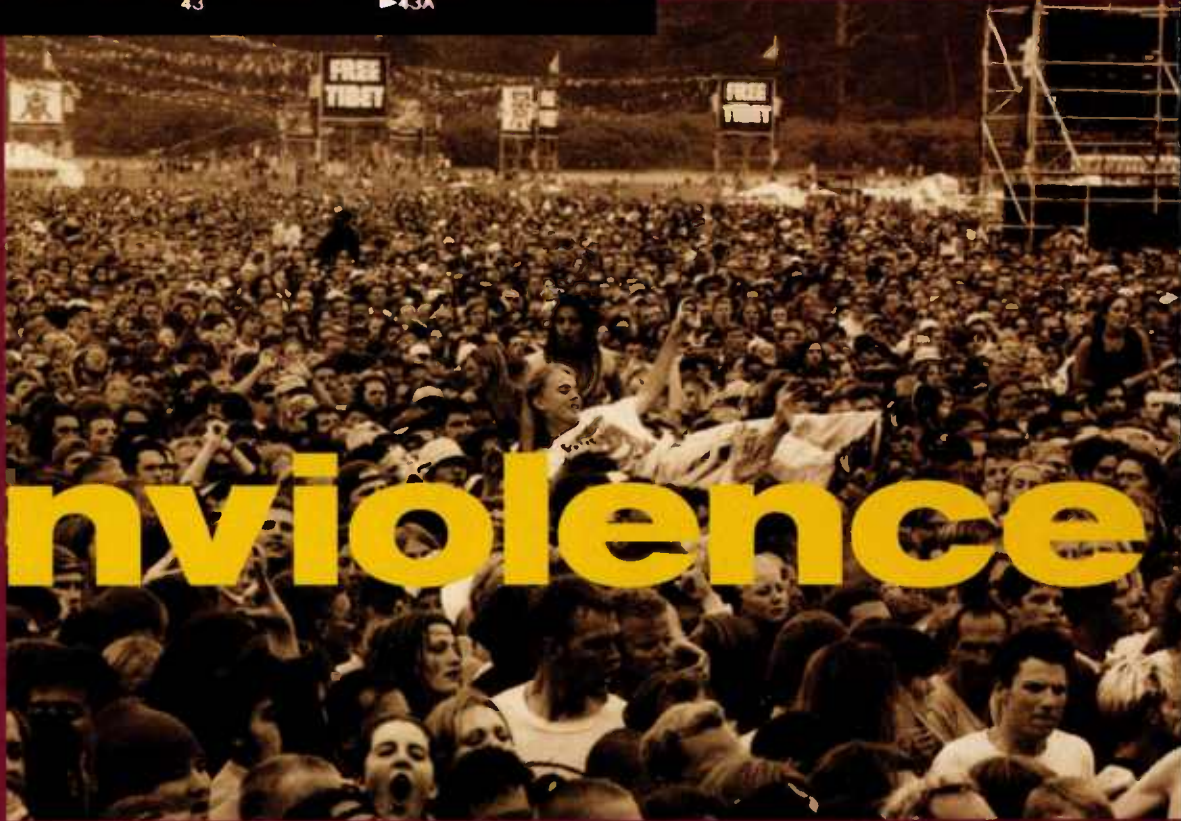
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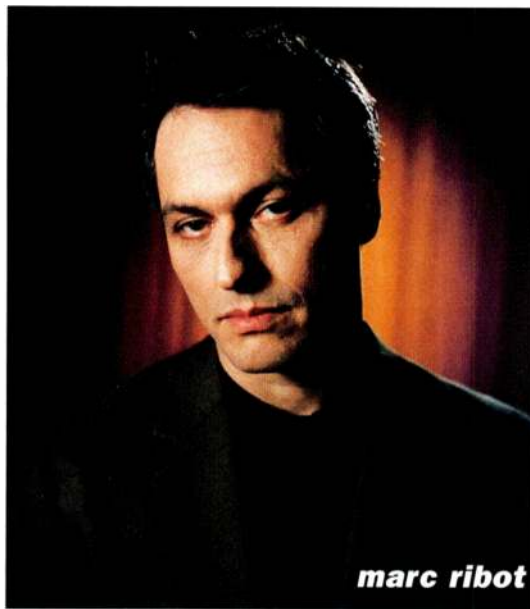
pleasurable to the band to hear themselves playing unfamiliar sounds." Hey, the the pleasure is ours.  
—Mike Mettler

**Marc Ribot**

**Marc Ribot y Los Cubanitos Postizos**  
**(The Prosthetic Cubans)**  
**(Atlantic)**

The last time I saw Marc Ribot he was screaming into a microphone as his amplifier bled feedback, veins popping from his neck like battleship chains as he fronted the band Shrek. On the new *Marc Ribot y Los Cubanitos Postizos*, he's caressing—and maybe just lightly kicking—the melodies of the late master of Cuban son, Arsenio Rodriguez. Indeed, Ribot has at least temporarily departed the hellfire and blazing atonal hoops he's put his guitar through in service of Tom Waits, Elvis Costello, John Zorn, Marianne Faithfull, and his own writing for the sweet, emotional core of Latin lyricism.

As Ribot explains, "I got this Gibson ES-225 and felt like finding some way I could play it distorted, and I thought this was a really good way." But that slights his gentle handling of the sweet melodies of the swinging "Aqui Como Alla," the sinuous spooky grace of "Esclavo Triste," and his glide through the beautifully voiced chords that introduce his ultimately alarming take on "La



Vida Es Un Sueno." Ribot clearly loves this music, and while his confessed inner-conflict "between direct lyricism and the desire to fuck it up" tugs at the sultry-to-staccato lines he laces through each number, his guitar succumbs to the charms of Rodriguez regardless of how much

amp tremolo, delay (from a reissue Memory Man pedal) or fuzz decorates each track.

Translating Rodriguez's pieces for big band to a quartet with bassist Brad Jones and percussionists E.J. Rodriguez and Robert J. Rodriguez (all unrelated) meant that Ribot had to distill each of the composer's detailed arrangements into a single melody line for guitar. And recording them live made dynamics a challenge. "I had a lot of trouble creating distorted amp sounds with my flat-wound strings. I couldn't just walk over to my amps and turn them up because they were covered with all kinds of junk to isolate their sound." The solution was a combination of a gain-gooing line-driver and the vintage tones of an old Gibson amplifier and a reissue Fender Deluxe Reverb. Keyboardists

Anthony Coleman and John Medeski added simpatico lines and textures as overdubs.

"For me, this project is about playing a lot of guitar," Ribot enthuses. "Arsenio was a tres player. A tres has three sets of three strings, tuned to D, G and B, like the upper middle strings

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## records

of a guitar. I could have played tres, but this isn't a Cuban band. There's no real tradition in Cuban music of guitar trios, except all-guitar trios. We're a New York band doing a tribute record, and while I'm not gonna say this album is without myth, it's certainly not the myth of authenticity." That's especially clear when Ribot vocalizes in his shaky Jersey-born honk on two songs.

"What's common between this project and Shrek is my interest in arranging and composing," Ribot declares. "Shrek was heavily influenced by Albert Ayler. While Rodriguez and Ayler do not sound similar, they both went outside of A-A-B forms. Cuban music in general has more complex forms than the average bebop 'head' tune. But my impulse is always to push the envelope. If I stick with this band long enough, I'll find a way to make it sound like Shrek." And dive back into the hellfire.

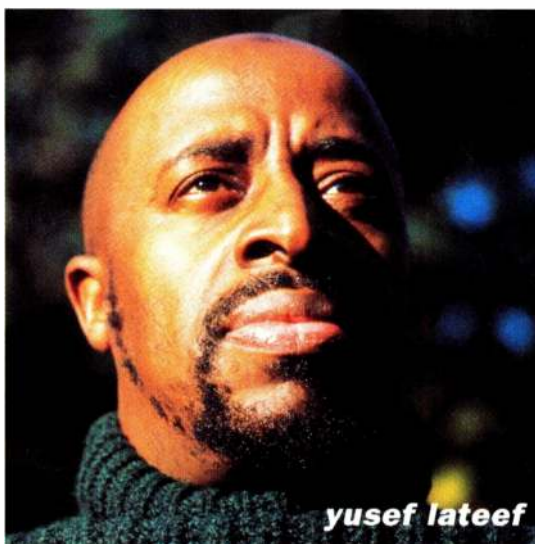
—Ted Drozdowski

### Yusef Lateef

*The Man with the Big Front Yard*  
(32 Jazz/Rhino)

**M**ost box sets are all over the map. Pulling together scattered tracks from an artist's career, they often fail to properly represent that artist's intent. Though the original albums may have been focused, congruent works, the selections extracted from them wind up forming an historical hodgepodge.

With Yusef Lateef, these rules do not apply. Generally categorized as a jazz artist, he spent most of his half-century career using jazz as a trampoline, bouncing off R&B, funk, bossa nova, Asian folk music, European classical music,



yusef lateef

atonality, and the blues, sometimes within the confines of a single LP. Thus, a stylistically diverse box set can provide a more complete picture of Lateef, and *The Man with the Big Front Yard* does just that, on three entertaining and revealing discs.

Compiled by veteran jazz and pop producer (and former jazz DJ) Joel Dorn, *Big Front Yard* is actually a repackaging of four nonconsecutive LPs released during Lateef's first tour of duty with Atlantic Records (1967-76). Dorn produced each of these component albums (*The Complete Yusef Lateef*, *Yusef Lateef's Detroit*, *Hush 'N' Thunder*, and *The Doctor is In . . . and Out*); together, they paint a portrait of a creative figure who was continually absorbing new sonic ideas but who always left his own identifiable imprint on the music.

Prior to these sessions, Lateef had never worked with a "non-passive producer," Dorn says. On *The Complete Yusef Lateef*, from 1967, Dorn asked him to create sequels to individual tracks from earlier in his career, and though the results are uneven, several cuts shine, especially the opener, "Rosalie," a simple, potent, African folk tune driven by flute and percussion.

On *Yusef Lateef's Detroit*, however, Dorn suggested a definite theme: "I said, 'You grew up in Detroit; paint me a musical portrait of the city. But I want to use some of the R&B guys along with your group to get another feel.'" Released in 1969, this LP holds together beautifully, presenting a colorful soundscape that takes Marvin Gaye's or Curtis Mayfield's stylings in a jazzier, almost big-band direction, and then adds a string quartet arranged in a low register. On first listen, especially, *Detroit* will leap right out of your speakers; the LP is a time capsule, but one that still lives and breathes.

From a compositional standpoint, 1973's *Hush 'N' Thunder* is the strongest segment of the set. "Opus Pt. I" and "Opus Pt. II" combine to form an eight-minute piece that starts dreamily with cello and electric piano and then develops into sort of an Impressionistic funk number. And "This Old Building" shifts from electronic helicopter-like noises straight into a gospel party jam, complete with hand claps and tambourine, topped by Lateef's growlin' tenor sax.

A little more experimental, but not quite as successful, 1976's *The Doctor is In . . . and Out* still features some great down-and-dirty saxwork on "Mushmouth," in addition to a cool, Middle Eastern-tinged modal fusion cut, oddly titled "Hellbound." For the closing track, "In a Little Spanish Town," Dorn asked Lateef to go even further off the deep end, suggesting that he play a bebop-style solo over a 1929 male quartet record. "He was fine with that," Dorn remembers. "He was never afraid."

That willingness to take chances, combined with a wide-ranging musical ability, made Lateef an original, one whose music continues to intrigue and delight listeners decades later.

—Bob Remstein

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**ACTODYNE GENERAL**, 5561 Engineer Dr., Huntington Beach, CA, 92649, (714) 898-2776: Lace Helix guitar, **65**

**AKAI**, 7010 Soquel Dr., Aptos, CA, 95003, (800) 433-5627: S5000, S6000 samplers, **73**

**AKG**, 1449 Donelson Pike, Nashville, TN, 37217, (615) 399-2199: C-1000 microphones, D-12E mic, **25**; IVM-1 in-ear monitor, WMS 60 VHF wireless system, **72**

**ALESIS**, 1633 26th St., Santa Monica, CA, 90404, (310) 558-4530: Point Seven speakers, RA-100 reference amplifier, **25**; Microverb 3, **26**; D-4, **38**; ADAT-XT20 & ADAT-LX20 MDMs, **63**; QS6 keyboard, **73**

**AMPEG**, 1400 Ferguson Ave., St. Louis, MO, 63133, (314) 727-4512: VT40, **68**

**AUDIO-TECHNICA**, 1221 Commerce Dr., Stow, OH, 44224, (216) 686-2600: prototype 4060 tube mic, 4050, 4030, & 4041 mics, **38**; UHF Wireless System, AT 4060 tube mic, **72**

**AUDIX**, 29103 SW Kinsman, Wilsonville, OR, 97070, (800) 966-8261: OM-5 mic, **38**; condenser mics, **72**

**AVEDIS ZILDJIAN CO.**, 22 Longwater Dr., Norwell, MA, 2061, (617) 871-2200: cymbals, **38**; Remix series cymbals, **19**

**BEHRINGER**, P.O. Box 9031, 575 Underhill Blvd, Syosset, NY, 11791-9031, (516) 364-2244: Denoiser, **38**

**BOSS**, 7200 Dominion Cir., Los Angeles, CA, 90040, (213) 685-5141: DR-550 MkII Dr. Rhythm, **25**; Bass distortion pedal, **38**

**CELESTION**, 89 Doug Brown Way, Holliston, MA, 1746, (508) 429-6706: amp, **68**

**DIGIDESIGN**, 1360 Willow Rd., Ste. 101, Menlo Park, CA, 94025, (800) 333-2137: Pro Tools, **38**

**DIGITAL MUSIC**, 5312-J Derry Ave., Agoura Hills, CA, 91301, (818) 991-3881: GCX Expanders, **38**

**DIGITECH/DOD**, 8760 South Sandy Pkwy., Sandy, UT, 84070, (801) 566-8919: GSP 2101 & 2112 effects, **38**; S200 multi-effects processor, Quad 4, **63**; Vocalist Access, **72**

**DOD ELECTRONICS**, 8760 S. Sandy Parkway, Sandy, UT, 84070, (800) 999-9363: DFX-94 delay/sampler, **26**

**DRAWMER**, Charlotte St., Wakefield, West Yorkshire, England, WF1 1UH, 44 019 24378669: DPR 901, DL231, DS404, DPR414, **26**

**EMU**, 1600 Green Hills Rd., Scotts Valley, CA, 95066, (408) 438-1921: Planet Phatt, **38**

**ELECTRO-HARMONIX/SOVTEK**, 20 Cooper Square, 4th Floor, New York, NY, 10003, (212) 529-0466: Deluxe Big Muff stomp box, **26**; Microsynth, **38**

**ERNIE BALL**, P.O. Box 4117, 151 Suburban Rd., San Luis Obispo, CA, 93403, (800) 543-2255: .10-gauge strings, **38**

**EVENTIDE**, 1 Alsan Way, Little Ferry, NJ, 7643, (201) 641-1200: DSP 4000 effects, DSP-4000, GSP-4000, H3000 Harmonizers, **38**

**FENDER MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS**, 7975 N Hayden Rd., Scottsdale, AZ, 85258, (602) 596-9690: Twin Reverb amp, **25**; '64 Stratocaster, Deluxe amp, **84**; Custom Shop Shirley Manson Stratocaster, Custom Shop Venus, '64 Jaguar guitar, Custom Shop Stratocaster, Custom Shop P-Bass, Custom Shop Jazz Bass, **38**; Vibrosonic Reverb, **68**

**FOSTEX**, 15431 Blackburn Ave., Norwalk, CA, 90650, (562) 770-STEX: X-24 4-track cassette recorder/ mixer, **63**

**GENELEC**, 39 Union Avenue, Sudbury, MA, 1776, (508) 440-7520: 1030A monitor, **38**; 1091A subwoofers, **76**

**GENERALMUSIC**, 1164 Tower Ln., Bensenville, IL, 60106, (708) 766-8230: Falcon mixer, Eagle mixer, **63**

**GIBSON**, 641 Massman Dr., Nashville, TN, 37210, (800) 283-7135: ES335 twelve-string guitar, ES175 electric guitar, Hummingbird acoustic, **25**; ES-225 guitar, **87**; Custom Shop ES-335 guitar, **38**

**GUILD**, 7975 N. Hayden Rd., Scottsdale, AZ, 85258, (602) 596-9690: Starfire III guitar, **38**

**JBL PROFESSIONAL**, 8500 Balboa Blvd., Northridge, CA, 91329, (818) 894-8850: LSR28P powered nearfield moni-

tors, **74**; speaker, **68**

**KORG**, 316 S Service Rd., Melville, NY, 11747-3201, (516) 333-9100: DTR-1 tuner, **38**; Trinity V3, **73**

**KURZWEIL**, PO Box 99995, Lakewood, WA, 98499-0995, (253) 984-0275: K2500RS, K2000S, **38**

**LEXICON**, 3 Oak Park Rd, Bedford, MA, 01730-1441, (781) 280-0300: Lexicon Studio Series, **74**; DC-1, **78**

**MACKIE DESIGNS**, 16220 Wood-Red Rd. NE, Woodinville, WA, 98072, (800) 258-6883: 1604 mixing board, **25**; 1604VLZ console, 32x8 console, HUI, **38**; M 2600 amp, **72**

**MARSHALL AMPLIFIERS**, 316 S. Service Rd., Melville, NY, 11747-3201, (516) 333-9100: amps, **67**

**MARTIN**, P.O. Box 329, 510 Sycamore St., Nazareth, PA, 18064, (800) 345-3103: 0018 guitar, **84**; CEO-2 Dreadnought guitar, **75**

**MATCHLESS**, 9830 Alburts Ave., Santa Fe Springs, CA, 90670, (310) 801.4840: amp, **90**; Hurricane amp, 1x12 cabinet, C-30, 2x12 combo, Hot Box, **38**

**MESA ENGINEERING**, 1317 Ross St., Petaluma, CA, 94954, (707) 778-6565: guitar, **85**; stacks, **90**

**NEUMANN USA**, 6 Vista Drive, Old Lyme, CT, 6371, (203) 434-5220, U-47: FET-47, KMS-150, TLM-193, & U47 mics, **38**

**OBERHEIM**, 2230 Livingston St., Oakland, CA, 94606, (800) 279-4346: keyboard, **62**

**OPCODE**, 3950 Fabian Way, Palo Alto, CA, 94303, (415) 856-3333: Vision DSP, **73**

**RAPCO INT'L**, 3581 Larch Ln., Jackson, MO, 63755, (314) 243-1433: DI **38**

**ROLAND**, 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA, 90040, (213) 685-5141: CK-7, **12**; RE-501 chorus/tape echo, **38**; VS-880EX hard disk recorder, **63**; JP-8080 Analog Modeling Synthesizer Module, **73**

**SABINE**, 4637 NW Sixth St., Gainesville, FL, 32609, (800) 626-7394: GRAPHIQ-3100 series signal processors, **72**

**SAMSON**, P.O. Box 9031, 575 Underhill Blvd, Syosset, NY, 11791-9031, (516) 364-2244: UR-5 wireless system, **38**

**SHURE BROS**, 222 Hartrey Ave., Evanston, IL, 60202, (800) 257-4873: SM58 microphone, **25**; UHF wireless system, SM-57, 58, Beta 57, & 58 mics, **38**; UT Series wireless system, **72**

**SONIC FOUNDRY**, 100 S. Baldwin, Ste. 204, Madison, WI, 53703, (608) 256-3133: ACID software, **73**

**SONY ELECTRONICS**, 3 Paragon Dr., Montvale, NJ, 7645, (201) 930-1000: DAT Walkman, **25**; APR-24 2" 24-track, **38**; MOS-DRE1, **63**

**SOUNDCRAFT**, 8500 Balboa Blvd., Northridge, CA, 91329, (818) 894-8850: Spirit Folio FX8 mixer, **75**

**STEINBERG/JONES**, 17700 Raymer St., Ste. 1001, Northridge, CA, 91325, (818) 993-4091: Cubase VST/24, **73**

**SUMMIT AUDIO**, PO Box 1678, Los Gatos, CA, 95031, (408)395-2448: TLA-100 compressor, **38**

**TASCAM**, 7733 Telegraph Rd., Montebello, CA, 90640, (213) 726-0303: Porta 07 cassette four-track unit, DA-88 digital eight-track, 25: DA-88 recorder, **38**; DA-45HR 24-bit DAT recorder, DA-302 dual DAT recorder, **62**

**TC ELECTRONICS**, 705-A Lakefield Rd., Westlake Village, CA, 91361, (805) 373-1828: G-Force effects, **38**; G-Card processor, **72**; TC Native Reverb, **73**

**WAVES**, 4302 Papermill Rd., Knoxville, TN, 37909, (615) 588-9307: Renaissance Equalizer, **73**

**YAMAHA**, 6600 Orangethorpe Blvd., Buena Park, CA, 90622, (714) 522-9011: Portasound PS-1 keyboard, REV 5, **26**; acoustic guitar, **85**; NS-10 monitor, **38**; MSP5 home studio monitor, **63**; A3000 sampler, **73**

**YORKVILLE SOUND**, 4625 Witmer Industrial Estate, Niagara Falls, NY, 14305, (716) 297-2920: VHF wireless system, headphones, microphones, **72**

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# Jokin' Off

**There's more to life than  
bashing drummers . . .**



**O**kay, here's an all-too-familiar road scenario. You're sitting in the unheated basement/dressing room of the club, waiting for the opening act—a new age/fusion duo—to finish sound-checking their koto and wind chimes. The latest road conquest stories have been shared, your roadie has finished drawing a somewhat anatomically exaggerated portrait of the club owner on the wall. What now? Simple . . .

*It's joke time!*

As a student of musicianly diversions, I put considerable time into faxing, searching the Web, and hanging out with my wittier colleagues—*i.e.*, those who could still put sentences together after that last set at two in the morning—to come up with the most rimshot-worthy musician riddles now making the rounds. Here are the results, arranged helpfully by victim . . . er, category.

## **LEAD SINGERS**

*What's the first thing a lead singer does in the morning?* Put on his clothes and go back to the hotel.

*What's the difference between a lead singer and the PLO?* You can negotiate with the PLO.

*How does a singer change a light bulb?* She holds onto it while the world revolves around her.

*How do you know there's a singer at your door?* He can't find the key.

*How can you tell when your singer is flat?* Her lips are moving.

## **SAX PLAYERS**

*What's the difference between a bari sax and a chainsaw?* Vibrato.

*What do you call a house occupied by five sax players?* A crack house.

*How many sax players does it take to change a light bulb?* Five—one to change it, and four to figure out how David Sanborn would have done it.

## **GUITARISTS**

*What's the difference between a heavy metal guitarist and a dressmaker?* The dressmaker tucks up the frills.

*What do a guitar solo and premature ejaculation have in common?*

You know it's coming, and there's nothing you can do to stop it.

*What do an electric guitar and a vacuum cleaner have in common?* Both suck when you plug them in.

*How many lead guitarists does it take to change the light bulb?* None—they just steal somebody else's light.

## **BASS PLAYERS**

*What's the difference between a bass player and a trampoline?* You take off your shoes to jump on the trampoline.

*How do you get a good sound from your standup bass?* Cut it up and use it as a xylophone.

*How many bass players does it take to change a light bulb?* None—the piano player can do it with his left hand.

## **DRUMMERS**

*What did the drummer get on his IQ test?* Drool.

*What does a drummer say when he gets to his gig?* "Would you like fries with that, sir?"

*What's the difference between a drummer and a drum machine?* You only have to punch the information into the drum machine once.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

*What does new age music sound like when played backwards?* New age music.

*What did it say on the blues singer's tombstone?* "Well, I didn't wake up this mornin' . . ."

*What's black and tan and looks good on a music critic?* A Doberman.

*If you pushed a music critic and an A&R man off a tall building, which one would hit the ground first?* Who cares?

*What's the difference between musicians and government bonds?* Government bonds will eventually mature and earn money.

Thanks, everybody. You've been a great crowd. Enjoy the rest of the show. And please don't touch the dancers.

—**Reverend Billy C. Wirtz**



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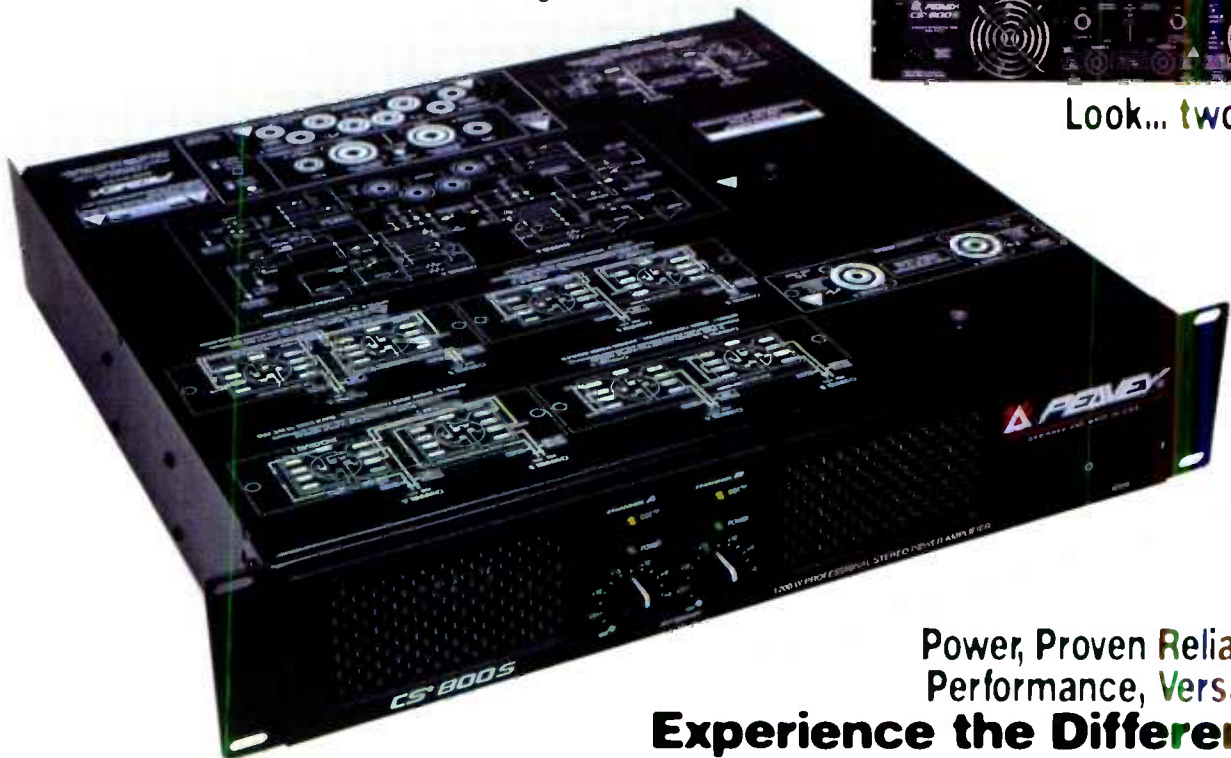
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