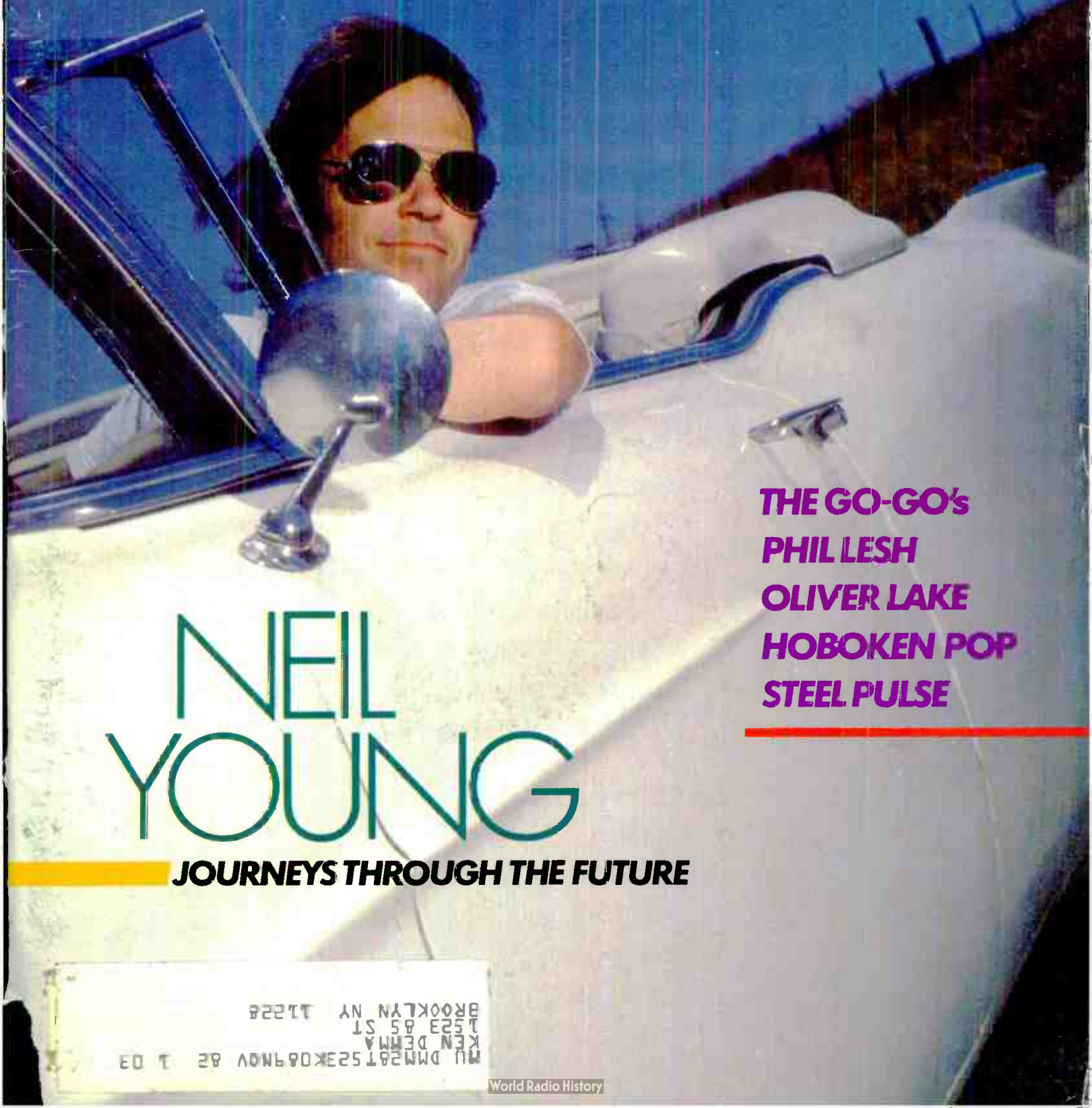


# MUSICIAN

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\$1.95 No. 49. NOV., 1982



**THE GO-GO's**  
**PHIL LESH**  
**OLIVER LAKE**  
**HOBOKEN POP**  
**STEEL PULSE**

# NEIL YOUNG

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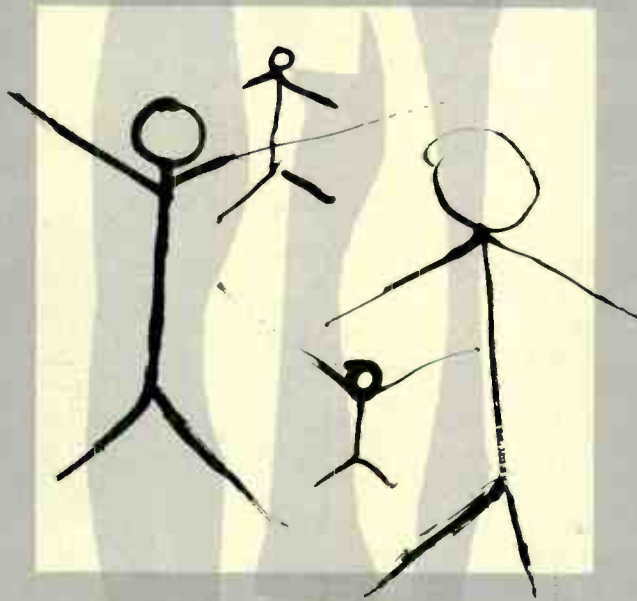
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# MUSICIAN

NO.49, NOV., 1982

**The Go-Gos** have been more successful than any female group in the history of rock but still find they have to prove themselves to sniping critics who call them mere token tomatoes. Dan Forte investigates the charges and discovers the Go-Go's are true pop professionals.



**Neil Young** remains a law unto himself after fifteen years of artistic triumph. From his years in the Buffalo Springfield, the fountainhead of California rock, to his great solo albums and his erstwhile membership in CSNY, Young has not only been a magnificent songwriter but a compelling original guitarist. Cameron Crowe discovers Neil's up to something you never expected.



**Foreigner** may excite your wrath as a leading exponent of the corporate rock over production syndrome, but don't think the members of this best-selling band aren't aware of the problem. Lou Gramm and Mick Jones bare their souls to Vic Garbarini and admit that despite some good intentions and a couple of fine recent LPs, a little more spontaneity and bite wouldn't hurt.



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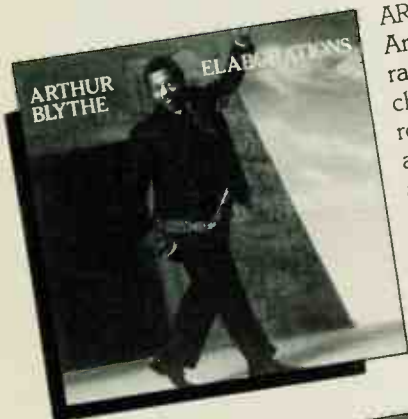
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Arthur Blythe unquestionably ranks as the most popular champion of the alto sax's return to prominence. Both fans and critics can't stop raving about him. For an elaborate description of Blythe's music, check out his latest LP, "Elaborations."



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Gloucester, MA 01930 (617) 281-3110

**New York Advertising/Editorial**

MUSICIAN, 1515 Broadway, 39 fl.

N.Y., N.Y. 10036 (212) 764-7400

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Musician (USPS 431-910) is published monthly

by Amordian Press, Inc., P.O. Box 701, 31 Com-

mercial St., Gloucester, MA 01930. (617) 281-

3110. Amordian Press, Inc. is a wholly owned

subsidiary of Billboard Publications, Inc., One

Astor Place, 1515 Broadway, New York, N.Y.

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Press, Inc. ©1982 by Musician, all rights

reserved. Second class postage paid at Glou-

cester, MA 01930 and at additional mailing

offices. Subscriptions \$18 per year, \$34 for two

years, \$48 for three years. Canada and else-

where, add \$6 per year, U.S. funds only. Sub-

scription address: Musician, Box 1923, Marion,

OH 43305. Postmaster send form 3579 to

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# WHEN BILLY COBHAM PLAYS HIS ZILDJIAN'S, HE'S PLAYING WITH DYNAMITE.

Someone once said of Billy Cobham: "He does certain things because he just doesn't know they can't be done." In the course of doing things that "can't be done" with his own Glass Menagerie group, with the likes of Bobby and The Midnights, George Duke, Stanley Clarke, and Freddie Hubbard on some 300 albums, he's been named Downbeat Drummer of the Year time and time again.

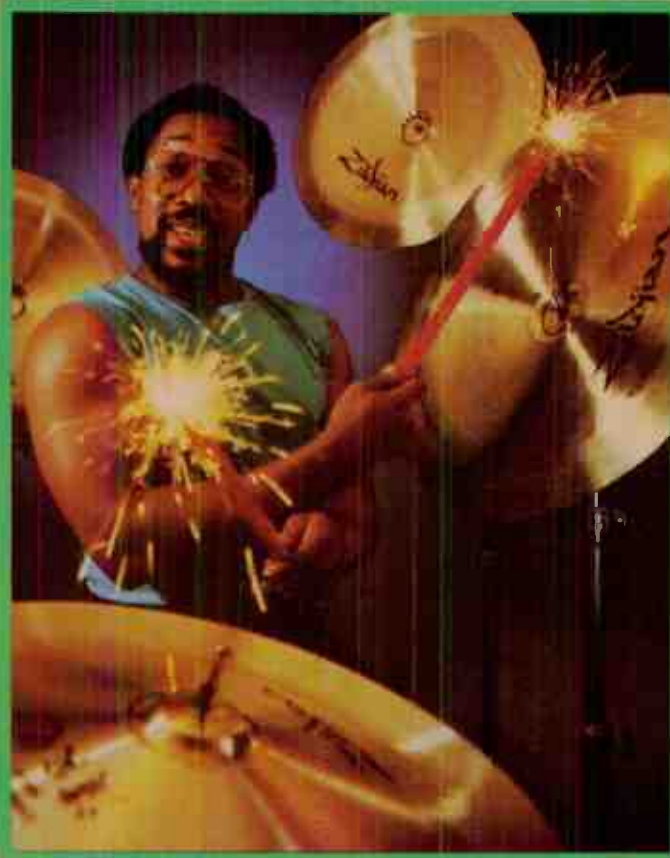
Here are some of Billy's observations:

## On His Schooling.

"I graduated from Grossingers resort up in the Catskill Mountains. No, I'm just kidding. Actually, I went to the School of Music and Art in New York City, but at graduation time I got a gig at Grossingers and they had to send my diploma up there."

**On Playing Cymbals Upside Down.** "I first got the idea of inverting my cymbals a few years back when I was in Finland. I was at an outdoor concert and a band from Prague was playing about 500 meters away. The drummer had an old Chinese cymbal and he was playing it upside

down, way up above the drum set. You could barely hear the rest of the band at that distance. You just heard this great explosive cymbal sound. Now I play one 22" China Boy High upside down and one 18" China Boy High in the regular position. The reason I play one upside down is the way it projects.



Why does Billy use our new China Boys for his crash and ride Cymbals: Explosive POWER!

It can be the loudest sound on stage. What happens with the cymbal is that when it is projected up at the room, it makes the whole room vibrate from the cymbal sound."

**On China Boy Cymbals.** "I started using China Boys for my crash and ride cymbals because of the explosive effect they have. When you hit them you get this 'POW!' There's an amazing amount of projection. I can get a lot of different effects from my China Boys. If I play them upside down, hitting the outer lip will give me a nice slapping solid stick sound. They also sound great with mallets, almost like small gongs. You can ride on them and get a very different

kind of ride sound. And because they cut out fast, you can get very nice short crashes."

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# LETTERS

## LET'S GET METAPHYSICAL

Your interview with Pete Townshend gave me a vision of a gigantic charge of electro-spiritual energy groaning in travail to squeeze through a pin-hole (black hole) in the infinite nothingness in which All That Is churns in slow Natural Freedom.

Do I sense another Big Bang in the heating process? An explosion of divine light would be more than this old humanity could withstand... unless, of course, that light were to clothe itself in human personalities living in the pain of a species which has separated itself from Nature in the illusory hope of creating its own eternal life through technological and scientific thought-products believed to be superior to the Laws contained within the Law of Nature from whence we came.

I can tell you from my reincarnational experience that P. T. is right when he says that even a rat has a natural creative influence on earth.

Val Vardamis  
Bangor, ME

## LODER BLOW

Your critic, Kurt Loder, has a great deal to learn about life. I just hope that the readers of his diatribe against Pete Townshend's *Chinese Eyes* are not so immature or foolish as to take much stock in Loder's own "sub-sophomoric spew." And, frankly, your editorial staff comes off looking like a bunch of ingrates. After Pete graciously granted you an exhaustive interview, you turn around and bad rap his LP! Like a *Rolling Stone*, for God's sake!

Loder's total insensitivity toward Townshend's philosophical message is only exceeded by his desperation to make himself heard. He touts the album's least impressive track, "Communication," as if it were the highlight of the album. He takes lyrics out of context so that he can label them "apallingly incoherent—or downright maudlin." And, finally, the lowest blow of all, Loder accuses Townshend of backsliding into the "bad old art-rock days." If you go on printing his drivel, your magazine is going to lose its last faint vestige of credibility.

Exquisitely bored in Texas, yet, sincerely,  
James M. Martin  
Corpus Christi, TX

## ROCK REALITY

Your articles on Peter Townshend, the Jam and the Clash are very interesting in one respect: all three reveal artists committed to (or mesmerized by?) the ideal of change, the use of rock as a vehicle for social transformation. The

question is, does this concept have any truth to it?

The first thing one must realize is that if the system, or the corporations, ever really felt menaced, they would waste no time or tears; the threat would be snuffed out. Obviously the Clash or the Jam don't really threaten anyone. And because rock is so bound up in the world of mass-marketing (even the most radical of bands must sell records to survive) it really can't change much. In a basic way, it *is* the system.

Peter Kincl  
New York City, NY

## MISSING THE MARK

Pete Townshend has been making some statements to the press lately about John Lennon's murder that are very disturbing to me. He implied that John may have contributed to his own death by trying to relinquish his star status and live in retirement. As Townshend says, "You cannot do things the way Greta Garbo did...." Greta Garbo did it her way and *still* walks alone on the streets of New York City. She *can* live her life any way she wants to, and John had the same right. The only problem is, in America "insane" people can drop into their neighborhood gun supermarket and do anything they want. I guess that's their right, according to God and the N.R.A.

John Lennon is *not* responsible for his own death. There's just one person responsible for that, and he's sitting in a New York prison right now, where I hope he stays until he rots. To even hint otherwise is outrageous.

Marsha Ewing  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI

## THE RIGHT TO ROCK

In Dave Marsh's article in your September issue, he assumes that anybody who is a political conservative can neither understand nor really care about rock 'n' roll. Marsh, who loves rock so much that he prefers Springsteen's *The River to Highway 61 Revisited*, does this a hell of a lot, as do many of the rock critics who roam this vast wasteland. Just because I have different political views from you doesn't mean that I ought to be insulted by people whom I otherwise admire; you need to clean up your act and be more tolerant. Other than that and the heavy-metal teen-idol idiot on your cover, the last issue was great, as every one has been. *Musician* is the best magazine I get, except for maybe *National Review*.

Geoffrey LaForte  
Denton, TX

## NO NEED

Since Pete Townshend feels that Cincinnati "needed to happen" because it serves "as an example to all of us within

the rock 'n' roll framework that it's *not* perfect," I wonder who he thinks has benefited from this "example" enough to warrant the price of eleven lives. Concert promoters remain greedy, careless and inept in their creation and execution of "events" involving tens of thousands of fans herded into stadiums and sports arenas to witness a concert. Fans are still stupid enough to attend concerts under these conditions. Townshend remains pompous and egocentric, worrying mainly about his media image and refusing to face those eleven deaths as real *deaths*, rather than mystical symbols in rock history. And the rock media remains as obsequious as ever, unwilling to point out to the "Patron Saint of Rock 'n' Roll" that his comments on Cincinnati seem completely muddled and meaningless.

I was a survivor of the whole mess. It was a good concert. But it didn't "need to happen."

Melissa Pullin  
Washington, D.C.

## RHOADS RECONSIDERED

Thank you for the great article on Eddie Van Halen. His style is both original and outstanding. He gets better on every album—I think his solo on "Push Comes To Shove" is some of his best work yet.

The part about Randy Rhoads "doing him to the bone" is a little unfair. Randy Rhoads was an excellent guitarist with his own style. Too bad he was just beginning to get notices before his tragic death.

By the way, Dave, Rick Savage has the best legs in rock.

Sue T.  
Highland, CA.

## BANDLEADER BRUFORD

Hold it. How can a magazine do a story on Bill Bruford and not even mention his solo career? Has anybody at *Musician* heard of "Sample And Hold," "Travels With Myself And Someone Else," "Fainting In Coils," "If You Can't Stand The Heat" or "Palewell Park"?

In all the stories I've read, in *Musician* and elsewhere, no one has compared Bruford's role in King Crimson with the role he played in his own band. Bruford's second album, *One Of A Kind*, has more interesting chord progressions on one side than the two King Crimson albums have combined.

I also think that it's ironic that after years of being told—by Bruford and Robert Fripp—that Bill Bruford's fans were going to have to give up the past and let the offbeat drummer escape. Yes, et al, now his fans are being asked to give up Bill Bruford's tunes, his own music.

That's just great.  
Terry Mattingly,  
Charlotte, NC



# SECURITY CAN BE SHATTERING. PETER GABRIEL.

**SECURITY.**



Prepare yourself. See Peter Gabriel.  
On tour in November and December.



**GEFFEN  
RECORDS**

Manufactured exclusively by Warner Bros. Records Inc.

music

industry

news

By Jock Baird

### Consolidation & Cutbacks

After a year's talk of hard times and big losses in the record industry, major action was finally taken by the two giants, Warners and CBS. During the first weeks of August, the axe fell on literally hundreds of employees, local sales reps to vice presidents. CBS completely revamped its distribution system, closing branch offices in nine major cities and consolidating its regional sales/promotion structure; first reports had casualties at 300 but the figure now seems closer to 400. WEA, Warners' distribution system, (which already had its regional managers reporting directly to home base and therefore had less fat) shed forty-three, with another twenty-nine cut loose from Warner Bros. Records. Atlantic let go about a dozen people. CBS "furloughed" 135 workers at its pressing plant in Terre Haute, a supposedly normal procedure in the summer, but one which is normally undertaken in April or May, not right before the fall releases.

Shaking survivors were ordered to take on the duties of the departed, leaving controlled havoc in many offices as new jobs had to be learned. As the dust settled, however (and as lurid rumors of Elektra/Asylum and Epic being absorbed by parent companies proved unfounded, based only on consolidation of office facilities), order began to be restored. Despite the loss of a number of major publicists, including Columbia's v.p. Hope Antman, the majority of the bloodletting involved retail and distribution personnel and some industry insiders felt that was long overdue, especially in CBS's case. The process of trimming off a decade of fatty excess may not stop here, of course, and will certainly extend to

artists. Elektra let twelve acts go immediately and even the big-timers who wrote cushy contracts and failed to go platinum will be pushed harder when it's time to renegotiate. One thing is certain: the L.A. *Herald Examiner's* screaming headline, "The summer the music business died," was, like rumors of Mark Twain's demise, greatly exaggerated.

In the midst of fire and brimstone, the fall album offensive is under way. If ever a gaggle of home runs were needed, it's now and Christopher Cross's long-awaited followup to his fantastically profitable debut is considered the cleanup hitter of the lot, with Billy Joel's new studio LP right behind. Other high-hope hitters include the Who, Donald Fagen (once of Steely Dan), Kenny Loggins, Pink Floyd, Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, Supertramp, Hall & Oates, Diana Ross, Linda Ronstadt's *Get Closer*, Rush, Kim Carnes's *Voyeur*, Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers and Pat Benatar. If, of course, you could care less about the Big Time, you might still be interested in new ones by Dire Straits, Prince, Chaka, a live Emmylou Harris, the Time, the Psychedelic Furs, Luther Vandross, Peabo Bryson, George Duke, Mike Rutherford and Phil Collins of Genesis, Joan Armatrading, the Kinks, Jerry Garcia, John Hall, Smokey Robinson and the Temptations with David Ruffin. The award for the most unnecessary record of the fall goes hands down to Chuck Mangione's vocal version of "Feel's So Good."

The L.A. version of the Kool Jazz Festival, scheduled for early November, has taken a more adventurous tack than most cities. New music stars like Air, the Art

Ensemble of Chicago, Muhal Richard Abrams & Anthony Braxton (who will also give a lecture), the World Saxophone Quartet, Lester Bowie's Root To The Source, Blood Ullmer, Roscoe Mitchell, Laurie Anderson and the John Carter Quintet with guest James Newton are finally getting top billing. It's about time.

R&B shouter **Joe Tex** died of a heart attack at age forty-nine.... **Al Green** and **Patti Labelle** are going on Broadway for a stint with *Your Arm's Too Short To Box With God*.... **Elton John** is recording a new album at George Martin's Montserrat complex.... **Robert Fripp** is producing the **Roches'** new LP.... **Paul Simon** is polishing a new solo effort in the Apple.... **Bob Dylan** enjoyed **X's** Minneapolis show so much, he went backstage, only to find the group had returned to their hotel. Following them there on sketchy directions, Dylan knocked on a number of doors and finally found lighting director Rick Schmidlin dressed in his underwear and holding a beer. Schmidlin jumped back, dropped the beer and shouted, "Holy s---! It's Bob Dylan!" After recovering, he introduced Dylan to **Exene** and **John Doe**.

### Chart Action

The top eight album contenders jockeyed furiously for position throughout the month but other than John Cougar's breakout over Fleetwood Mac's five-week reign at #1, little had changed. Survivor's boxing anthem, *Eye Of The Tiger* hovered just below the top, *Asia* dropped a place or so, Steve Miller *Abracadabra'd* up a place or so and Robert Plant, CSN and REO didn't move a muscle. But the Go-Go's pep-rallied in at #42 and in five weeks went to #9 even as Billy Squier did almost exactly the same thing to get to #11. Chicago inched upward between them. Former top tenners Willie Nelson and Toto, as well as teen toughs the Human League and the Motels took hard shots and plummeted rapidly. The Gap Band used their extraordinary success on the black charts to get to #14 while newcomers A Flock of Seagulls and Men at Work (#68 to #17 in six weeks) showed surprising vitality. Michael McDonald and Steve Winwood's new solo LPs averaged twenty point gains every week to get to #28 and #32 respectively; they'll be mixing it up with the big boys soon. Peak positions were reached and surrendered by Marshall Crenshaw (#50), X (#76) and Rick James (#34) even as the Clash (#19) and Pete Townshend (#26) fought up inch by inch. Will somebody tell Pink Floyd's *Dark Side Of The Moon* what year this is; after 432 weeks, the damned thing went up eleven points!



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World Radio History



# STEEL PULSE'S REGGAE EVOLUTION

A band forged in the fires of Britain's punk uprising tempers its Rasta roots with funk and fusion flash and finds its own groove.



Steel Pulse (David Hinds with vest): "seeking the heart that has never been told."

**BY CRISPIN CIOE**

"What do you think of the big man's office?" the road manager quipped, ushering me and David Hinds, lead singer/songwriter for the British reggae band Steel Pulse, into the plush midtown Manhattan digs of an out-of-town Elektra/Asylum veep. As we settled into a couple of overstuffed armchairs to do

an interview, Hinds, who sports towering "congo dreadlocks," as they're called in Washington Square by Rastas slumming in Babylon, took a long, cool look around the office and drawled, "The big man's not that big after all."

It's not exactly a runaway movement yet, but recently American major labels have been quietly signing proven reggae acts to relatively long-term deals, notably Third World to CBS, Den-

nis Brown on A&M and Steel Pulse with E/A. By and large, these are musicians who've been able to temper their authentic reggae roots with some measure of pop/R&B flash—and still come up skanking enough not to alienate their base audience of hard-core reggae fans. Steel Pulse has reached this point in a particularly interesting way, partly because the band's R&B influences are so funky and partly because its sound, and David Hinds's songwriting, have ripened so much in the past two years. The last two highly competent internationally released LPs—*Tribute To The Martyrs* and *Reggae Fever*—featured the kind of occasionally jazzy textures and fusionoid guitar allusions that signaled a group to watch, full of gradually emerging chops and very cosmopolitan ambitions.

The band hails from the West Indian enclaves of industrial Birmingham, England and like Linton Kwesi Johnson and some other leading British reggae artists, Hinds's lyrics are rooted in the real world. He is a professed Rastafarian, but in the best post-Marley tradition, Hinds doesn't get lost in doctrinaire religious ramblings. On songs like "The Unseen Guest," "Sound System" and "Biko's Kindred Lament" ("Pharoah's armies won't let them be/ Biko died in chains Yeh") from *Tribute To The Martyrs*, Hinds and band first started to hit their stride with a danceable, street-poetry approach that was always mindful of reggae's biggest trump card in the top forty sweepstakes: an irresistible dance beat.

But *True Democracy*, the group's first American major label release, is a different thing altogether. The stylistic seams are no longer showing; from the herky-jerky intro to the LP's opener, "Chant A Psalm," which melts into a percolating cruiser of a beat, it's clear this is a band that's finally found its own groove. The song builds on a minor-keyed chord progression, edging toward a reeling chorus via several asides and a teaser bridge, and this holding strategy only heightens the message when it hits. If that message looks somber on paper ("Seek ye the half that has never been told/ Get behind me satan, in dis ya Armegeddon"), the chorus itself is so infectiously chantable that it teaches its





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act, with newer groups like the Police opening for them. Hinds says that he likes the Police, "but I must also say they have told us since that tour that we were a big influence on some of their songs."

Steel Pulse's first musical influences included, as Hinds remembers, all kinds of Jamaican music, but he also says that "we were into early 70s funk groups like Mandrill, War, Osibisa and the Isley Brothers, as well as Stanley Clarke and Herbie Hancock. Our drummer Steve was actually a funk drummer earlier in his life, very into Alphonse Mouzon and such, and we've always encouraged him to use those kinds of fills in our songs. And personally, I've always listened closely to Gil Scott-Heron, going back to his first albums on Flying Dutchman." Hinds believes his own progress as a songwriter relates to a desire "to deal with all kinds of people, not just Rasta. So we put music out that extends. For instance, the idea of putting an end to destruction is a fairly universal one. Or my idea on 'Chant A Psalm' is that when you read a psalm, each has a different meaning, and it's up to one to know which psalm to chant to give you strength, or to achieve anything you want. But I don't feel life begins and ends in the Bible alone. There are so many books to be open to: *Zen Flesh Zen Bones*, *Aesop's Fables*, *Shakespeare... The Taming of the Shrew* deals with man/woman relationships clearly. It's all a matter of seeking the heart that has never been told."

On a recent concert trip to Africa last spring, two band members and a manager contracted malaria, cutting the tour of Nigeria and neighboring countries short. "But," says Hinds, "everyone recovered, and it was the ultimate experience for a reggae band nonetheless; it was our first trip there, and our first exposure to the real African roots, of course. And we found the people there very receptive to reggae, if not always ready for the Rasta philosophy. They've even got their own version of the music, called 'fuji reggae,' and it's very percussive; the people dance to it almost exactly like West Indians dance to reggae. But none of this surprised us too much. When we were in Arizona recently, representatives of the Havasupai American Indians, who live at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, came to see our concert and we met with them afterwards. They have actually taken in the philosophy of Rasta, to keep themselves together as a people. It's just very good to see that Rasta is relevant to so many different people. In fact, I can see blacks from outside Africa really aiding in the unification of the continent. And if right now Rasta is spreading in Africa via the music, rather than the spiritual side, that's fine too. It's like the song 'Find It... Quick!' says on our album: 'Love is a golden chord that binds all commandments/ Makes all hearts sing.' All of them." ☑



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# LETTER FROM NEW ORLEANS

A pilgrimage to Big Easy's Jazz & Heritage Festival reveals that, unfortunately, *everything* is for sale, including some gumbo music giants.

BECKET LOGAN



Life in another world: director Louis Malle consults his attorney.

## BY BRIAN CULLMAN

New Orleans is generally known as "Big Easy," the prevailing wisdom being that if you can't make it in New Orleans, you can't make it *anywhere*. It's a city of hustlers, con artists, fringe characters, one shots, has-beens and never-weres all trading on the charm and the past and the exotica of the city, selling it to the movies and selling it to the tourists and getting ready for the 1984 World's Fair, an event almost certainly guaranteed to erase the last vestiges of the city's charm, what with the sudden influx of some hundred thousand tourists and gawkers (in what is essentially a big small town), and with hotels and parking lots being erected in their honor. All of this is perfectly in character; one of the best things about the city is that *everything* is for sale, even and especially the charm.

For generations (okay, maybe years), musicians have traded on New Orleans' reputation as the center of hip, the birthplace of jazz and of rhythm and blues, home of the backbeat that time forgot, that Bomp Bomp Bomp/Ba Bomp Iko Iko beat. And while the reputation is undeniable, it also gives license to some of the sloppiest and dumbest playing in the world; people like Huey "Piano"

Smith and Eddie Bo brought whole new meanings to the notion of "dumb" with songs like "The Little Moron" and "Check Mr. Popeye" and with routines that would make even folks like Zager & Evans blush. (On the subject of dumb, however, Fats Domino steals the show with his penetrating insights into matrimony: "Let's get married, get married soon. / You be the bride, and I'll be the groom.") The stoppiness, though, is something else again. It's odd when a group like the Neville Brothers, one of the few New Orleans bands to have toured extensively in recent years, still can't figure out how to finish any of their songs and just wind up skidding to a dead end within, oh, maybe a minute and a half of each other.

But then, there's a *laissez-faire* "soon come" attitude about life in New Orleans which pervades the music industry (such as it is) and which accounts for the fact that like certain French wines and types of New York cheesecakes, the music doesn't travel well; hell, it doesn't travel at all, it lives vicariously through its reputation and through all the old records. It's not laziness exactly, just a different mindset, just another world, and you have to deal in the currency of the realm. That currency includes fairly constant heat (sleep in a room without a fan or an air conditioner and you wake

up tasting your lungs); po-boy sandwiches, gumbo, turtle soup and crayfish; and a general sense of ease and complacency. Just as certain residents of SoHo and Greenwich Village take great pride in never having been above 14th Street, there are musicians who never travel further than Matarie or Baton Rouge (daring ones venturing occasionally as far as Biloxi or Houston). But it's possible to get by, and it's possible to scale your ambitions and expectations to the size and nature of the place; if you're used to a city where they put oysters in your sandwich, where one of the most popular churches features a scale model of the infant Jesus riding around the altar in a railroad car waving at you, where the former mayor was named Moon, and where no matter how peculiar you are or how odd your habits might be you'll fit in... well, then it's hard to imagine going out on the road and contemplating, much less dealing with, the rest of America.

Hence the annual Jazz & Heritage Festival; it's a way to bring the mountain to Mohammed, a way to get a few thousand tourists into town, get some press, and also a way of checking to see that all the performers are still alive (any number of musicians who have died still hold onto weekly gigs at Tyler's and the Fauborg).

From the first day on, the weather was phenomenally cooperative, featuring clear blue skies, temperatures in the mid-80s, and, that rarest of New Orleans phenomena, cool breezes blowing in from the east. On other years, rainstorms had turned the festival into an enormous mudbath, replete with wet blues players, drenched audiences huddling for shelter and soggy oyster po-boys floating by as the rains formed small tributaries to the Poncitrain.

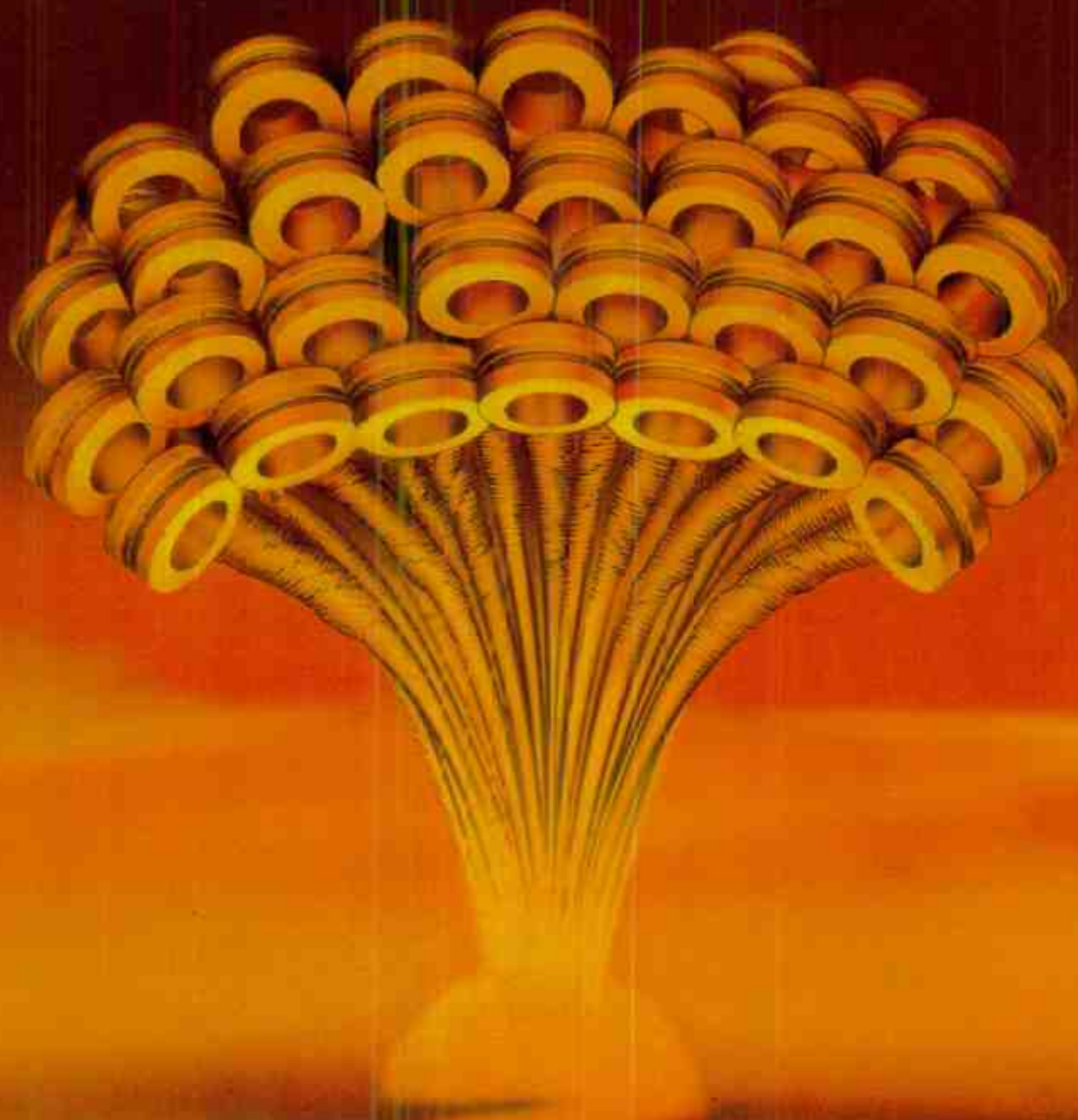
Director Marty Scorsese brought along his own jug of orange juice and stood off to the side watching zydeco bands; on the other end of the fairgrounds, Boz Scaggs soaked up the rhythms of the day, all but taking notes; and seemingly everywhere at once, former head of the White Panther Party and MC5 manager John Sinclair listened delightedly and plotted the next revolution.

Any notion that the locals are long on



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musical savvy is quickly dispelled when it becomes clear that the festival committee brings in some of the lamest jazz artists available just to please the inhabitants, who, having grown up on Lee Dorsey, Professor Longhair and Shirley & Lee, nonetheless flock to see hacks like Spyro Gyra, Stanley Turrentine and Hubert Laws. Tourists like me, a tuna of a different stripe (and just as much of a sucker) flock instead to hear James Booker, Aaron Neville & Irma Thomas, and Allen Toussaint perform on a blues cruise on the riverboat *President*.

Booker, one of New Orleans's oddest characters (this in a town where Jack Abbott felt comfortable drinking and where Lou Reed would be just one of the

guys), is subdued, even polite, trying to tone down his bad boy image. Out at the fairgrounds, he had stormed off the stage after less than a minute of playing piano... reasons unknown. Booker has been known to leave stages abruptly if the color of someone's tie upsets his aesthetic or if he suddenly remembers that he has to feed the dog. But on the riverboat, he appears almost elegant, wearing a light suit, and with dark glasses replacing his usual glittery eyepatch, performing a set that is a model of restraint and good taste, playing like an inspired lounge pianist in a Holiday Inn. Not what you'd expect from a man who could just about cut Professor Longhair while he was still with us, who combines

the virtues of Little Richard and Glenn Gould, and who calls himself the Black Chopin and means it. But you have to scale your expectations; if you can't be Mozart, or Thomas DeQuincey, or Howard Hughes, you can at least bang out tunes for the tourists and make a buck.

Then there's Aaron Neville & Irma Thomas. Aaron Neville, possessor of arguably the greatest falsetto in the Western hemisphere, is the most serious "might-have-been" in all of New Orleans. When Frank Sinatra first heard "Tell It Like It Is," he flipped; he wanted to make Aaron a star and put him on a TV special he was planning. Of course, he wanted to make a couple of little changes. With a dagger tattooed on his face, with his eye makeup and his sleepily lurching sexuality, Neville looks like someone who, if encountered in a dark alley, might kiss you (regardless of gender), stab you (regardless of gender) or advise you on your shampoo (again, regardless of gender). Sinatra wanted to remove the tattoo, buy him fifty suits and send him to charm school (presumably so he would stop upsetting people and learn how to be more like Sammy Davis, Jr.). Neville didn't know how to deal with it, turned the offer down and retreated back into semi-obscurity. Now a full member of the Neville Brothers, New Orleans's premier funk band, he's respected and working, but is far from a national figure.

Here he is, teamed with Irma Thomas, herself a legend, queen of New Orleans soul, the inspiration behind gifted singers like Tracy Nelson and Dusty Springfield as well as poseurs like Lou Ann Something-or-other; Irma Thomas, who sang "Cry On" and "Ruler Of My Heart" and "It's Raining" and "Two Winters Long" and "I Did My Part" and on and on. Together they should be able to combine Marvin Gaye & Tammi Terrel's smoothness with Otis Redding & Carla Thomas's grit and growl.

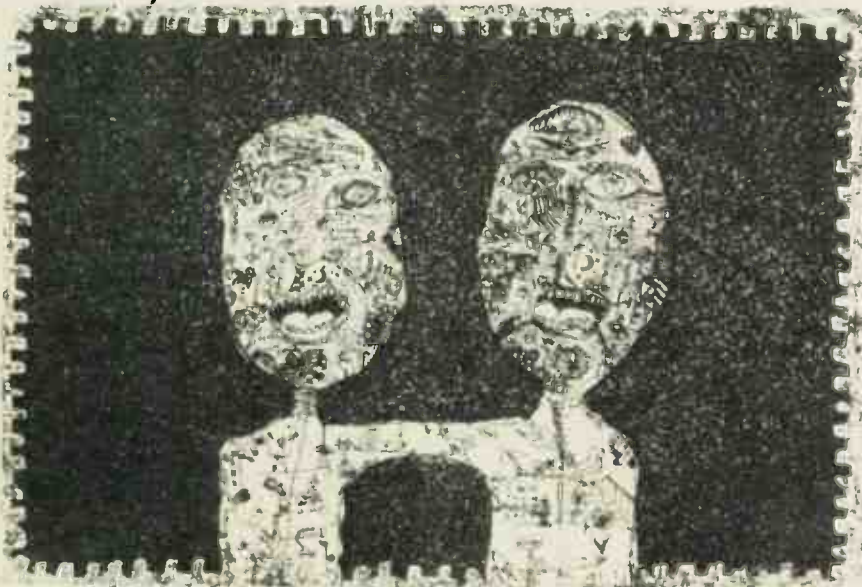
So what do they do, these geniuses, these juke-box giants? Well, they start off with "Fame," and it's all downhill from there: "With You I'm Born Again," "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," and other songs so dreadful that the composers were too embarrassed to even title them. Jeez, Neville had turned down Sinatra just so he could turn himself into his own version of Sammy Davis, Jr.

On to Allen Toussaint, godfather of the New Orleans music scene, writer of more great songs and producer of more classic records than anyone in the history of the universe. Ever. Almost. But he's a lousy performer and shows serious lapses in taste (claiming to love Glen Campbell's horrific version of his own "Southern Nights"), an amiable if unconvincing vocalist mumbling his way through a set of predominantly disposable material.

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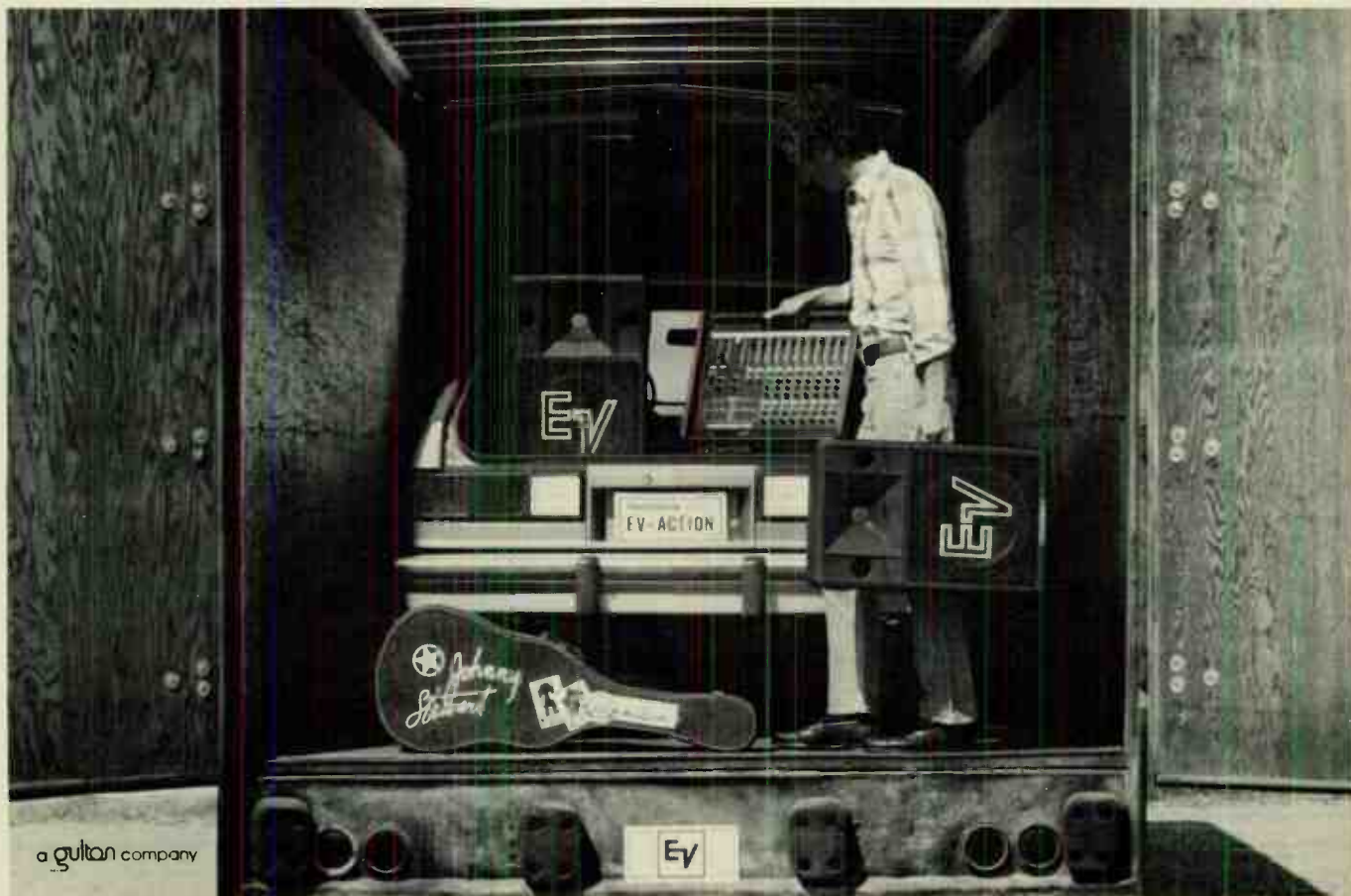
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word), but there's no point, only the strange realization that most of the great R&B players and singers play the way they play because it's the only way they know how to play, and they'd change if they could and learn how to be Glen Campbell or Eric Gale or Sheena Easton or the Muppets if they only could; and the most traveled and successful of the players are trying, unsuccessfully, to do just that. If some of the best and most beautiful and strange and heartfelt music in the world comes from here, it's an accident. It just happened that way while God wasn't looking. ☑



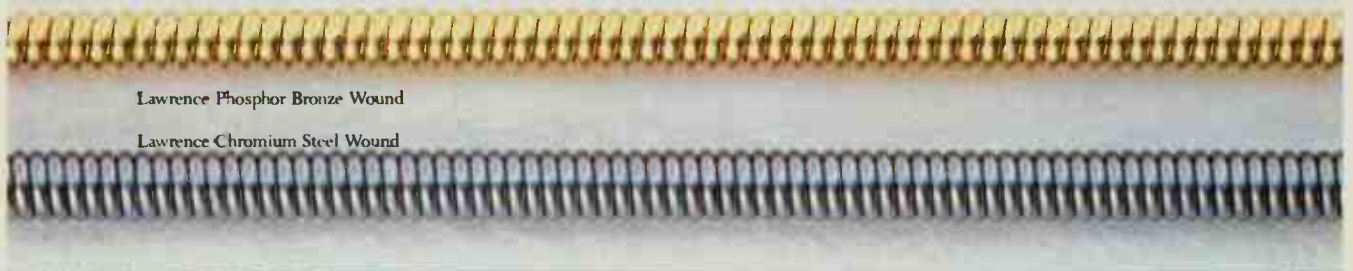
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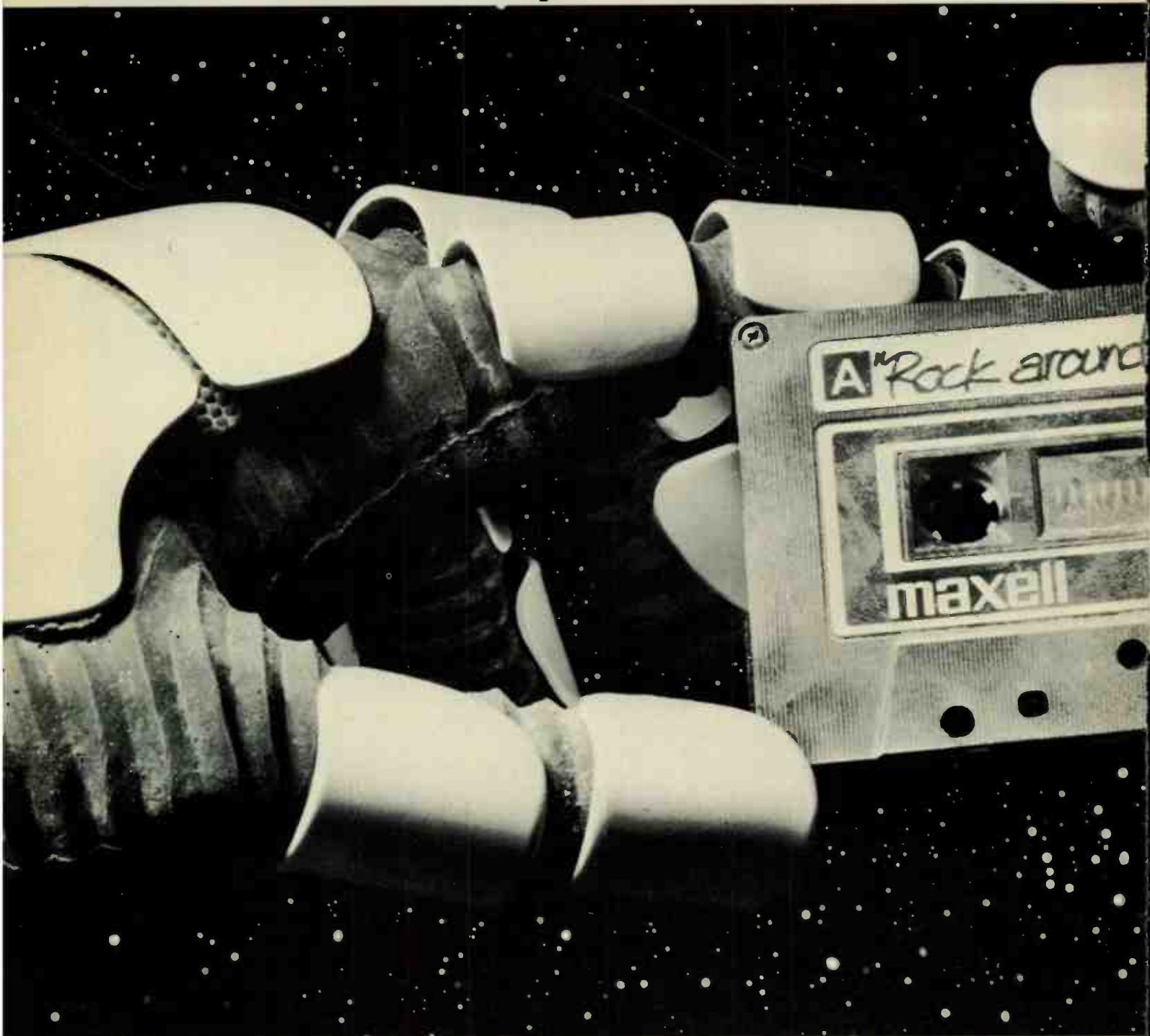
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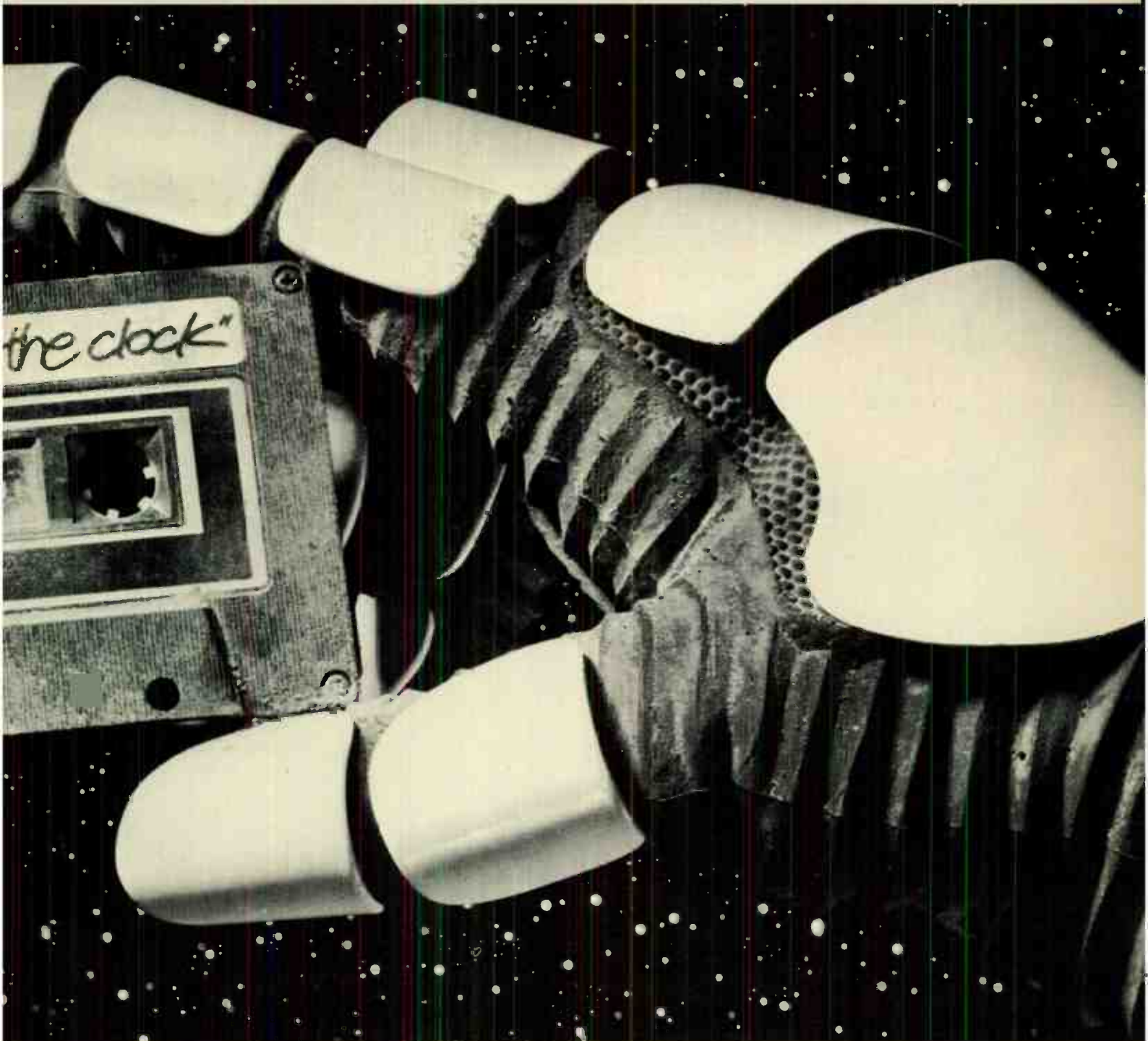
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# OLIVER LAKE

BY JOE BLUM

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**J**ump Up: a dance, a party, a hop. Also the name of a band run by Oliver Lake. Music you can listen to or dance to, what jazz was, perhaps, in the days of Basie and Ellington. Their new release on Gramavision (*Jump Up*) features Lake's virtuoso saxophone work, whimsical vocals and a reggae-funk rhythm section, combined in the looseknit manner of an African dance band. It is not, therefore, very surprising that they had such a solid reception on their recent African trip, with, yep, standing ovations and dancing in the aisles. "I started out playing dance music and now I've come full circle," says Lake. "But it's something I really believe in, something closer to the people, something they respond to."

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present. According to Julius Hemphill, fellow member of the World Saxophone Quartet and an early collaborator of Lake's in the Black Artists Group of St. Louis (late 1960s), "Oliver has always been interested in ethnic music, whether it be African, Caribbean or Buddhist temple music. His earlier years of self-appraisal led to an awareness and a belief in a collective or tribal concept of creative organization. This led to a study of African music, followed by a study of Island music (music of the Diaspora), which eventually led to Jump Up."

The African tour took the band to Swaziland and Malawi in the south, Togo, Ivory Coast and Liberia on the west coast, and included a one-day stop in Nairobi, Kenya. In addition to concerts, dinners and formal functions, official tours and interviews, the group participated in workshops with local musicians and music students. Jump Up's warm reception was not unexpected, but there were other surprises: "For example, in Malawi. Wherever we went, we had been getting wild applause, people standing up, shouting for more," Lake recalls. "Then in Malawi, just this very polite clapping, extremely formal, followed by silence. I was really hurt and was sure they didn't like us, but it turned out that that was simply the style there, extremely restrained. Perhaps it's also a reflection of the political atmosphere, and people are uptight—in Malawi, *Ebony* magazine is censored as salacious, and long hair is banned. I had to wear a wig to conceal my dreadlocks. But later on they asked us, 'Why didn't you play more?' I was also struck by the extent to which the old coexists with the new, the rich with the poor. You can have a modern, palatial residence on one side of the street, and right across the way people are living in corrugated tin shacks. I saw traditional dress, ancient fishing techniques, mud huts—then later on was greeted by bands playing disco and top forty—American top forty.

"The musicians were more up to date in Togo and Ivory Coast, which are French-speaking and receive publications from the Continent like *Jazz-Hot*. The English-speaking countries in the south, Swaziland and Malawi, are dependent on what records South Africa wants to send them. In Malawi I would say they were at least thirty years behind as far as jazz goes—we really freaked them out. But many places are up to date, and you can walk into a nightclub and hear a band doing 'Dance To The Music' just as you would in the States. We got lots of questions about contemporary American players, mainly guitar and bass players. Also technical questions, like sax players would ask me how I got to the high register on my horn. People weren't into initiating political discussions, either because it wasn't needed, or in some places, inadvisable."

Lake grew up in St. Louis, Missouri





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where he attended high school with Phillip Wilson, John Hicks and Lester Bowie. He didn't start playing saxophone until he was eighteen, but with Lester's encouragement he was soon playing professionally with local R&B groups. "Lester really inspired me to want to be a musician, even though I was starting at a late age. 'Ten years from now,' he would say, 'no one will know at what age you started.' We went on the road with a band, must have been 1964 or 1965, a rhythm and blues band, Phillip Wilson, Lester and me. We got hung up in California, and it was at that time Lester moved to Chicago. But all before that we had been in St. Louis, playing together, jamming, practicing, studying and doing the whole thing."

In 1968, Lake founded the Black

Artists Group with other St. Louis musicians. "The Black Artists Group was initially inspired by the A.A.C.M. Like when we saw them leave Chicago and go to Europe, and it seemed like they were making a success of it. When they came back, they came to St. Louis and stayed in our building for almost two years—we had space for musicians to live, rehearse and perform. They told us about the experiences they had in Europe, and I thought it might be a good shot."

The Black Artists Group included singers, poets, dancers, actors and artists as well as musicians. Consequently, a lot of multi-media projects originated here, and Lake found himself working with poetry and theater. (He even has a book of poems, *Life Dance*,

which, like his singing, are both personal and witty.) "The poetry led me to realize the importance of the voice in terms of getting to people or making a communications link, a connection. The voice is our natural instrument, after all. So I began to use my voice in poetry, then singing and chanting." Lake's instrumental style began to reflect this awareness, and his expressive range expanded as his playing became more vocal.

In 1973, he moved to Paris, where he taught at the American Center for Artists and Students and studied at the Electronic Workshop with Ivan Pequeno, a South American electronic composer. He had left St. Louis with four other B.A.G. musicians, Joseph Bowie, Bobo Shaw, Floyd LeFlore and Baikida Carroll, and this helped hasten the demise of B.A.G. at that time. But Lake saw travel as part of the "artist's responsibility—to be a messenger." Returning to New York in 1976, Lake recorded with Anthony Braxton, a saxophone quartet track which presaged the W.S.Q. He also began to experiment with strings (*Heavy Spirits* on Arista) and wrote several composed pieces, including a string trio that was performed at Carnegie Hall.

Lake established himself as one of the significant voices in the avant-garde of the late 70s, his work of this period perhaps best represented by the Arista LPs *Shine* and *Life Dance Of Is*, on which he alternates the use of sound and space, and experiments with blending vocal and instrumental textures. This period also saw the birth of the World Saxophone Quartet, a modern group with very solid roots in the blues. Oliver's work with the W.S.Q. has helped him elaborate upon his early R&B playing, and conceivably served as a bridge to his present efforts with Jump Up and James "Blood" Ulmer, for whom he has also recently recorded.

Sometimes in the past, Lake has seemed overly preoccupied with structure, but his recent efforts show that now he can make his structures work for him, and feels more free to blow. *The Prophet* (Black Saint) is an indication of this, with its Monk-like progressions, solidly established themes and overall conceptual unity (the album is a tribute to Eric Dolphy). *Clevon Fitzhuber*, his most recent release on Black Saint, is a continuation of the move away from an earlier spacey, over-liberated landscape where there was too much room to play and not enough directed, concentrated energy. Certainly Jump Up, with its dance format and simple harmonic motifs, provides Lake with a new, radically different balance of structure and freedom, and arguably the best forum he has had as an improviser. The notion of a virtuoso saxophonist fronting a dance band is an intriguing one, and the amplitude of reggae rhythms, even as adumbrated by a decidedly non-island rhythm

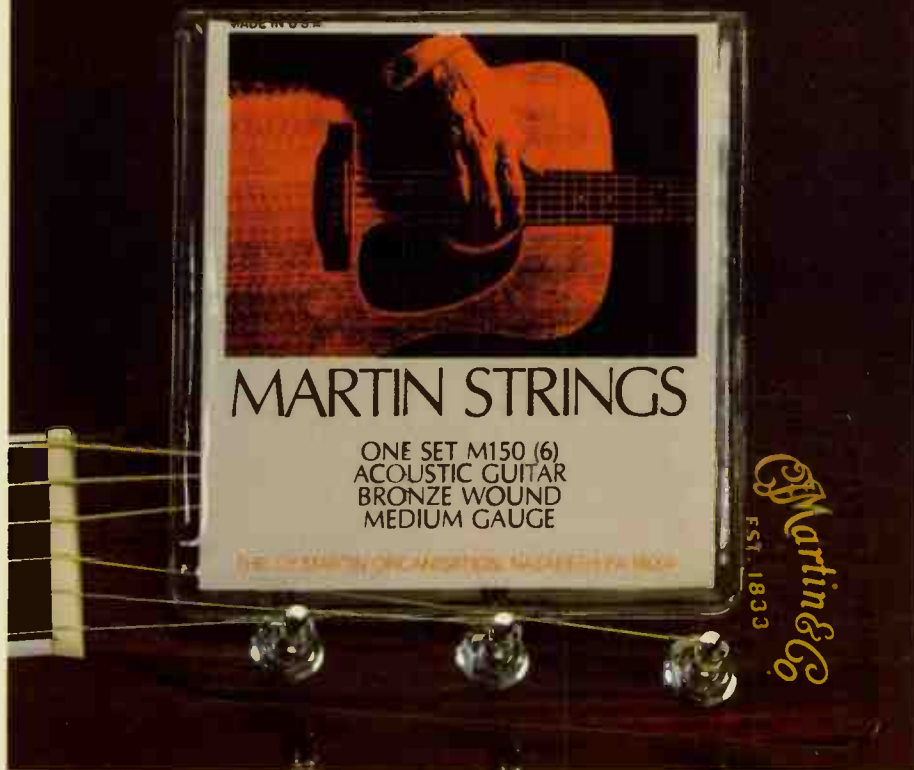
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section, leaves more room and creates fewer restrictions than anything this side of jazz. Lake has been exploring the possibilities with increasing success, and seems increasingly fulfilled as an artist in the process, enriching himself on the chances he is able to take and on the surety upon which they repose. Few saxophonists since Dolphy have his command of the instrument, and fewer have harnessed such command to a recognizably original style.

Earlier on, of course, Lake imitated other players, like most young musicians. "There was a period I sounded just like Jackie McLean; I even copied his solos. But I soon got aware there were an awful lot of people out there who could play bebop licks extremely well, and I didn't want to compete with them. It mattered more to develop my own

approach. I've been through so many different things, so many different kinds of music, but around the time I was doing *Life Dance Of Is* I was getting into something which involved recitation of poetry with music, which led to singing, which in turn led me to this group. Also a trip I took to Trinidad and South America stimulated my interest in this direction.

"It's been two years for this group and I'm happy with it. I'm not involved with Rasta or the Jamaican political situation. This band is not pretending to be authentic or 'roots' reggae, and most people say it's not reggae although it sounds like reggae. But the very appeal comes from the fact that we're all bringing our own different personal experiences to this group, not from any attempt to be authentic.

"I find it challenging after all these

years of moving away from chordal playing to try to improvise within the limits of two or three chords. This can be exciting. The vocabulary of the saxophone isn't different, but the way it works is different, and to move from this to the World Saxophone Quartet where you have all that freedom—that's quite a trip."

Lake has no intention of curtailing his other musical involvements—he played with the W.S.Q. at the Kool Jazz Festival this summer—but he's glad people are interested in Jump Up. Admittedly a bit of a ham, he enjoys being a vocalist and doesn't shun the role of entertainer. He hopes to avoid stylistic and commercial restrictions, such as packaged modes of presentation that would change his dress or his way of playing and writing, should the group continue to be popular. He notices that writers have begun to lump Jump Up with bands such as Prime Time, Blood Ulmer and Ronald Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society—sort of an "avant-funk" category—but so far he's not worried.

The conflict between high and pop art is unreal, and is certainly not found in Africa, as Lake was able to observe. Art per se is not a common term of reference in the old country; it is an organic and inseparable part of the daily lifestyle in which everyone participates. Unfortunately, in contemporary Africa, this may lead governments to ignore the spiritual and economic needs of musicians and

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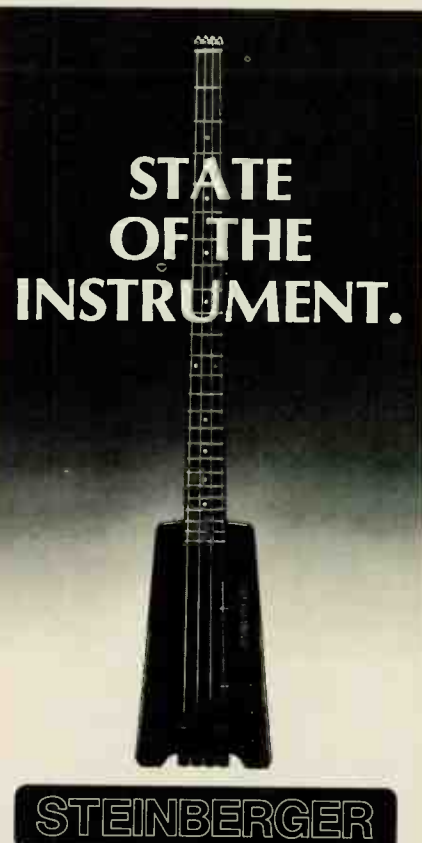
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to be unaware of ancient musical forms being lost as lifestyles change—music is simply taken for granted. "People don't discuss this much but it's a problem. The government may sponsor a National Troupe of some sort, but otherwise neglects music. In the countries I visited, musicians were just beginning to perceive music as a commercial enterprise, part of the world of commodities. All over the continent things are modernizing—the changes are widespread and sometimes frightening. I had a lot of things to take in over a very short period of time, but I did get some help.

"We played about fifteen concerts and ran maybe eight or ten workshops. These were all set up beforehand and part of the itinerary. We'd get a lot of questions about electronic devices, like guitar pedals, which hadn't arrived there yet. We had beginning students who'd ask us about basics, as well as adult professional musicians who were teaching us. I learned quite bit, particularly traditional rhythmic things, which I'm sure will turn up in the next compositions I write for the group.

"At the workshops we had question and answer periods—that's where we really could talk. We talked a lot about commercial pressure and earning a living. None of the places we went had a recording industry except in Lomé, Togo, where they had a brand-new 24-track studio. That's where we saw the Afro-jazz group, Peter King. Saxophones, guitars, African rhythms: no vocals. In the Ivory Coast we saw a band that would play a tune that was segmented: eight bars of traditional music, then eight bars of jazz improvisation! They played it for us to show us they knew what was happening.

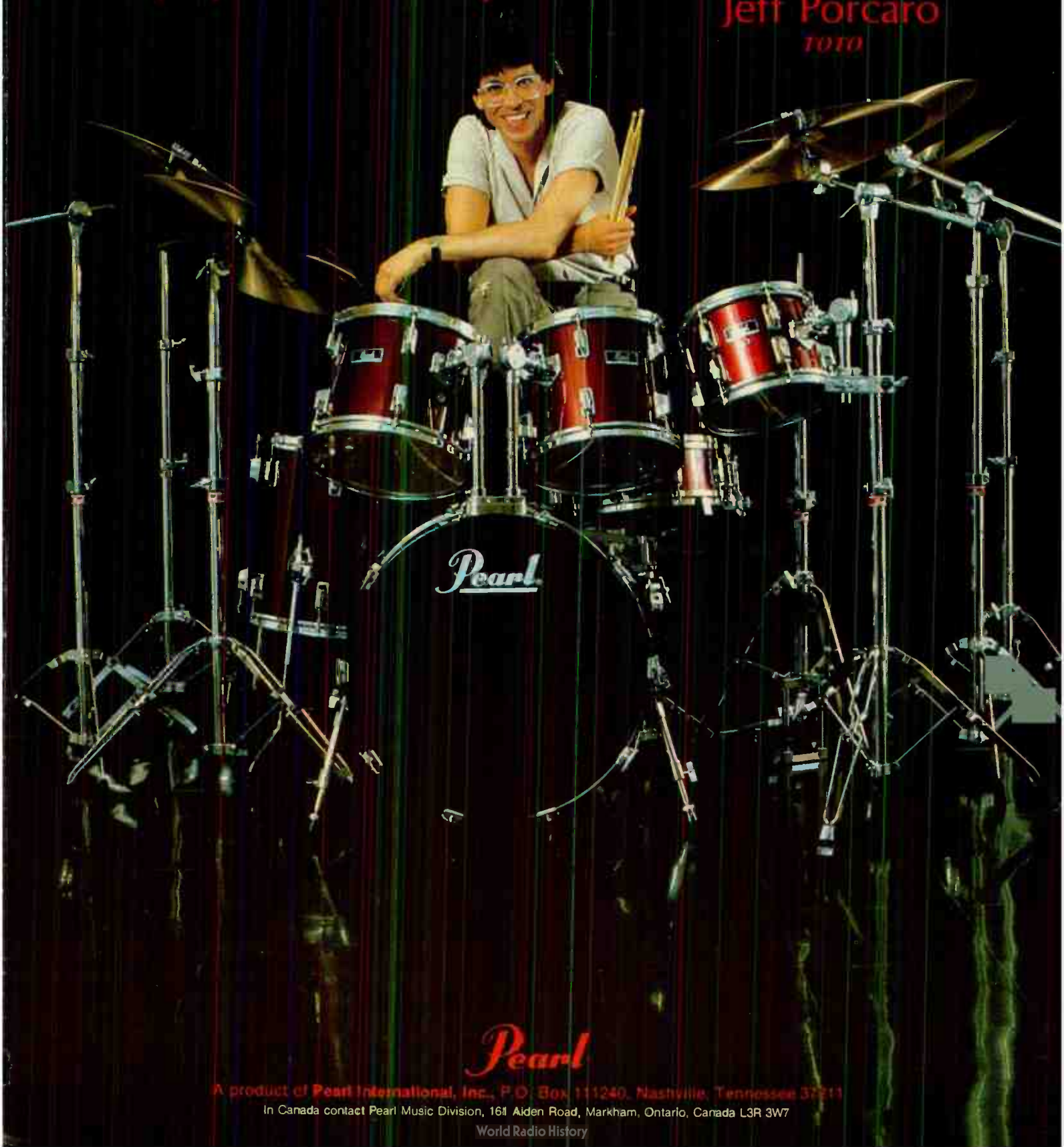
"We played a lot of theaters, and it was usually billed as a concert, so people often didn't get up to dance because they weren't sure it was proper. But they were so excited about us in Malawi we'd have to rent the stadium if we played there again! We played for a couple of bona fide dances, at the ambassadors' homes, at the university in Swaziland.... We're doing that here in the States, too. We played for a dance at Bard College before going to Africa that turned out really great, and we expect to do more. As I say, this is music you can dance to or listen to, and I'm not afraid to bill it as a dance group. It was a reggae festival at Bard, and it worked out well considering we're not the most authentic reggae group—we do play funk, and some 'outside' stuff. I'd been accustomed to, you know, you play your solos, you don't even look, you bow and that's it. It's a real challenge for me to relate more to the audience, to get into visual, not just musical, interaction, even when I'm not playing.

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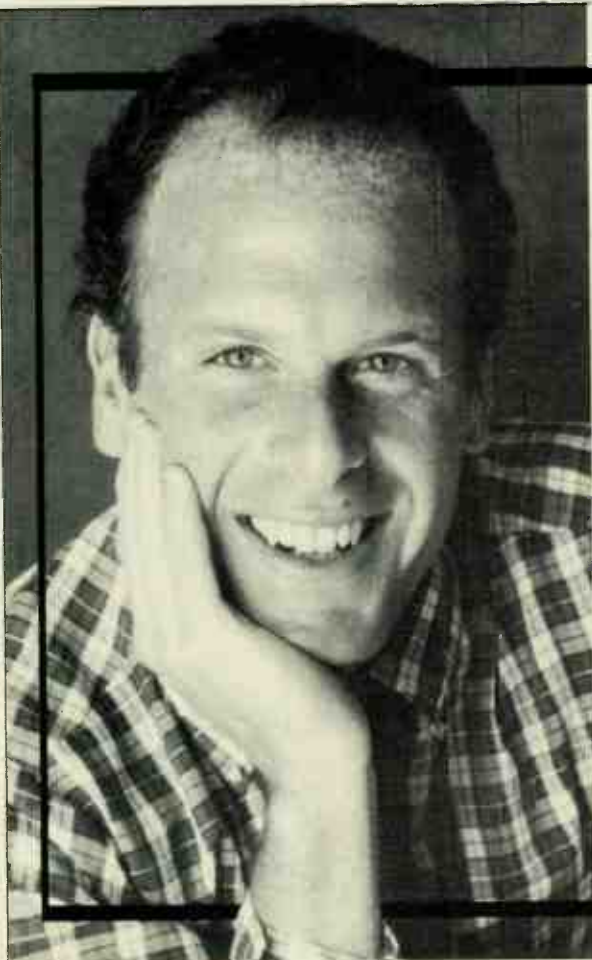
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into what we've been doing and of course we have the reggae numbers, but we are open to all sorts of things in the future, as long as it's danceable. As long as it's about moving, I'm into it. We may even create some rhythms ourselves, that's open too."

Lake embodies without strain two movements in contemporary jazz. One is the expansive motion, the visionary search for greater freedoms and expanded tonalities. The other is the "return to the roots" toward basic forms, to the dance, where melody is simple and rhythm is compelling and insubordinate to formal construction. Lake has, in a manner of speaking, "returned to where he started," to playing dance music, but only after passing through a sequence of avant-garde mysteries which he has, in one way or another, brought with him. As a soloist with Jump Up, Lake will take risks, play things that have never been played, come up with sounds that are really different, then incorporate them into a musical structure we all can understand. The wobbly start was exceptionally brief, and the concept seems to be working. A music that can be recognized in Africa and danced to in Manhattan must have made the journey at least once before. History is a nightmare from which we are trying to awaken, and the moments of wakefulness have almost always been accompanied by music. **M**



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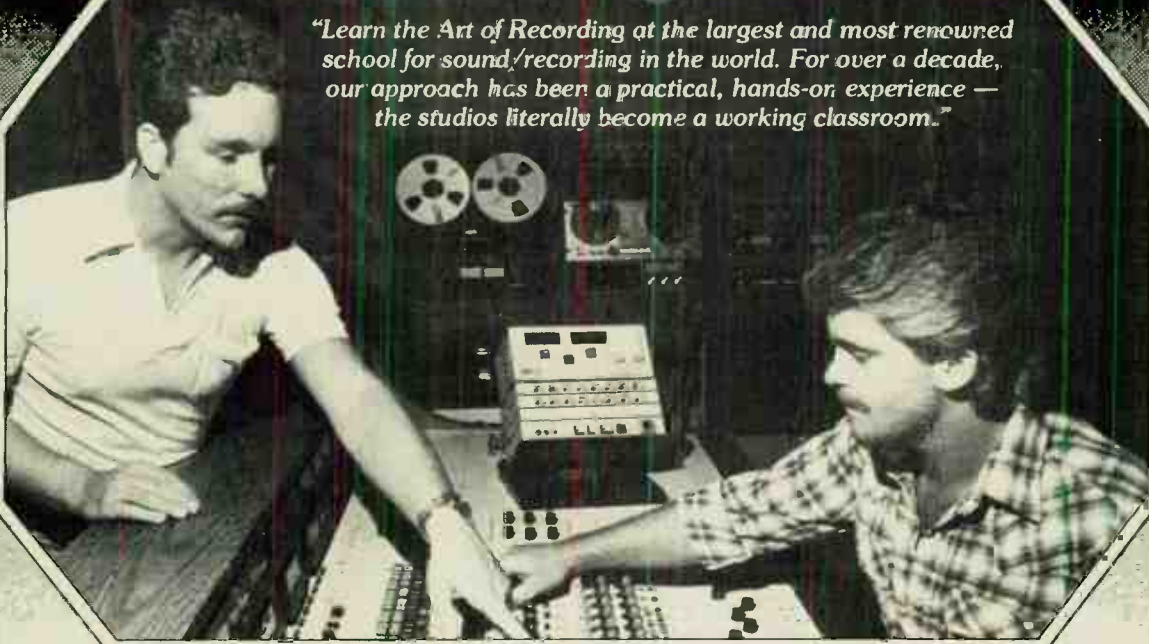
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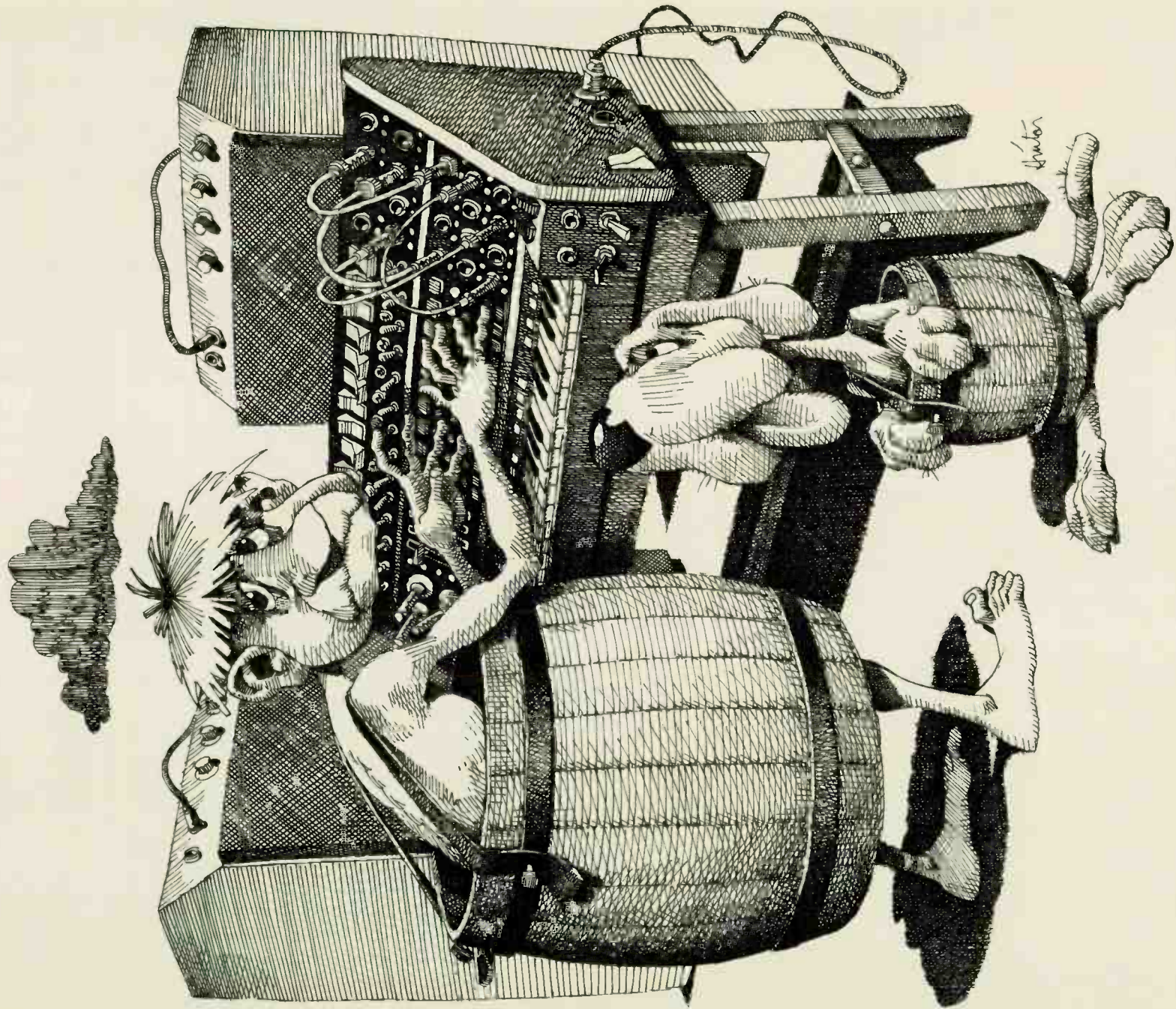
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## DOOBIE BROTHERS

The Doobie Brothers are one of the last great AM radio bands, one of the last rock groups to concentrate primarily on hit singles. Now that AM radio is largely conceding the pop music field to FM radio and cable TV, an era is ending. The Doobie Brothers are ending too.

Welded together twelve years ago as the favorite bar band of the Hell's Angels around Santa Cruz, the Doobies softened and crumbled under the pressures of corporate rock. When they assembled early this year to make a new Doobie Brothers record, they acted like independent singer/songwriters who each expected the others to act like session musicians. So they formalized this reality by disbanding the group and pursuing solo projects. Still they couldn't resist one last summer-long farewell tour.

Guitarist Pat Simmons was the only original Doobie Brother left in the eight-man lineup onstage. It was not the best Doobie Brothers concert nor was it the best Doobie Brothers cast,

### Doobie Brothers

but the band churned out their incredible string of hits with acceptable accuracy. All in all, it was a sloppy but affectionate good-bye kiss.

With fourteen different members in a dozen years, the Doobie Brothers have turned over personnel as thoroughly as the New York Yankees. Though the name has remained the same, the Doobie Brothers have actually been three different bands with three different leaders and three different sounds. The original quartet was led by Tom Johnston, whose grainy soul voice and choppy R&B guitar made songs like "Listen To The Music" and "China Grove" irresistible dance singles.

Touring ulcers sidelined Johnston in 1975, and Simmons assumed leadership. With the addition of Steely Dan cohorts Jeffrey "Skunk" Baxter and Michael McDonald, the Doobies shifted from bar basics to more eclectic, progressive rock.

McDonald's growing skills as a blue-eyed soul singer/songwriter produced a new string of hits from 1978's *Minute By Minute*. Then original

drummer John Hartman, longtime bassist Tiran Porter and Baxter left and a new cast including Elvis Costello alumnus John McFee and Cornelius Bumpus lit up the scoreboard with 1980's *One Step Closer*.

The earliest and mid-period songs fared poorly on the farewell tour. Neither McFee nor Simmons could compensate for Baxter's absence, no matter how many solos they took. The newest songs fared the best, naturally. McDonald's mid-tempo melodies were strengthened by chunky rhythms from the three percussionists.

The Doobies also played the first singles from the debut solo albums by Simmons and McDonald. Simmons's "Out On The Streets" was competent but uninspiring hard pop; McDonald's "I Keep Forgetting" featured his grainy soulful voice on a great melodic hook reminiscent of "What A Fool Believes." Meanwhile offstage, Baxter has become a busy producer on records by Nils Lofgren, Carl Wilson, Billy & the Beaters and others. Johnston, the first and foremost Doobie Brother, is still hunting—after two unconvincing solo albums—for that old bar band magic.

— Geoffrey Himes

## GOLDEN PALOMINOS

Given the personnel, you might call the Golden Palominos the first no-wave supergroup—especially considering how seminal its membership has been to the emergence of such *au courant* notions as the punk-funk, art-damaged pop and free jazz/funk fusion. I mean these guys come loaded with avant-garde credentials, y'know? And in case you don't: drummer and band organizer Anton Fier pounded skins for the original Lounge Lizards, gonzo guitarist Arto Lindsay also hatched with the first batch of Lizards but more recently led the late, and in some cultish quarters, lamented (and demented) trio, DNA. Jamaaladeen Tacuma you should know by now as Ornette Coleman's nimble lead bassist while Bill Laswell, of course, plucks mucho slippery-bottom in the eclectic, chimerical col-

lective Material. Add to this cast of moonlighting punkfunkateers SoHo percussionist David Moss and post-loft saxophonist John Zorn and you've got a jam session—making its second appearance, in Joe Papp's New Jazz At The Public series.

To discuss the Palominos is to take into equal consideration their wacko sense of both the musical and the theatrical. Fashion, slapstick and a respective range of functional gimmickry were as much a part of their performance as the fits and starts of discordant funk they rammed against jagged freedom-swing head arrangements. Taking the two bassists as an example, Tacuma hit wearing a natty iridescent green suit and his beloved 5-string Steinberger; Laswell, on the other hand, sported his usual Bowery-bum tailoring and an 8-string Fender slide bass. In counterpoint, the former contributed propulsive pointillisms that slithered around clichéd notions of syncopation with harmologic eccentricity, while the latter provided chunky, connect-the-dot wanwah figures and banshee slide noises. Between the drummers, things were even wilder: a huge Ivy League frat-type, Moss mounted himself behind one of the more outrageous multiple percussion—nay, multiple instrumentation—kits seen since Sonny Greer's early days with Ellington. Among his toys were standard traps draped with tinsel, ribbons and balloons, cymbals crushed into U-shapes, tourist model steel drums, a bass fiddle bow (for the balloons, natch), a slide trombone and some sort of homemade Vocoder unit he used to garble monologues you'd expect maybe an asphyxiating Shakespearean bit player to spit out. Poker-faced Fier played straight man to Moss's mad one-man junk band experiments by laying down a solid backbeat Charlie Watts style. As for reedman Zorn, when not legitimately doubling on alto and soprano (and blowing neat freeboppish curlicues) he rather ridiculously applied himself to such fractured, Joseph Jarman-inspired (or perhaps Harpo Marx-inspired, who knows?) inventions as



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE



underwater kazoo and one-third a clarinet—with surprising musicality. One gut-busting highlight was his masterful, multi-instrumental parody of both Kansas City swing-style sax breaks and Art Ensemble-mannered carry routine (kinda like a takeoff on a takeoff if you can get to that).

As the band's ostensible "front-man" and "lead vocalist," Lindsay brought doubtful charisma to the task, jittering about the stage like a wounded chicken and screeching these gawdawfully nerdy yelps and yodels that strangely enough made me think of James Brown trapped in Don Knotts's body. This is a cult idol? As for Arto's guitar playing, it ain't so regular neither: the man doesn't so much stroke clean chops out of his black-and-bruised 12-string as scrape and strangle it into disrhythmic atonality.

If all this ingenious lunacy makes the Palominos sound halfway between a vaudeville act and a hell-for-leather blowing session, it should. These guys, I guess, figure they can play music anywhere and a good laugh ain't so easy to come by these days. I left the Public a little schizzy myself: the nutcase in me most definitely had had his fun but the, ahem, musical aesthete, however, left unsettled and unsatisfied and probably wouldn't have minded a few more cogent expositions from Zorn and Tacuma especially. — *Gregory Ironman Tate*

## RICHARD HELL

During New York City's early punk era, Richard Hell & the Voidoids were extremists bobbing on a sea of originals. Hell's agonized vocals whined his anthemic refrain, "I belong to the Blank Generation," and bore little resemblance to the witty conciseness of such CBGB's stable-mates as Blondie, Talking Heads or the Ramones. Assisted by Robert Quine and Ivan Julian's jarring, dissonant twin guitar leads and Mark Bell's (now Marky Ramone) undisciplined rat-a-tat drum beat, Hell pushed the studied alienation of his former Television teammate, Tom Verlaine, to an authentically desperate overload.

In the seemingly effortless manner of the creative archetype who teeters between genius and madness, Hell evolved the style to watch, the jangled, street-wise sound to emulate. Yet until he released the *Destiny Street* album this summer, Richard Hell had eroded to merely another "what-happened-to" face. What *had* happened was that Hell—whose spiked haircut and torn-up clothes were applied to the much better known Sex Pistols—confused his garbagemusic self-doubt with destructive subterranean reality. In other words, he was hooked on drugs for several years, surfacing occasionally to act as a pouty star in Lower East Side movies, or release a few crisp, controlled singles for the European market, including "The Kid With The Replaceable Head."

Currently free from any unhealthy dependencies, Hell pursues live out-

ings with the joyous freedom of a soul returned to the land of the living. Hell's lackluster audience at the Bottom Line was far from his ideal milieu of sleepless, densely-packed, sweat-caked bodies. It is therefore remarkable that his abbreviated, encore-less set was neither perfunctory nor detached. Hell has eschewed the standard punk litany of complaints for more reflective (though no less incisive) evocations of his urban landscape. Never has he come closer to sharing the lost-child appeal of Verlaine's vocals as Hell applied bends and whispers to his naturally nasal singing.

In fact, Hell is now sufficiently comfortable with himself to share his surprisingly diverse musical roots with his audiences, from the obscure Kinks rave up "You Gotta Move" to a straightforward reading of Bob Dylan's tender-hearted ballad, "Going Going Gone." Hell has learned to subsume

### Richard Hell



EBET ROBERTS

the harshness that once overwhelmed him into a storyteller's identity. His new direction blends equal parts jovial schoolteacher and mixed-up student who keeps sticking his finger into an open socket.

If Robert Quine's distinctive chiming rhythms were missing from Hell's performance, they were enthusiastically compensated for by Ivan Julian's frantic spins. Accurately described by *Destiny Street's* producer Alan Betrock as "a cross between Prince and Jimi Hendrix," the diminutive Julian cascaded static throughout Hell's martial opener, "Lowest Common Denominator," and offered a fierce, feedbacking crescendo to the anti-romantic 1977-vintage "Love Comes In Spurts."

Given the Bottom Line's inescapable aloofness, Hell wisely stuck to the sprightlier songs in his repertoire, skewing his vocals to contrast with the staccato beat of "Kid With The Replaceable Head" and rushing through "Blank Generation" as if it were something to get over with quickly. And perhaps the brightest indication for Hell's future is precisely that he has traded in an obsessive generational enclosure for an unstrained individual vision. — *Toby Goldstein*

## BONNIE HAYES AND THE WILD COMBO

The first time I caught Bonnie Hayes & the Wild Combo (then called the Punts) was at Larry Blake's Rathskellar, a Berkeley musicians' hang-out that usually specialized in blues, R&B and salsa. What was this quartet of young, white new wavers doing on-stage there? They were weaving out an impromptu, energetic but faithful rendition of Stevie Wonder's "Signed, Sealed And Delivered," that's what.

This sort of versatility and command of various musical styles is but one element that sets Bonnie & the Wild Combo apart from the multitude of post-punk groups. (I've also seen them do justice to Huey Piano Smith's "Don't You Just Know It.") A glance at the individual members' backgrounds and musical personalities is a strong indicator that this is not just another female-fronted new wave outfit. Onstage Bonnie Hayes ssexys without posing or pouting; she's cute without being overly coy. Besides singing, dancing and writing virtually all of the group's originals, Hayes, twenty-seven, is an accomplished keyboard player; she still holds down a day job as a piano and voice teacher and is possibly the most talented female musician I've encountered in any pop/new wave band. Bonnie's younger brother, Kevin Hayes, is the group's drummer (brother Chris, a former Punt, now plays with Huey Lewis & the News) and provides a strong R&B backbeat. Likewise, a touch of fusion can occasionally be detected in Paul Davis's guitar playing, a holdover from his tenure in Merle Saunders's band. Bassist Hank Maninger gives the group a solid kick in the butt, both musically and visually.

"My first love was funk," Hayes points out; "Jr. Walker, James Brown, Little Stevie Wonder.... We all played that first. So in a lot of ways we have a

lot of that influence that the other bands don't have. That's why it makes me crazy when people talk about the 60s 'girl groups.' I'm so tired of hearing that. I never listened to girl groups; they were always my least favorite thing."

To celebrate the June release of their debut album on Slash, *Good Clean Fun*, the Wild Combo headlined a series of dates in and around their home base of San Francisco, beginning at the Old Waldorf. Opening with one of the LP's hottest numbers, "Inside Doubt," the band utilized their collective talents throughout the set to show off the songs rather than their chops. Although the pace slowed down briefly for ballads like "Coverage," the momentum and tension the Combo created never subsided—from the blues break that closed the dissonant "Dum Fun" to "Raylene," with its salsa piano figure and mambo bass line played against Kevin's funk backbeat. The set's centerpiece was "Shelley's Boyfriend," the Punts' catchy independent single that led to their Slash contract. Most impressive, though, was the congenial atmosphere that came from the band as much as from the music.

Hayes and the boys closed the show with the Isley Brothers-by-way-of-the Human Beinz garage classic, "Nobody But Me." Unlike most new wave 60s covers, the Combo's version breathed new life into the oldie instead of beating it to death. After singing lines like "Nobody can do the shing-a-ling like I do / Nobody can do the skate like I do," etc., Bonnie more than met the claims of the lyrics with a medley of dance steps recalling the golden days of the Ikettes and Layda Edmund, Jr. (remember *Hullabaloo?*). For their encore, Hayes and company pounded out a rendition of "Wild Thing" that was both humorous and riveting—as any homage to the Troggs should be.

Wild Combo, I think you move me. — *Dan Forte*

### Bonnie Hayes



F. STOF PITZGERALD

**A**lmost twenty years ago, the Beatles wanted only to hold your hand, but the dB's, Bongos and Individuals seek our hearts and minds as well. Drawing upon the cumulative history of pop music, these bands are trying to prove they too can reconcile rock's warring factions: experimentation and accessibility. This pop trinity has even become associated with the town some are calling the "new Liverpool." Hoboken, lodged in New Jersey directly across the Hudson River from Manhattan and known primarily as Frank Sinatra's birthplace, has become the spiritual home for this new breed of rock 'n' roll.

They represent the fourth wave of New York pop, descended in a straight line from 50s Phil Spector through 60s Velvet Underground and beyond the mid-70s renaissance of the Dolls, Talking Heads, Blondie and the Ramones.

# FOURTH WAVE POP FROM HOBOKEN

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**dB's, BONGOS, INDIVIDUALS**



Yet most of them originally emigrated from places like Winston-Salem, Tampa or Hoboken. The dB's, the Bongos and the Individuals all aspire to Manhattan's avant legacy, though all three essay a neo-romantic brand of pop that's more at home in the suburbs than on the streets.

All three of these nouveaux pop groups were weaned on the three-minute universes of the mid-60s mainstream. The dB's lean more towards melody than the other two, often squeezing chunks of it in between shifting, shimmering rhythm changes. The Bongos are the most stripped down, subordinating their streamlined guitar riffs to a feverishly jumpy, terse backbeat—half Eno, half Monkees. The Individuals stretch out their songs to allow for spare, purely percussive interludes in the jamming manner of bands like Television or the Doors. Each group is well aware of the art in

DEBORAH FEINGOLD



*The Bongos: (l. to r.) Richard Barone, James Mastro, Rob Norris and Frank Giannini.*

pop, sometimes too self-consciously so. All are die-hard romantics, from the sardonicism of the dB's' "Amplifier" to the exhilaration of the Indies' "Dancing w/My 80 Wives" and the Bongos' cover of T. Rex's "Mambo Sun."

"Pop is the language we grew up with," says the Bongos' Richard Barone. "We listen to all kinds of pop. From Frank Sinatra to Throbbing Gristle."

"We were real influenced by the 'no wave' thing," stresses the Individuals' Glenn Morrow, pointing out his own band's commitment to experimentation within the pop format.

"I find the New York avant-garde influence very important to my own musical development," explains Janet Wygal, the pretty blonde bassist for the Individuals. "It seems to me in everything I do I try to bridge the gap between two apparently polarized things. I know I could never be in a band like DNA. I like them, but I don't have the patience for something that isn't very rewarding in terms of positive feedback."

Indeed, much of the tension that makes these bands work comes from just that dichotomy, between pleasing their own inquiring intellects and the mass audience's "Saturday night" urge. Others would echo dB's guitarist Peter Holsapple's own assertion the groups are trapped making "smart music for stupid people."

All three groups have worked their way up through a fragmented N.Y. club scene, experiencing a decline in the excitement and discovery of the original 70s punk explosion. While violently abrasive no wave musicians like James Chance and Lydia Lunch got the media recognition, the Bongos, dB's and Individuals were polishing their craft—solid, formally structured pop songs, with nods to artists like John Lennon, Lou Reed, Alex Chilton, Tom Verlaine, David Byrne and Brian Wilson, who all tried to ground their twisted visions in populist music. The three groups updated the classic 60s legacy with wide-eyed belief tempered by experience.

The three bands have emerged lately as front-runners in critical acclaim as the city's best unsigned groups with the recent release of independent label debuts by the Bongos and Individuals and the second LP by the dB's. The dB's, who include guitarist/songwriters Chris Stamey and Peter Holsapple, along with bassist Gene Holder and drummer Will Rigby, are the veterans of the trio. Winston-Salem natives Stamey and Holsapple first played together in a North Carolina junior high school almost fifteen years ago. The Bongos, with Tampa-born leader Richard Barone, bassist Rob Norris, guitarist James Mastro and drummer Frank Giannini, are three years old, about the same age as the Individuals—singer/guitarist/composer Glenn Morrow, bassist/composer Janet Wygal, her brother Doug on drums and Jon Klages, who also writes, on lead guitar.

**Trapped making smart pop for stupid people; the dB's (l. to r.) Chris Stamey, Gene Holder, Peter Holsapple and Will Rigby.**



"I like being associated with those other bands and the Hoboken scene," adds Morrow, "because it's real easy for the media to get a handle on—which is good for business... although that might seem crass. But we're not really packaged like a lot of bands are. Maybe we should be, but our basic rule is, whatever you wanna do. It sorta fits. After all, we're the Individuals."

"From the very beginning, we decided we wanted to be natural and not worry about a lot of pretense," Bongo Barone seconds Morrow's observation. "We try to use our influences as a vocabulary to express our own ideas. Hopefully we will never stand to represent a single style, image or musical formula. Our only goal is to continue to express ourselves instinctively."

Which might just be the dB's, Bongos and Individuals' biggest common problem in making their pop popular—that down-to-earth, everyday-people stance, their lack of pretense and ultimately, any clearly defined identity except what's expressed in the grooves and in performance. Unfortunately, one can't imagine today's kid running out and buying a guitar after seeing any of 'em, like Bongo Richard Barone did when he first caught the Beatles on the *Ed Sullivan Show* as a precocious seven-year-old. But Barone doesn't think he was born too late. "We feel it's the right time for us," the twenty-four-year-old says in an unlikely high-pitched voice, which seems perfectly natural for his jangling, trebly instapop. "We can now use those old influences to make better music than we could have fifteen years ago. We're probably smarter, too. Those bands were dumb. They couldn't even manage themselves. They lost all their money. I think we can do a lot more now. We're lucky to be around at this time."

The Hoboken hitmakers are interconnected in a number of different ways. Gene Holder, dB's bassist, produces the Individuals. Bongo Barone and Individual Morrow originally started out in a Hoboken-based band named a. Indies' guitarist Jon Klages and dB Holsapple share a pad in that same Jersey port across the Hudson where *On the Waterfront* was filmed. All three bands are represented by the same booking agent, who doubles as manager for the dB's. Two of them—the dB's and the Bongos—played in the disastrous "Start Swimming" concert of five New York bands at London's Rainbow Theater two years ago. Members of the dB's and Individuals have worked for the *New York Rocker*, while all three were heavily influenced by both the Velvet Underground and Big Star, the Memphis pop band headed by Alex Chilton. Each has become associated with playing Hoboken's leading (and only) rock club, Maxwell's, and none of them has signed to a major record company despite continued glowing notices.

"We've had so much good press, it's killed us," sighs dB Peter Holsapple, one half of that band's songwriting combo. "We could afford some honest criticism. No one wants to read a press kit that's forty pages long and costs \$1.20 to mail. I do wish people would call us urbane and witty instead of quirky and eccentric, though. It makes us sound like Mr. Magoo. We're closer to Dorothy Parker's writing. She's very caustic, but you can't help but love her. I'd like to think we have that kind of nastiness in our songs."

"I believe we're a band that could have wide appeal outside the immediate metropolitan area," says Individual and Jersey-

LAURA LEVINE





LAURA LEVINE

**"Whatever you wanna do"; the Individuals: (l. to r.) Glenn Morrow, Doug Wygal, Jon Klages and Janet Wygal.**

ite Morrow, explaining his own conviction. "We've really gone down a storm in places like Greenville, South Carolina and Knoxville, Tennessee. To those kids, we were this really wild, crazy thing, where in New York, we're just not unusual enough to break through the complacency."

"We feel we should be at a different level than slugging it out in the same clubs over and over," says dB coleader Stamey about his group's recent hiatus from live performing. "We think what we do applies better to larger halls and we should concentrate on being more successful and more efficient at it. Instead of trying to conquer this baby local underground circuit, we'd rather set our sights on the next record."

The dB's are in the middle of negotiations with Albert Grossman's Bearsville Records for a label deal, while the Bongos are dickering with RCA, among others. The dB's have never put out an album in America; their two previous LPs, *Stands For Decibels* and *Repercussions*, were released as Albion U.K. imports. The Bongos' *Drums Along The Hudson* came out on PVC, Jem's stateside label, compiled from a series of singles on London-based Fetish Records. The Individuals just put out their own debut, *Fields*, on tiny local indie, Plexus. All three blame their current difficulties in being inked to the preponderance of bands from the U.K. getting stateside deals. "All those English groups," says dB Stamey ruefully. "It might seem like a racist thing to say, but it's true. What does Duran Duran have to do with America? It's a mystery to me."

"People get recording contracts every day," moans bandmate Holsapple. "I know, because I work in a record store. I still believe in the old myth where a band gets signed after a great gig and immediately begins making a record."

"I never thought anybody in England came close to Television or the Velvet Underground," continues Stamey. "I don't think the Beatles had nearly the social impact of say, Darlene Love. To me, the Beatles were selling stardom while Phil Spector was selling little worlds."

"I think there are a lot of English groups that are being formed strictly to get American contracts," says Barone. "I'm not going to name names like Flock of Seagulls, but some

bands have used the fact that they're from Britain to make it over here. They certainly don't have a following over there.

"We never get discouraged because we don't have any expectations. We take things one step at a time. The bands we've most liked over the years were never on major labels, either. Like Big Star or the Velvets. Our aim is to make really good records and if RCA wants to distribute them, great."

Members of all three groups are similarly committed to the long road that lies ahead, even though most are already in their mid- to late twenties. "There's definitely a way to make a living outside the mainstream, but I'm not going to change the way I do things. If you just do what you're doing, you've got to hope it'll work."

These products of the baby-boom generation are the survivors of the former age of plenty. Work hard enough, they were told, and you can do anything you want. But no one prepared them for the vagaries of the current pop music crap-shoot. "We want to continue writing songs and be able to enjoy doing so," says Holsapple. "That's more important than any kind of record deal or even a live gig. I used to think we were the 'dB-all' and end-all, but I don't think any group or thing can ever be. I sometimes wonder if I take the dB's too seriously. But it is serious. I want this to be my career. I can't do much of anything else."

Glenn Morrow points to someone like the Waitresses' Chris Butler as a role model. "He's just living like your average Joe. He hasn't made a lot of money. But I see what it took him to get where he is now, and I consider him pretty successful. It's taken a lot of hard work. We don't have any illusions about making it rich. The bottom line for me is getting some sort of emotion across. Connecting with the audience. You can do that in a literal way or a Dadaistic way. When you leave something open, musically or lyrically, it might confuse someone and maybe make them feel something they never felt before or make them think of something they never thought of. That's more important to me than writing dancefloor hits."

These are not groups that were formed to make a quick buck. The dB's have been together off and on since 1967, when Stamey and Holsapple were in a band called Oz Monolith. Add in fellow North Carolinians Gene Holder and Will Rigby, along with sometime member Mitch Easter, and the group forms a tight-knit outfit. All three bands believe in a fraternal community of like-minded musicians, an idealistic rarity in these competitive times.

"I coined the word 'combo-raderie' to describe that," says Holsapple. "The stuff the Individuals and the Bongos do appeals to me as a fan and as a record buyer. The Individuals are the hardest and grittiest. They have a Bruce Springsteen feel to me. They have a great live show and their songs are like anthems. The Bongos are just full of energy. They tear through their sets very fast. We're all working toward making an honest living playing the music we want to play."

"I feel like the godfather of the scene," laughs twenty-seven-year-old Stamey, who came to New York five years ago as a braces-clad bassist for Alex Chilton. "It's really good to be supported in helping you compose something you can really hear. By Glenn or Richard or, of course, the dB's."

"Last year, I was feeling real depressed and suicidal," recounts Holsapple about his frustrations at the slow progress of the dB's. "And I received a fan letter from a guy who had heard that I was down. I didn't even know him, but he really made me believe that my songs meant something to him and that he would really be missing something if I didn't write any more. That really helped pull me out of it. I'd like to think the people that we mean something to, we mean a great deal to."

The dB's, the Bongos and the Individuals are all worth caring about, whether you're an aging pop romantic looking for old kicks or an impressionable teen feeling alienated from the Rush, Styx and .38 Specials of the world. These bands are not larger than life. They're real life. And real people. **M**



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# HEAD GAMES

## FOREIGNER'S PLATINUM CONFESSIONS

*Foreigner discovers it's not all that easy cranking out safe, sleek AOR pop, as an age-old struggle between raw spontaneity and tame perfection comes to a boil between Lou Gramm and Mick Jones.*

Dear Musician,

I can't believe you guys did this. I mean, Foreigner of all people! Wasn't Van Halen bad enough? What makes you think we want to hear about the concepts of a bunch of faceless corporate jerks content to crank out sterile, freeze-dried shlock 'n' roll—and then laugh all the way to the bank? These guys could care

answer any real questions, anyway.

Rock lives!  
Randy de Torquemada  
c/o *The Inquisition*  
Grenada, Spain

"We do it better than Foreigner!"

Joe Strummer  
*Clash American Tour, 1982*

"Foreigner albums are incredibly high quality... the actual motives behind the musicians... if you sit down and talk to these guys they're not assholes, they're good people. I suppose what's lacking is the depth."

Pete Townshend  
*Musician magazine*

"Things we do in the studio get condensed down and perfected so much that it can squeeze some of the life out of it. That's Mick's approach, but Lou and I don't always want that. We *should* be more daring and dangerous. But then we might not sell so many albums, and the record company and management would say, 'What's wrong with your success?' My answer to them would be that I'd be happier going with first takes, something vibrant. Something more *real*."

Rick Wills  
*Foreigner bassist, 1982*

Foreigner is a band in danger of gaining the whole world and losing its soul. This is not unusual for this type of band, you say, and I agree. What *is* unusual is the fact that they're aware of the problem. Even more amazing, they seem to care. In fact, they care enough to open themselves to the kind of merciless cross-examination that even critically favored bands shun like the plague. "So what," you ask. Aren't these guys just another bunch of corporate clones, cranking out AOR fodder for the great unwashed? Yes and no. Sure, their recycled art-rock licks and Bad Company/Free moves often sound trite and shallow. But when they come up with a cruncher like "Hot Blooded," a song that almost passes muster as a linear successor to "Honky Tonk Women" and "All Right Now," I begin to wonder. And when I hear a surging hunk of future funk like "Urgent" come roaring out of my radio like some renegade from the Alpha Centaurian R&B charts, I get really confused. How can they be so good

NEIL ZLOZOWER



Mick Jones: "I'll probably sing 'I'm Gonna Win' all the way to the bank."

less about the integrity of their music. Why should they? All they have to do is sit back and watch the money roll in. What's the point of interviewing a mindless juggernaut? They wouldn't have the guts to

"If Strummer and those guys ever start thinking they're so superior to a band like Foreigner, watch out!"

Lester Bangs, 1980





Lou Gramm: "I don't want to play it safe" and so bad at the same time?"

In any case, when a band that in some ways epitomizes the corporate rock ideal decides to make a clean breast of it, we almost have an obligation to listen. At the very least, their candor deserves our respect. Besides, I want to know what goes on behind the platinum curtain. Is it all strictly business, or do these guys, in their hearts, really agonize over their musical integrity? Do they agree that their music is sometimes calculated and contrived, their lyrics occasionally misogynistic? Their records sterilized, at times, by squeaky-clean production values, triple tracking and multiple overdubs?

Let's be realistic: these guys aren't *that* bad. Hell, even erudite *Village Voice* critic Robert Christgau admits that their music "... isn't as sodden as you might expect... I love rock 'n' roll so much that I catch myself getting off on 'Hot Blooded'..." (of course, Christgau goes on to slam them for their "woman-hating" lyrics). Here's one to ponder: if they're only in it for the money, why don't they just play it safe and keep on serving up refried versions of the same song like Journey, REO and Styx? Why the raw, almost demo quality production values on *Head Games*? Why the abrupt departure from their eminently bankable signature sound? Why screw around with a winning formula? And when *Head Games* proved to be their lowest selling

album to date, why, instead of scurrying back into the corporate fold and toeing the line like good boys, did they instead unleash *4*, an even more radical leap into the unknown, laced with Thomas Dolby's spacey synthesizer wash and avant-garde textures. And what about "Urgent"? From whence came this tidal wave of throbbing synths and churning guitars that punches its way into hyper-space courtesy of a scorching sax solo by, of all people, Junior Walker? Like I said, it

*"I don't think Mick's open to change. It's like due process; it's not even thought about. He just sees the songs finished that way, with that big sound."*—Lou Gramm

doesn't quite add up. Clones are supposed to just mechanically replicate themselves—not take risks and evolve, for heaven's sake.

When *Musician* first requested an interview with Foreigner, it was on the condition that it be a frank no-holds-barred conversation. The band graciously and courageously (some might say foolishly) accepted the challenge. Far from being a jaded, blasé musical juggler,

Foreigner proved to be deep in the throes of self-doubt and reappraisal, a band in transition, questioning its values, in search of its own soul—and far from united in their visions of where they should be headed. (As far as fractious dissension goes, they're easily a match for the Who in heat.)

The key players in our drama are vocalist Lou Gramm and guitarist Mick Jones. They are temperamental and musical opposites, and the ensuing dynamic tension is the source of both friction and strength. Gramm is young, impatient and achingly sincere. Onstage, his vocals are direct, full-tilt bursts of adolescent fury and frustration that make up in intensity and sincerity what they may lack in seasoning and depth. In the studio, he craves spontaneity and passion. Jones, on the other hand, is the cool, detached, veteran. His style is both authoritarian and precise, yet diplomatic. He is a perfectionist, obsessed with getting every detail just right—even if his mates feel he sometimes refines the final product to the point of sterility. Jones is clearly the chief architect of the Foreigner sound, and has no qualms about imposing his visions on the band.

Obviously, these guys both desperately need each other—and at the same time can drive each other a little crazy. Jones's compositional chops and sense of dynamics provide a structured vehicle for Gramm's instinctive rock 'n' roll street smarts. Conversely, without Gramm's directness and urgency, Jones's tendency to over-refine and play it safe could completely deaden an already partially compromised music. In any case, it's not necessary to like Foreigner or their music to appreciate the exceptional honesty and frustration in the following interviews.

Like many commercially successful

but critically unpopular bands, the members of Foreigner crave respect. The difference is, these guys realize that respect is something that has to be earned. They also sense that the real victory comes not from garnering laurels from their fans, their peers or even from us heartless typewriter-bangers in the media. It comes when you've earned the respect of that funny-looking bloke who stares back at you from the bathroom

mirror every morning

## LOU GRAMM

**MUSICIAN** *The other night in New Orleans, you headlined a bill of so-called "faceless" corporate rockers like Le Roux and Loverboy. Do you resent being lumped in with bands like that?*

**GRAMM:** I think they're fine players and vocalists, and I like some of their songs. But there's a certain amount of, uh...bullshit...that goes along with them. In fact, it's the same type of bullshit we've taken four years to try and reduce.

**MUSICIAN:** *And how would you define said "bullshit"?*

**GRAMM:** Being hams. Being more entertainers than musicians. You know, the tough rock 'n' roller with a smile on his face, like you don't really mean it. And that's not to put them down. I've caught their set a number of times and they're potentially a bear of a band.

**MUSICIAN:** *But you admit you've indulged in a bit of that yourselves?*

**GRAMM:** Yeah, like when I shout out "Hot Blooded" and the crowd answers. Sure, we do stuff like that sometimes, and that's okay. But Loverboy and a lot of those bands...let's just say you shouldn't lean on that stuff. A little bit of fun for the kids, but if you start doing it too much you'll...uh....

**MUSICIAN:** *Go blind? Just kidding.*

**GRAMM:** It becomes sort of...of...manipulative. It tarnishes your class a bit.

**MUSICIAN:** *Were you uncomfortable about your act being a little too contrived from the very beginning?*

**GRAMM:** No, I didn't mind it then. I thought that was the way every band had to be to make it here. We were young and naive. I figured we would grow out of all that. We did, but it took a long time. And we're not totally out of it yet, 'cause there's still a bit of hokeyness that goes on onstage.

**MUSICIAN:** *A lot of the criticism directed against you guys over the past few years boils down to this: your music is well crafted, it has intensity and some kick to it—but it's too calculated. It doesn't feel like it's coming from your souls. Do you feel there's any validity to that? Particularly in terms of your earlier work?*

**GRAMM:** Even if there were shreds of truth to that—which there probably were—it was because we were a new band. It wasn't the way they made it look in print, like we ran into the studio and said, "Well, we have no intention of being a real band, so let's just coldly rip everyone off by giving them a taste of all their favorite types of music."

**MUSICIAN:** *Maybe it wasn't intentional, but there was still a sense of there being nothing to latch onto. The songs didn't seem to be coming from your own expe-*

*rience. I hope I'm not going to insult you if I say this, but...you definitely have passion and intensity, and that touches something real in those kids, but you're not Van Morrison.*

**GRAMM:** Some of that stuff about the early songs...it's probably more on me

of us to deliver.

**MUSICIAN:** *I'll tell you, I always felt that the overdone synthesizer wash on "Waiting For A Girl Like You" ruined the song. But this time with Mick doubling on piano and less synth it began to work for me. The emotion came through much*

*"I suppose I may suppress ideas and expressions sometimes. But we've succeeded beyond our wildest dreams, and to do that we had to have a certain amount of discipline." —Mick Jones*

than anyone else. I hadn't been a singer that long, and I didn't know how to get the best out of a lyric. By the way, I am a bit insulted....

**MUSICIAN:** *About the Van Morrison thing? Look, even Van Morrison isn't Van Morrison nowadays. I didn't mean....*

**GRAMM:** No, I'm just...a...little insulted.

**MUSICIAN:** *You seem to link up with or mirror certain very real frustrations and passions in your audience. Where does all that come from?*

**GRAMM:** It's the frustration of trying to grab the moment. The system...everything moves too slow for me. I hear something, I grasp it, and I just have to get it out. I'm not an "angry young man"...I'm just a pacer (laughs).

**MUSICIAN:** *Where are you trying to take your singing now? Is there a clear direction?*

**GRAMM:** Yeah, there is. There's a sense of spontaneity and immediacy that I want to capture. Two weeks into this tour I knew I could bury anything I did on the new record, simply because I'm more familiar with the material. Now I'm more aware of when I'm peaking as far as intensity and feeling are concerned. I won't go for doing twenty takes to try and hit that note just perfectly—not at the expense of sincerity. I don't want to play it safe.

**MUSICIAN:** *I noticed that you had only two extra backup musicians behind the band in New Orleans, instead of the three you used earlier on the tour. The arrangements were a lot looser and sparer, and the overall sound and impact was vastly improved. The music could breathe....*

**GRAMM:** ...and it left a little more space for the vocals through that curtain of sound. Yeah, when we came back from Europe and began the last leg of the American tour, we dropped one person. Before that it was too safe sounding; we always had backups, everything covered. Now, with one less person, there's more spontaneity in it. It put more onus on all

more clearly.

**GRAMM:** Yeah, exactly. During rehearsal we always thought, "Well, let's add one more person just to make sure all the parts are covered." That's fine for a few songs, but then there's songs that don't need that extra part. So we wound up inventing parts, and consequently it became negative overkill. Now I can hear everything Dennis is doing, and I know Mick can. We were riffing back and forth, and it was...it was like a band again.

**MUSICIAN:** *One of the criticisms of bands like yours is that you always play it safe, you never take any risks, and that you play your songs in concert exactly like the records.*

**GRAMM:** Sure, we've been guilty of that.

**MUSICIAN:** *But in this case you were forced to take risks, and saw how it can revitalize your music.*

**GRAMM:** Yeah, but it's too bad that we had to find out the last...I mean, after 155 shows, we had to find out in the last 50.

**MUSICIAN:** *Better late than never. But let's take this one step further: Mick is obviously an extremely talented musician and songwriter, but seems to be temperamentally very different from you. I would guess that he's the one who wants to play it safe, who wants to hone everything down in the studio to perfection—or beyond—and who worries about all the parts being covered.*

**GRAMM:** He does. And I'm so totally the other way that we just don't...I mean, these are pretty basic concepts, aren't they? We can write and work together, but when we get in the studio, he is totally that way, and I'll be just as extreme in the other direction.

**MUSICIAN:** *As the musical director and the founder of the band, is he totally in charge?*

**GRAMM:** Yeah, it's up to him.

**MUSICIAN:** *Granted he has more experience and I'm sure you've learned a great deal from him; but is there a sense*



*of give and take—is your advice heeded?*

GRAMM: When I first joined the band, I had little or no experience. I absorbed a lot watching Mick and Ian, and probably some of the best producers in the business do Foreigner albums. I learned a lot. But I also learned things that I don't like. There's this whole process that's taken for granted, triple-tracking and overdubs. Why kill spontaneity with technology? Why bury a great performance by stacking three layers of the same thing on top of it?

MUSICIAN: *I'm sure that you realize that these are some of the same complaints your critics voice about the band. What do the rest of the guys say when you bring this up?*

GRAMM: This is... well, I mean... I don't want to get into....

MUSICIAN: *I'm not looking for you to get into some kind of a fight. Look, even bands like the Beatles and the Who had raging internal disagreements about their musical direction. It's natural. Besides, Rick agrees with you, and I think even Mick would admit that he sometimes overdoes things. But do you feel he's open to change, or is this the way it's got to be?*

GRAMM: I don't think he's open to

anything that came to the top of his head.

To me, that's one of the best solos he's ever done. But he doesn't do that often, much less let anyone else.

MUSICIAN: *If you were to sit down and speak with the other band members, and they asked your opinion about how the band could improve or grow, what would you say?*

GRAMM: Immediacy. Spontaneity. Actually, these are things we've sat around and talked about and agreed upon and been excited about. But then at a certain point it changes.

MUSICIAN: *Is there a fear that increased spontaneity might reduce your commercial appeal?*

GRAMM: It was never a fear for me or Rick. And I never felt it from Mick while we were playing. But when it actually comes to mixing—the final outcome of the song—certainly that fear is blown out of proportion.

MUSICIAN: *I've got to say, I didn't expect you to be so concerned about the authenticity of your music. You seem genuinely concerned about having something genuine to offer those kids.*

GRAMM: It really goes back to my time in bar bands. You were able to do anything

GRAMM: Yeah. I've been trying to get him a damned good song to sing on the last two albums so we could bump "Star Rider," but it... it's like hitting your head against a rock, you know? I'll betcha any Foreigner fan could name our entire live set in order, and that bugs me. There's no reason for that.

MUSICIAN: *How much did producer Mutt Lange have to do with the change in direction between Head Games and 4?*

GRAMM: He pushed us past what we thought our limits were. We like what *Head Games* said differently from *Double Vision*, but we wanted to go beyond that, and he pushed us even more radically.

MUSICIAN: *How would you define what you were aiming for on Head Games?*

GRAMM: Starting with the rhythm track, I'd say we wanted more recklessness. A lot more jagged edges. Not so squared off.

MUSICIAN: *Were you satisfied with the results?*

GRAMM: No, because we didn't spend enough time on the arrangements, to the point where we lost the spark of the original song. We wound up spending too much time mixing, I mean, I've got cassettes of the rough mixes that would bury *anything* on that album. Everything we honed down just right... and then it went *past* just right. And it wasn't just Mick. The more we worked on a song, the less interesting it became. We were all involved, so I'm not blaming anyone.

MUSICIAN: *Who was responsible for bringing in the synth brigade?*

GRAMM: That was basically Mick. When we stripped down to a four piece we left room for synthesizers or keyboards. Meaning, we rehearsed the basic track with them in mind.

MUSICIAN: *You mean all that synthesizer material was overdubbed afterwards?*

GRAMM: Oh, yeah. With the exception of a song or two. I think Bobby Mayo played that basic keyboard line in "Waiting"; yeah, that was on the basic track. Later, there were some things on that album that came out as a compromise. Personally, I went through hell with "Louann." I wrote that song, and I heard the end product differently than Mick. I mean, he helped me a great deal on that song to interpret my ideas. The verses and choruses were fine. I wanted the final product to be very stark—like on Beatle albums where you might hear lush songs followed by quite stark ones. I wanted just guitar, bass and drums, and just Mick and I singing harmony, and that would be it. So we could walk onstage and perform it as a four-piece. But then came the overdubbed guitars and overdubbed voices, and it just....

MUSICIAN: *Do you think he'll ever be open to doing something that loose, or is he too much of a perfectionist?*



With one less musician onstage, Foreigner discovered more edge and emotion.

change. It's like due process; it's not even thought about. He just sees the songs finished that way, with that big sound.

MUSICIAN: *Have you been able to get him to loosen up at all?*

GRAMM: The things that I have been able to get him to see my way are usually in his guitar playing, of all things. Like the solo on "Juke Box Hero," for example, was very structured and too tame for the song. Between Rick and me, at some strange hour of the morning, we got him out of his head and psyched enough to go in and just start flailing chords, and playing

then—change your set, turn this song upside down. Why do we have to open with "Long, Long Way From Home" for four years? Why "Star Rider" right in the middle, for four tours, y'know?

MUSICIAN: *That was the only bum song in the set the other night, by the way. Everything just dropped dead at that point. A real "Stairway To Noubere."*

GRAMM: Really? You know who knows that? *Everybody.*

MUSICIAN: *So why is it still in the set?*

GRAMM: Take a guess.

MUSICIAN: *One of Mick's ideas?*

GRAMM: Once again, I don't...when he reads this article, I don't want to stir up trouble, because he and I have had these discussions. It's frustrating, because it's not the difference between a good song and a bad song; it's a question of putting the song within the context of Foreigner... and I'm part of Foreigner, too!

MUSICIAN: *I'd guess something as dramatically effective as "Urgent" must have satisfied everybody, no?*

GRAMM: Yeah. It's funny, but that's an R&B song as far as I'm concerned. Mick and I both have an affection for that type of material. We often sit around his piano just ripping out things like "Ain't That Peculiar" and "Chain Of Fools."

MUSICIAN: *Was "Urgent" composed that way, on the piano?*

GRAMM: The verses were, yeah. The guitar riffs were just something we came up with while fooling around with the echo delay. The song went through a lot of changes; there was even a time when it was on the beat, and it didn't rock out like it now does on the one and three.

MUSICIAN: *More like "Night Life"?*

GRAMM: Something like that. There were also too many words at one point, so we literally cut half of them out and shifted the emphasis to the two and four and suddenly, boy, it was just right.

MUSICIAN: *Was Junior Walker brought in to augment the R&B mood?*

GRAMM: Actually, we were just sitting around in the studio thinking that it needed a Junior Walker kind of sax. Within a minute we were going through the *Village Voice*, and here was the man himself playing that very night at the Lone Star. I was wiped out from singing, but Mick went right down and brought him back to the studio after the late show.

MUSICIAN: *You're kidding! The same night?*

GRAMM: Well, to listen to the tracks, yeah. He brought his whole band down and really dug the stuff. He didn't have a clue who the band was... probably better that way (laughs).

MUSICIAN: *There must have been some instances where you convinced Mick or your producer to change their strategy....*

GRAMM: Of course. "I'm Gonna Win" on 4 for instance, started out as an R&B song Mick wrote on the piano—very uptempo, like something the Temptations would do. That was a bit too slick, so Mutt Lange's idea was to make it heavier, with a dominating guitar solo. Great idea, but it came out so square, with four guitarists playing the same riff. Like a funeral march. I couldn't sing to it, so I asked them to please exclude those extra guitar tracks, and for Mick to just go in and play that line on one guitar, off the top of his head. He brought in that syncopation, and he liked it. And then I went out and ripped off a vocal. That was a case of him

just loosening up.

MUSICIAN: *What would you say were the main untapped strengths of this band?*

GRAMM: Probably the rhythm section. That and Mick's guitar playing. And...I don't know, they always seem to come up with good production, except...I just wish certain things weren't blown so out of proportion. We should be able to make well-rounded albums and not be afraid to progress and not correlate com-

might actually be of use to somebody. On the last album, "I'm Gonna Win" was meant to stir something up in people if they're feeling despondent. I sing it to myself when I feel that way...some people might say, "Yeah, all the way to the bank" (laughs). And I probably will.

MUSICIAN: *Talking with the other members of your band, I get the distinct impression that they're intimidated by you. Rick and Lou both seem to feel that*



Mick Jones contemplates the rigors of life on the road, Lear jet style.

merciality with overkill.

MUSICIAN: *Fair enough. If a producer asked you what your ideal production values were, how would you answer?*

GRAMM: I would point to a certain era of Beatles albums: *Rubber Soul*, *Beatles '65*, that kind of blend; where the voices had their own identity, where you could pick out who was singing what, instead of just that massive Mormon Tabernacle Choir approach. I'd like that kind of vocal blend combined with the power of AC/DC, or early Free. It would be very sparse and yet very complete, with minimal instrumentation.

MUSICIAN: *I've been really surprised and impressed by your candor. I didn't expect that at all, and I suspect our readers didn't either. You got guts, kid.*

GRAMM: It was a lot of fun. Actually, I was waiting for somebody to ask me these questions.

## MICK JONES

MUSICIAN: *As the chief songwriter for one of the most successful bands in the world, do you feel a sense of responsibility to your audience when you sit down to write?*

JONES: I do, at times, even though some of the lyrics may not be what you might call educational. I try on each album to slip on one song with a serious tone that

*you're an unbending perfectionist who tends to overproduce and play things safe. How would you respond to that?*

JONES: I suppose I can be intimidating in circumstances, depending on the personality I'm involved with. I may seem to suppress ideas and expressions sometimes...I felt that's what was happening a bit earlier on. But I think we've completed a cycle with 4, and with the next album a lot of things will change. Look, we've reached a plateau that we never hoped for in our wildest dreams. And in order to do that, we had to have a certain amount of discipline.

MUSICIAN: *True, but both of them seem to believe that there's too much discipline, and not enough emotional openness and risk-taking, and that you're not open to changing that.*

JONES: I'm aware of shortcomings in what I do, and I try and work on it. I think...I wish they would wonder what goes on in my head, too. I might not be perfectly sure of myself by any stretch of the imagination, although I sometimes come off that way. I think we've come a long way towards being more spontaneous. We've talked quite a bit about unrestricting ourselves in those areas.

MUSICIAN: *How do you work on something like that as a band?*

JONES: You sit down and batter each other's brains out! You talk about it and rip



each other to shreds. Personally, I'd like to see Lou's and my relationship grow. There was a point when there was a lot of resentment going around, and I became very disillusioned about the effort I'd put into it. I'd had an absolutely fanatical approach at one point, while at the same time constantly trying to think about everyone else, to give them the opportunity to emerge. And Lou did that very well; he made his presence clearly felt. MUSICIAN: *Was the rough feel on Head Games a result of seeing these things in yourself?*

JONES: To a certain extent, yes. I know I went out of my way to make some of my things rough...but there are certain things like tempo and urgency and immediacy in the rhythm section that I feel require absolute accuracy. Quite honestly, there were a few things on that album we didn't bring up to their full potential. For one thing, I was counting so desperately on a big contribution from Ian McDonald that didn't come.

MUSICIAN: *Many people assumed that Ian was too eccentric for a band like Foreigner and that he was squeezed out because he was a threat to the band's commerciality.*

JONES: The exact opposite is true. I was hoping that Ian would contribute his incredible versatility on keyboards, sax and flute to this band. Instead, he wanted to be a guitar player! Here I am writing these one-guitar songs, and the first thing he would do was pick up a guitar which really muddied things up. It got to be very frustrating, 'cause although he has some good ideas on the instrument, he's not a natural guitarist, in my opinion. And meanwhile, where were his main talents on piano and woodwinds?

MUSICIAN: *For a supposedly conservative band, there's a great deal of variation and stylistic evolution from one album to another in Foreigner.*

JONES: Until recently, I'd have said the contrary was true. In fact, we'd allowed some of our contemporaries to catch up with us. And the thing that I absolutely didn't want to do on 4 was to come out with an album that was going to sound like four or five other bands that had already been heavily influenced by us. I was aiming for something that people would be emulating two years from now. MUSICIAN: *So that's why you began experimenting with unusual synthesizer textures?*

JONES: Mutt Lange and I wanted some sounds and textures that would be absolutely original and unique. We did some nice things with Larry Fast and Bob Mayo. Then we felt we wanted a totally different approach, so we contacted Tom Dolby in England, who was from a totally different world. He'd played with people like Lene Lovich, very ultra-modern, new wave

synth things.

MUSICIAN: *Did you feel you were taking a risk by pulling in someone from such a different genre?*

JONES: Yeah, I thought there was a real risk he might not be able to relate to the music, but it so happened that he did. Not related, necessarily, but appreciated it. We spent days experimenting and he came up with some incredible things.

MUSICIAN: *Lou explained how you ran down to the Lone Star to ask Junior Walker to play on "Urgent." Did he understand what you were after when you got him in the studio?*

JONES: Not at first, no. The first takes didn't quite work, because he was playing in that disco style that he'd gotten into over the past few years.

MUSICIAN: *Was it awkward telling him that it didn't cut it?*

JONES: Yes, it's very awkward to have to say to someone of his caliber that you want them to play like they did ten years ago. But he picked up on that, and it really started to happen. I was quite proud of how it came off.

MUSICIAN: *Most of the kids who buy your records have probably never heard of him, so I thought it was a nice gesture for you to fly him in to play at a few of those gigs.*

JONES: I just wanted people to be reminded that he had been a great inspiration to me at one point. I used to copy his sax licks on the guitar!

MUSICIAN: *What would you say were the*

*les. How did you feel about them at the time?*

JONES: Totally blown away! They took me under their wing, and we used to hang out at the hotel. Sit around and jam. I realized that Geroge was a *big* guitar player, and that Paul was pretty incredible too. I remember him sitting down and playing a song left-handed on the guitar, and then turning it around and playing it right-handed.

MUSICIAN: *What about Lennon? What was special about him?*

JONES: He was the one with charisma. I can see him lying in bed with this big red rugby shirt on with a hat while a guy in the corner did a sculpture of him. They were all having a great time and couldn't believe it themselves. They weren't really as... nice and sweet as they appeared to be. But I think they were handling it amazingly well. But it was unbelievable—women just throwing themselves left, right and center at them.

MUSICIAN: *That must have been terrible.*

JONES: I got a few, too! (laughs)

MUSICIAN: *How did they influence you musically?*

JONES: They turned me on to people I'd only vaguely heard of, like Marvin Gaye and Bobby Blue Bland, and those kinds of people. And then I used to stand on the side of the stage and watch them every night with tears in my eyes. They were so magical... blang, blang, blang; hits, one after the other. All trite little love songs, all very harmless.

*"I wish things weren't so blown out of proportion. We can't be afraid to progress and shouldn't correlate commerciality with overkill." —Lou Gramm*

*main lessons you learned working with bands like Spooky Tooth, Gary Wright and Leslie West?*

JONES: I think with Spooky Tooth it was more a question of learning how a band *shouldn't* be—at least in terms of personal conflicts. But that band also set a quality level for me in terms of vocal directions. Mike Harrison and Gary Wright, the combination of their voices was imprinted on my brain. With Leslie West it was like being thrown in the deep end, inasmuch as I hadn't played in a heavy rock band for a long time, where the onus is on just two guitars. And I had to fight for my identity with Leslie, which brought out a lot in me, I feel.

MUSICIAN: *Way back in '64 or '65, you were in a band that toured with the Bea-*

*MUSICIAN: There's an ideal for you: make trite little love songs that can move people the way the Beatles did.*

JONES: Yeah, well, I'm trying all the time. There's real feeling in a lot of our songs, like "The Damage Is Done," "Head Games"...I've even seen people fall in love listening to "Waiting For A Girl Like You," as banal and romantic a statement as it may appear.

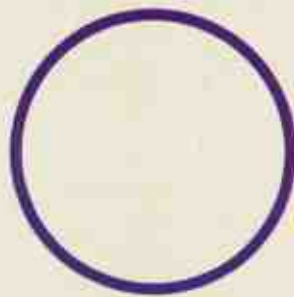
MUSICIAN: *Yeab, I had to go to a special critic's hospital to have that hook surgically removed from my head.*

JONES: Yeah, I've heard about that place where you guys go. I'd like to visit it myself sometime.

MUSICIAN: *Why? You have a book you want removed?*

JONES: No, I want to blow the place up.

BY CAMERON CROWE



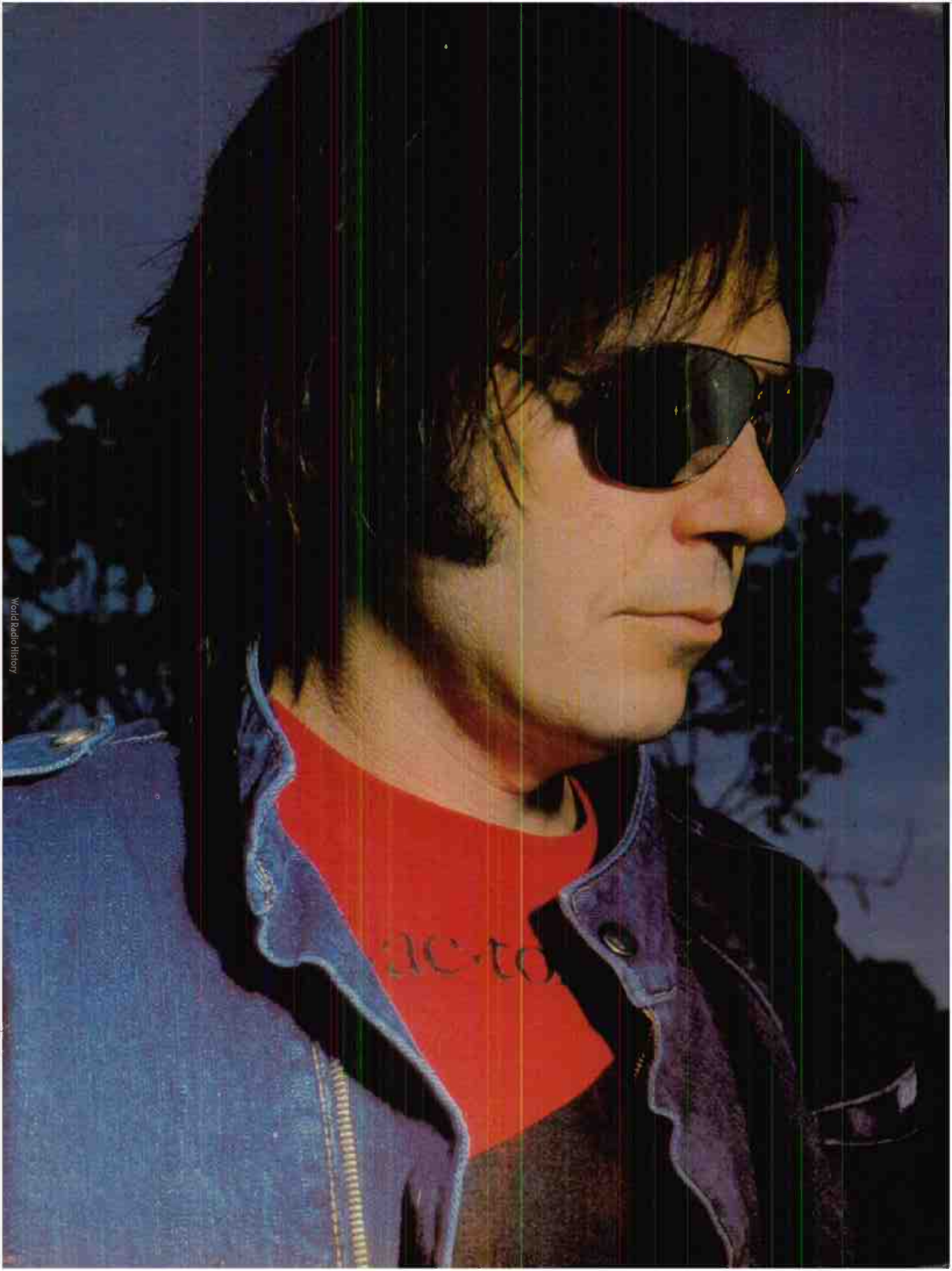
ne of rock's most powerful *auteurs*, the Loner reaches into his brilliant past to find a new band, new themes and a surprising new love: computers.

## NEIL YOUNG: STILL EXPECTING TO FLY

I know a Neil Young fanatic who calls my house every month. It's always something different, something amazing that he has to report. And it always begins with, "Did you hear what Neil did *nou*?" Then comes a wild story about how Young a) has filled his home with electric trains; b) is recording an album of Korean Work Standards, or c) is writing love songs to computers. The remarkable thing is that most of these stories turn out to be true. I first interviewed Neil Young in 1975, and I've tried to check in with him at regular intervals ever since. Six weeks is a relatively short period of time for most people, but for Young it's long enough to write a new cycle of songs, record them, set them aside and pass through an entirely new phase, too. I had last seen him in early '81, when he was in New York City for a two-day visit with his wife, Pegi. Young, thirty-seven, was at the midpoint of a four-year sabbatical from touring. He had taken the time to edit and shape his movie, *Human Highway*, as well as be with his family.

"I've never known what it's like to not be on the street," he'd said. "When I start playing again, I think it's going to be very different...."









that I wanted to play, and that I was into it. "Maybe" by the Chantels, "Short Fat Fannie," Elvis Presley and Larry Williams, Chuck Berry... those were the first people that I heard. I heard them on CHUM... I used to listen to them a lot. CHUM-1050. I used to go to bed at night with the station on. The radio was right by my bed, I used to just fall asleep listening to music. I was a real swinger. On weekends, I'd stay up late listening to the radio (laughs).

**MUSICIAN:** I've read a few interviews with Ricky James, your former partner and lead singer in the Mynah Birds, where he says he convinced you to play electric lead for the first time.

**YOUNG:** That's a load of crap (laughs).

**MUSICIAN:** So you started out playing rock?

**YOUNG:** Oh yeah. What he means is when he met me I was on a major folk trip. When I was in my teens, I started off playing rock 'n' roll. The Squires, my first band, played rock. Then about eighteen or nineteen, somewhere in there, I switched over totally to folk music. Sold all my stuff.

**MUSICIAN:** You sold your guitars?

**YOUNG:** Some of the equipment I just put away and later sold. It was good stuff—my electric guitar from the Squires was my original orange Gretsch, before the one I had in the Springfield. I had to pawn that baby. And it was a good guitar. It had a white case, with everybody's signature on it. And it was signed by Stills, and Furay, with little notes on it to me... in black ink pen on this case. All the people that I met up until the time I was nineteen had signed my guitar case. And I pawned it. Sold it.

**MUSICIAN:** You must have heard some amazing folk music.

**YOUNG:** (laughs) Yeah. Well, I heard Bert Jansch... Hamilton Camp, Bob Gibson, Phil Ochs, Dylan. All those kind of acts, you know. (pauses) Acts? All those *entertainment types*, you know (laughs). So I played folk music for awhile, then met up with Ricky James and we had the Mynah Birds. Bruce played bass. Ricky sang and I played lead. We were kind of folk-blues-rock.

**MUSICIAN:** What was it like auditioning for Smokey Robinson at Motown Studios in '64?

**YOUNG:** I don't remember Smokey Robinson, really. Ricky was really into the fact that we were going down to Motown, and I thought that was great, too. I knew the music. But when we got there... these guys would just come in, like Bery Gordy, or one of the other heavies, Holland-Dozier-Holland... they'd be around. We went in and recorded five or six nights, and if we needed something, or if they thought we weren't strong enough, a couple of Motown singers would just walk right in. And they'd Motown us. A couple of 'em would be right there, and they'd sing the part. They'd just appear and we'd all do it together. If somebody wasn't confident or didn't have it, they didn't say, "Well, let's work on this." Some guy would just come in who had it. Then everybody was grooving. And an amazing thing happened—we sounded hot. And all of a sudden it was Motown. That's why all those records sounded like that.

Probably ninety percent of the acts there were better groups than the Mynah Birds. But we were weird, we were really different. We were the only group with a 12-string guitar on Motown. Playing country 12-string with this *beat*. And actually, they kind of liked the sound of it. And they had the hugest, *hugest* most gargantuan contract you've ever seen in your life. Man, we were ushered into these offices, signing these *huge* publishing contracts. They still have my publishing on everything with the Mynah Birds. Seven-year exclusive contracts signed in '64... it was great (laughs). Our album never came out, but they had enough for a single. (sings) "It's My Tiiiiime."

**MUSICIAN:** Supposedly the single was canceled on the day of release. Did you ever see a copy of it?

**YOUNG:** I never saw it. All I knew was Ricky got busted for draft evasion, and we all went back to Canada. Our manager never gave us the money, and then two weeks later he OD'd... OD'd on our advance. He ran right through twenty-five G's (laughs). What a guy!

**MUSICIAN:** That must have been disillusioning.

**YOUNG:** I didn't even notice at that point. Made no difference. We just wanted to play. That's when we sold all the equipment, though. We didn't have Ricky anymore—he was in jail. We didn't have contracts. Our manager had OD'd and spent all the money on himself, so we sold all the stuff we had... and bought this hearse. We headed for the U.S. This is Bruce Palmer and me, through this whole thing.

**MUSICIAN:** And so begins the famous saga of you running into Stills and Furay on the street in Hollywood... and that was the birth of the Buffalo Springfield.

**YOUNG:** (grinning) That's right. That's really a rough breakdown of it, too.

**MUSICIAN:** How long was it before the Springfield were signed to a record label?

**YOUNG:** These things take *time*, you know. (pause) Might have been, you know... six weeks (laughs). It seemed like a long time.

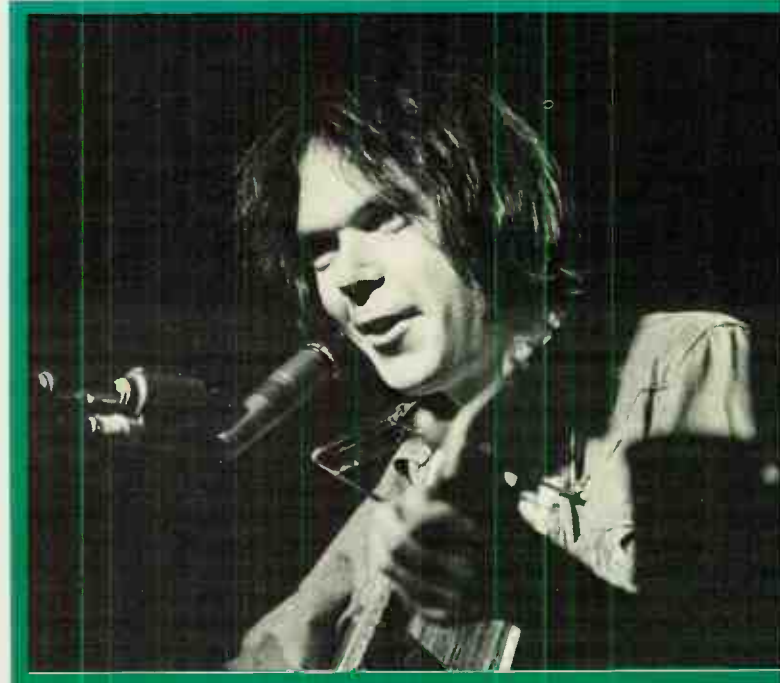
**MUSICIAN:** So when you went into the studio to make those first records, did you feel the Springfield was a step up from the Mynah Birds? Had you been playing live at all?

**YOUNG:** Yeah. We'd already played in front of people and everything. We were the regular house band at the Whisky a Go Go.

**MUSICIAN:** Did you take an active part in the production of the Springfield album?

**YOUNG:** We wanted to take an active part in the production of the early records, and Stills and I were very forceful about doing that. It just so happened that our managers also fancied themselves as record producers—that rare combination. Somehow, I don't know how they did it, but they really were managers and record producers. A team of record entrepreneurs. Quite a duo.

They did the stereo mix on the first album in a day and a half. Stills and I did the mono. The *mono* is the one to have, not the stereo. The mono took a *lot* more time.



**Young's acoustic guitar intimacy is now computer-based.**

**MUSICIAN:** So when you hear something like "Mr. Soul" or "For What It's Worth" on the radio, do you wince?

**YOUNG:** Oh no, I like 'em. They're good.

**MUSICIAN:** One would think, from an outside perspective, that "Expecting To Fly" was a breakthrough song for you.

**YOUNG:** You know, that song... we spent thirty days on that song. Jack Nitzche and I. There's no one from the Springfield on that record... it's just me. And I don't play very much. I didn't even play the acoustic. I played the electric guitar—there's an electric guitar in there that plays a couple notes here and

*"The people I played my best with":  
(left to right) Ben Keith, Nils Lofgren, Ralph  
Molina, Young, Bruce Johnson and Joe Lala.*







there, like a piano trill. But Jack and I wrote down every note—we had three or four acoustic rhythm guitars playing at once, playing those lines. That's how we did that. That was a lot of fun. And Jack did a great mix... boy, he was on that thing day and night. He wouldn't stop. We did the vocal line-by-line, word-by-word. It was like we were possessed. I had quit the Springfield when we did that, so it was... really the first thing that I did by myself. Then I went back to the group and took it with me.

**MUSICIAN:** Are you a wake-up-in-the-middle-of-the-night kind of writer? Or will you sit down and say to yourself, "I'm going to write a song now...?"

**YOUNG:** No. (long pause)

**MUSICIAN:** A man comes to you with a briefcase every six months and hands you your new songs...?

**YOUNG:** (laughs) I write almost all my songs now when I'm doing something else. When I don't have an instrument.

**MUSICIAN:** Like cooking, for example?

**YOUNG:** Driving. The last song I wrote, I wrote in my car on the way to pick up Bruce at the airport: "Soul Of A Woman." That's only one song, though. I'm slowing down.

**MUSICIAN:** Yeah, you used to get four or five songs out of that airport drive.

**YOUNG:** Now it's down to one song, folks. This is a real good one, I think. I always feel that way about the last one, though.

**MUSICIAN:** So are you using a tape recorder when you're doing this? Or just singing a cappella?

**YOUNG:** No. No sound. No singing. I don't even sing it. I just drive along... I'm singing in my head. I may sound like I'm mumbling from the outside, but I can hear it in my mind.

**MUSICIAN:** Let's talk about your first solo album. Were you thinking that songs like "Last Trip To Tulsa" didn't quite fit into the mold of what people might have expected after the Springfield?

**YOUNG:** No, I never thought of that. I don't care. And I cared even less at that time. I think that was the farthest thing from my mind, what people would think of it. Songs were coming really fast and I was just grabbing them all and (makes dice-throwing gesture) getting them out. It all happened very fast. Those first solo records came at a time when I was doing two or three albums a year. Time went by very quickly then. Lots of albums in a short period of time. After *Harvest* I spaced out the time between records a lot more.

**MUSICIAN:** It seems like the curse of being a songwriter who deals in imagery, or in personal themes....

**YOUNG:** The curse of the songwriter? I've heard of the Pussinger Curse, but I've never heard of the Curse of the Songwriter.

**MUSICIAN:** Okay, it seems that part of what happens when a songwriter uses imagery, or obscured themes, is that some people out there think, "He's talking to me, man... he knows about the hassles with my girlfriend and everything—I've got to find this dude." Was this happening to you at the time?

**YOUNG:** That has happened all the time... just as far back as I can remember, there have been people like that. I don't know when that started.

**MUSICIAN:** Did that scare you at first?

**YOUNG:** At first it was kind of interesting. I think I even kind of liked it when it first happened. The first couple times I was thinking, "Wow... I'm really getting through." (pause) *Buuut*, as time went by... (laughs).

**MUSICIAN:** It never caused you to stop, while writing a song, and say, "Better make this a rock-me-baby song"?

**YOUNG:** Oh, no. Those two things don't go together. Not anywhere.

**MUSICIAN:** With *Crazy Horse* you started getting a different, dirtier sound. Was this the emergence of *Old Black*, your trusty '56 Gibson Les Paul?

**YOUNG:** Yeah, that's when *Old Black* emerged. With its original pickup.

**MUSICIAN:** And that guitar had a lot to do with *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere*?

**YOUNG:** That's what I really remember. When I traded Jim



### Old Black & the Machines

Neil Young's equipment is a combination of state-of-the-art and vintage sentimental favorites, all of which produce a specially crafted sound. Onstage and on record, Young uses two primary electric guitars. The main one is a black '56 Gibson Les Paul—nicknamed *Old Black*. In concert, *Old Black* uses a Nady VHF wireless guitar link that enters an all-tube Fender Reverb unit. "Neil loves the sound of tube equipment,"

says guitar technician Sal Trentino. "We try and keep it all in the exact shape it was when it left the factory twenty years ago." The reverb unit is connected to a special switching system, custom built by Trentino, which Young controls onstage from a large red foot switch.

From the foot switch, Young has the ability to activate any or all of the following effects: MXR analog delay, Mutron octave divider, Boss flanger, Magnatone vibrato and a unique function built by Trentino in '75 called the Whizzer. The Whizzer mechanically controls Young's volume knob between two pre-set points.

This all flows through a Fender deluxe tube amp in which a scratch-built set of speakers with a cone assembly of P-12N Jensen baskets has replaced a bright old speaker that blew out just prior to the *Rust Never Sleeps* tour. The Deluxe output is fed into a Magnatone Tube stereo amp. Both the Deluxe and the Magnatone are miked into an Altec mixer, which leads into a Sunn Coliseum slave amp—one or several depending on the size of the hall—with Sunn 90-degree Radials and Sunn P.A. Bass Bins.

For "trans" songs like "Sample And Hold," "Mr. Soul" and "Transformer Man," Young uses three Vocoders which allow his voice to be played through a Synclavier keyboard. Two of the Vocoders are for vocals and the third is for his guitar.

Young's other guitars, maintained by Larry Cragg, include a stereo White Falcon Gretsch and a '69 Martin D-45—both obtained in a trade with Stephen Stills some twelve years ago (Neil gave up a standard mono Gretsch Falcon). On his current tour, Young also plays a rare original Gibson Explorer. The acoustic guitars used on tour are Takamine, with Palathetic pickups. The output of these are blended with Sunrise pickups installed in the sound hole, each of which is connected to a wireless transmitter on the strap of Young's guitar.

Young uses Gruen GTR Rock 'n' Roll strings, with the first string replaced by an .009. For acoustics, he uses D'Merle light gauge strings.

"Neil works very hard getting all the right sounds," says Larry Cragg. "It's a very intricate setup... but sometimes I think the whole dynasty rests on that one pickup in *Old Black*."

Messina my orange Gretsch for that old black guitar, (lowers voice, speaks *sotto*) boy, I really scored big. That's my biggest memory of that time. *Great* guitar. All of a sudden I had a band, *Crazy Horse*, and it felt really good. Ralph (Molina) had only been playing six months or something. Billy (Talbot) had only been playing a year. We really had to practice the songs, to get it so we could go all the way through without major problems. And we did.

**MUSICIAN:** Was *Hendrix* an influence?

**YOUNG:** Not so much on me, no. Probably more on Stills. He knew him. I played a little bit with *Hendrix*, third party, when Stills was around. That was it. He was more of an influence on me *after* he had really made his big footprint, after he had put out three or four records... then I picked up on him. I heard him in the beginning, but I wasn't concentrating on guitar playing. I came through him again later. He played with a real passion.

**MUSICIAN:** I always thought of "Ohio" as CSNY's "Revolution." Here's a group you're used to hearing in a more clean setting, doing a real bash-it-out song. How did it feel to you?

**YOUNG:** It was the only one like it. "Almost Cut My Hair" might have been the only other one. They were the only tracks that came across like that. "Woodstock" almost did, but it got a little creamy. A little bit too creamy, I might add. If anybody ever heard the original, before they erased the lead vocal and did the *creamy* lead vocal and *slick* background voices, they would have been able to say that it was like "Ohio" or "Almost



Cut My Hair.”

CSNY in the studio used to be a lot better before the final production part of it. But I was one and they were three. (pause) I was ready for it to be a little funkier and they were scared witless for it to be funky. (pause) They wanted nothing less than to be funky (laughs). They wanted to be the vocal sound of all time...which, you know, they essentially were when they came out. It was so impressive to hear that *tracked* vocal sound. It was awesome. In pitch, tracked three times across, totally tight...wow. So when you heard it for the first time, you'd never heard anything like that before. The 16 tracks were just starting to happen. I mean, groups like the Four Freshmen and the Beach Boys could only *approach* that. They hadn't been able to track themselves that many times...or they hadn't wanted to.

**MUSICIAN:** *Were you happy with Four-Way Street?*

**YOUNG:** I really don't remember it. I was happy with the tour that we did...the album, I'm not sure about. I think it's probably too long. The instrumentals and stuff might have been too long on it. When the Springfield played those long instrumentals, it was better than when CSNY did...it seemed to me. Until it was kind of a downhill slide, in some ways, even though the vocals were really great. Having the different bass players and different drummers and having people *hired* to play with you and everything, it never felt right to me. To have four guys who were in the band, and two guys who *weren't* in the band felt kind of strange. It was always...you know, kind of weird. It never could be like the Springfield, where everybody was equal.

**MUSICIAN:** *Do you have any regrets about how little music CSNY produced in its time together?*

**YOUNG:** No, I don't think so. I think there was enough. I thought it was just right. It would have been nice to put out "Pushed It Over The End" (a still-unreleased live track from the CSNY '74 tour). Our live "On The Beach" was good too. The thing is, we didn't want to put out a live CSNY album of all Neil Young songs. That was considered as an idea in '74. You know...I probably, looking back, should have gone for that. But at the time it just didn't feel right. I didn't think there were enough of my songs there for a good album. I thought there were maybe two or three of my songs that *should* have been on a great CSNY album...so I wouldn't let them just ride on my other songs that were mediocre to just get through there. That's what stopped me from doing that.

**MUSICIAN:** *Some of the songs, especially on your later albums, have come from different periods. Do you still have the ability to pick and choose from many outtakes?*

**YOUNG:** Yeah. I still have the ability to do that. But I haven't done that in a couple of years now. I did it to excess for a while, because the stuff was good and I didn't want it to just get buried. So I'd put it out because it was on my mind all the time. "Homestead," stuff like that, I just couldn't leave it in the can. I wanted them out there.

**MUSICIAN:** *It seems that real guitar technocrats, if you know what I mean, would... (Young clears throat loudly)...listen to a lot of your music and...*

**YOUNG:** No, you're wrong right there. They *wouldn't* listen to a lot of my stuff (laughs).

**MUSICIAN:** *I was going to say that real guitar technicians tend to...*

**YOUNG:** Bore the crap out of me (laughs). I think there's a place for them. Luckily, it's a big world.

**MUSICIAN:** *People like that might hear a song like "Into The Black" and think, "That guitar sounds incredibly distorted." I don't think a lot of people realize how much time you spend crafting your guitar sound to exactly that effect.*

**YOUNG:** (smiling) Well, the truth is that I dropped my amp on the way into the studio. I was halfway up the stairs when *crash*, I dropped it. And you know, we only had an hour, hour-and-a-half to cut the song. So we went with the smashed amp sound.

**MUSICIAN:** *But is it fair to say that you work on your guitar sound very carefully?*

**YOUNG:** Oh yeah. I've got my big red control, man. I think about it a lot. I work on it a lot. I'm always aware of what it

sounds like, all the different controls and effects...to the point of mania, probably. I have a guitar that's totally out of control. Old Black has a life of its own. The guitar's a killer. It's so alive that you can speak into the pickup and broadcast through a P.A. It's so alive, it feeds back; you literally can talk into the pickup and be understood through the amp. It's the third pickup I've had on it.

**MUSICIAN:** *What was the original one like?*

**YOUNG:** It's just like the other one that's still there. I had a Gretsch pickup in there for a while too. Pretty hot. I used that for a while quite successfully. Then I lost it or it was stolen, and I moved up to this other pickup, which was a real killer. I like the old pickups. I was lucky to find this one. I had to buy the whole guitar just to get it. It was in New York. This guy had a Firebird, and he said, "This has got the hottest pickup you'll ever hear." And I played it. I don't know if it was the *Time Fades Away* tour, or CSNY, but I played it...maybe it was even Stills-Young. I *had* to have it. I had renewed life. I hadn't used Old Black for a long time, you know. I lost the pickup and I'd stopped playing Old Black.

**MUSICIAN:** *You didn't play it in '73, on the Time Fades Away tour.*

**YOUNG:** That's right. It never was on the *Time Fades Away* tour. That's why I played like crap on that tour, too (shakes head). Of all my memories of everything I've ever done, that's the worst tour I ever did. I hope that doesn't hurt anyone's feelings.

**MUSICIAN:** *Here's a quote from a musician who once played with you—"When Neil is in the middle of a solo, and he comes over to your side of the stage and looks at you, you can tell the guy is in another world...."*

**YOUNG:** I hope that guy doesn't still play with me (laughs). The whole idea is to be somewhere else. The whole idea is...to not be *attached* to your mind. If you're thinking, you're not playing. If you start thinking, you know you're only running maybe fifty percent. Tops. Maybe ten percent. But if you're not thinking at all...you *could* be playing a hundred percent. And you have to think to get through a show. You can't ignore the fact that you're standing there in front of people.

I'm capable of staying out there for four, five, six, seven songs in a row before I come down. And with Bruce and those guys playing with me, I think I have a chance to do that a lot. A couple more new songs and we'll be there. We have to pile up some new experiences.

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*"I'm lucky there's still something I can do that will piss people off. I don't know what else I could do, except repeat myself until further notice."*

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**MUSICIAN:** *Why this new musical offensive? Did you reach the point where you needed a break from Human Highway?*

**YOUNG:** Well, the film was a labor of love. Playing is something I have to do. I get anxious when I haven't played.

**MUSICIAN:** *I heard a story that you were sent a copy of Kraftwerk's Computer World album, and that started your fascination with synthesized music.*

**YOUNG:** I just went out and bought the album. I was listening to different records in reference to what was happening in music. Whenever I put out an album, I'll buy a broad spectrum of what's happening. We were putting out *Reactor*, and I went and bought stuff like Foreigner, Journey, AC/DC, Devo...and Kraftwerk. I heard it once and I knew I liked that kind of music. I loved the beat. I knew they'd programmed the drums and I didn't know how they did that. So I started getting into the equipment.

**MUSICIAN:** *It seems that what you've done with your elec-*

tronic music is take all the familiar aspects of a Neil Young record, and invert them. Listening to a song like "Sample And Hold" is like looking through the telescope backwards.

**YOUNG:** The computer music is like a mask. I can sound like so many different characters it's unreal, all within my own voice... with no pitch problem. It's like getting the key to the city. I went in and recorded six electronic songs. I used all of them. Then I felt myself getting tugged back to the human side. It kept coming back, saying, "You gotta reveal yourself a little bit." So I started choosing new musicians. We went to Hawaii, and recorded a bunch of really human-sounding things. The other four songs on the album are the best of the eight or nine things I cut there. The whole album is a transition, a tug-of-war transition.

I feel like it was a complete job that I did. This album isn't like taking part of something that I worked on two years ago and didn't put out. This album came chronologically. These are the last ten songs that I've recorded. They've all been recorded since *Reactor*. They fit together that way, as a complete album.

You know what I feel it is... I feel electronic music has replaced the acoustic music that I used to do with my guitar. The computer stuff is that personal to me. It's stuff I used to do with my acoustic guitar, alone. Now it's me alone with the machines. You know how people used to... they would only like me with my acoustic guitar, not with Crazy Horse? Or they wanted to hear me with Crazy Horse, not with CSNY? Well, it's just like that. Now it's gonna be—they like me when I do "Like An Inca" and they don't like the computer sound, which I'm really into. Or vice versa. I feel like my next album, beyond this one, will be heavily based on stuff that I do with my machines. (pause) Neil Two and the Machines. He can do things Neil One never could!

**MUSICIAN:** You've said that one of the points of the *Rust Never Sleeps* tour, with its oversized amps and mike stands, was that the music business was getting so huge that you felt like a little kid. Now the music business has scaled down a bit again. Do you think about where you stand now?

**YOUNG:** I do think about where I stand. But only after I play.

**MUSICIAN:** Your new show is largely a crowd pleaser. You do a lot of well-known material... at least it's not like *Tonight's The Night*, where the audience's perplexed state was part of the show.

**YOUNG:** It's friendlier than that. It's pretty open. (pause) It takes you right along. Plus I'll be performing these songs in places where I've never been before, countries where they've never seen me. I like playing for people who haven't heard me before. It's also nice that we end up with "Sample And Hold" and "Mr. Soul." People can see where all this music has taken me. You can't come back after "Sample And Hold" and play "Southern Man."

**MUSICIAN:** How did you wind up playing with Nils Lofgren again?

**YOUNG:** Nils phoned me up about a year ago, when he was working on his last solo album (*Night Fades Away*). I was playing around with the machines. He said, "When you're finished with the machines, give me a call." So I did.

**MUSICIAN:** How about the new band. Did you sit down and say, "I want to put together a group of musicians from every point in my career"?

**YOUNG:** I really wanted to put together the people that I had played my best with. The musicians that I felt were really there—that was basically Bruce (Palmer) and Ben (Keith) and Ralph (Molina) and Nils (Lofgren)... and Joe (Lala) I added to it later. I wanted to take it further with all these people.

**MUSICIAN:** I think the most surprising choice would have to be Bruce Palmer, who you haven't played with since the *Springfield*. But then I heard about a year ago that there was going to be a *Buffalo Springfield* reunion in Los Angeles. You were all going to get together and rehearse, and see if anything was there....

**YOUNG:** Yeah, we almost did. Bruce was the one who tried to get the *Springfield* back together again. We had it all arranged

and everything, and... for one reason after another, it just didn't work out. I guess it wasn't the right time. It's hard to get everybody together long enough to find out. But I was willing to do it, and I had blocked a little bit of time... and it almost happened.

But from that came my awareness of Bruce as a force, that he was on the move again. That he wasn't just dormant, but aggressively seeking to play. I always loved playing with him. I think that in some ways he is the best musician I've ever heard. So I jumped at the chance to try it. I knew it was going to take a long time to do it. The kind of music I was talking about playing, he hadn't played for a long time. But he's so wide open that now I think we have the same kind of elevation that the *Springfield* had. What I felt with the *Springfield*, I feel with this band. It's also as emotionally unstable, and sort of shaky, which I really like.

**MUSICIAN:** There is an opinion that, "Well, Neil Young's great, but his last few albums he hasn't been writing about himself." And it's true that for many years people could buy your records and basically see what you've been going through in your life. Now it's not so clear. *Reactor* is you writing about other people, like "Surfer Joe" and "Opera Star."

**YOUNG:** Right. Yeah, that's a big change.

**MUSICIAN:** Are you consciously trying to write about something other than your own life?

**YOUNG:** Well, I think that you can only write about it if you feel like writing about it. I just haven't felt like writing about myself quite so intensely. So I wrote about what I feel like writing about. Lately it's been science fiction. Things like that.

**MUSICIAN:** Is that just as satisfying to you?

**YOUNG:** Yeah, it really is. I feel that songs like—"Transformer Man" is probably one of the best songs I've ever written. The fact that I sang it through a Vocoder, using another person's voice, and did it totally with machines—it makes no difference. To me it's one of my most sensitive, acoustic songs. That's really how I feel about it, like "Birds" or something. That's why in the show it's going to be right after "Birds." We're going to try to perform it, semi-live. Which is quite all right... we're only recreating what a machine did in the first place.

**MUSICIAN:** You have names for your Vocoders: *Sylvia* and *Tabulon*.

**YOUNG:** They're names for the different sounds. They're like these little programs who have their own characters. When you sing through them, their character comes out through you. It brings out whole different parts, different personalities that have been absorbed by you. It's like a human *Tron* experience.

There's only thirty-five Vocoders... we have three of them right now. There are only thirty-five of them ever made, over a three-year period which ended in 1968. They're from the 60s... there's not a lot of Synclaviers either, so it's a rare combination. And they are extremely potent. You can program it so that you strum your guitar and the sound is of a whole background chorus singing "Ahhhhhhh." It's another world. You don't need any of this other stuff with that. I can go a lot farther than I've gone... this is just the very beginning.

**MUSICIAN:** How do you look back on the *Rust Never Sleeps* tour?

**YOUNG:** I'm really glad I did that. I think it really needed to be done with Crazy Horse. For that band. After *Rust Never Sleeps*, no one ever asked me why I played with Crazy Horse anymore.

**MUSICIAN:** It was interesting that *Rust* came after *Comes A Time*, which seemed like a throwback to the sound of your first album in many ways.

**YOUNG:** *Comes A Time* was just coming out when we were on the road with *Rust*. I had held onto the first pressing of the album because I didn't like the sequencing, it didn't sound right to me. I had to buy those records back from the record company. (laughs) I bought 200,000 records. I finally got a deal. I can sell 'em for six thousand bucks.

**BERNSTEIN:** Have you seen those records lately, Neil? I

*continued on page 96*



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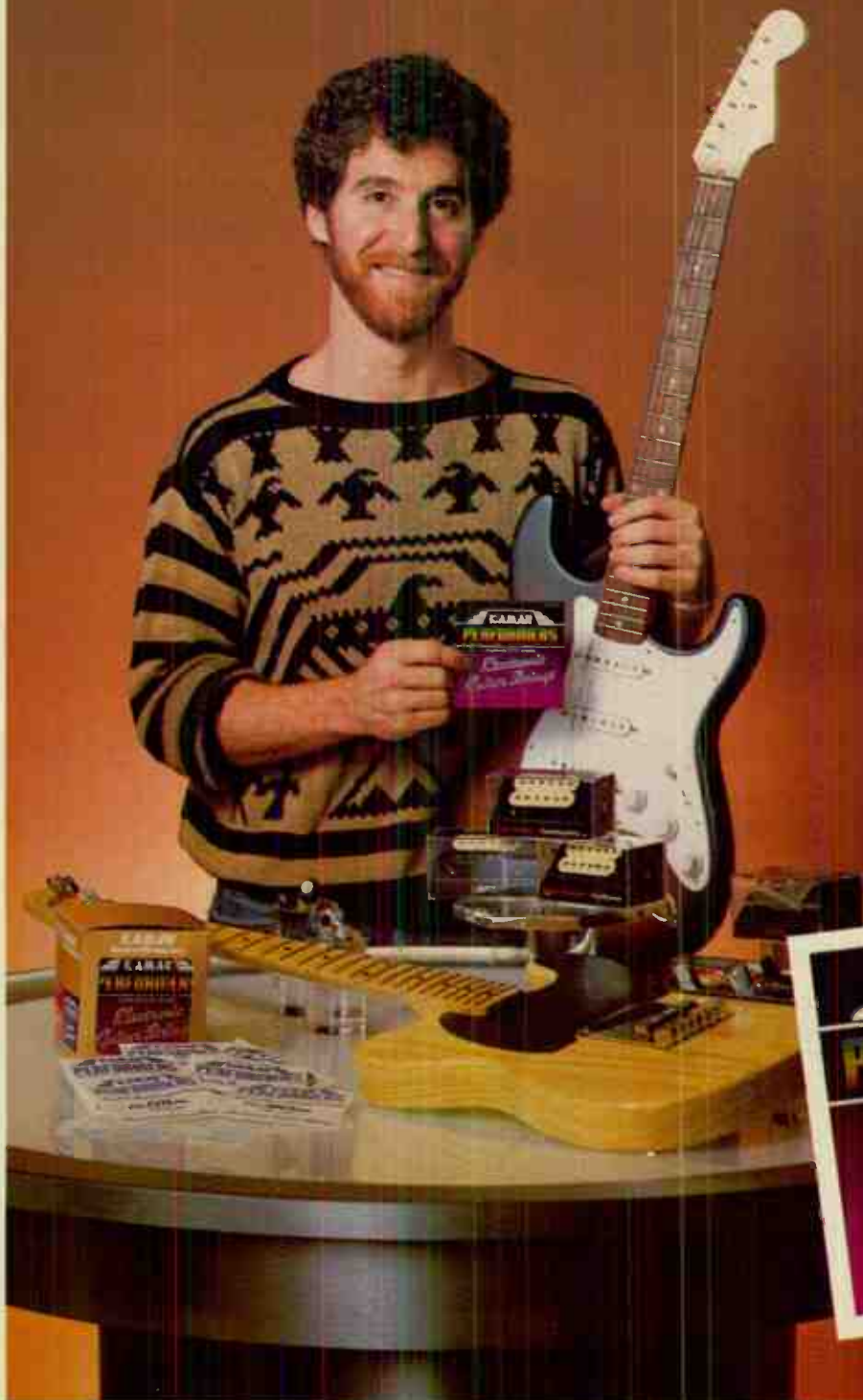
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# tease or permanent?

GO-GO'S FIGHT FOR CREDIBILITY

By Dan Forte





**t**he Go-Go's have already proved to be one of the most successful pop bands of the 80s, and in so doing have become one of the most controversial. No, they don't sing songs about the conflicts in Lebanon or El Salvador, or about killing your parents. They don't have a disgusting name, and they don't mutilate small animals onstage. And they don't make outlandish statements in interviews discounting the contributions of rock's biggest icons. Quite the contrary. Their music is bright and bouncy and virtually harmless—a celebration of being young, gifted and well tanned. So what's so

controversial?

Well, the Go-Go's are an all-female band—the most successful all-girl group in rock 'n' roll history—and in 1982 much of the music industry still isn't prepared to accept that. When their debut album surprised everyone by sounding remarkably confident and professional, the story was that it was the product of a production wizard and an engineer genius. When magazines began publishing major articles on them, they were accused of jumping on the bandwagon. At best some critics allowed that they played their instruments pretty well ...for girls. More often the question was asked—with the answer spinning around the turntable—can they really play?



**Kathy Valentine**  
*"We've given women more options to think about in their lives, especially younger girls."*

To be fair, the Go-Go's' image has often provided more fuel for their detractors. Their fall headlining tour—which, regardless of the location, looked like a junior fashion show of flouncy white mini-skirts and striped knit tops—opened with a recording of Connie Francis singing "V-A-C-A-T-I-O-N" as the quintet danced, pranced and skipped onto the stage. Their first album cover pictured each of them in a bubble bath, while their followup depicted them as precision water skiers. When *Rolling Stone* suggested photographing them for a cover story clad only in white underwear, they agreed. When the story appeared it was accompanied by a hot-pink headline reading "Go-Go's Put Out." One can't help sympathizing when lead singer Belinda Carlisle admits forlornly, "I guess we were tricked." It's as though they are being castigated for the fresh innocence that made their first album so charming.

Those unwilling to go with the Go-Go's are further alarmed by the flood of letters from adoring, imitative teenage admirers and a scale of first-name familiarity that recalls John, Paul, George and Ringo—and, of course, Davey, Mickey, Peter and Mike. But the Go-Go's are a far cry from the Monkees or any of the prepackaged media groups of the 60s.

Charlotte Caffey, Jane Wiedlin, Kathy Valentine, Gina Schock and Belinda Carlisle got their start as the Go-Go's, not on a drawing board in a record executive's office, but in a dank rehearsal hall in the basement of the Pussycat Theater in Hollywood. They weren't aiming at AM radio, but were adopted by the top forty after a long, slow climb through L.A.'s new wave circuit and, eventually, AOR radio stations. They didn't solicit outside help from songwriters or session musicians; they wrote all their own material and learned to play their own instruments.

Admittedly, when they first started bashing and crashing away, their technical abilities matched their limited experience (which in the case of most of the original members was no experience at all), but by the time they entered the studio to record *Beauty And The Beat*, their debut album for I.R.S., they were more than up to the task at hand, as evidenced by the tight, authoritative ensemble playing on every track. Their followup release, *Vacation*, debunks any notion of the Go-Go's being a flash in the pan, and shows an even greater degree of confidence and musical maturity.

The Go-Go's first got together to rehearse in the spring of 1978. The original lineup consisted of Margot Oliverra on bass, Elissa Bello on drums, Jane Wiedlin, who'd never played a guitar in a band before, on rhythm guitar and lead singer Belinda Carlisle, whose only previous band experience had

been as dancer and backup singer in Black Randy & the Metro Squad. By July of that year Charlotte Caffey, with a B.A. in music from Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles (where she concentrated on piano) was recruited from Manuel & the Gardeners and the Eyes (where she played bass) to play lead guitar (which she'd never played). A year later, Gina Schock, veteran of numerous bands in her hometown of Baltimore, Maryland replaced Bello on drums. Ginger Canzoneri, one of the group's first fans, became their manager.

More than a year later, the Go-Go's opened for England's ska revivalists, Madness, at the Whisky a Go-Go. In January and February of 1980 they toured England with Madness and the Specials and recorded "We Got The Beat" for Stiff Records. In December of '80, bassist Oliverra was replaced by Kathy Valentine of Austin, Texas. Valentine had previously played guitar with Girlschool and the Textones; she had never played bass. Los Angeles DJ Rodney Bingenheimer (KROQ-FM) introduced a guitar instrumental written by Charlotte, "Surfing And Spying," to the Ventures, who recorded it with vocal backing by Caffey and Wiedlin. The song is probably the most compatible marriage of surf guitar and new wave energy ever consummated. When the Ventures played their first American club date in ten years at the Starwood in L.A., the Go-Go's joined them onstage.

For their debut album, I.R.S. chief Miles Copeland teamed the Go-Go's with producer Richard Gottehrer, whose credits range from "My Boyfriend's Back" by the Angels to Blondie's first album, from the Strangeloves ("Night Time," "I Want Candy") to Robert Gordon and Marshall Crenshaw. The sound of *Beauty And The Beat* is lean but powerful, with Gina's punchy drums balanced by Charlotte's reverby guitar and the group's four-female harmonies. Released in July of '81, the LP reached number one on *Billboard's* album charts on March 6 of this year, where it stayed for seven weeks.

After touring with Police earlier this year (they also opened for the Rolling Stones in 1981), the Go-Go's went back into the studio with Gottehrer and engineer Thom Panunzio to start work on their followup LP, *Vacation*. The resultant sound is more muscular this time out, the playing more confident, and



**Belinda Carlisle**  
*"I think the second album sounds more confident. We're stronger and more sure of ourselves."*

the material more varied and interesting. Valentine's "We Don't Get Along" rocks as hard or harder than anything on the first album. Wiedlin's "Girl Of 100 Lists" is one of the group's best efforts, musically and lyrically, while "Beatnick Beach," by Charlotte and Belinda, shows off the group's campy sense of humor. (Crammed into this one song are words such as groovy, boss, keen, neat, square, limbo, paisleys and a line about the *Lloyd Thaxton Show*.) There is also a fine cover of the Capitols' "Cool Jerk," the only non-original the Go-Go's have recorded.

The Go-Go's' success story shatters many of the myths surrounding the stereotype of women in rock being at best pretty centerpieces and at worst mere novelties. They hold the distinction of being the first all-female band to break not only the top ten, but the Hot 100! "I'll tell ya something," says Charlotte, matter-of-factly, "I just knew it had to be us to be the first. It only made sense—because we have such good songs."

Onstage, the Go-Go's are as visually striking as they are

PHOTOS BY PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE





## Gina Schock

*"I've always liked a big, fat sound on my drums. I hit them about as hard as I possibly can."*

musically competent. Their *Vacation* tour resembles a combination of tribal ritual and pep rally, with their audiences favoring not only the high school ages but the female side of the gymnasium. Offstage, the five girls are articulate, witty, outspoken, attractive and completely natural. Belinda, twenty-four, the most captivating onstage, is pensive in conversation. Charlotte, twenty-eight, is a nonstop talker with the most droll sense of humor. Gina, twenty-five, is the most animated, the cut-up. Kathy, twenty-three, is demure, deliberate, sophisticated. Jane, twenty-four, looks like a pixie and has a cartoon voice remarkably like Georgette Baxter from the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*—but what comes out is usually straight to the point.

**MUSICIAN:** A lot of articles draw comparisons between the Go-Go's and the "girl groups" of the 60s. But most of you aren't even old enough to have been exposed to much of that music. Do you think you sound much like 60s girl groups?

**CHARLOTTE:** They were not our idols. My idols were the Beatles. I saw them perform in 1966.

**BELINDA:** People just have to compare things with something. It's just because of the harmonies, but the harmonies aren't even that similar.

**KATHY:** It's just because they hear girls' voices. People also say we sound like the B-52s, which I don't see at all. The 60s girl group music I didn't find out about until probably the middle 70s. And all the garage bands, like the Seeds, I'd never heard of. But it doesn't have any less impact when you discover it ten years later. I love all that stuff, but the only music I liked growing up was Elvis and the Beatles. Everything else was schlock.

**MUSICIAN:** Charlotte, did you write "Surfing And Spying" specifically for the Ventures?

**CHARLOTTE:** I didn't write it specifically for them, but I'd listened to them all my life. I just thought it'd be cool to have an instrumental song.

**GINA:** That's what I thought was cool when I first joined the band—that sort of guitar sound—because where I was from, I'd heard of the Ventures, but I never knew what any of their music was like. I didn't know much about the Beach Boys either. But it felt so right to play that sort of stuff.

**CHARLOTTE:** I lived in Santa Monica, a block from the beach, when the Beach Boys were hot. I'd go surfing and skateboarding with my brother. I just basically listened to the radio. I knew just about every word to every song, but I never consciously tried to memorize them. It was just a matter of overkill. I'd bring my transistor radio to school with my little earplug. But I wasn't really influenced by surf music, not consciously. I started playing through the reverb because it gave it more sustain and made me play better—or made me think I was playing better.

**MUSICIAN:** When you started playing electric guitar, whose records would you play along with?

**CHARLOTTE:** I never played along with records. I don't have any influences at all. Actually, I played bass lines at first, because I'd played bass for a couple of years before that, in another band. So I used to play low things because I didn't know what else to play. Then I started making up melodies and plucking them out on the guitar. I don't have any early guitar

idols, but I've come to like guitar players now. I saw Chris Spedding and I liked the way he plays. Andy Summers, who's a totally different style, I like too. And David Lindley is so talented.

**MUSICIAN:** I take it the first incarnation of the Go-Go's was a bit punkier.

**BELINDA:** Yeah, because we didn't know how to play, the majority of us. And the fashion—you had the spikey purple hair and green hair or whatever, except Charlotte had long blonde hair. We'd all end the same song at different times, and it was like screaming. It wasn't really good, but I guess it was entertaining.

**CHARLOTTE:** They asked me to join, and at that time they had all these songs with messages, kind of political. I thought, "Why don't you just take advantage of the name Go-Go's?" Then I brought in "How Much More" and "Beatnick Beach," the first two songs I introduced to the band, and that kind of changed things. We practiced about five days a week and played two days a week. Even though we were singing the same parts as now and having the same ideas, we weren't musically competent yet. Finally, they became clearer, after Gina joined and we got tighter. Then people started saying, "What's wrong with these girls? They're selling out, they're becoming a pop band." We were going, "No, this is the way we've always been, you just never knew it."

**BELINDA:** We all really did like pop music, and we always wanted to be a pop band, but we never could because of our ability.

**GINA:** I didn't always want to be a pop band. I wanted it to be a rock 'n' roll/pop band, which I think we are. My drumming is pretty rock 'n' roll, and Kathy's playing is more rock 'n' roll.

**KATHY:** I sit there with Jane and show her how to go *whappa-whappa-whappa* (mimes power chords). It's so funny, because it's like, "What do you mean you can't do that? Sure you can." And finally she goes, "Yeah, I guess I can."

**JANE:** It's something you have to learn. There's a really elusive quality to playing good rock guitar, which I haven't mastered yet, and a lot of it is feel. Judging from what Kathy plays, I'd have to say that a lot of it is upbringing, what you were listening to. I never listened to that style of rock before, so it doesn't come naturally to me. I never listened to hard rock or the Rolling Stones very much. Even listening to the Beatles a lot, I never paid much attention to the guitar playing. I was always more interested in the melodies.

**MUSICIAN:** The image most people have of a "lead guitarist" is someone like Eric Clapton soloing chorus after chorus into uncharted territory. Do you, Charlotte, improvise much?

**CHARLOTTE:** Are you kidding? I work out the lead breaks and play them that way, and if I happen to make a mistake when we're playing live and it sounds better, I just change it. I



## Jane Wiedlin

*"If you consciously try to retain your innocence, you're going to lose it for sure."*

only know certain songs in certain ways—I admit it—but I think what I play works really well with the rest of the band. That's the way the whole band plays—to complement each other. That's not a cop-out; I just like the way it sounds. I'm comfortable with that.

**JANE:** This band is not a guitar-oriented band. I don't think people come to see us to hear some groovy licks.

**CHARLOTTE:** I've still got a lot to learn, but then again,

## GO-GO'S PLUG IN

**Charlotte Caffey:** (lead guitar) I use a pre-CBS Fender Twin Reverb amp, JBL speakers. I have a Hamer Prototype guitar I just started using, which is interesting. They gave it to me. It's got a nice neck. And I have a '61 Fender Telecaster, and I just got a Roland guitar synthesizer. I use a Boss Chorus—not the stereo one, the small blue one—and an MXR Micro Amp power booster, and I got a Memory Man that I use for some delay stuff. Jane and I use GHS Boomers strings.

**Jane Wiedlin:** (rhythm guitar) I use a Marshall 50-watt amp, piggy-back. And I play a Gibson SG Les Paul Jr. and an SG Melody Maker. The SG I have has a different neck than most SGs—like a Les Paul neck—and it has Les Paul electronics.

**Kathy Valentine:** (bass) I play a Fender Precision bass, a 1973. The neck is shaved to accommodate my tiny little hands. I just got an endorsement from Gallien-Kruger—the only bass player to have that distinction—so I'm using two Gallien-Kruger amp tops. I use one as a preamp, for power, a 200-watt 400RB. And I have four 15-inch Electro-Voice speakers altogether. I use Rotosound round-wound strings, and I change them every other show.

**Gina Schock:** (drums) I use Rogers drums—I've used them for years. And I use Paiste cymbals. I endorse both brands now. I use Remo black-dot heads on the road, because they last the longest and they sound good. They're clear.

working within the structure of the Go-Go's, I don't know if I want to learn all the normal stuff. I like the way it is. It's still a challenge. Like the rock 'n' roll songs Kathy writes with the guitar breaks, she's helped me a lot.

**MUSICIAN:** *The songs you write, Jane, sound like they start out with the lyrics, with the music written afterward.*

**JANE:** Usually that's true. My songs might sound more complicated because of not having as much of a musician's background as some of the others. I don't know some of the basic structures to a lot of pop songs, so it doesn't occur to me. Kathy or Charlotte will say, "Naturally you'd go to A there," where I would have gone to something else.

**KATHY:** "Our Lips Are Sealed" is a good example of that. That "doesn't matter what they say" part—that's a really weird chord for the context of the song. That's what's good about Jane; I would never have put that chord there.

**MUSICIAN:** *Belinda, having never sung in a group before this one, who are some of your vocal influences?*

**BELINDA:** I didn't really have any influences when we recorded the first album—not until the past year—because I didn't really know what to listen for in a female's voice, as far as phrasing goes. I started listening more, because I wasn't too pleased with the way I sounded on the first album. I like Patsy Cline a lot. I like Michael Jackson and Phil Alvin of the Blasters. I do like Bryan Ferry of Roxy Music.

**MUSICIAN:** *What about drum influences?*

**GINA:** My influences were at a much earlier age. John Bonham and Charlie Watts were my two main influences in my style when I was growing up. Charlie Watts is all very simple, yet he has perfect meter. His timing is perfect. What I appreciated most about John Bonham was how busy he was, yet his beats were simple. It's just the way he put them together that made them sound so awesome and complicated, but they're all basically simple things. And his footwork is really difficult. He only used one bass drum, but you'd have thought he used two from the way it sounded. I'd come home from school every day, put my headphones on, and play along with records. And those were probably the two drummers I listened to most when I was growing up. Now my list of favorite drummers is a mile long.

**MUSICIAN:** *People seem to think that it must be extra hard and more strenuous for a female to play drums than it would be for a man. Is it?*

**GINA:** No, it's just a matter of practice. I've been playing drums for ten years now, and my body is built up, and I can play for hours at a time. I have no problem playing. It's definitely more physical than playing guitar or something. But I've always hit the drums really hard.

**MUSICIAN:** *Was there a period where you were thought of as*

*a "girl drummer," instead of just a drummer?*

**GINA:** Oh sure, sure. I'd say just recently, within the past six months or so, people will come up to me and, instead of saying, "You're a good drummer for a girl," they'll say, "Hey, you're a pretty good drummer." So that's kind of neat. But if they say, "You're a good drummer for a girl," that's cool, too. If they like it, that's all that counts, really.

**MUSICIAN:** *Did you always have such a big drum sound, or did that arise during the recording process?*

**GINA:** It's a little bit of both. I know what kind of drum sound I like. I've always liked a big fat sound on the drums. I tune my heads low, so you can get more kind of a punchy, boosh sound to it. Richard (Gottelher) likes a big fat drum sound, too. When I'm in the studio, I hit the drums about as hard as I possibly can. Richard told me to do that, because ultimately they'll sound better than if they have to beef them up technically. If it sounds fat from the start, then we'll have a lot better basis to work from.

**MUSICIAN:** *A lot of aspiring female musicians look up to you as pioneers. Don't you think the stereotype image of the Go-Go's posing in their underwear for the cover of Rolling Stone will have a negative impact on the advances you've made?*

**KATHY:** We got flak from feminist-types for our first album cover—us in the bathtub—which to us was a big joke. No cause is that serious that you can't poke fun at anything.

**BELINDA:** I'm not sorry that we did the photo session; I'm just sorry that they put "Go-Go's Put Out" for a headline. Maybe we're too naive and trusting of people, but we learned a lesson. I don't regret it at all, but I think we'll be more careful and cautious in the future.

**GINA:** The thing that sort of saddened me was that you would figure a magazine like *Rolling Stone* would have a bit more integrity than to put out some sort of bullshit headline like the *Enquirer*. You read this sensational headline, and then you open it up and it has nothing to do with the story. You work all



**Charlotte Caffey**  
*"How can you be in a band that makes records and not be merchandised? You have no choice."*

your life to get on the cover of a magazine like *Rolling Stone*, and then something like that happens. It kind of makes you lose faith.

**MUSICIAN:** *Do you think something like that will affect your credibility—make it harder for you to be taken seriously as musicians?*

**JANE:** The thing that I realized on that subject is that saying it over and over in interviews doesn't change anyone's opinion. All you can do is continue to prove yourself through your music. Every band has to keep proving themselves, with every album and every song. It's not a matter of being female; it's a matter of being a popular band.

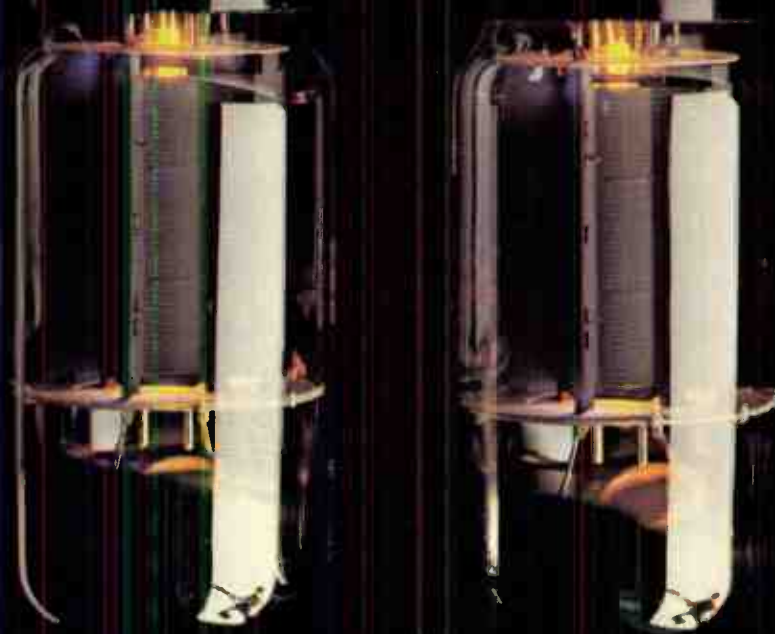
**MUSICIAN:** *With any successful band there always comes a certain amount of backlash....*

**KATHY:** What's great, I think, is that the majority of women feel a lot more encouraged by our success. I think we've given them more options to think about in their lives, especially younger girls. But there are some very jealous people. There are people who will always say really catty things about us. They say we're fat and stuff. I mean, we're obviously not....

**BELINDA:** Skinny.

*continued on page 100*





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# THE MUSICIAN

## The Instruments, The People, The Process



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### PHIL LESH

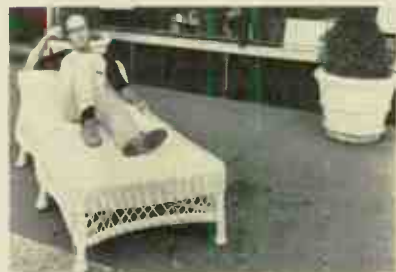
The reclusive cult hero whose slippery, inventive bass intelligence has made the Grateful Dead a truly unique rock 'n' roll band.

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The bandleader from *Late Night* discusses the method in his live video madness.



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From the studio drum booth, a view of twenty years of solid gold singles.



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Anatomy of a jazz festival in a ballpark, from logistics to state-of-the-art reinforcement.



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# PHIL LESH'S UNBROKEN CHANGES

*The Grateful Dead's Mad  
Professor of the Bass*

BY DAVID GANS

The music of the Grateful Dead can be described as an ongoing conversation, not just between musicians but between musics. Guitarists Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir, drummers Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann, keyboardist Brent Mydland and bassist Phil Lesh—and the others who have played in the band in the past—each bring a radically different set of values, traditions and goals to the party and set out to create their music anew at every performance.

Phil Lesh is a pivotal participant in the Dead's improvisations, contributing a puckish instrumental personality as well as deep musical literacy gained in a lifetime of formal training. He urges jams into uncharted territory and adds rich counterpoint to song arrangements. In concert, his face reflects the mood of the music and the musician as he runs through a panorama of unself-conscious poses: leaning into his axe in total concentration; shooting looks at his bandmates to register approval, reproach or intent; and dancing joyously, looking like a marionette caught by a sudden gust of wind. "Phil goes through his changes much more frequently and intensely than I think of myself as doing," says Garcia, who sums up Lesh's role in the ever-shifting Dead dynamic: "When Phil's happening, the band's happening."

Phil Lesh, warned the Dead's publi-

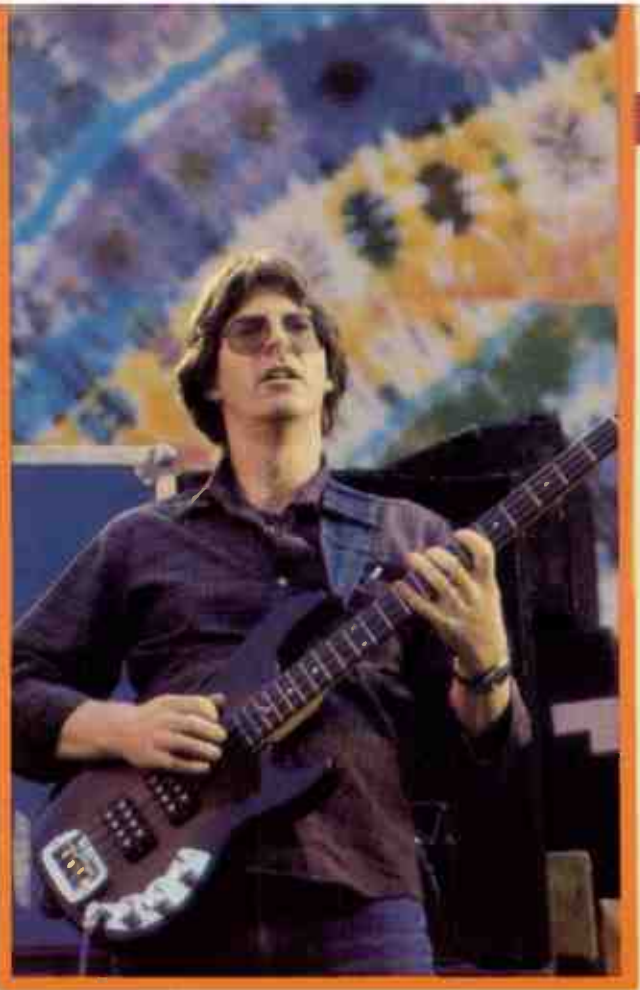
cist, "never does interviews." But at our first meeting, which took place at the Dead's Marin County recording/rehearsal space, he gives a detailed history of his musical development, beginning with the time he heard Brahms's First Symphony on the radio at age four. Later at his home, he plays some of the music crucial to that development—Ives, Stockhausen, Berio, Beethoven, Coltrane and the Dead. He brings out scores, points out the notation of particularly interesting and complicated passages, and offers critiques and marginalia on everything we hear. It was like a visit to the home of a hip college professor: his love for the subject and the presence of a willing pupil elicits a marvelous private lecture, punctuated by his quick and sardonic humor—Lesh has a wicked laugh—and rooted in a deeply philosophical attitude towards the musical and social phenomena dominating his life.

"I got into popular music backwards," Lesh explains. "Until I was about sixteen, my entire input was classical. The more complicated classical music leads you to jazz; the blues content of jazz gradually sucked me into pure blues, and that led straight to rock 'n' roll." Lesh never so much as picked up an electric bass guitar until he joined the band that became the Grateful Dead, so one of his unique contributions to the musical conversation is a pair of hands unspoiled by the retooled-guitarist habits of most

bass players.

By the time he hooked up with Jerry Garcia's electrified jug band in the mid-60s, Lesh had taken up and given up the violin and then the trumpet and turned to "serious" composition. He wrote pieces for multiple ensembles, each playing not just different keys and times but different music, and then dropped out of the University of California ("a school for musicologists, not musicians") midway through his first year, going straight into a graduate-level course under the tutelage of Luciano Berio. Hearing "Subterranean Homesick Blues" on the AM radio taught him that artistic substance and commercial survival weren't necessarily mutually exclusive. After finding himself "the only guy in a roomful of screaming chicks" at a showing of *A Hard Day's Night*, he decided "there must be something to this!" and started growing his hair long. These and "various other life scenarios" opened Lesh to the LSD-fueled creative flux that gave rise to the Dead and other San Francisco bands in the psychedelic 60s.

Lesh's pre-Dead influences can best be heard on *Anthem Of The Sun* (1968), which includes passages of *musique concrete* directly traceable to Berio's electronic music, and *Live Dead* (1969), where "Dark Star" illustrates the group's improvisational bent and "The Eleven" (in 11/4 time) shows Lesh's ambitious structural and harmonic ideas. But Lesh will be the first to admit that Grateful





Dead albums aren't the best way to hear Grateful Dead music. "I don't know whether what we do can be captured," he sighs. "And personally, if I never had to play in a recording studio again I'd be a happy man."

Lesh gave up writing for the Dead after 1974's *Mars Hotel* album. "Unbroken Chain" could have been really something," he says, "and some people think it really is something. But I wanted it to be what I wanted it to be, and it just didn't happen. I can't get what I want from the band, and I don't want to lean on them because I know it would be counterproductive." He did contribute "Passenger" to *Terrapin Station* (1977), but "the only reason I made that song up was that I wanted the guitar players to play with a little raunch."

The Grateful Dead may not make platinum platters, but year after year they can be found at or near the top of the list of box-office winners. The reason is that for the Dead and their fans, each concert is more like a seance in the guise of a carnival than an evening of "entertainment" in the usual sense. The musicians approach each other sonically, entwining their ideas in two ninety-minute sets and hoping to catch a whiff of "it," that ephemeral spiritual linkage of minds that results, Lesh says, in moments "when you're not a musician any more, you're not even human any more—you're just there."

In characterizing the uniqueness of the players, Bob Weir notes that "Jerry doesn't play guitar like anyone else I've heard, and neither do I; Phil doesn't play the bass like a bass...." And it's true: like the rest of the Dead's two-drummers-no-waiting rhythm section, Lesh doesn't dwell too much on the traditional role of his instrument in the ensemble. "It was obvious at the beginning that there were certain fundamentals that had to be observed," says Lesh. "Coordinate with the bass drum, play the root of certain chords, and so forth. But after six months it was obvious to me that a lot of that could be disposed of. I could play off-beat to the kick, and I could put the seventh—or even the ninth—in the bass line and still have it make sense."

The constantly-changing quality of the Dead's music is, says Lesh, "the nature of the beast. I prefer it this way, because if it didn't change it wouldn't exist any more. Sometimes a change isn't necessarily positive; sometimes it's not necessarily growth. But whatever occurs gives one certain person, or some people, or everyone, a different perception—which then leads to something positive."

In the early days of the band it was possible for the music to go "outside" at any time, but a decision was made at the

start of the 70s to include more songs per set and therefore rely less on improvisation. "The *Workingman's Dead*—*American Beauty* style of material and the concept of the 'warmup set' have forced us into more rigidity than I'd like to see," says Lesh. "This particular show that we're doing now has been ossifying since 1970."

"Some nights we come out on the stage and from the first note it's straight on up. No problems—away we go! Then there's the more common experience where we have to start from just about nowhere and by the end of the first set or the middle of the second set we get to a place where something can happen.

"Or there's the one where nothing you do makes any difference. I'll systematically try everything I can think of to make a change—I'll play more, I'll play less, spread out my registers, play one note. I also do something that gets people really crazy: I will stop playing when I don't have anything to say or I know that what I do is not going to matter." He cocks his eyebrows and emits one of his diabolical belly laughs.

"When the Grateful Dead is happening, I can't put a finger in a wrong place," Lesh continues. "I don't have to think about what I'm playing; there's no time to think about it!" Those are the times that make all the rest of life seem pale by comparison. Lesh quotes aerialist Karl Wallenda to illustrate: "The wire is life, the rest is just waiting around."

After years of using sophisticated, custom-made basses, Lesh recently turned to simpler instruments—but only temporarily. A chance encounter with a '57 Jazz bass caused him to shelve his Doug Irwin (a twin to Garcia's 6-string) and he subsequently switched to a new G&L bass. "It's louder and it has more tone controls than the Fender, and it has a master volume," notes Lesh. "On the Jazz, when I wanted to change the volume I had to use two fingers, and I couldn't do it very rapidly. The G&L also has treble boost and bass boost, and humbucker-to-single-coil switching. I always use the single coil, because the humbuckers sound so choked. I don't quite understand that, because other humbucking pickups don't sound like that."

The G&L will soon be replaced by Lesh's dream bass. "My idea is to have a 6-string bass that's tuned in fourths, with a B below the normal E and a C above the G, so it's playable like a regular bass but with half again the range," he says. The new bass will incorporate a filter developed by Lesh and Alembic for the modified Guild Starfire II that Lesh played from 1971 to 1974 (and still uses on occasion). "The filter has five modes: notch, high pass, low pass, bandpass

and bandpass with boost," he points out. "There are frequency, bandwidth and gain controls for the filter, plus an unfiltered gain control.

"If the acoustics are right, the bass can walk right up your backbone," says Lesh with a mad-scientist glint in his eye. "I'd like to be able to start from the feet."

After experimenting with steel picks (which cut his fingers and, being magnetic, tended to shoot pulses through the pickups), Lesh settled on a pick made of titanium. "It's really strong and really light, and it doesn't wear out like the Gibson heavies I used to use," he says. "The feel of it is superior for the bass—you hit the string and it knows it's been hit!"

Because of his early involvement with electronic music, the complexity of his basses and his adventures with synthesist Ned Lagin in the mid-70s, Lesh is thought of as a computer-music freak. "That was really only happening for a brief period, and somehow it got around that it was a big deal in my life," he shrugs, "but it's not. I'm not a computer person at all, but I know that it can be used to make music."

Lesh's collaboration with Lagin took the form of improvisations between the Dead's sets in 1974, and an album called *Seastones*, released in 1975. "Ned just had people blow, as it were, electronically and on drums and things," says Lesh. "Then he processed the tapes into a form that he could work with in his own way. I still don't understand completely how he arrived at the final product—he used the recordings sort of like the foundation of a building: most of the time you don't hear what was played."

Adding to Lesh's techno-geek image is the oscilloscope in his amp rack, but his stage setup is actually pretty straightforward, starting with an Inter-sound IVP preamp. He uses four 18-inch and four 15-inch speakers by Meyer Sound Labs, the same outfit that designed the Dead's current P.A. Meyer's system uses an electronic processor to monitor the coupling of the speaker to room acoustics and correct phase distortion, yielding truer frequency response and greater efficiency than conventional speakers.

His power amps are Godzillas. "John Meyer says they aren't made right," laughs Lesh, "and they aren't—but they have a slew rate of 600 volts per micro-second, which means that they deliver power the fastest. I need that because of the transients from the titanium picks." Wattage is relative, he adds. "Some say it's 600 watts and some say it's 1,000, but all I know is that it can be as loud as Garcia—and that's some doing. ☐

# DIGITAL SYNTHESIZERS

A Guide to the Computer Keyboard Revolution

BY FREFF



The formidable Prism, with bubble memory, updated sampling and multi-track capability.

You'd have to be dead not to notice: computers are everywhere. In offices and homes, in cars and grocery stores, in the bar down the block... everywhere. Dick Cavett pumps for Apple in between toothpaste and deodorant commercials, Japan slugs it out with America for the honor of having the fastest microchip on the block, and last year that juvenile delinquent of computers, the lowly video game, took in more money than the record, movie, book and TV industries combined. Now, with lots of fanfare and even more confusion, the digital revolution has come to keyboards.



Synthia's touch-control plasma screen.

Let's step back a minute. It sounds nifty, but just what does it really mean? Digital—what's that? And that other word, "revolution"—we've all heard that one too many times. We're cautious. These new instruments raise big, basic questions and we deserve some big, basic answers.

**BBQ #1:** Revolutionary, eh?

**BBA #1:** Yes. It's a completely different way of thinking about sound. That means new possibilities for playing, composing, recording and performing. This is no hazy promise. It's real. Right now there are enough digital instruments to offer every music an (not just keyboardists) an earful of miracles. But remember—no revolution ever invalidated the past. Digital is a big sweeping wave, and a thrill, but it won't make your coffee for you in the morning, or replace your Minimoog (or your Strat or your Stradivarius), or get you that glowing record contract. Digital isn't better than analog (not yet, anyway). It's just different. And it can't put talent in your hands or heart that wasn't there to start with.

**BBQ #2:** So what is it? What's it do that analog can't?

**BBA #2:** Count from zero to ten, and then congratulate yourself—you're at least five times smarter than a computer, which can only sit there and hum a string of zeros and ones. The trick is, it hums very fast (the official slang for this is "number crunching"). Now in an analog synth, you shape voltages that are *analogous* ("like or similar") to the sound you're producing. Play a sine wave at A-440 and you actually shove a sine wave at 440 cycles per second through a series of amplifiers and filters. In a digital synth what happens instead is that the computer crunches numbers in

pre-arranged ways, nothing but strings of zeros and ones, until it is told to send the numbers to a DAC (Digital to Analog Converter), which turns them into an A-440 a loudspeaker or tape deck can understand. Digital's strength comes from bossing those numbers around. Given a powerful computer, you can make them jump through all sorts of hoops. Want a waveform shaped like the Manhattan skyline? Want your clarinet sound to become a steel drum if you strike the key extra fast? Just crack the whip on those numbers. Want it to do the same thing, same time, every time? No problem; digital can remember it all for you. Analog can't. (Analog instruments with memories, like the Prophet V, are actually *hybrids*; they have some kind of microprocessor built into the system to keep track of changes.) Digital can also *sample* (record) natural sounds and convert them into numbers, allowing you to play any sound you can analyze, from trumpets to raindrops to real live musical chairs; it can let you precision-design your own waveforms and envelopes, do multi-track recording without a tape deck of any kind, set up your own scales and tunings, print out your improvisations in musical notation... and lots of other things that analog will never be able to do, because analog instruments are locked into the limitations of their hardware. They make beautiful fat, rich sounds, exactly the thing they were designed to do, and nothing else.

Of course, digital is also limited by its hardware, and little things like the laws of physics. If your computer's operating speed is, say, 35,000 cycles per second, then it can only produce accurate sound up to 17,500 cycles. Try to play a note with harmonics higher than that and the computer can't count the zeros and ones right. Instead it will "fold them over" in a process referred to as *aliasing*, which usually creates very unmusical and unexpected offerings in the lower registers. (Of course, every limitation is an opportunity in disguise. With some

Play video games while you're waiting for your guitarist to tune up!





care and thought, aliasing noise can be made to add to the music quality of a signal, much the same way the dirty sound of an old tube amp can make for a more exciting guitar part.)

The neat thing about software is that it keeps getting better, so your instrument keeps getting better, too. An example: the alphaSyntauri digital synth uses an Apple II computer and a couple of Mountain Computer oscillator cards, plus its own keyboard and software. Every few months or so the programmers, in response to their own creative urges or some specific market need, come up with new software applications. Buy a copy (the price varies depending on the program) and your alphaSyntauri is once more a state-of-the-art instrument.

Most of the digitals, you see, can't be considered finished instruments. What they really are are eternal prototypes. They'll keep changing and growing and improving as long as you and the company that built them (or anyone else who understands the hard and soft innards of the beasts) can think of new things to try. **BBQ #3:** *Presuming we're convinced—and we're still dubious, mind you—what kind of choices are we facing?*

**BBA #3:** Digital synths fall into four broad categories (push-button, hybrid, sampler and programmable) and two basic price ranges (Fairly Reasonable and Very Expensive). Some overlap categories. And one musician's Expensive is another's Dirt Cheap. Look over the following list of comparisons while keeping your own resources and needs in mind. All prices are suggested list.

**PUSH-BUTTON:** RMI KC-II Keyboard Computer (\$4,750)  
Synergy (\$5,295)  
Yamaha GS2 (\$6,900)  
Yamaha GS1 (\$16,000)

Push-buttons are the combo organs of the digital world. Their sounds are built in, some tone control is offered to the player, but not true synthesis. The first argument favoring this approach is cost. Cutting out programmability keeps it down. The other goes like this: nearly all Prophets that come back to the factory for service or a new battery have the original presets. Unaltered. Obviously, the reasoning runs, nobody is inventing new sounds. They're just playing the presets. So why build in what won't get used? (A note: the KC-II was designed long before this particular argument arose.) Imagine Yamaha's surprise when the complaints began! Apparently, no one had ever thought that all those Prophet owners might be using the cassette interface to store their own sounds while the instrument was being serviced, to avoid being ripped off....

*continued on page 84*

# LATE NIGHT'S PAUL SHAFFER

Live TV Music Comes of Age

BY DAN FORTE



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Shaffer modeled his *Late Night* quartet after a lounge band in a topless bar.

"We are *thrilled* to be here," the band-leader enthuses with mock sincerity, "and, of course, by 'we,' I just mean me." Me, in this case, is keyboardist Paul Shaffer, who is thrilled to be the music director of NBC's *Late Night with David Letterman*. And in between such regular features as Stupid Pet Tricks, Viewer Mail and films by Letterman's dog, Bob, Shaffer and "The World's Most Dangerous Band" have been treating viewers to some of the best rock and R&B ever to occupy the airwaves. As Shaffer puts it, in his typical mock show-biz fashion: "It's a gassy gig, it's a fresh kind of kick."

With New York studio aces Hiram Bullock on guitar, Will Lee on bass and Steve Jordan on drums—with Paul playing piano, Hammond B-3 organ and Oberheim OB-Xa synthesizer—the group plays snippets from "Green Onions," "You Can't Sit Down," "Love And Happiness," Motown tunes, Beatles songs and Rolling Stones selections whenever there's a pause in the talk-show action. "The idea of the group," explains the thirty-two-year-old band-leader, "is it's supposed to be like an organ-based combo—a four-piece organ trio. The first consideration was that the show could only afford four guys

and the set is really small, so the question was, how do you accomplish that? The idea was to sound like a lounge group. I used to see a group like this in a topless bar in Canada. And I played a lot of organ as a kid, in rock bands. So we just play the tunes that everybody knows, our favorite songs. And this is the best band I could possibly have to do this gig."

Ted Nugent agrees. When he was recently on *Late Night* he donned a Les Paul for a little jamming and referred to Shaffer's boys as "the hottest band on television." The group has also provided superb and soulful backing for a wide stylistic range of guests, including: poet Allen Ginsberg, rock 'n' roll wildman Wayne Cochran, comedian Bill Murray (singing "Let's Get Physical"), the "Godfather of Soul" James Brown, seminal rocker turned evangelist Little Richard (singing a gospel tune), trash film actor/actress Divine, jazz harmonica legend Toots Thielmans, boogie pianist Commander Cody, and even Tony Clifton, Andy Kaufman's lounge singing alter ego, in a medley that included "That's Life" and "Volare."

Shaffer got his musical start playing lounges in his native Canada. "We're talking Thunder Bay, Ontario," he points out; "that's where I grew up. I started playing by ear pretty early as a kid, playing rock 'n' roll. My first band was called the Fabulous Fugitives, and we did top forty. But we were working for the toughest audience in the world up there. We would do shows with continuity and medleys, and pretend that people were listening, but they weren't. Then I went to school in Toronto and did lounge work."

Paul eventually made it to New York, landed a job in the pit band for *Godspell*, and got his first acting job on a short-lived TV sitcom called *A Year at the Top*, which had a record deal tie-in a la *The Monkees*. That show was produced by Don Kirshner, and Shaffer's association with the music mogul came in handy on his next television job, *Saturday Night Live*, where he uncannily impersonated Kirshner introducing the Blues Brothers for the first time. Shaffer was musical director on Belushi and Aykroyd's albums, *Briefcase Full Of Blues* and

Made In America, but, unfortunately, could not appear in *The Blues Brothers* movie because of a conflicting engagement on Broadway with Gilda Radner.

*Late Night's* format doesn't allow much space for Shaffer's comedic and acting skills, but when the camera turns his way he makes the most of it. When one viewer wrote in complaining about Paul's penchant for 60s rock, Shaffer answered with the immortal words of P.F. Sloan's "Eve Of Destruction," complete with medallion and Nehru shirt. When Steve Jordan had to temporarily leave the show for a tour of Japan, a middle-aged woman was chosen from the studio audience as his replacement. As Jordan got the baffled-but-willing housewife started on a single-stroke tom roll, the band broke into "Wipe Out," complete with drum breaks.

Considering the problems most rock units have had trying to condense their sound into 2-inch television speakers across the country, the Shaffer band comes through loud and clear with remarkable consistency. Paul credits the show's sound engineer, Pam Gibson, with the superior results. "She just happens to be good," he states. "She's rare among the engineers you run into in TV land. Secondly, the fact that there's only four instruments I think gives you a better shot, because it's clear anyway, whereas most TV shows have horns. And we're on four nights a week, so we get a chance to come in the next day and say, 'Pam, we couldn't hear the bass last night,' or whatever. We would play louder were it not for the fact that the camera operators have to hear and communicate on the floor."

As for his future plans, Shaffer believes, "You can't really think too far ahead. I like to do a little bit of everything, so it's hard to say what you'll do next. I'm always prepared to go back and play lounges in Canada, too. You have to be prepared for that eventuality. It's going to be good when we get the show down even slicker. I want to be able to take advantage of the fact that it's a small band to do nutty, impromptu things. I want to be able to do anything, know every tune. I think one of the things I can do is be versatile. I do know a lot of styles just from being a kid and listening and liking it. So I make use of that skill."

Contrary to a rumor (started by Shaffer himself), Paul will not be retiring from *Late Night*. Last June he did retire on the air three or four times in a period of two weeks, but each time he'd make a comeback before the next commercial break. "And I did come back," he says solemnly, "because of the love and respect that I have for the people in the business...and by 'the business,' of course, I mean the industry." ■

G I G G I N G

## FESTIVAL SOUND

### A Blow-by-Blow Account of David Sanborn's Visit to the Home of the Braves

BY MARC SILAG



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Sanborn and Hiram Bullock's effortless show masked hours of frenzied, skilled activity.

Bleary-eyed and jet-lagged after a recent European tour assignment, I shuffled to the mailbox one morning to find the usual assortment of junk mail, some bills and an envelope from saxophonist David Sanborn's L.A. management office. Forgetting for the moment that thin envelopes have traditionally been carriers of grim news (draft notices, college rejections, telephone shut-off notices, etc.) I opened the letter suspecting it contained information regarding an upcoming concert Sanborn was scheduled to play in Atlanta as part of that city's edition of the Kool Jazz Festival.

#### David Sanborn Itinerary

Date: Friday, June 25, 1982  
 Flight: EA Eastern Airlines #101 LGA/ATL  
 Venue: Atlanta Stadium/Kool Jazz Festival  
 PERFORMING WITH MILES DAVIS (opening) HERBIE HANCOCK, SPYRO GYRA & GEORGE BENSON  
 NO SOUNDCHECKS FOR ANYONE DUE TO BRAVES GAME THE NIGHT BEFORE  
 SHOW STARTS AT 8 PM; DOORS OPEN AT 7 PM  
 NO HOTEL: FLIGHT BACK TO NEW YORK IMMEDIATELY AFTER GIG  
 Flight: EA Eastern Airlines #444 ATL/JFK

That was it. No note from Dick Tompkins, David's road manager. Just the facts.

NO soundcheck! Called on account of ballgame? NO HOTEL? Flight back to New York after gig? What fun!

I had three priorities. First I had to make sure the promoter rented the proper band gear as required—we wouldn't carry our own on this trip. Sanborn's band, Hiram Bullock (guitar), Marcus Miller (bass), James "Sugar Bear" Skelton (keys) and Buddy Williams (drums), are a demanding but reasonable group of first-rate musicians. My gig is to assure they've got decent equipment to play on. Secondly, without benefit of a soundcheck, I had to make sure that signals were straight with the



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Stadium sound is a whole new ballgame.

house and sound crew. I could see that I'd have about forty-five minutes in which to set up my stage equipment, mike it, check mike lines and monitor sends. David likes to hear himself well out front in the monitor mix so I prayed to the monitor gods for their blessings at

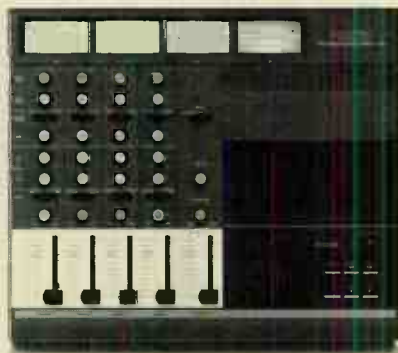


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the home of the Braves.

Advance contact is mandatory and prudent in any situation, but particularly when working with this kind of schedule. Calls down to Atlanta provided me with the information I needed. McCune Audio of San Francisco seems to have won the Kool Festival sound sweepstakes and their presence on the Kool circuit is considered a blessing to many an engineer, including me. As for the stage logistics, it was up to the Kool production staff to keep that together, but I let them know in advance what was needed to do my show and mailed a stage and mike plot ahead of me.

The day of the show, we arrived in Atlanta at 4 p.m. The first thing I noticed as we pulled onto the underground roadway that circles beneath the 52,000-seat stadium was Hank Aaron's parking space. The second thing I noticed was center field, where the Kool staff had constructed a large tarpaulin covered structure that sat just behind second base and looked across the first base line. The sixty-foot wide stage was in fact two separate production stages, side by side to accommodate the impressive lineup of talent, while keeping set change times to a minimum. While Dick Tompkins led the band to the dressing room, generously provided by the umpires of the National League, I headed across the field in search of the fearless technicians upon whom our Atlanta performance depended.

Dennis Griewe and Mark St. Louis, the two Kool production staffers responsible for the staging and production schedule, were easy to find. All I had to do was look for the guys with the walkie-talkies strapped to their belts and the concerned looks on their faces. I found Dennis first.

"Hi. Dennis? Marc Silag with the David Sanborn Band."

"Okay, Your gear is piled over there. Did you bring your own drums? There's the set of white Pearls, but Alphonse (Mouzon) is using them on Herbie's set so you'd better use the set over there (pointing); Miles hits at eight sharp, stage left, Herbie's on after Miles, stage right. We'll strike Miles's gear and set you up during Herbie's set. Thanks for sending a stage plot. We couldn't get pedals for the (Hammond) B-3. The guy over there is Mike Brady with McCune, you'd better get together with him about your P.A. setup. You should have your beer and soda in the dressing room already. Any problems see me. David plays a forty-five minute set. We've got to stay cool on time tonight. If you need any . . ." His voice faded and I never heard the end of the sentence; Dennis had his head stuck under the lid of a Steinway working on a belligerent piano

*continued on page 108*

# HAL BLAINE

The Fundamentals of Prolific Hitmaking

BY DAVID LEVINE



**Don't be disappointed to learn that six of your favorite drummers were Hal Blaine.**

It's an old story, almost as old as the decaying sign atop the Hollywood Hills. As soon as a session musician enters the front door of a Los Angeles recording studio, he or she becomes invisible. Sure, their bank accounts grow. But they remain unknown, unrecognized, unnoticed and unacknowledged. Yet, in a few special cases, a session player can rise above the role of backup musician. One such case is Hal Blaine, who rewrote the book on studio drumming.

In the early 1960s, after working with Tommy Sands and Patti Page, Hal was recruited by Phil Spector. "Da Doo Ron Ron" by the Crystals was one of Hal's first Spector hits.

"Spector did many brilliant things," Hal recalls. "With Phil the tape was running from the minute you stepped into the studio. We never knew what he was going to take. Drumming for Phil was always keeping a beat. It was accompanying but it was up-front. Phil would hold me back from doing fills. Every once in a while he would just point at me, which meant for me to play. I was hardly doing any cymbals with Phil. He had me play mostly snare drum and floor tom backbeats in unison.

"Spector's sessions were like big house parties. There was always a big sign on the door that said 'Closed Session,' but Phil would grab anybody that walked by and throw them in somehow. The famous 'Wall of Sound' was created by a big orchestra: three or four guitars, at least two bass players, a drummer and five or more percussionists. Phil

would yell to me to give the guys something—maracas, tambourine, anything—to play.

"'A Taste Of Honey' by the Tijuana Brass, which was my first Record of the Year (1965), was so much fun you can almost hear the guys laughing. The quarter notes on the bass drum going into the verse were originally an open fill. The band kept coming in funny so on one take I slugged the bass drum straight through. It was a joke but somebody said, 'Hey, that's it; leave it in!' Playing straight four on the bass drum and that bass drum sound became associated with me and I got a lot of work from it."

The Spector sessions established Hal as one of the "first call" session drummers in L.A. From the mid-60s through the 70s, Hal played on over 150 gold records and 7 Records of the Year. He backed the Beach Boys, the Mamas & the Papas, Sonny & Cher, Neil Diamond, the 5th Dimension, the Byrds, Barbra Streisand, the Association, Simon & Garfunkel, the Monkees, Frank Sinatra and the Captain & Tenille. Hal's playing was so prolific that fellow drummer Bruce Gary once complained, "One of the biggest disappointments in my life was finding out that six of my favorite drummers were Hal Blaine."

Of course, the importance of Hal's drumming is not in the fact that it was so successful, but why it was. Rock 'n' roll drumming made the drummer even more of an accompanist than he had been while the drums became more and

HOWARD ROSENBERG

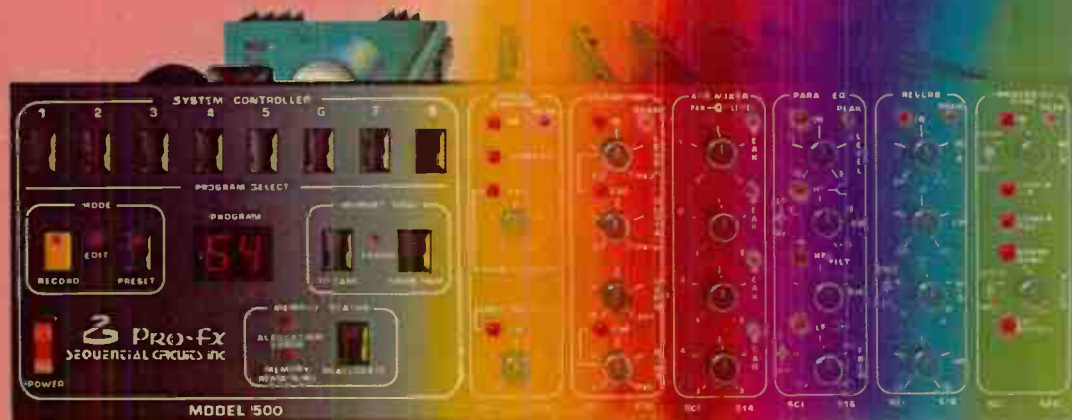


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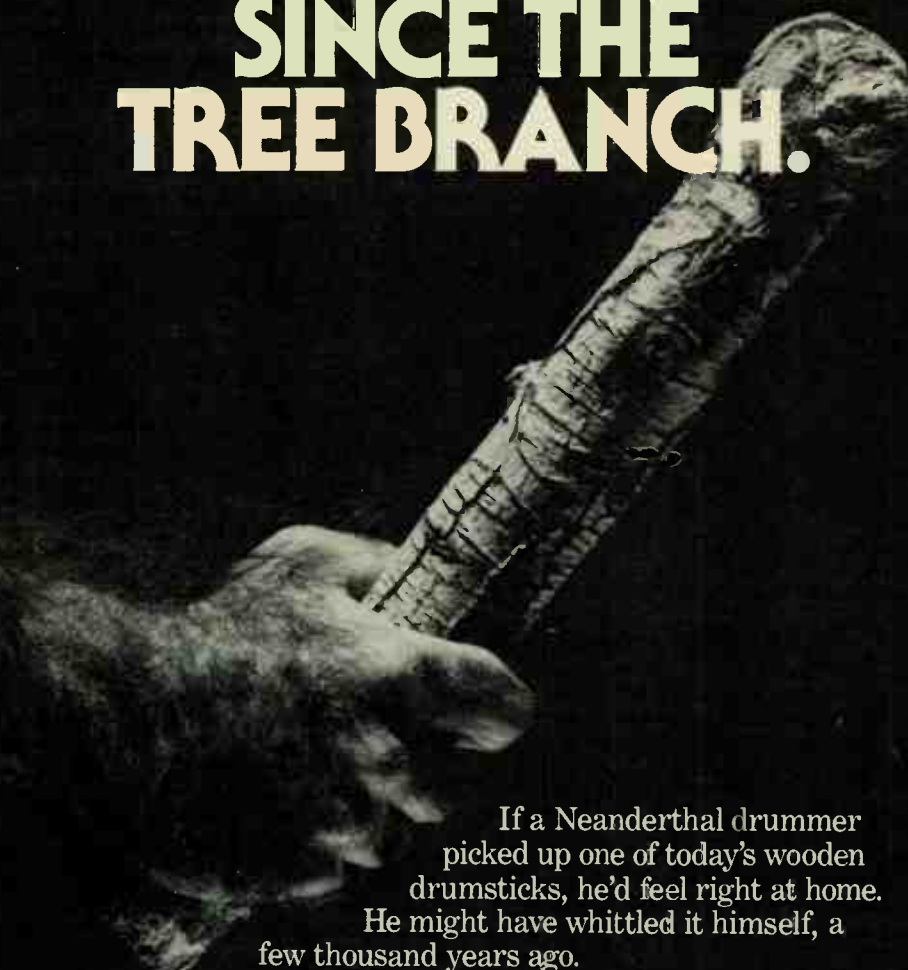


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more prominent. No longer was it  
enough just to keep time. The drum  
tracks had to "get a feel," "lay down a  
groove," "put it in the pocket." The key to  
Hal's playing was his unique ability to  
always find the right feel, to perfectly  
define the pulse of each song. When you  
talk about songs like "Surfin' USA," "Mr.  
Tambourine Man," "Up, Up And Away,"  
"Last Train To Clarksville," "Monday,  
Monday," "Bridge Over Troubled  
Water," and "Strangers In The Night,"  
you're talking about a lot of very different  
feels.

Hal explains his attitude. "No matter  
who I was working for my approach was  
always the same. I always aimed for the  
masses. They're the ones who make a  
record a hit. I listened closely to the  
music and then I let nature take over. I  
mean, it seemed to me that the simple  
backbeat was the most sensual and the  
easiest to feel. I knew if I went crazy,  
people wouldn't dance.

"Part of it was maturity. I had already  
been through that stage where you have  
to play every bar completely full of  
drums. I realized that I was an accompa-  
nist. But, I found that I was doing some-  
thing different, something more comfort-  
able, behind vocalists. I seemed to have  
a sense for the music that other  
drummers didn't have. I guess because I  
had been a singer I had a better under-  
standing of lyrics. Certain things would  
turn me on so I'd do something on the  
drums here or there. These became little  
hooks. If they happened in the first eight  
bars, they'd happen again in the second  
eight or the last eight. People would tune  
in to those hooks."

Hal's impact on drumming was not  
limited to his hit-making style, however.  
He was also involved in creating a new  
drum sound and a big trend in drum  
equipment. Hal saw the changes in  
music that were happening day by day.  
He was one of the first to realize that, like  
rock 'n' roll, the plastic head and individ-  
ual miking were here to stay.

"Prior to the 60s, calf heads had to be  
tuned tight and, for his sound to cut  
through, a drummer had to use a thin  
snare drum pitched as high as he could  
get it. Even in the Spector days, drums  
were still pretty tight. What I was doing  
with Spector was giving him the highs of  
the snare drum and the lows with the  
floor tom. Both of them together became  
the rock snare sound. Today most guys  
use the big, fat, snare drums because  
they want that fatter, deeper, sound.

"The lower drum sounds seemed to  
blend better with the music I was doing. I  
knew that most other instruments  
sounded best in their mid-range, so I  
started lowering my snare drum to its  
mid-range. For the Beach Boys, I took  
my snare drum and put it lower than  
mid-range; by doing that I got an even  
fatter sound. I started thinking about  
what would happen if I did that to my  
tom-toms."



Lots of drummers had already been experimenting with the drier, flatter, sound of single-headed drums, so Hal wasn't the first to take the bottom heads off his tom-toms. But, by doing that and then lowering the toms to their mid-range, Hal found a warmer, deeper, sound. The only problem was that now the range of the drumset had been lowered to its middle, too. To compensate for that, Hal and drum technician Howie Oliver took the mid-range theory a step, or rather seven steps, further.


To increase the range of his drumset, Hal added seven single-headed fiberglass drums (7½x6, 7½x8, 8x10, 8x12, 9x13, 10x14, 10x16) to his standard four-piece blue sparkle Ludwig kit (14x22 bass, 9x13 and 16x16 double-headed toms, 5½x14 metal snare). These "monster toms" set the music world on its ear. They were first used on "The Snake," by Al Wilson, in 1966 or '67. The designs were given to the Ludwig Drum Company and for the next fifteen years "concert" toms and "Octaplus" drum sets sold like crazy. With the recent exception of 12-inch high-hats, Hal's drum and Zildjian cymbal set-up (22-inch medium ride, 17-inch crash with rivets, 16-inch crash, 14-inch high-hats) hasn't been altered since.

It wasn't too long after the monster toms came along that the Carpenters followed. Starting with "Close To You," Hal played on twelve gold Carpenters records in a row.

"The Carpenters' songs were songs that needed breath," Hal says. "The fills I did on those records were noteworthy in that they changed the fill world. It started happening on those records, with those songs. It went back to my philosophy that one note in the right place is worth a million sixteenth notes."

Instead of doing stock drum fills made up of consecutive sixteenth notes, Hal used his extended-range tom-toms to play a few select notes, almost out of rhythm. The fills still had the characteristic descending motion but the space they created generated a looser, softer, middle-of-the-road feeling. As Hal put it, "That {style} seemed to become the status quo."

A lot of what Hal Blaine did became status quo. His to-the-point playing and spacier fills created a new feel for music. The monster toms and deeper drum sounds, led to big changes in drums over the past twenty years. And Hal Blaine's hit-making attitude redefined the role of the studio drummer while establishing new levels of success, recognition and influence.

"Being influential comes with hit records," Hal concludes. "When you're successful people want to do what you did. I'd walk into sessions where the producer would tell me he wanted the drums to sound like a certain record he'd heard. Nine times out of ten that drummer would be me." 

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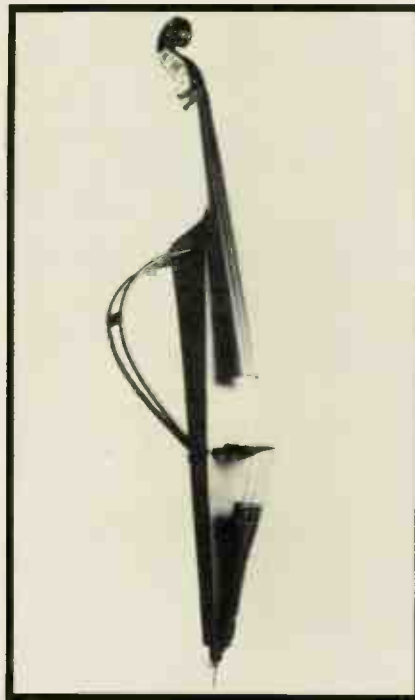
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D E V E L O P M E N T S

# Z-BASS

The Missing Link Finally Appears

BY J.C. COSTA



**Henk Van Zalinge's electric-acoustic stand-up bass is starting to catch on.**


The missing link from the 400-year-old evolutionary chain of the acoustic double bass and electric bass guitar, Henk Van Zalinge's new Z-Bass seemingly should have popped up well over thirty years ago, long before Leo Fender shook the foundations with his future-primitive solid-body design. An acoustic-electric hybrid in the most precise sense, the Z-Bass represents a conceptual half-step wherein the upright bass guitar is totally redesigned into a streamlined marriage of acoustic tone generation and modern electronics.

Van Zalinge, a Dutch automotive engineer who builds racing cars and state-of-the-art turbo engines, has come up with a wholly legitimate and instantly recognizable bass "voice" that is neither intended to supplant the conventional upright nor surpass the electric instrument. Patterned on the dimensions of a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -size acoustic bass, the Z-Bass uses a radically slimmed-down body or tone chamber (Van Zalinge based his design on extensive lab analysis) in conjunction with a piezo-electric Z-Transducer pickup so that the characteristically rich, dark tones of the bass can be expanded

and enhanced by the wonderful world of electronic amplification.

The Z-Bass offers some visible advantages over its predecessor: reduced size and weight, an aerodynamic shape that eliminates the lower bout of the instrument and provides easier thumb positions in the higher registers, a faster string-to-finger response and, because it can be directly accessed electronically, the Z-Bass produces a cavernously "big" sound that easily cuts through other amplified instruments without the enervating feedback problems that often result when miking the acoustic bass.

Police frontman/bassist Sting has already made conspicuous use of the Z-Bass onstage and in the studio ("Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic"). Ray Brown uses one to teach students but, as a longtime upright traditionalist, is still somewhat ambivalent about its ability to seduce young students of the bass away from the acoustic. The virtuoso Norwegian jazz bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen uses one. And who knows? If some of the classical conductors loosened up about electronically amplified instruments, the lean and mean shape of the Z-Bass might find its way into major classical orchestras—in fact, several European radio and TV orchestras are already using them.

Like many legit design innovations, the Z-Bass uses the most traditional materials in its construction: all-mahogany laminates for the body, maple for the neck and headstock, mahogany for the bridge and ebony for the fingerboard. Van Zalinge's patented pickup system actually senses the string vibrations and the sound from two different points in the tone chamber. The cone-shaped pickup can be swiveled in several directions to radically alter the overall texture and the sound of the attack. It can also be bowed like the double-bass and is compatible with any modern amplification system. The only prohibitive factor remaining is the price, which, admittedly less than one tenth that of an old acoustic, is still enough (approximately \$2,500 list) to make one stop and consider. The only other question is, why did it take so long for the Z-Bass to happen? 



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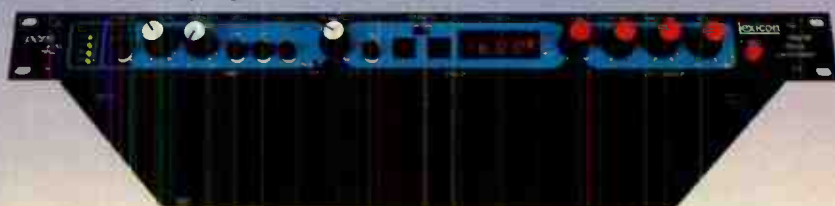
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In this field, both the older KC-II and brand-new Synergy are the superior instruments.

The KC-II, an offshoot of development work done for the Allen digital church organ, offers excellent tonal and dynamic control through a well thought-out, expressive set of foot pedals. It also makes hundreds of additional waveforms available on a series of punched cards, up to four of which can be fed into the KC-II and played against or mixed with the presets at one time. It's a great instrument, as Roger Powell and others have demonstrated both on record and on stage.

The Synergy makes up for its non-programmability by giving you a fairly wide range of control over the twenty-

four cartridge-loaded presets you can have on line at one time. First, these sounds were actually designed on the General Development System, one of the best of the big digital machines. Secondly, thanks to the demanding tastes of Tom Piggott (this country's finest synth demonstrator), it has a ton of musically useful features: good modifiers, a 4-track sequencer, intelligent portamento and more. The cartridge slot will soon support a home computer interface that can be used, among other things, to increase the sequencer's memory and allow you to store compositions permanently.

But don't count Yamaha out of digital on the non-strength of their first showing. Around eighty percent of their keyboard

division's efforts are devoted to it. Watch for some very strong instruments in the 1983 season, programmable ones, based on an upwardly compatible design. Planned obsolescence is definitely *not* the wave of the digital keyboard future. (Yamaha is also the owner of the patent on a major form of digital synthesis called FM—Frequency Modulation.)

**HYBRID:** Voyetra Eight (\$5,000)

Rhodes Chroma (\$5,295)

McLeyvier (\$24,680 to

\$49,000 and up)

When is a hybrid more digital than analog? When it has an external computer interface, like the Rhodes Chroma, originally designed by ARP, and the Voyetra Eight, from Octave-Plateau. The Voyetra has the more exciting approach. The VCOs, VCAs and VCFs are all analog, to keep that thick sound. But *everything* else is digital, and controlled by an Apple-compatible 6502 microprocessor. The synth itself is just a sturdily built box, designed to fit in a rack mount. It connects by a mike cable to a velocity- and pressure-sensitive keyboard, and—if you want the extra computing power—to an Apple, through its game paddle port. That gives you a lot of programming power. And unlike the current Chromas, this Apple interface works. Virtually any part of the signal chain can be routed to any other, or to several simultaneously. This instrument—and the string and piano modules that are being designed for computer-link with it—will be giving stiff competition to quite a few firms, especially Sequential Circuits.

The McLeyvier is a hybrid designed to compete with the top-line digitals, like Synclavier. It gets lots of points for its design, its programming language—English, by heaven—and computing power, its music printing facilities and most especially its Canadian manufacturer's skill at PR. Sending out demo invitations on official Canadian Embassy stationery is very classy. But it loses points for its actual sound. In both demos I attended, it didn't *sound* any better than a mid-priced analog machine. The general theory in the field is that the unit could actually sound fine, but the engineers on the project got carried away with the computer side and didn't spend much time actually "voicing" it: designing good, strong sounds. That's a mistake. Sound is the absolute bottom line in a musical instrument, even one that can play Beethoven symphonies backwards at the press of a button (no kidding).

**SAMPLER:** Emulator (\$7,995)

There are other digital machines which sample, but Emulator is the only one that does it exclusively. Unfortunately, all the bugs aren't out. Be careful in looking this one over. Sampling can be very effective (witness Geoff Downes's use of the Fairlight, and much of the

*continued on page 101*

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**Shure Brothers** has announced the introduction of their new Professional Entertainer series microphones, designed to specifically fit the individual needs of the instrumentalist and vocalist. The basic PE series includes four new vocal microphones and five new instrumental microphones. All finished in a contemporary look, these low or high impedance dynamic microphones are engineered for peak performance and long-life durability. All models in the PE series include a locking or non-locking on-off switch, an internal anti-pop windscreen and a built-in shock mount. For optimum ease of product selection, the new line is packaged and labeled to take the guesswork out of selecting the perfect microphone, with application recommendations and specifications a part of every new package designed. Shure Brothers Inc., 222 Hartrey Ave., Evanston, IL 60204.

**Dynacord** introduces the Dynacord DDL12 Digital Delay Line, featuring 0.5 to 500 millisecond delay range (1000 Ms with expander module with no change in specifications), 96 db dynamic range, balanced and unbalanced inputs and outputs, built-in VCO with three waveforms for flanging and chorusing, Quasi 14 bit AD/DA, 20Hz-12KHz frequency response at all delay settings and virtually noise-free operation with inaudible compressing. Unicord/ Dynacord, 89 Frost St., Westbury, NY 11590.



**Silver Eagle Designs** of Van Nuys, California introduces eight new Mohave designs for 1982. These beautiful Southwestern heritage designs give each genuine leather and heavy tapestry-style fabric guitar strap a special character of its own. Many of these designs and colors can only be reproduced on woven fabric material such as is done in hand-crafted weaving of rugs, blankets and tapestries. The fabrics carry the ideas and expressions of the Indian cultures of the United States. Special features include: genuine top-grain leather on one side and beautiful tapestry designed fabric on the other—they're reversible—handy utility pick-pockets—conveniently located at both end of the strap for holding picks, slides, capos, etc.; no metal or plastic parts eliminates scratching or marring of musical instrument. Silver Eagle Designs, 6747 Valjean Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91406. (213) 786-8696.



**Groove Tubes** has expanded their line of matched output tubes and selected preamp tubes to include virtually all models required for domestic and European tube amplifiers. The recent additions include matched duets, quartets and sextets for English Marshall, Hi-Watt and Vox, for older Gibson amps, Ampeg 6 and early Music Man. Groove Tubes has also made available many rare antique tube types previously unavailable to owners of antique and classic amps like the early tweed series of Fender. Also, Groove Tubes is now offering many hard to find tube amp replacement parts such as quality tube shields and ceramic replacement sockets for Marshall and Fender. All these new products have been added to the complete line of matched output tubes and selected preamp tubes for Fender and Marshall already available from Groove Tubes. Groove Tubes Box 4753, Sylmar, CA 91342. (213) 367-3206.



**TEAC** announces a new metal floor console, the CS-607, with standard 19-inch rack mount frames which occupy 12 EIA Standard Units (21 inches) and are pre-drilled and tapped, so that any cassette deck, open reel deck, amplifier or other component may be mounted. The tilt angle may be adjusted to 3 different positions for easier editing or maintenance. The structure also allows space to rack mount an outboard dbx or an additional cassette deck on the lower platform. This floor console is made of metal and features heavy duty casters for easy mobility. TEAC, 7733 Telegraph Rd., Montebello, CA 90640.

**James B. Lansing Sound** introduces the 2445 Compression Driver, a 2-inch throat, high frequency component featuring a newly developed pure titanium diaphragm with JBL's exclusive diamond-pattern surround. Combining the ruggedness of phenolic and composite type diaphragms with the outstanding frequency response of aluminum and exotic metals, the 2445 offers unprecedented high power reproduction and superior durability. It incorporates a 4-inch edgewood aluminum ribbon voice coil and JBL's unique ferrite magnet structure for extended distortion-free response. This range of performance attributes makes the virtually indestructible 2445 an ideal component for both high power sound reinforcement systems and custom studio monitor installations. JBL, 8500 Balboa Blvd., Northridge, CA 91329.



The model 500 Pro-FX (Programmable Effects) from **Sequential Circuits** is the first integrated signal processing system to offer the convenience of a modular rack mount design with the flexibility and control of full programmability. Musicians, sound engineers, producers and home studios can now consolidate all their effects and mixing into one package and have instant and accurate control over a wide variety of sound changes while playing or mixing. The mainframe includes a system controller and space for six effects modules while also providing power and program control for up to thirty modules, mounted in three additional expansion chassis. The first 500 series modules available will include a phase shifter, distortion/sustainer, 4 into 2 mixer, parametric equalizer, reverb, sync/transposer and a delay/chorus/flanger. All switch and knob settings on each module may be stored and recalled in 64 programs, with immediate access to any combination of effects. A cassette interface permits sets of 64 programs to be saved on cassette tapes, thus creating a library of effects settings. Sequential Circuits, Inc., 3051 N. First St., San Jose, CA 95134.





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# RECORD REVIEWS

## The Who

*It's Hard* (Warner Bros.)



This, of course, is not a Who album. The Who were a big-bash beat group who defied anarchy in the U.K. circa 1965. As a band, their extended moment seemed pretty much over by the mid-70s, and the death in 1978 of drummer Keith Moon, their principle anarch, only provided an epitaph for the immovable monument they had become. R.I.P.

So who are these guys? Legendary survivors, soldiering on in search of some fresh context for the 80s, but what becomes a legend most? Certainly not the mantle of elder-rock-statesmanship in which leader Pete Townshend wrapped himself in on his recent solo album, with which he is still fumbling on this second Who LP since Moon's death. With hired hand Kenny Jones providing a more sedate style of drumming, and the guitar-crunch quotient drastically lowered as a result of Townshend's famously impaired hearing, the focus now, more than anything else, is on the lyrics, which are presented with an increasingly embarrassing clarity.

Fortunately, *It's Hard* features none of the precious recitatives that so subverted the Townshend solo record *All The Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes*, and upon hearing a line such as "Any kid can chatter—few can inform," from the title track, an optimist might be forgiven for hoping that Townshend was actually nailing his own worst pretensions. But then one notes on the lyric sheet that the preceding line was characteristically befuddling "Any gang can scatter—few can form," and one realizes that Townshend is simply wrenching rhymes together again. It's not hard, it's depressing.

Townshend aspires to literary effects the way high school jocks once aspired to letter sweaters. He still can't explain, but he's using a lot more words in the attempt. The result is often pure blather. Consider this couplet: "Any stud can

reproduce—few can please/ Anyone can pay—few can lease." Say what? Even when his thoughts are more formally cogent, they tend to be banal. In "Cooks County" we are informed, "People are lonely/ I'll say it again and again and again"—as if mere repetition could somehow save the world.

No, this is not a Who album, but that's not to say it's a bad record, either. The Who are too well-intentioned and, yes, too intelligent to just churn out faceless product and ritually rake in an ever-diminishing flow of royalties. Townshend, with his aching years, may have lost his youthful obsession with loud, rude guitar noises, but they still service the songs of bassist John Entwistle, who contributes three surprisingly appealing tracks here. And Roger Daltrey executes one of his most lyrical vocals on Townshend's otherwise unedifying post-macho "A Man Is A Man."

The single, "Athena," grows on you; "One Life's Enough" is a touching lament for Townshend's lost teen years; "I've Known No War" is a forcefully felt anti-war song (God knows we need them); and the whomping "Cry If You Want" along with Entwistle's "One At A Time," prove that fires can still flare within this again and anguished outfit. But Townshend's lyrics generally shed so little light, one fears the Who may be slowing slipping into darkness. Light a candle for one of the greatest bands in the history of rock 'n' roll. — Kurt Loder

## Jimi Hendrix

*The Hendrix Concerts* (Warner Bros.)

**James Blood Ulmer**

*Black Rock* (Columbia)

**Andy Summers & Robert Fripp**

*I Advance Masked* (A&M)



Hendrix was to rock guitar what Charlie Parker was to jazz saxophone, an innovator who created from the sources of his past a vocabulary that would influence generations of the future. Just as Bird's music deserves to be heard in its entirety,

Hendrix's art and his audience deserve everything that's fit to press, and most of the stuff that isn't. If those awful wire recordings of live Parker are worth hearing (and they are), then so are the soundboard tapes from Jimi's final tour with the Experience. I heard some of the stuff that's circulating among the underground bootleggers when I was up at Bill Natopi's Hendrix Archives last year, and it's a real revelation, music as intense and as free-spirited as any I've heard. Hendrix takes off from tunes like "Spanish Castle Magic" into the uncharted realm between blues and free jazz, leaving Mitchell and Redding flailing and plodding in his wake.

Unfortunately, Alan Douglass, whose legal stranglehold on Hendrix's music seems unbreakable, has other things on his mind. This double live package does include some live-only rare gems along with the greatest hits, but it concentrates on the early years of Jimi's career, when he was still sticking close to the recorded versions of the tunes. Only the final track, "Hear My Train A-Coming," hints at the direction Hendrix took in his last year of concerts.

Jimi's genius jumps out of every cut here, though, particularly the Gibson blues, "Bleeding Heart," in which he combines the sophistication of B.B. and the raw power of Albert into a masterful and totally authentic performance. I wish we had something more interesting than "Hey Joe" and "Wild Thing."

Blood Ulmer's come up with a nifty pun/title and marketing concept for his second Columbia album that plays up the comparisons rock critics have been making between his music and Hendrix's. "Black rock calling," he sings on the title cut, but is he talking about the power of harmolodic music to "go inside the soul of the person and awaken something" (as Hendrix once put it to Dick Cavett) or about the power and wealth symbolized by CBS's Manhattan corporate headquarters? The rest of the album leaves the issue in doubt, mixing Blood's Doberman attack and atonal rhythmic flurries with shabby pop contrivances like backbeat disco handclaps on "Fun House" (you can call it "harmolodic rapping" if you wish, Blood, but I call it jive). The contrast is often



# SOUNDTRACK FEVER

By J.D. Considine

After the astounding success of the *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack album the record industry slowly came to realize that the closer a soundtrack album came to resembling a K-Tel compilation, the better its chances of selling big. Not that this should have been news, since *American Graffiti* was durable enough for MCA to churn out three volumes of oldies as alleged soundtrack material, but it offered a convenient formula for the industry. Unfortunately, the trick wasn't as easy as it seemed. Disco music was immediately latched onto, but performed indifferently; *Thank God It's Friday* sold to Donna Summer fans, but other efforts, like the highly listenable *Looking For Mr. Goodbar* album, sold poorly.

As it turned out, the only reliable formula proved to be "Let Irving Azoff do it." His California all-stars packages have included some of the best-selling soundtracks in recent memory: *FM*, *Cowboy I & II* and *Heavy Metal*. Needless to say, the bigwigs at Asylum must have had a hard time controlling the drool when he started pasting together his latest, *Fast Times At Ridgemont High*. In addition to the expected offerings from Joe Walsh, Poco, Jimmy Buffet and assorted ex-Eagles, Azoff had also collected cuts from Jackson Browne (his first new material in two years), the Go-Go's, Quarterflash, Stevie Nicks, Billy Squier and Sammy Hagar—a feast of potential hits.

And much as I'd like to sneer to the contrary, *Fast Times* lives up to expectations. Jackson Browne's "Somebody's Baby" is one of his best, a simple, unassuming rocker that effectively transposes the wistfulness of *Saturate Before Using* to Browne's current guitar-heavy style. Timothy B. Schmit's "So Much In Love" is cheerfully wimpish, the sort of song Andrew Gold has been trying to write since he got stuck for a followup to "Lonely Boy," while Quarterflash's "Don't Be Lonely" is an appropriately quivering heartbreak number. Some tracks are pleasantly predictable, such as Joe Walsh's goofy "Waffle Stomp" or Billy Squier's son-of-the-stroke "Fast Times," and there are some delightful surprises, like Louise Goffin's engaging "Uptown Boys" or the Ravyn's anthemic "Raised On The Radio" (expect to hear more from these guys). Oddly enough, only the car songs, Donna Summer's "Highway Runner" and the Go-Go's "Speeding" disappoint.

Of course, not every film can afford a big-budget soundtrack of the type Azoff assembles, so they cut corners. One of the more popular ways of doing this is to

commission a few songs and rent the rest, which is exactly what *Summer Lovers* and *Night Shift* do.

*Summer Lovers* has the better excuse of the two—since much of the action takes place in bars and discos in Greece, we get lots of synthesized dancebeat from the likes of Depeche Mode, Heaven 17 and the Cage featuring Nona Hendryx, and the last two would be reason enough to check this one out. But this is also a romance, so producer Randal Kleiser gums up the works by including some gloppy ballads by Stephen Bishop and Chicago (not together, thank God), and tops it all off with a pair of instrumentals by a cut-rate Vangelis, Basil Poledouris. (Visions of Kleiser yelling into a phone, "I don't care who you find, just get me a Greek guy with a synthesizer!")

Burt Bacharach and Carol Sager provided the original music for *Night Shift*, but fortunately Al Jarreau, Quarterflash, Rod Stewart and the Pointer Sisters provide the voices. It's mostly bland AM pop with Quarterflash sounding most like a hit but still not as sharp as the additional material by Marshall Crenshaw, Rufus and, once again, Heaven 17.

A trusty sub-genre in the soundtrack sweepstakes is the reggae movie album, something that has held on largely because *The Harder They Come* sold exceptionally well for retailers who couldn't tell Bob Marley from the I-Threes but figured they should have some reggae in stock. *Countryman*, the latest entry in this field, ought to do well if only because the majority of the songs are by Bob Marley; still, it's worth having if only for Toots & the Maytals' joyous "Bam Bam," Rico's buzzing "Ramble" and a pair of good dub numbers, Aswad's "Mosman Skank" and Lee Perry's "Dreadlocks In Moonlight." Unfortunately, side four features dialog from the film, which makes no sense whatsoever since the film has yet to be released in the U.S.

Finally, there are a few soundtracks that should be avoided at all costs. *Zapped!*, featuring such big names as David Pomerantz, Plain Jane and the Greg Mathieson Project, couldn't have sounded worse if they'd let star Scott Baio do the singing; *Tron* boasts Journey's "Only Solutions" amid Wendy Carlos's semi-symphonic score like the prize in a box of Cracker Jacks, a ploy only an all-day sucker would fall for, and *The Pirate Movie* features singing by Kristy McNichol and Christopher Atkins, something which makes the listener yearn for the good old days of John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John.

extremely jarring, but I'd recommend this record to anyone as an introduction to Blood's music. Ulmer does nothing but play in his unique and totally individual style, and he gets right to the bone every time, which is why he recalls Hendrix without sounding at all the same. Hearing his primal intensity next to Ronny Drayton's extremely competent Hendrix imitations (which remind me of Naugahyde), I understood his music for the first time, and began to meet it and hear it on its own terms.

The ghost of Hendrix also looms over the Andy Summers/Robert Fripp collaboration, which opens with a classic whammy bar/feedback quote from the Book of Licks. But while Blood Ulmer is heir to Hendrix's demonic intensity, Fripp and Summers are among those who have developed Jimi's use of the electric guitar and the tape recorder as orchestra devices. Together they've created a rock version of ECM music out of lush guitar synthesizer textures, spare percussion, Fripp's polymath arpeggios and Summers's spacey chords. Some of the more experimental pieces seem to begin in the middle and stop without ending, like the aural equivalent of a sculptor's preliminary sketches. When the music works, though, it's very good indeed. Summers's romantic sensibilities make an excellent foil for Fripp's intellectual abstractions, and his Tele chimes provoke Fripp into some of his most lyrically emotional synthesizer playing on vinyl. The Policeman's solos don't come off quite as well, but then again he has to deal with those mathematical arpeggios, which are a bit restricting as blowing vehicles for the kind of John Abercrombie licks Summers employs here.

These records remind me again of the depth of Hendrix's talent and of the amazing amount of territory he opened up for the electric guitar, territory in which both Blood Ulmer and Summers & Fripp's music, as different as they are, belong. I can't help wishing he'd lived to acquire tools like the Roland guitar synthesizer and the Floyd Rose tremolo, and to hook up with a really challenging rhythm section (how about Jack DeJohnette and Jamaaladeen Tacuma? so he could've explored more of the frontier himself. — Chris Doering

## Don Henley

*I Can't Stand Still* (Elektra)



The critical book on Don Henley's solo debut holds that it's animating force is the songwriter's anger and that's true. Henley's so angry about modern American times that he throws a haymaker at the TV

news ("Dirty Laundry"), wails bitterly about the electronic age ("Johnny Can't Read") and takes a shot at nuclear warfare ("Them And Us") that, unfortunately, finishes a distant second to Newman's "Let's Drop The Big One."

As one might expect, this anger impairs his accuracy. The very good news here is that when Henley simmers down and takes aim at smaller targets—sexual jealousy, the memory of a love affair left behind in Texas, and such—he is in absolutely peak form. On the best songs here, Henley sounds like he wrote every word with the intention of biting down hard on it with every particle of conviction his whiskey voice can convey.

The best song here is "Nobody's Bus-

iness." In late autumn of 1980, not long after the Eagles broke up, a call for medical help brought the cops to Henley's Los Angeles home, where they found two underage girls and a quantity of drugs. The resultant publicity has made him very bitter, but in a way that makes "Nobody's Business" absolutely compelling. A press kit insists that the song was started by Henley, Bob Seger, Timothy Schmit and Glen Frey during a nighttime jam four years ago, and that Henley and J.D. Souther finished off the words more recently. Teamwork has paid off. Schmit and Russ Kunkel supply a skipping beat with martial overtones, Benmont Tench leans hard on the organ and Danny Kortchmar and Waddy Wachtel trade volleys of electric guitar

behind Henley's fevered complaint. "And I knew," he sings, "I was wastin' my time/ But it was nobody's business/ Nobody's business but mine...." This is the most interesting angriness on the album, because it keeps twisting back on the singer. There's something artistically very rich in Henley's anguish and when it's married with the lyricism of ballads such as "Lilah" (with its introductory harp-and-tin-whistle passage from the Chieftains), it adds up to something that's more art than pop, and worth anybody's time. — Fred Schruers

### Michael McDonald

**If That's What It Takes** (Warner Bros.)



How remarkable that a whole generation of American bands (the Doobie Brothers, Steely Dan, the Eagles) have decided to dis-

band before the cheering fades. Many of the solo careers that will be launched from these divorces will undoubtedly be disappointments, but Michael McDonald, the voice of the Doobie Brothers, will benefit from his new freedom. McDonald's moody, generally downbeat and strikingly grown-up solo effort makes his work with the Doobies seem heavy-handed. Tracks like "Playin' By The Rules" recall in their precise restraint the singer's apprenticeship with Steely Dan during one of their most accomplished periods.

McDonald's songs deal with a worldly man's struggle to believe in romantic love in the face of life's failures. For all McDonald's professed strength of will, the album has an undercurrent of admission that the struggle is doomed. On McDonald's beautiful solo piano muse, "I Can Let Go Now," he summons up the courage to abandon an unrequited love even as his usually deep and confident voice reaches for an unsteady ascent. The suddenly fragile vocal contradicts the lyric's assurance that he'll be okay with heartbreaking understatement. Even uptempo (and superficially upbeat) tunes like "That's Why," "Believe In It," and the Kenny Loggins collaboration, "I Got To Try" sound like brave attempts to whistle past the graveyard.

The compositions and recording itself are built around piano (usually McDonald's rhythmically exact Rhodes) with guitar assigned an embellishing role no more pronounced than the subtle colors added by Greg Phillinganes's acoustic piano and clavinet. This structure inclines the compositions to a blue moodiness less likely in a guitar context (though the remake of "Losin' End," the one track on which guitar is integral, is a heartbreaker too).

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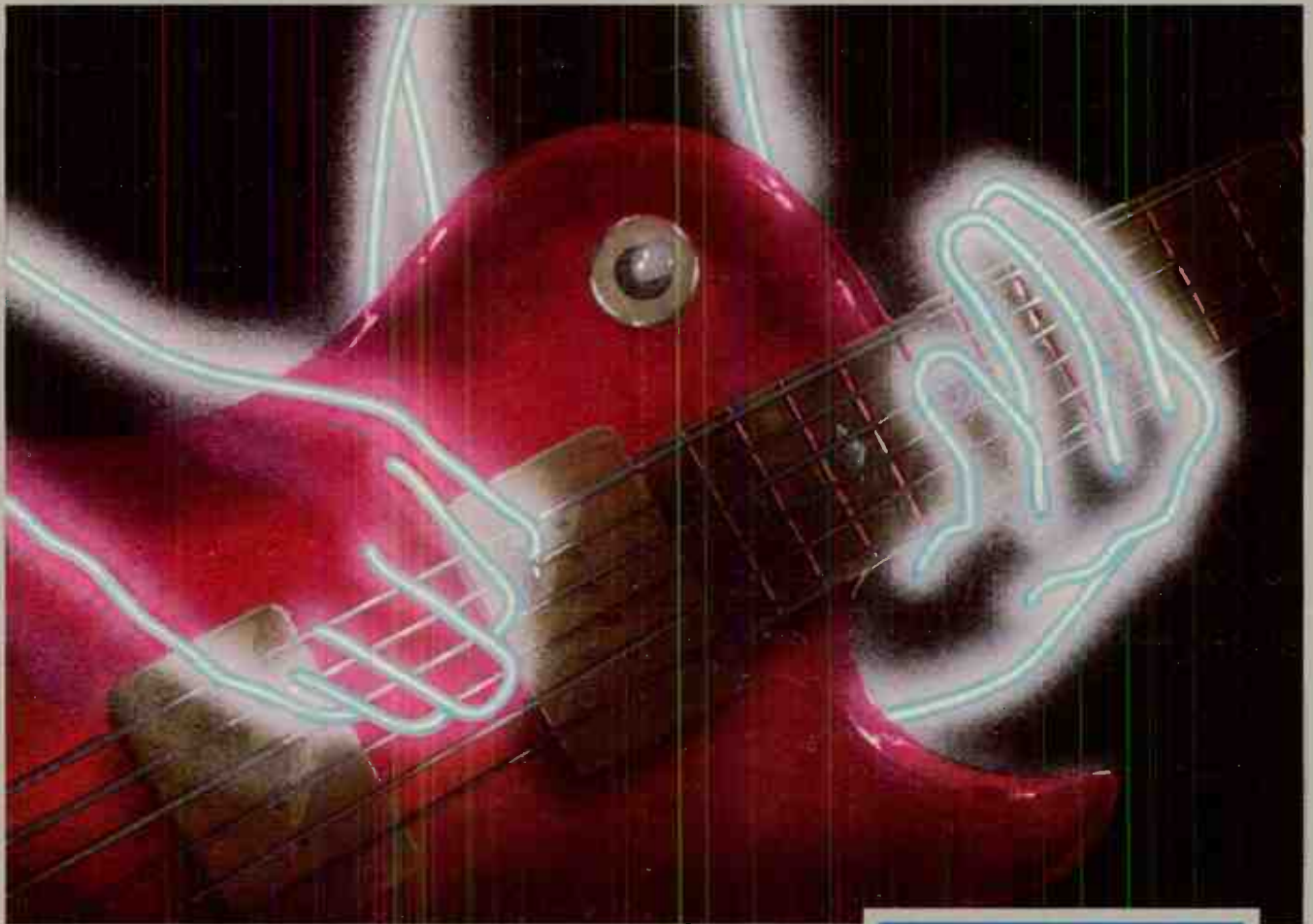
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human—and on "Broken Shadows" (like "Happy," recently recorded by Old & New Dreams, which makes for an interesting comparison), the full ensemble repeats the haunting theme over unsettled rhythms while one soloist at a time steps forward to declaim, a strategy that manages to recall the church, Africa and the *quem quaeritis* trope of the Greeks (from which this tragedy was born), and it works transcendently for Coleman: this is a classic performance.

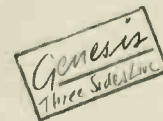
Of the quartet pieces, "Country Town Blues," by the epochal Five Spot four-some and equal to anything they've played, fares the best, but "School Work" gives us "Dancing In Your Head" in yet another successful permutation, and "Rubber Gloves" boasts great improvising from Coleman and Dewey Redman, whose work throughout this date may be his best on record. Neither of the vocals equals the great "What Reason Could I Give" from *Science Fiction*, and Webster Armstrong is no Ashta Puthli, but the blues shows us Coleman toying with and then resolutely defying the standard chord changes, and the ballad is an endearing shambles.

All told, the level of creativity is remarkably high, with "Happy House," "Country Town" and the title tune standing free and clear as genu-wine classics. I'd say the album cuts everything else I've heard this year, only it doesn't seem comparable to anything else I've

heard this year. I don't listen to Ornette Coleman for the same things I do in other jazz musicians—development of ideas, ingenuity, imagination, emotional buildups and peaks—but for a consistent level of truthfulness that defies logic, fashion, style and time. Bless his anomalous heart and the song that enters it, older than he is, patient and solid as earth. — Rafi Zabor

## Genesis

### **Three Sides Live** (Atlantic)



When a progressive art-rock band like Genesis puts out a live album, they're damned if they do (play as intricately as the studio versions)

and damned if they don't. On *Three Sides Live*, this prevailing wisdom pretty much holds true, except when Phil Collins tacks a wonderfully inappropriate, spontaneous scat-singing fade-out on the close of the hit "Misunderstanding." Otherwise, the three live sides pretty much rehash the group's last two monster sellers, *Duke* and *Abacab*, though they did not make it onto that album. The other two were cut in Sweden three years ago. The newer material bodes well for the group sustaining its current chart success. "Paperplate," the new single, is punctuated with Stax-like horns and a catchy melody, perking up the band's ethereality with a strong rhythm. On "Me And Virgil," which sounds like it came off *Big Pink*, Phil Collins leans into the plaint with some of the warm self-assurance he exhibited on his pleasantly surprising solo debut last year.

Many people dismissed Genesis after the defection of stalwarts like guitarist Steve Hackett and lead singer Peter Gabriel. But this threesome has clearly struck a chord with their greeting card verse and lush melodies. If they allow some of Phil Collins's well-meaning eccentricity to enliven the proceedings, as they seem to be doing, there's no telling how far Genesis could go. They may even get good reviews. — Roy Trakin

## Various Artists

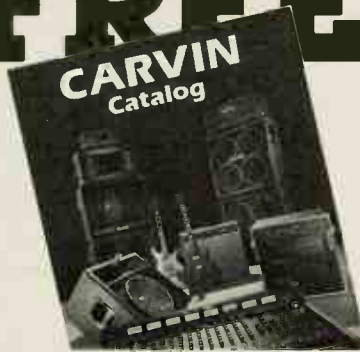
### **Africa Dances** (Original Music)



John Storm Roberts, well-known music critic and author of *Black Music of Two Worlds*, has recently set himself up as a one-man

clearing house for Caribbean-African-Latin musical materials, both records

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and books. The organization is called Original Music, "a real kitchen table operation," and has for a first issue an excellent collection of African urban music entitled *Africa Dances*. (In preparation are collections of music from Zaire, Kenya and the Caribbean.) This superb LP was initially put out in 1973, when Bob Christgau listed it as one of his top ten choices for that year. It has just been issued again.

During the current age of fusion it can be extremely easy for a newcomer to be confused by the growing number of African-sounding records. We have African sounds in disco, African-inspired punk-rock and various Western groups which periodically include African side-

men. What, in that case, is African music? The term African pop can certainly be misleading, because we can readily lose sight of the tribal origin of most African music and presume the existence of an homogenous pan-African culture, which is hardly the case.

Most of the African nations during this century of modernization have evolved some form of indigenous dance music which involves a blending of Western techniques with traditional forms. The origin of these musics is vaguely reminiscent of that of the early days of jazz: African musicians developing their thing using marching band instruments and church-derived harmonies. Once these musicians had established a successful

musical style, they began to experiment more freely with tribal instruments and techniques, particularly as nationalism grew and liberation forces sought to strengthen their sense of identification with local, rather than European, culture and history.

Each country or area has its own particular musical history, and what Roberts has done here is to present a sampling of contemporary urban music (African pop, if you will) from eleven different nations, thus giving us an idea of the variety of music subsumed under this category. His samples are picked from popular 45s and are generally not only representative, but of excellent quality. Included are such things we would not be likely to find even in African import shops, such as "Ethiopian soul" music (the only way to describe it) and songs from Uganda and Sierra Leone, which are off the beaten path for African pop. Then we have liner notes which give us both the general background and a specific run-down on each selection and the tradition it represents.

The highlife on this record *swings*, which is often not the case with music we get from Ghana, and the Congo stuff is typically mellow and refined. There are four pieces from Kenya, which give us a good idea of what's been happening there as they have moved out of a long Congo-influenced period and developed a stronger version of their own music. I must add that swing and volume do not go hand in hand, and despite the images of frenzied drummers we may carry from Hollywood versions of Africa, this music generally sounds mellow and is danced to in a "cool" manner. It is much less brassy than most Latin music, and at times hauntingly evocative, even bittersweet.

*Africa Dances* is the only extant sampler of the different contemporary African styles, and hopefully will stimulate, not just educate, the American ear. It is available (along with a listing of books and recorded materials) from Original Music, 123 Congress Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201 for \$9.98 plus \$1.00 postage and handling. Add relevant sales tax if you are a New York resident. Spend some time with this record and I'm fairly sure you'll fall in love with at least some of it. You'll also know where to go for more, or at least what to call it.

— Joe Blum

**Neil Young** from pg. 62

think most of them are badly warped. **Young:** They're giving me three cents each for 'em. They're gonna reprocess the vinyl. They got wet, I know they got wet (laughs)...200,000 *Comes A Time* albums. I paid a buck each for 'em. (pause) I ate it. I made a sequencing mistake, and I ate it. And I expect the same out of other people who make mistakes. (adopts a super rock star stance) Yeah, so I'm thinking of calling my group

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**Musician:** Do you know the value of a song like "Helpless" or even "Into The Black" while you're writing it? Or do you realize that in retrospect?

**Young:** Those things happen so fast, you don't think about that. Maybe after you write... if I write a song, and I record it and listen to it, for a split second I have a feeling what the ripples will be. That's as much as I ever think about it. A split second, where I'll feel a sensation of knowing what I've done. And that's as much time as it's worth. There's all kinds of other people who think about that, but not me.

**Musician:** "Into The Black" inspired quite a bit of response among musicians. Elvis Costello says he wrote "The Loved Ones" as a reaction to the Rust Never Sleeps concept. And then there was John Lennon, in the Playboy interview, lashing out against the entire concept of "it's better to burn out than to fade away..."

**Young:** Yeah. I remember that. I read that just after he died. That's when it came out.

**Musician:** He said it's better to survive, and no one should know that better than Neil Young, who keeps coming back.

**Young:** The rock 'n' roll spirit is not survival. Of course the people who play rock 'n' roll should survive. But the essence of the rock 'n' roll spirit, to me, is that it's better to burn out really bright

than it is to sort of decay off into infinity. Even though if you look at it in a mature way, you'll think, "Well, yes...you should decay off into infinity, and keep going along." Rock 'n' roll doesn't look that far ahead. Rock 'n' roll is right now. What's happening right this second. Is it bright? Or is it dim because it's waiting for tomorrow—that's what people want to know. And that's why I say that.

**Musician:** Do you put yourself to that test when you put out a new record?

**Young:** I try not to put myself to any tests. I don't hold up too well to testing (laughs). No testing.

**Musician:** You often talk about your songs as if they're living personalities...do the albums have distinct personalities to you too?

**Young:** This album has a split personality...which I think is interesting. Songs like "Like An Inca," that's the future of my music as seen fifteen years ago. "Sample And Hold" is the future of my music as seen today. It's more automatic...it's trans-music. That's why I want to call the album *Trans*. And I was thinking *Trans* is good for the tour... *Europa-Trans*. All the guys on the crew could wear outfits with *Europa-Trans* written on the back, like a road crew... working on the road, you know. But by the time we're out of Europe we'll just be getting those outfits in. Then we'll be ready for *Trans-Japan*...and *Aus-Trans*.

**Musician:** At this point you've written enough songs that you might sit down at some point and think, "Why finish this song, I've already said the same thing before in 'Peace Of Mind'..." Is that a problem?

**Young:** Not at all. When I'm writing...if I'm writing right, I'm in the same place that I am when I'm playing, so...I wouldn't be able to think. The process of logic is not involved in songwriting, to me, or the playing of the song. There's a line that you just don't go over, they don't cross over. You can't have one and the other. It's dominant hemisphere versus the subdominant hemisphere of the brain.

(At this point I take out a radio news service report on Young's showing of Human Highway at the Mill Valley Film Festival. It's a stubbornly negative review, and I had only wanted to refer to its stuffy description of the movie as "a rather vague no-nuke film." Young, however, eagerly grabs the review out of my hand and reads it. After a time, he hands it back.)

Well. That's what he thinks. Even when you see it written down, it's still one guy's feeling. Either you get it or you don't. It's not made for...well, it's made to get a reaction. That's the guy's reaction. He didn't get it. But then, you know, who's the guy? Would you want to see the kind of film he would make? Maybe

continued on next page

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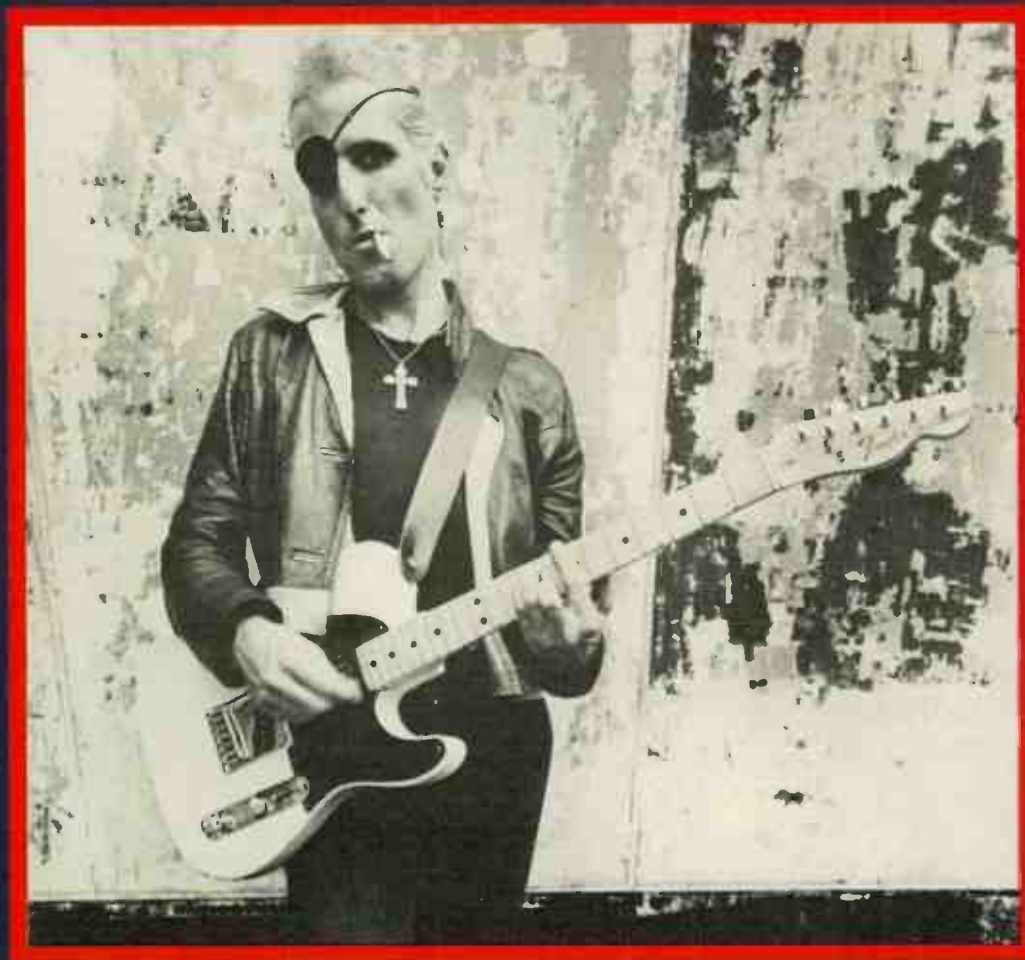
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continued from previous page  
not. What the heck....

**Musician:** Will there be more "trans" music in the set by the time you reach America?

**Young:** There will probably be four by then. Four or five. We have to see how it goes. It can be very shocking to any audience. There's no discounting the shock factor. Soon as we play the last song, they take all the mikes away. It's kind of a playing thing to do, it puts a very tenuous feeling out there... and then we come back. And when we finish doing the encore now, they're just looking at each other, going, "What the hell was that?" They really are shocked. It's really good for them. They're enjoying it... but having never seen anything like that, it's like watching a ghost. Half-machine, half-man. There's something very supernatural about that.


You could be two different characters... or five different characters. A chorus of four of them, in perfect tune, machined perfectly. All of a sudden, one guy's up there doing four-part 'ooooos.' This is what I got into by woodshedding. I was here at the ranch so much that I got into everything. I really miss being able to spend time with the machines. Because pretty soon I'm not gonna need too much. Just master control. It's gonna be all synthesizers, and video decks up in the attic. The Lab.

You know what else I like? All I have to do is get someone in there, tape their voice... and I can sing just like them. I could get Rick James in there, get him to go 'aaaaahhhhh' and then I could sing just like Rick James anytime I wanted to. Or I could do a James Brown song *trans*, like "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" or "Cold Sweat."

**Musician:** It seems like *trans* is going to split people down the middle, like a lot of your best albums.

**Young:** I'm lucky that there's still something I can do that will piss people off about me. I mean, you know... I am. Anything other than this, I don't know what I could do—except repeat myself until further notice. I mean, it's the computer age now. Might as well just be machine-oriented. I love machines. It's a natural marriage. Nobody likes machines better than I do. I love machines. (pause) "Tell me, do you like machines?" (laughs)

**Musician:** Last question. Why don't you play anything from Reactor live?

**Young:** I don't feel like playing anything from Reactor. I'd rather do the new stuff. I hope people really dig "Sample And Hold." It does take you right to another place. I'm trying to get a microphone that comes out of a pair of Vuarney sunglasses. I think it'd be much better to have glasses on when that music is happening. It removes you one step. It makes it easier to do it. The eyes are the most human part. If my eyes are covered and I sound like that, I could really be... (booming voice) NEIL TWO. 



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- No. 35... **The Doors**, David Lindley, Carla Bley
- No. 36... **Grateful Dead**, Koolhaathon, Skunk Baxter
- No. 37... **Reggae**, The Rolling Stones, Rickie Lee Jones
- No. 38... **Police**, Bassists, Pretenders, David Murray
- No. 39... **Cars**, Keyboardists, Earth, Wind & Fire
- No. 40... **Ringo**, Drummers, Devo, Rossington-Collins
- No. 41... **Miles**, Genesis, Lowell George
- No. 42... **Hall & Oates**, Zappa, Jaki Byard
- No. 44... **Graham Parker**, Nick Lowe, Lester Bowie
- No. 45... **Willie Nelson**, John McLaughlin, the Motels
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Go Go's from pg. 68

**KATHY:** Why would you want to sit there and ignore someone's talent just to say they're fat? Just because we pick everyone apart doesn't mean they have to do it to us (laughs).

**JANE:** It is true that when someone is pushing for you and feels responsible for your success, then once they've done it it's real easy to get this kind of attitude like, "Oh, now that they're big they don't care anymore." I think if you're a good band, though, you ride through that and the critics stop. Look at the Cars. They were like the critics' babies and then all of a sudden everyone hated them, but they're still going strong.

**MUSICIAN:** How do you feel about being merchandised?

**KATHY:** There's a demand for it. We

don't have any choice, really. I don't think it will get as ridiculous as, say, Kiss.

**CHARLOTTE:** That was a preconceived package. They were built on their image.

**JANE:** I don't understand—how can you not be merchandised and be in a band that makes records? I don't see that you have any choice.

**MUSICIAN:** Well, there are different types of merchandising. Fleetwood Mac is highly merchandised to a point, but they never did a movie like *A Hard Day's Night*, they never had Fleetwood Mac comic books and lunch pails. On the other hand, the Bay City Rollers and Kiss have been merchandised at those levels, as were the Beatles.

**GINA:** I think we're somewhere between all those.

**JANE:** See, merchandising in those bands made up for a lack of talent—no offense to anyone mentioned. The songs weren't there, so there had to be something for people to want.

**KATHY:** If there wasn't a demand for it, then there wouldn't be any of that. But in between records and performances people like to have something. It's also kind of fun for us, because we pretty much dream up all that stuff ourselves—us and Ginger.

**MUSICIAN:** Most of the songs on the new album are group originals with various members collaborating in different combinations. How does that work?

**JANE:** It's always different. Kathy and I, when we work together, pretty much collaborate on everything. With Charlotte, usually she has the music and I have the words.

**KATHY:** It seems like the overall song benefits from having another person's ideas. I rarely feel like I want to do it all alone anymore. Jane wrote "Girl Of 100 Lists" on her own, and when she brought that song in it was totally different from what you hear on the album. We all liked the words, but....

**GINA:** It was too country-western sounding.

**KATHY:** So we said, "Well, let's put it with this drum beat and this guitar part...." We can just about turn any song into a Go-Go arrangement.

**MUSICIAN:** Vacation sounds more like a progression from the sound of *Beauty And The Beat*, rather than a departure.

**BELINDA:** I think the second album is a lot more confident sounding, and the first one is more vulnerable and naive. We just sound stronger and more sure of ourselves.

**KATHY:** It's a big step and progression for us, because we're going to have to make a big effort to duplicate the songs live. We're going to add keyboards to our show. We've kind of forced ourselves to grow a little bit with this album. That's the best thing about it. Also, we made a big effort to get more variety in the guitar sounds. The first album pretty much has the same reverb, echoey, Dick Dale sound.

**CHARLOTTE:** I just got a Roland guitar synthesizer, too. I didn't use it on the album, but we used some digital delay and stuff. I want to use it simply and incorporate it into the music. It's not going to be anything outrageous. I'm having a blast experimenting, though. (By the start of the Vacation tour, Charlotte was playing her Roland guitar synthesizer for the majority of the show, with chorus and delay effects. The keyboard synth was used on only two songs—Belinda on "Worlds Away" and Charlotte on "Girl Of 100 Lists.")

**MUSICIAN:** Who played the keyboard parts on the new LP?

**CHARLOTTE:** I did, and Michael Bodicker programmed a lot of the stuff.

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Basically, he's more of a complicated keyboard player and our style is simpler, so he only played the solo on "Girl Of 100 Lists." But for everything else, he programmed things and I played, just because my style is simpler and it fits with the band, and I pretty much knew what I wanted to do. He's going to help me figure out the right synthesizer to get.

**MUSICIAN:** *Belinda was saying earlier that the new album might sound more mature, whereas the first one was more innocent. Do you have any fear of losing that innocent, naive quality that made the first album what it was?*

**GINA:** I think we've retained the same things from the first album; it's just that now we've progressed more. But we still have the same qualities that made our first album successful.

**JANE:** I think if you consciously try and retain something, like your innocence, you're going to lose it for sure.

**GINA:** Nothing's contrived. It's just the way it comes out. We're just lucky that it comes out like that, because we don't try or make a conscious effort.

**JANE:** And in ten years, if we're such good musicians that we can't sound innocent anymore, then that's fine. If we're that good, then there'll be something else equally good about it. ☑

#### Digital from pg. 84

Synclavier demo record) but it's a long way from perfected. (Kinetic Sound, makers of the Prism, are reported to be working on some interesting approaches.)

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better than Fairlight. But Prism seems to have a good system coming. Do we wait and see? Do we need sampling more than music printing? Synclavier has that. Prism doesn't. And there's memory storage. Most everybody uses floppy discs of one size or another. But Prism went with bubble memory. It's more expensive but far more durable and won't be affected by heat and smoke. Those are awfully common where musicians work. The Synthia uses digital tape cartridges, and it looks pretty cool, too, but they haven't got all their software operating, so how do I know it will do all the great things they say it will? And interfaces! GDS has a nice keyboard, and responds to commands through things I understand: sliders and knobs and pots. But Synthia has that unique plasma display screen. You just touch it. That's pretty fast after a while. Synclavier has great working graphics, but Prism doesn't have any yet, though they say they're working on it....

... And they all cost so much! It's okay for Wendy Carlos and Jimmy Destri and Lyle Mays and Billy Cobham and Tangerine Dream and all the rest; they can afford it. Hell, with their studio costs the multi-tracking capabilities of these instruments might end up *saving* them money. And they make good tax deductions....

The companies are aware of the price problem. They're all trying to bring the figures down, trying to design new products for people with less money to spend. But so far there's no fallout from the high end yet except the Synergy.

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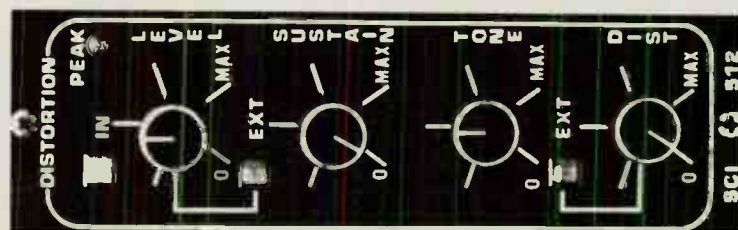
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# ROCK

By J.D. Considine

## SHORT TAKES

Gwen Guthrie



Soft Cell



The Persuasions



The Lords of the New Church



**The League Unlimited Orchestra** — *Love And Dancing* (A&M) This is, for want of a better term, the Human League in dub. None of the material is new, with seven out of eight tracks taken from *Dare*, but the versions are decidedly different, with the vocals stripped off and the instrumentals tricked up. The end result is dancefloor slick and pleasantly melodious, yet utterly lacking in charm, something which confirms my suspicions that it's the singing that makes the League human.

**Paul Brady** — *Hard Station* (21) Between the anxious kick of his band and the soulful glide of his voice, Paul Brady comes on like an echo of Van Morrison, much as Mark Knopfler recalled Bob Dylan. But Brady's soul is mostly a matter of inflection; his songs are too angry and working-class bitter to even hint at the transcendent joy Morrison sips from. Consequently, Brady's passion can be riveting, provocative but never nourishing, and that's what keeps this very good album from turning into a great one.

**Gwen Guthrie** — (Island) With a rich, sassy voice and the Compass Point All-stars percolating behind her, Guthrie answers the question, "What would *Nightclubbing* have sounded like had Grace Jones been able to sing?" Perhaps that's a bit too cold; after all, Guthrie is a solid writer (check out the sly logic that fuels "Peek-A-Boo") blessed with a formidable vocal personality, not just another clothes-horse-turned-chanteuse. Put it this way—if this album doesn't get you on the floor and shaking it, nothing short of an earthquake will.

**Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five** — *The Message* (Sugar Hill) Rap records aren't just a lot of flashy talk about nothing in particular, but even

then, this isn't called "The Message" for laughs. Not only do Flash & the Five create a credible panorama of hard times in the city, they manage to make their tales of urban tension so infectious that you jump right into its snaky groove—until you suddenly remember what it is you're partying to. It isn't often you get mugged by meaning like that.

**Various Artists** — *Deutschland* (das Buro) Side one of this compilation of new German music is almost all industrial synth stuff, surprisingly more influenced by D.A.F. than Kraftwerk; side two features mostly punk-funk and jagged new wave, and doesn't sound all that different from what alternative England is churning out. Among the standouts are Palais Schaumburg, a sort of Killing Joke on microchips, and Ja Ja Ja, who have successfully translated the goofy charms of early B-52s. On the whole, though, there's more repeated than discovered, not a good thing in anybody's "new" music.

**Billy Squier** — *Emotions In Motion* (Capitol) Squier's sly synthesis of hard rock riffs and loose, funky grooves comes backed with a lot more muscle this time out, so much so that you might lose the hooks in all the racket. The price of success on the coliseum circuit, I guess. But if you listen past the bluster, you'll find that Squier swings just as hard as on *Don't Say No*, and far more consistently; if you don't, you'll no doubt be impressed to find all the rockers running at full throttle. In any case, you should be glad to know that the closest thing to "Son Of The Stroke" has been relegated to the *Fast Times At Ridgemont High* soundtrack.

**Nicolette Larson** — *All Dressed Up & No Place To Go* (Warner Bros.) If, like me, you believe that the lack of quality

on a female vocalist's album is directly proportionate to the lack of clothing worn on the cover, be advised that on this one, Larson is wearing a towel.

**Soft Cell** — *Non-Stop Ecstatic Dancing* (Sire) Two new ones, two old ones and two remakes—not bad for a between-albums filler. "Where Did Our Love Go" sounds pretty good even without "Tainted Love" as a preface; "What" is delightfully cheesy 60s heartbreak pop; and "Sex Dwarf" is even more wicked than before. While "ecstatic" might be overplaying it a bit, the "non-stop dancing" part is right on the money.

**Various Artists** — *Voices Of The Angels* (Freeway) The idea behind these eighty-one bursts of poetry, commentary and invective is to assemble an articulate cross-section of the L.A. punk and poetry scene. Some bits, like a poem about Jayne Mansfield recited by Dave Alvin of the Blasters, are absorbing; others, like Tuff Muffin's anti-Valley Girls "Beach Rebuttal," are hysterical. Unfortunately, there aren't enough of either in this two hours of chatter, which makes the thing seem a lot longer. Guess you had to live there.

**Santana** — *Shango* (Columbia) With its rich vocal harmonies, straightforward rhythms and clean, no-frills production, *Shango* boasts all the virtues of Zebop except one—good songs. And you thought Santana had gone commercial.

**The Persuasions** — *Good News* (Rounder) It's hard to believe that an album without a rhythm section could rock this hard. Well, okay, they do clap some on "Let The Good Times Roll," but otherwise this is pure a cappella harmony singing, bursting with soul and not a bum note anywhere. Vocal prowess notwithstanding, it's the song selection that really sparks this album, providing



melodies rich enough to encourage Jerry Lawson's gospel-tinged embellishments and structures solid enough to get the rest of the group rocking. A must-hear for anyone even vaguely interested in the meaning of soul.

**Al Kooper** — *Championship Wrestling* (Columbia) The title makes this sound like an NRBQ concept album, so it was disappointing to find out that it was just another Kooper hodge-podge. An inspired hodge-podge, mind you, with a connoisseur's choice in covers and some sterling guest vocals by Valerie Carter, Mickey Thomas and Ricky Washington. The boogie and soul numbers work well, the ballads are uneven and the token instrumental is easily skipped over. Consider it the best two falls out of three.

**Pere Ubu** — *Song Of The Bailing Man* (Rough Trade) This album sounds the way Maurice Sendak drawings look—studiously exaggerated, fantastically naive, halfway between high art and cartooning. Anton Fier's cocktail piano could teach the Lounge Lizards a few punch lines, while David Thomas's too-much-helium vocals are frequently downright silly. But then, perhaps I'm making too much out of the band's sense of humor; after all, how funny can they really be if the liner notes tell us that the title "Horns Are A Dilemma" is "whimsey"?

**The Rockets** — *Rocket Roll* (Elektra) Now that Bob Seger has discovered

Hollywood angst, the Rockets have begun cranking out the sort of high-velocity rockers that used to be Seger's staple. "Rollin' By The Record Machine" in particular stands out as the sort of ass-kicking bar band classic Seger should have written but didn't. All of which makes me hope that the Rockets' reputation as semi-metal stompers will be laid to rest by this exquisite display of rock 'n' roll vitality.

**The Lords of the New Church** (I.R.S.) Nothing generates suspicion like a punk rock supergroup, but I'll swear on a stack of Sid Vicious records that this one lives up to its billing and then some. Built around back-from-the-Dead Boy Stiv Bators and the formerly Damned Brian James, the Lords manage to pack the same anarchic wallop as their forebears but in a far more disciplined song structure. Driving, obsessive and at times brutally funny, this is as close to the spirit of '77 as you're likely to get in '82.

**Bus Boys** — *American Worker* (Arista) Wisely putting the black-guys-playing-white-rock shtick on the back burner, the Bus Boys return for their second album with a more generalized social satire and a tougher guitar sound. While it's the latter that grabs your ear, particularly as abetted by the group's unflinching vocal harmonies, it's the former that holds your attention—particularly now that the jokes are less obviously funny



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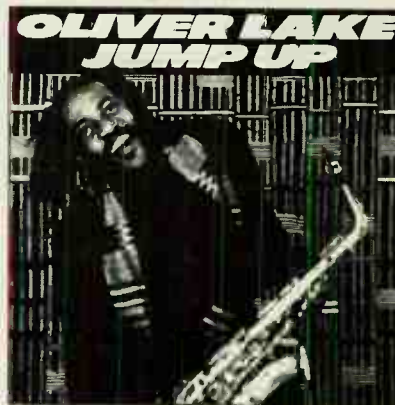
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# JAZZ

By Brian Cullman

## SHORT TAKES

A horn will always tell you more than you want to know. A good player can hide behind a guitar or a piano, just as a good singer can often hide behind his voice, but a horn player is almost always exposed, vulnerable, left naked by that fragile relationship between breath and instrument. It's why, on those old live recordings of Charlie Parker and Eric Dolphy and John Coltrane, you can almost hear the audience asking: "Please! Tell us all you know and then go home!" You can hear it in the applause. And, of course, once they've told everything they know, once they've hit the right note, there's no longer a home to go home to. This may be why so many great horn players, in emulation of their instrument, find ways to make themselves hollow.

**Chet Baker's** done a pretty good job of this. Long considered the most beautiful dead man in the world, Baker is also the most heartbreaking trumpet player imaginable. Although in recent years he's grown increasingly short of breath, has rarely toured with the sort of musicians he deserves and seldom records his singing (which is every bit as good as his playing), Baker is still an absolute master, a man who can capture several lifetimes in the course of one song. His newest album, *Peace* (Enja), is a collection of ballads and meditations, mostly written by vibraphonist David Friedman. Friedman's pieces are simple, open sketches, but they leave Baker plenty of room to blow. And that's all he needs: room and a trumpet. Along with Friedman (whose playing is impeccable), Baker is backed by Buster Williams on bass and Joe Chambers on drums.

**Chico Freeman**, who's been considered most promising young tenor saxophonist for so long that they're thinking of retiring the title, has exquisite taste in tunes and sidemen, has become a first-rate writer and arranger and has a clear and strong tone. So I don't know why something always seems to be missing. On record, at least, he seems to stand back from his playing. On his new, self-titled record on Elektra/Musician, he's supported by Cecil McBee on bass, Jack DeJohnette on drums and piano, Clyde Criner on piano, Billy Hart on drums and Wallace Roney on trumpet. Roney is a revelation, a wry and fiercely inventive player who brings the best out

of Freeman. Playing with Roney, Freeman tends to forget himself and steps out. He should only do it more.

**Tom Scott**, of course, does it enough for both of them. His new record, *Desire*, is also on Elektra/Musician, and it sounds like... money. This is a record to put in the bank, not to listen to. What's the matter with the whole Elektra/Musician series? There's something fundamentally wrong with a label that releases a **Mose Allison** album (*Middle Class White Boy*) on which Mose 1) has no moustache, 2) plays electric piano, and 3) performs "The Tennessee Waltz" in 4/4 time. Someone is obviously the victim of bad information!

That rant aside, Elektra/Musician has a good new record in **Sphere's** eponymous LP. Sphere consists of Ben Riley on drums, Kenny Barron on piano, Buster Williams on bass and Charlie Rouse on tenor sax. Rouse and Riley are alumni of Monk's bands, and this record is a loving and spirited reimagining of some of Monk's least-performed work.

Anthony Braxton's been quoted as saying that **Derek Bailey** is "the most amazing guitar player on the planet." Hard to say; Bailey's not talking and Braxton skipped town shortly after he gave out that quote. On his newest record, *Views From Six Windows* (Metalingua, available through NMDS), Bailey is joined by Christine Jeffrey on "voice" (mostly a high and not unpleasant vocal meandering). Bailey's not so much a guitarist as a "guitar player": he doesn't strum or pick or frail so much as he uses the strings as percussion; plays off of the wood and natural resonance; stands on the neck; and puts small chunks of cheese under the strings, then mikes the various mice that gnaw through the wood on their way to lunch. The music is dissonant and disturbing but always inventive and almost always listenable.

*Ethnic Fusion* by **Big Black** (Arch Records) is a duet of sorts between intrepid percussionist Big Black and Anthony Wheaton, a classical-styled guitarist with more enthusiasm than imagination. The record seems more a Berkeley-style jam than a duet; i.e., they both play at the same time, occasionally even falling into the same rhythm, but rarely interact. In fact, they are so completely oblivious of each other and so

excited by their own playing, that it's hard not to admire them... if not for their music, at least for their ability to keep themselves amused and entertained.

A little north of Berkeley, *Regional Zeal: Mouth Music From Olympia Washington* (Palace of Lights) is an anthology of music "dealing with various applications of the human voice—i.e., spoken, singing, multi-tracked, processed..." This is a pleasant collection, most of the artists dealing in the repetition of words and sounds, drawing their inspiration from Steve Reich ("Come Out"), Robert Ashley, Laurie Anderson, Meredith Monk and Stockhausen ("Stimmung"). No one ever goes into a full scale rant or a primal screech a la Patty Waters, Diamanda Galas or Yoko Ono, which may indicate that these are fairly well adjusted or fairly timid souls, but Cheri Knight's "Primary Colors" is intriguing. This is a multi-track recording of Ms. Knight exclaiming (simultaneously) the names of the primary colors... although somehow she leaves blue out and throws in brown and black and white.

**Pat Peterson**, sister of ace trumpeter Marvin "Hannibal" Peterson, comes out of a gospel tradition, having worked with Ray Charles as one of the Raylettes. Her first album, *Introducing Pat Peterson*, (Enja) shows her to be a promising vocalist—grittier than Dionne Warwick and more subdued than Esther Phillips—who has been very badly misplaced. Here she's backed by a tasteful section of jazz players (Billy Hart on drums, T.M. Stevens on bass and John Scofield on guitar, along with the great "Fathead" Newman on sax) when what she needs is a good funk section and a producer who'll strip her songs down from nine minutes or so to a more reasonable four or five.

**Tommy Flanagan's** *Giant Steps* (Enja) is an especially elegant tribute to John Coltrane, with whom Flanagan played piano back in the late 50s. Possibly because he never recorded "Naima" with Coltrane, Flanagan's reading of it here is particularly moving. George Mraz and Al Foster join on bass and drums, respectively.

No one could be further from Flanagan's keyboard sensibility than **Conlon Nancarrow** (well... John Hinckley might be a little further off, hard to tell). Where



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Flanagan is stylish and understated, Nancarrow is boisterous and exuberant and fiendishly perverse. Born in Texarkana, Nancarrow now lives and composes in Mexico City, where, one can only assume, his talents are fully appreciated. If Bunuel made records, he would make records like these: ludicrous, flamboyant, wildly funny and impossible to imagine. Nancarrow, you see, has never found human hands that play his work properly (or fast enough), and so he has taken to punching out his scores so that they can be performed on player pianos...usually on two player pianos simultaneously. His *Complete Studies For Player Piano, Volume 3* (Arch Records/NMDS) is one of the strangest records ever made—stranger even than *Frogs Of North America* or *Mouth Music From Olympia Washington*. But there is method to the madness; if you try putting this record on as background music, you will go crazy. Simple as that. You will be evicted, you will lose your job, your marriage will fall apart, war will erupt in the Middle East, your driver's license will be revoked, insurance companies will renege on your claims, mirrors will break, the light will fail, men with small hammers will come for your children. But listened to, the speed and the strange resonances and the harmonics between two keyboards all begin to sound superhuman...not at all electronic, but a mechanical music of the spheres, as dreadful and as fascinating as the movements of the stars. ■

**Festival Sound** from pg. 78 pickup.

Mike Brady is an agreeable guy who, along with Gary Mullen, was responsible for the stage miking and the twin monitor systems that split the center of the full production stage. The McCune monitor system is based around what appeared to be modified Studio Master 24x8 boards, combined with Crown power and a potent set of floor wedges McCune builds in their San Francisco shop. The McCune organization is also partial to the world of transducers and speaker cabinets according to John Meyer of Meyer Sound Laboratories of San Francisco.

The phrase that sets Meyers, and McCune for that matter, apart from the competition is "Linear Response." Their goal is accurate imaging of true natural sound by utilizing high-tolerance drivers in cabinets that employ outboard circuitry to "pre-distort" the P.A. signal delivered to the stacks. The flaw in standard transduction methods is that during the transfer of electrical to acoustic energy, phase distortion is a by-product of the process and introduces inaccurate images to the original signal. Meyers employs a circuit that distorts the signal in such a way that it reverts to an image more like its true acoustic predecessor as it is transduced into acoustic energy. This process is augmented further by the Group Delay Equalizer employed with the McCune JM-10 system in

Atlanta. The GDE shapes the waveform to be projected by the stage stacks by delaying specified frequencies' "arrival time," realigning the three bands of eq in such a way as to assure the listener's ear that he or she was hearing each band simultaneously, i.e., linearly.

Brady explained that the two stages had independent monitor systems that were fed to a special multi-core "snake" out to the house boards. The snake was equipped with Dean Jenson transformerless splitters, an effective means of eliminating grounding problems and leakage between the two stage systems.

Brady and I finished up our business at the monitor board. He had my stage plot and knew the mike I wanted for David's saxophone—a Sennheiser 421, though I had hoped we'd be able to try a Beyer 88. Having just begun my tenure with David, I was anxious to experiment with different mikes in different venues. I left the stage and headed in to shortstop where a small canvas platform that housed the house mixing boards had been erected.

McCune's boards are built on their bench and boast exceptionally clean eq modules. I asked Ron Lorman, who mixes for Miles Davis these days, how he felt about the system and the fact that he was mixing outdoors. "It's pretty strange to be on a field this size, looking at the stage right stack, knowing my band's going to be playing next to the

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stage left stack. The fact that the audience is so far behind me is weird too. I have to mix this place a little loud for my own ears to feel confident that those people sitting way up top hear every note Miles plays. Other than that I have to rely on the system and maintain a good balance. Your hearing is much more open in this kind of situation, there's no room to influence the shape of the sound, so you have to listen harder to the system."

The house position was manned by Mike Neal and Greg Kirkland of the McCune staff. I spoke to Neal about the general guidelines to follow when mixing David and the band. My main piece of advice to anyone mixing David or any other horn player that tends to move

around his or her mike is that some limiting should be employed to maintain some sense of unified level. That prevents the sweet sound of the alto sax from turning into a blaring peal of distorted muck should David get passionate and lift the bell of his horn right over the mike diaphragm, which needless to say, he does all the time. David plays Yamaha and Selmer saxes and uses a Dukoff D-8 mouthpiece with La Voz reeds.

I headed back to the stage to coordinate the set change. Despite the lack of time, I felt confident that the show would go smoothly. Because we were using the same stage as Miles, the change-over would be relatively painless. Hiram, who plays a worn, beaten Strat, would

use the same two Fender Twins Mike Stern would use during Miles's set. They both play stage left, so I was covered. Naturally we'd use the same drum riser, but Al Foster's drums would be replaced by the set Griewe had pointed out to me earlier. Marcus Miller was playing a doubleheader that night—with Miles in the opening set and then with David. So his bass rig—a beautiful system comprised of an EV 2X15 cabinet, coupled with a Bagend 2X12 mid-range cabinet and equipped with a QSC Power Amp, Lexicon DDL, and IVP Parametric and a MicMix Reverb Unit—would stay put. Everything else would be struck from the stage and I had only to move my keyboards into place. The Hammond B-3 the promoter had secured was a monster! Sugar Bear couldn't have been more pleased.


The rest of the equipment for Sugar Bear's setup consisted of a Fender Rhodes, a Hohner D-6 clavinet and a keyboard monitor system the Kool people pull out of some well-insulated closet every spring that always works and sounds pretty good. Two EV cabinets with a 15-inch driver and horn in each do the trick for keyboards when they're combined with a small Yamaha PM 170 mixer and a Yamaha Power amp. While going over this I reminded Mike Brady to take the Rhodes and the clavinet direct separately so Bear could control his stage levels independent of the house and the monitor mix.

The drums were something else. I've known Buddy Williams for a number of years and respect his playing enormously. You can set your watch by the time he keeps. But these Ludwigs were... well-worn would be a polite description. Fortunately, with some paper towels and a serious taping job, he got by.

The only thing left was the show. The band was well aware of the restrictions playing outdoors. But when I asked what they wanted to hear in the monitors, the response was a unanimous "Everything!"

As soon as Miles was off stage, we began striking the stage gear as planned and were basically set and ready to go less than twenty-five minutes later. David and the band jumped right into it and with the help of Mike Brady were cruising on what seemed to be a solid monitor mix. The crowd responded to the show with a roar, I helped the crew get the gear off stage, and we were on our way to the airport—I didn't even get to hear George Benson's set!

As we neared the airport someone commented on the "crazy day." Well, thankfully it wasn't so crazy and wasn't quite as weird as playing a ballpark might be. I asked the guys if they'd been able to hear everything onstage to which David replied, "No—I couldn't hear enough of myself. But it felt great!"

Good enough. 

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The DOD Stereo Chorus 565 is a time delay effect. The chorus effect of the 565 is accomplished by mixing the original voice with a delayed voice whose pitch varies slightly from the original. The DOD 565 also includes a synthesized stereo output allowing the use of two amplifiers to produce a realistic stereo presence. Because of the tonal characteristics produced by the 565, its applications are many.

### FLANGER 575

The DOD Flanger 575 produces its comb filter type of effects through the use of time delay circuitry. Using short delay times, the 575 can produce a wide range of effects from regeneration flanging and chorus to quivering vibrato, and many melodic effects in between. The 575 has a dynamic range greater than 90 db with a very wide frequency response, making the 575 a natural for studio or stage.

### COMPRESSOR LIMITER 525

The DOD 525 Compressor Limiter makes all signals which pass through it have the same average output level, regardless of the original input level. In other words, the 525 squeezes a wide dynamic range into a much smaller one. This gives an instrument more sustain by increasing the gain as a note decays, adding a more even, unbroken professional sound.

**DOD**



# BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN'S NEBRASKA

BY PAUL NELSON

When someone told me that Bruce Springsteen had made a guitar-and-harmonica album—no E Street Band, no *Born To Run*-style rock 'n' roll—I guess I expected a record that would wed the flash and slash of early-60s folk-period Bob Dylan to the power-packed pull and thrust of the acoustic numbers on Neil Young's *Rust Never Sleeps*: i.e., high-energy instrumental dynamics, American-traditional melodies, muscular singing, lots of rock 'n' roll excitement without the usual amplification. Boy, was I wrong.

When I first heard *Nebraska*, I was shocked and a little dismayed. Here was an LP I could respect until the day I died—ten tunes, from the working-class point of view, about how it feels to try to stay marginally solvent, nonviolent and more than half-alive in the soul-shriveling age of Reaganomics—but would I ever really warm up to it, play it for enjoyment instead of edification? Initially, *Nebraska* sounded so demoralized and demoralizing, so murderously monotonous, so deprived of spark and hope that, in comparison, the gloomy songs from *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* and *The River* seemed not altogether unhappy. Springsteen had the courage of his convictions, I decided, and had made an album as bleak and unyielding as next month's rent. Only one problem: I didn't want to hear it. So, day after day, I circled *Nebraska*, attempting to listen, trying to escape. At night, I'd dream about the damned thing. A long weekend of this was enough to make me wish I had both a car and a girl or that Wild Billy's Circus was still in town. Over a time, however, my preconceptions and first impressions metamorphosed into something solid and more sensible, and I finally found a road map that took me to the right places.

To get there, I had to journey past Neil Young (making meaningful stops at *Hawks & Doves* and *re-ac-tor*) and Bob Dylan (revisiting "North Country Blues" from *The Times They Are A-Changin'*) all the way back to Woody Guthrie and to even earlier American singers and musicians whom people like Alan Lomax recorded in the 30s and 40s for the Library of Congress—traditional (and nonprofessional) singers and musicians you've probably never heard of: poor folks, mostly from the rural South, just sitting at home in front of that inexpensive tape or disc machine and telling their stories, sometimes artfully and sometimes artlessly, undoubtedly amazed that anyone from the urban world would place any value on what they were saying or how they were say-

ing it. Since there was a minimum of technology and a maximum of naturalness involved, Lomax and other collectors were able to capture real one-on-one stuff, such aesthetic and mortal unity that it was impossible to separate style from content. You did the song once, the way you'd been doing it your whole life, and that was it. That was it, all right: the song, your whole life and, every so often, a considerable piece of Americana. Like an aural FSA photo.

Well, *Nebraska*—though it's a brand new Bruce Springsteen album with gen-



erally characteristic Springsteen melodies and lyrics—feels, even *sounds*, like those old Library of Congress recordings. A quiet, almost recessive confidence permeates much of the music, the ghostly guitar playing mainly mixed way down to a near-indistinct thrumming on the bass strings while the treble strings echo eerie backwoods hints of mandolins and dulcimers. Springsteen's singing is easy and flexible, wonderfully subtle and unpretentious. At times, the language is reminiscent of folk balladry—"Highway Patrolman" opens with this simple declaration: "My name is Joe Roberts I work for the state"—and certain compositions have a timeless, supernatural quality ("Mansion On The Hill," "My Father's House"). Many numbers are directly addressed to an unnamed "sir," which sets up all sorts of interesting resonances: serfs speaking to lords, poor to rich men, criminals to lawmen, anyone who's ever been caught by the "meanness in this world" to whom ever will listen, me to you, you to me.

*Nebraska's* stories are, of course, contemporary. You read them in the papers and see them enacted in the streets every day. Ralph, with a mortgage and "debts no honest man could pay," gets laid off at the Ford plant, can't find another job, gets drunk, kills a night clerk and tells the judge he'd be better off dead than spending ninety-nine years in prison. A highway patrolman, rationalizing, "Man turns his back on his family he just ain't no good," lets his black-sheep brother escape into Canada. Ashamed that his father is treated shabbily in a used-car lot, a kid vows: "Now mister the day the lottery I win I ain't ever gonna ride in no used car again." In Atlantic City, a man and a woman, about to become involved in a dangerous deal, are so poor they can't afford a used car so they plan to make a run for it on the bus. A working man, eyes filled with wonder and hate, stares up at the lights of a rich man's house on a hill. He has stared up at that house ever since he was a child. Someone stands beside a dead dog in a ditch and acts as if he expects the dog to come back to life. A night-shift worker, fried on speed, commutes more than three hours a night to see his woman. Some nights, he's flying and happy, but there are other nights when he's so depressed he knows he'll kill any state trooper who dares to stop him. Charlie Starkweather and his girlfriend go on a murder spree, and Starkweather, in a classic love-hate statement, asks that his girlfriend be seated on his lap while he's being electrocuted. And in the LP's shattering final image (straight from "The River"), a groom stands on the banks of a stream, waiting with a preacher for his bride. On *Nebraska*, of course, she never shows up.

But affirmation does, believe me. Not so much in the tagged-on homilies—"Maybe everything that dies someday comes back" or "At the end of every hard-earned day people find some reason to believe"—but because one man, just sitting at home in front of a four-track cassette machine on the night of January 3, 1982 felt he had to tell these stories—and tell them in a particular way: one take per tune—to millions of people very much like him all over America. Real one-on-one stuff. Such unity. I guess it's just inherent: hoping for hope.

A last word: it's entirely possible that the total production cost of Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska* came to less than ten dollars, the price of a single high-quality cassette. What an argument for home taping. — Paul Nelson



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