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MUSICIAN

NO. 71 SEPTEMBER 1984 \$1.95

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World Radio History

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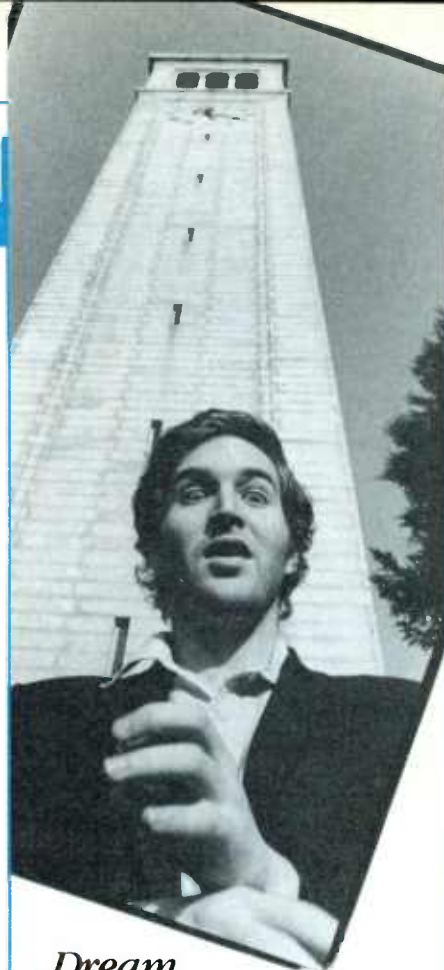
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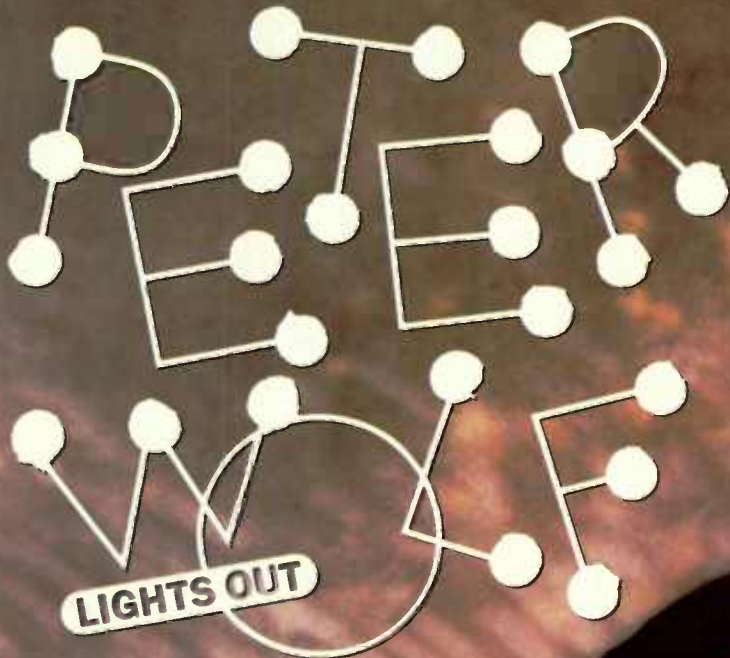
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Letters

VAN HOOPLA

Sincere thanks to Charles M. Young for greatly improving both my understanding and appreciation of Van Halen. I was particularly impressed with Eddie's commitment to his music, as well as his remarkable lack of regard for cashing in on his talent.

Nevertheless, nothing can justify Van Halen's mindless thrashing on such classics as "You Really Got Me" and "Pretty Woman." Maybe I'm just getting old, but even with all that nifty guitar work you still can't dance to them. How about sticking with originals from now on?

Francis Hare
Birmingham, AL

Roger Daltrey summed it up the best when he said Van Halen's music was "the biggest load of shit" he'd ever heard. The members of Van Halen look like *neanderthals*! Will somebody call the Bronx Zoo and see if they're missing any animals?

Frank E. Earley
Satellite Beach, FL



Brown? Is he nuts?!

Zan
Cliffside Park, NJ

I have just one thing I would like to pass on to David Lee Roth. Maybe Eddie never worries about money because he is so talented he will always be able to make a buck. Mr. Roth, on the other hand, had better hold onto every cent he can. If he and Eddie ever part ways his income would come to a grinding halt.

Gary Linkous
Mt. Vernon, OH

David Lee Roth can get down on his "kick-boxing" knees. Then he can thank the Lord that he was lucky enough to get into the same group as Edward Van Halen.

By the way, David Lee Roth has longer fingernails than Valerie Bertinelli.

L. Mortensen
Upland, CA

Van Halen is—David Lee Roth is full of it.

Donna Ketron
Bristol, TN

For years now you boys have been carefully cultivating the image of pompous pseudo-intellectuals pointlessly pontificating on obscure bands. Then you do a feature on Van Halen, and blow the whole bag of jelly beans. You guys are dumber than I figured.

I bet you boys thought you were being pretty clever with that Thomas Dolby thing—aping a "normal" rock reporter. "Morgan Roberts"—well guys, the joke's on you 'cause that guy could easily work for *Musician*, if only for his wonderfully developed artificiality.

I'd tell you to cancel my subscription but it belongs to my dogs—and I can't make all their decisions—even the most obvious.

Matt Caruso
Montreal, Quebec

PARTRIDGE PARITY

Thanks for giving well deserved attention to XTC, one of the truly great pop bands. Karen Schlosberg did an admirable job in flushing out the witty and articulate Partridge and his musical cohorts from behind their mummy. One must never view XTC as being wonderfully quirky. They are just wonderful.

I was glad to hear that the next album will be different from what they've done before. One of the best things about XTC is their ability to change, not follow the trend of the moment and try to shock us by becoming the freaks of the year, but truly change musically.

Cheryl Brugeete
Pittsburg, PA

In June you gave us the obligatory Van Halen cover, yet God save *Musician* for the feature on XTC. As American rock fans slog through a sea of monotonous metal, fake new wave, and tinny technopop, the fresh, honest, multi-textured music of XTC sails by unnoticed. This is the calamity of being in a class by yourself.

Thanks to *Musician* and Karen Schlosberg for calming my fears.

Al Urbanski
New York City, NY

HATS OFF TO CHRISSIE

It's funny how people will form opinions of other people whom they've never met. Chrissie Hynde "sounds like a jerk" and deserves a punch in the face for her "rude, uncouth, embarrassing antics"? [Letters, June 1984.] I play in a band that opened the Pretenders' concert in Honolulu. After a particularly frustrating

soundcheck, not only did Chrissie Hynde *not* spit on anybody, but actually stopped to talk to me and another band member. She was as warm and receptive as could be. I don't know—too much of that kind of behavior could really louse up her image for everybody, huh?

Byron
The Hat Makes the Man
Honolulu, HI

In response to the letters in the June issue of *Musician* degrading Chrissie Hynde and her music: The people who wrote them don't know good music when they hear it. Keep your dirty insults to yourself.

Tommy Ard
Dothan, AL

HOWUNNERFUL

Thank you for your wonderful article on Howard Jones. I am glad to see at least one American magazine has taken an interest in him!

Karin Friedemann
Ann Arbor, MI

AD-AMANT

I have been a subscriber to *Musician* magazine for several years and thoroughly enjoy your industry news, features, short takes, etc. However, I have always been troubled by the extreme sexism contained in some of the advertisements. I have finally become compelled to speak up about it. As a professional musician, performing and recording, I feel I have some right to expect my point of view to be reflected in industry publications. Please make them change their style!!

Valerie Brown
Portland, OR

I want to praise you for your Reader Service, which is a God-send. I really despise trying to get information from music stores, because most of them just want to move the stuff out. Thanks!

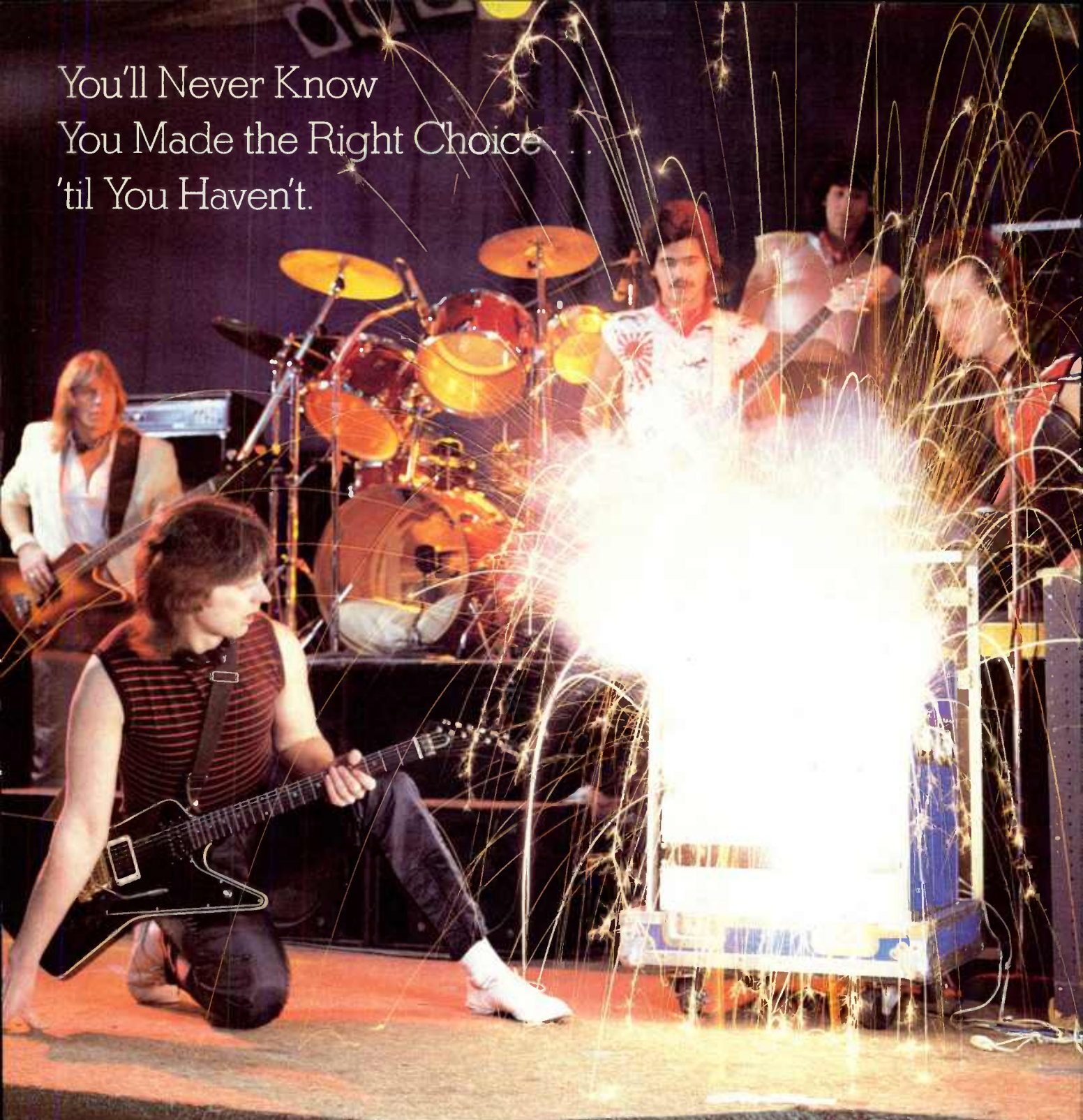
Susan B Claiborne
Oakton, VA

FRESH LOOK AT STALE LP

I strongly disagree with Anthony DeCurtis' review of the Stale, sorry, Style Council's first LP. I was a mod when nobody knew what that meant, and loved the Jam for their lyrics and music. I still think Weller is extremely vital, but I also think the Style—Is that a joke?—Council is crap. *My Ever Changing Moods* isn't "almost easy listening," it's music to sleep by.

Paul Innis
Toronto, Ontario

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MUSIC INDUSTRY NEWS

SCOTT ISLER

THE NEW SHELL GAMES

Forget about compact discs; the heavy growth medium for recorded sound appears to be the humble audio cassette. A Recording Industry Association of America report on consumer purchases of records and tapes states that in 1983 cassette retail sales increased almost one-third over the preceding year, up to 37 percent of all dollars spent. (In 1979, the first year of the RIAA's study, cassettes registered a mere 7 percent.) In the direct market—mail order, record clubs, etc.—the format has an even larger dollar share: 43 percent, also up one-third over 1982.

It's nice to know, then, that record companies are paying increasing attention to their cassettes' quality. Critics have taken the industry to task for shoddy prerecorded tapes—which in effect encourage home taping on superior-quality blanks.

"The way we look at it," **Ed Outwater**, says, "the only way to cut into home taping is to offer a better product than what you can get at home." Outwater should know whereof he speaks; he's director of quality assurance and studio operations manager for Warner Bros. Records. Warners is introducing a new, improved cassette shell, the Mark 10, with a separate bridge to improve tape azimuth alignment; a heavier plastic shell to resist heat warpage; and a clear plastic casing to look spiffy. The company will make a formal announcement about the shell this fall. Meanwhile, cassette connoisseurs can get a sneak preview with Dire Straits' *Alchemy* tape or the *Survival Sampler*.

Dennis Drake, PolyGram Records' studio manager and chief engineer, says that before year's end his company will introduce its own redesigned cassette shell. As developed by PolyGram's European research department, it will "help the

tape play better" through improved head-to-tape contact and azimuth alignment.

Officials at RCA and Capitol Records also admit to fussing with tape shell specifications. Why all the interest in the shell and not the actual tape within? "The major problem with cassettes is plastics, not tape," asserts Warner Bros. production vice president **Rick Wlettsma**.

That thinking didn't stop A&M Records from switching over to BASF chromium dioxide tape for all its releases, effective May 14. The high-bias tapes are duplicated at "normal" (120-microsecond) equalization. **Marv Bornstein**, A&M's vice president of quality control, concedes this adds a little more hiss, but makes for a cleaner copy in mass production. Non-chrome equalization further makes A&M's cassettes compatible with all tape players. Bornstein also says A&M duplicates its tapes at half normal industry speed.

RCA and PolyGram take a centrist position on chrome tape, using the stuff selectively: RCA on its classical Red Seal line, original cast shows and all digital recordings, PolyGram on its classical imports (Deutsche Grammophon, London and Philips).

Nor are shells and tapes the only tricks up manufacturers' sleeves. A&M, Warners and Capitol Records use the Dolby HX Pro Headroom extension system, which makes maximum use of the tape by varying the bias according to the tape signal. RCA is investigating Dolby C noise reduction, three times as effective as the now-standard Dolby B. Less dramatic improvements—Capitol's use of one-inch wide master tape, RCA extending its flat frequency response (± 1 db) from 10kHz to 15 kHz over the last five years—bespeak the industry's commitment to better living through tape chemistry.

"I've heard some cassettes that can't get any better," Drake says. "The problem is consistency—getting all of them to sound great."

Richard Blimm, Capitol's national engineering director, sees tape manufacture as a chain "which is only as good as the proverbial weakest link. No one link is particularly important. They all are."

NEW WAVES ON AIRWAVES

Not long after the creature that would become man emerged from the ocean and learned to stand upright, he faced a crucial question of survival: How to get exposure for new bands?

Thirsty Ear Communications Inc. has a couple of answers. The music marketing firm has just introduced *U.K. Buzz*, an "audio tip sheet," according to president **Peter Gordon**. *U.K. Buzz* is a monthly sampler album sent to 750 media bigshots (including over 180 college and progressive AOR radio stations). The fifty-minute record can be played straight through as a radio program, thanks to spoken intros and outros to each track by the BBC's gruffly avuncular **John Peel**. So far band selection has emphasized pop's left wing, with import-only items from **Tones on Tail**, **Fad Gadget**, **Robert Wyatt**, **Whizz for Atoms** and **New Order**, among many others. Then again, you can hear Culture Club everywhere else.

Thirsty Ear has an equivalent project for U.S. groups eager to get a foot on the ladder of conspicuous drug consumption: *SCREAM* ("Sampler Containing Really Exciting American Music"). This monthly compilation goes out to over one hundred college/"new music" stations. Executive producers **Gordon & Ira Robbins** oversee the screening process; bands that make the grade then pay a one-time fee of \$350. (But what price potential fame?) Aspiring musicians should send a SASE to *Scream*, Suite 1506, 310 Madison Avenue, New York City, NY 10017.

STUDIO TANS (AND BROWNS)

What becomes a legend most? In **James Brown's** case, maybe **Afrika Bambaataa**. The Godfather of Soul met the Godfather of Hip Hop for "Unity," a 12-inch single released on Tommy Boy. Quoth Mr. Brown: "It's the right thing at the right time."

Another Brown—albeit not of James' magnitude—just cut his first record in about a decade. R&B belter **Nappy Brown** has kept in shape singing gospel, but returns to the devil's backbeat with an album on Atlanta-based Landslide Records. He's accompanied by local heroes the **Heartfixers** and hornman **Billy McPherson** of the Late Bronze Age. Release date is September.

The unstoppable **Bill Laswell** of Material continues his plan for world domination in 1984. Since January the versatile Laswell has produced singles or albums by **Nona Hendryx**, **Yellowman**, **Mick Jagger**, **Herbie Hancock** and **Gil Scott-Heron**, among others. Up next is **Ronald Shannon Jackson** & the Decoding Society, an early 1985 release for Island. The line forms to the left...right behind the **New York Philharmonic**.

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TINA TURNER

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

BY MARK ROWLAND

THE SOULFUL QUEEN OF ROCK 'N' ROLL STRUTS BACK INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

Priate *Dancer* is Tina Turner's new album; "I Might Have Been Queen" the first song; and it's hard to decide which title, album's or single's, seems more ironic. I mean, has there ever been a dancer less private than Tina Turner? And what's with this "might have been" hokum? As sure as there exists a pantheon of rockers, Tina Turner is Queen. Or as she puts it, self-mockingly, "the first black woman of rock. And the only one."

Whatever her cachet, a sizable sliver of rock's reigning royalty is currently paying her court. David Bowie, who wrote one song on *Private Dancer*, performed a duet with Tina that will appear on his next record. Mark Knopfler wrote the LP's title track, and when he brought Dire Straits in to back up Tina, Jeff Beck came along for the ride. Now Keith Richards wants to produce her. And there's always Mick Jagger, who once upon a time stole Tina's dance steps, and helped forge a pretty decent career in the process.

Too bad he couldn't steal her genes too; Tina's forty-six, and after a quarter century in the spotlight, she still knows how to strut. "There was never a time when I didn't dance," she declares. She's sitting in a chair by a window in an air-conditioned corporate lounge overlooking New York's 6th Avenue; as she speaks she brushes back strands of her streaked, lion's sized mane, crosses and uncrosses a few miles of black net stocking, fingers her glass necklace, flutters her hands in the air. She's not nervous, just letting go of some extraneous Tina Turner energy. She's really not supposed to be sitting in a chair; she's supposed to be stalking about a stage sweating, screaming, singing, shouting, turning her microphone into a metaphor, dancing, kicking, shaking, exciting. Ask



"Everybody thinks I've been struggling. I've been having a good time."

her about ambition and she says she wants to make "a real rock 'n' roll record." Ask her about her current gig, heating arenas for Lionel "Three Times A Lady" Richie, and she laughs affectionately. "Lionel, you know, he wants to be rock 'n' roll." Tina Turner smiles sympathetically at the thought.

"I am rock 'n' roll."

From the moment young Anna Mae Bullock from Nutbush, Tennessee hooked up with a hot East St. Louis R&B bandleader named Ike Turner, nobody has sung or danced quite like her. At first Ike and Tina covered straight-ahead R&B, gradually acquiring a wider pop audience with the help of Phil Spector (who produced "River Deep Mountain

High"), rambunctious covers of rock hits like "Come Together," "Honky Tonk Women" and "Proud Mary," and, most significantly, the galvanizing stage presence of the lead singer. And why not? White bread audiences weaned on scraggly hippies strumming Fenders were bound to go slightly ga-ga at the vision of Tina, now accenting Ike's blistering rhythmic figures with the frankly erotic choreography of the high-stepping Ikettes, now belting out rock and soul numbers with a voice as piercing and as guttural as any self-respecting delta bluesman's.

"When I first started singing with the band," Tina recalls, "the singers were nearly all men, so my influence was

guys. I would not have been able to sing without my type of voice. A pretty, fragile voice like Diana Ross' would not have stood up in East St. Louis—these guys were troopers, they hit notes that would break a glass. That's why my voice is so unusual—very strong, very full, very loud. But you can't get a pretty voice to sing Ray Charles. It just won't happen."

In fact, Tina's recordings from those years encompass a variety of musical styles; despite the dominant R&B motif, she's sung whole albums worth of country, gospel and blues, even a disc's worth of sultry nightclub jazz, *Don't Play Me Cheap* (Sue). "Oh, please," she cringes at the mention of the latter LP, "I hated that album. I can listen to it with affection now, but back then everything Ike ever wanted me to play he'd make me sing. I did a lot of things I hated in those days...."

By the mid-70s Ike and Tina's revue was still cruising near peak popularity, but their marriage had deteriorated into a nightmare. Tina had endured it for sixteen years, and then one night in Dallas, in the middle of a concert tour, she took off. She holed up in a friend's house (Ann-Margret's) while lawyers worked out divorce details.

"I wasn't thinking of performing again, and in fact, I didn't for a year. I was thinking of just getting out, finding a

place to live, getting a divorce with no money, handling the kid situation [she'd raised four, two sons of her own and two of Ike's]. I didn't know anyone, but at that point in your life you don't need anyone—you just go and you'll be guided. It wasn't easy, but once I left, not being there made it easier. So," she sighs, "I worked my way through."

Private Dancer marks Tina's first major label release since that time, and casual fans can be forgiven for imagining the interceding decade as one long blues 'n' dues refrain. The Queen chortles at the suggestion: "Everybody thinks I've been struggling. I've been having a good time! Let me tell you what I mean: when you've been part of a duet for so long, and then you're finally on your own, you don't even think about records. We were packing houses, we'd have lines out the door. People came to see a show. In the industry it's like, 'She's not in the press, she's not in the trades, she's dead,'" Tina laughs. "But I've been working nine or ten months a year for the last seven years."

Much of that time was in Europe, where "they've always treated me like a star," and notably England, which has shared a love affair with Tina since "River Deep Mountain High" exploded in 1965 (here it just bombed). Partly it's a matter of loyalty ("European audiences

don't drop you") and partly that fascination so many Europeans harbor for American roots R&B. Indeed, after Tina appeared on Heaven 17's "Ball Of Confusion," Martyn Ware wanted to produce a song for Tina, "but," she recalls, "nearly everything he brought me was some kind of R&B. I said, 'I don't want R&B, I want rock 'n' roll.'" They compromised with Al Green's "Let's Stay Together." Tina's version sold 250,000 copies; she was a hot property again.

Thus *Private Dancer* was constructed hastily and in rather patchquilt fashion, featuring eight different songwriters and four producers who worked in separate studios. Ever the pro, Tina sojourned from one to the next—if this is Tuesday it must be Abbey Road. Yet the album's overall feel is surprisingly coherent; it rarely packs the wallop of Tina's live show, but recoups with more sophisticated vocal phrasings, textures and dynamics.

"People always refer to me as a dancer," she points out. "For this album I wanted to let my public know I can sing. This record came from years of work onstage, of just relaxing and getting into the music, of experience. A lot of times onstage I'd hit a note and in my mind's eye think, 'Isn't that pretty? I just wish it were in another style so people could really hear it.'"

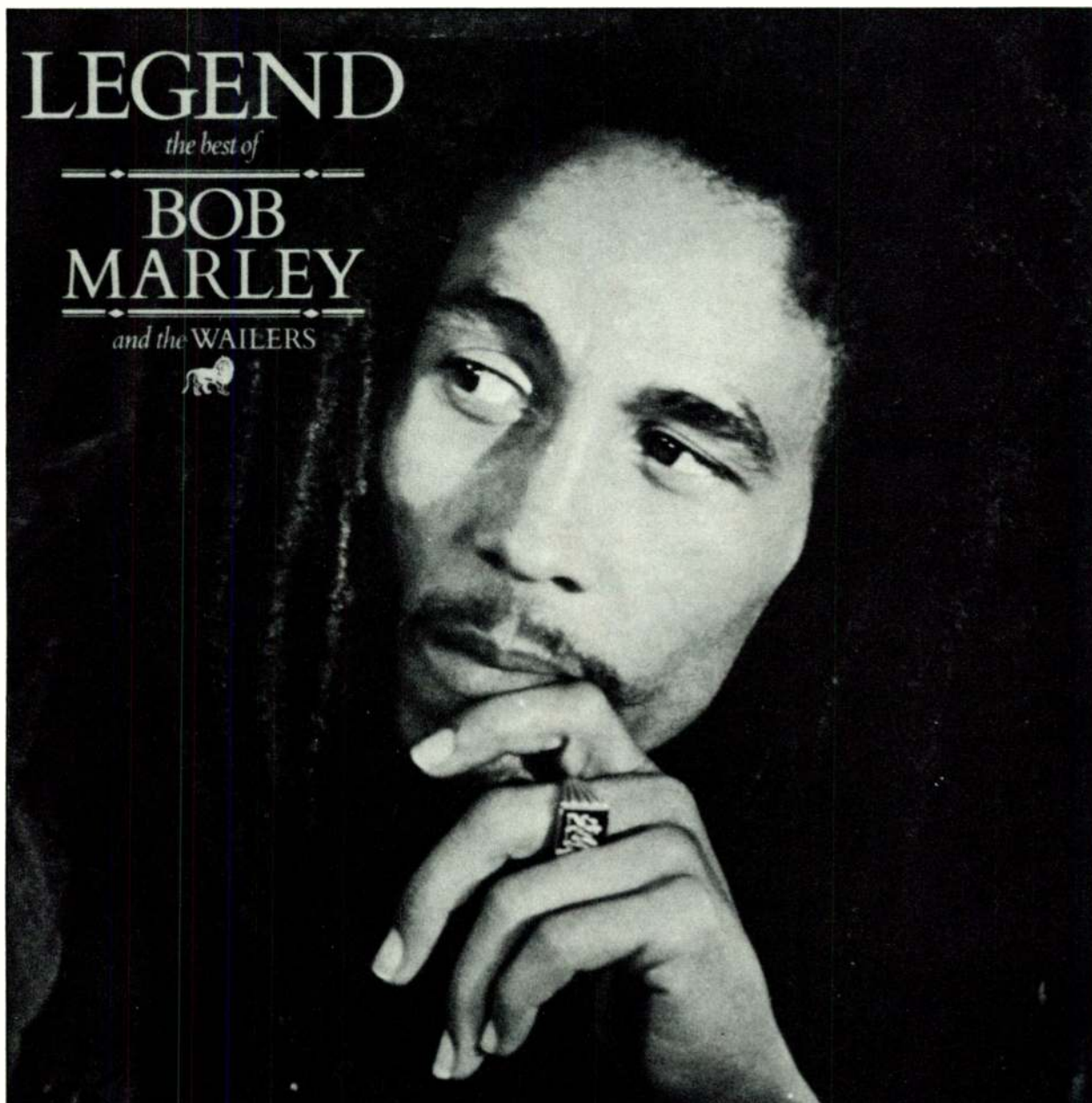
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So perhaps it's no fluke that the LP's two ballads, "Private Dancer" and "What's Love Got To Do With It," provide its most affecting moments. "Well, part of that is the song," Tina says. "I just have to get in the right key for the right effect. Like if you want a lot of push, what I'm known for, you raise the key. For soft, you lower the key, and I take on a different voice and make it pretty. I do know how to get different sounds for myself."

Nonetheless Tina regards *Private Dancer* as a transitional phase in her inexorable march toward mainstream rock. "I've really made my mark as a rock 'n' roll singer," she says, "but so far I don't have the album to show for it. I think the black women singers of my era—Gladys Knight, Aretha—we can sing with anyone. But I have no desire to sing that way. With Ike we sang rock onstage and produced R&B because Ike wasn't able to write rock. Now that's my problem—I can't either."

For all their spirit and raw energy, a lot of Tina Turner's songs do rely more on sheer power and dramatic flourishes than on emotional nuance—they'll knock you down, but rarely seep inside. One striking exception is Tina's "Nutbush City Limits," a musical memoir sung from the heart—no doubt because it was written that way. Which begs the question, why doesn't she compose more of her own material?

She draws a breath. "When I wrote that song in 1973, I was writing because our songwriter was schizophrenic, and I had to keep doing his songs over. It was awful—singing all day and writing at night—and I got to hate writing. And in a sense "Nutbush" came out of all that hate. After awhile I just couldn't think of anything except Nutbush—the stores and the highway and all—and so I just put it on paper.

"I really haven't been able to write since, I think because I've been blocked. Going through my divorce closed a lot of doors. Basically what I've experienced in my life is the R&B cliché," she says, "a lot of violence and a lot of hardship, and who wants to sing about all that crap when you've lived it? I want to be able to put that experience in a different light. I don't want to bring people down.

"For instance," Tina says, "look what John Lennon did with 'Help.'" She begins to sing in a surprisingly wispy voice, "Help me if you can, I'm feeling down-down..." then stops and gives me a look. "Now does that sound like you're feeling down? That's what I want, you see. If I could only get that *up* feeling, get my life on paper in a form like that...." Her voice trails off, and then, after a few moments, the rock 'n' roll queen shakes her head and breaks into an easy laugh.

"But I just don't have that attitude yet," Tina Turner shrugs. "So I'm not going to even bother with it now." ☐

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DIFFORD & TILBROOK

LAURA LEVINE

BY BILL FLANAGAN

SUICIDE SQUEEZE: THE END OF DEMOCRACY FOR A PAIR OF POP HIT SONGWRITERS

In olden days the breakup of a beloved rock band, like the breakup of a marriage, was heart-rending. Phil Everly stalking offstage on Don, McCartney tossing Ringo out of his house—those were profound emotional ruptures. But in the 80s, breaking up has emerged as a better marketing strategy than movie tie-ins, picture discs or reunion tours, offering all the poignance of premature death without death's usual impediment to career development.

Still, Squeeze's 1982 swan song was hard to figure. That summer they'd had a hit with the R&B-flavored "Black Coffee In Bed." After pushing at the American market for four years, they'd begun to pack big arenas like Madison Square Garden. By autumn they were gone.

Then Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook, Squeeze's singers, guitarists and ace songwriting team, announced that they would stay together. It was as if Lennon and McCartney merged following the Beatles' split. You had to wonder, how real was this breakup?

I pestered Difford and Tilbrook about this for two years. This spring A&M released *Difford And Tilbrook*, their first post-Squeeze collaboration; with a summer tour imminent and product to promote, the songwriters finally agreed to fill in the missing chapter.

Difford traced Squeeze's demise from the rehearsals for 1982's *Sweets From A Stranger* LP. Tilbrook was trying to move away from pop/rock, toward a feel influenced by American black music. The band wasn't biting.

"The attitude within the band," Difford recounted, "and this included me—was one of being extremely stubborn toward what Glenn was trying to bring in. I realized it was wrong to curb somebody who had that much talent. I just sat down and thought, 'This is really wrong.' This



Glenn Tilbrook's enthusiasm for R&B was shared only by collaborator Chris Difford.

doesn't feel right to me.' There was nothing inspiring about it at all."

I reminded Difford of a conversation we had had in a Pennsylvania bar during the *Sweets* tour. The songwriter had said that although he and Tilbrook would always remain a songwriting team, if any member left the band, Squeeze would end. This seemed a reckless statement considering the group's record of personnel changes: with two bassists (John Bentley replaced Harry Kakoulli after their second LP) and three keyboard players (Jools Holland, Paul Carrack, Don Snow) the five Squeeze albums had featured four different lineups. Only Glenn, Chris, and drummer Gilson Lavis

were constants.

So when Difford made that declaration in Pennsylvania I sensed he was looking for a

"A way out." Difford nodded. "Yeah, that's why I said it, really. I felt Don was pulling away to do his own material—which was fair enough—and that would be a prime opportunity for me to air my views. As it happened, I didn't have to."

Difford didn't have to because Tilbrook spoke up first: "One day Glenn said to me, 'I think the band's getting very stagnant. I think we should pull the reins in.' I said, 'I've been feeling that, too.' But we didn't just do it then and there. We said, 'Let's give it some time

and put as much effort into pulling it together as we can."

So came the Big Push—Madison Square Garden, MTV, Nassau Coliseum, "Black Coffee In Bed," *Saturday Night Live*. The whacky thing was, it worked. Squeeze was hotter than ever.

"I think if the big push had happened even one year earlier," Tilbrook says, "it might have galvanized everybody's enthusiasm. But we'd reached that unfortunate stage where we were a little bit too slack in our performing. There's a very fine dividing line between having enough confidence and having too much. Our approach became too slapdash."

There was another problem not obvious to outsiders: democracy. The band really was a five-man collective, and the two songwriters sometimes found their ideas vetoed.

"A democracy," Tilbrook sighs, "is all right as long as you're all fairly like-minded about things. The further you go on, the more difficult it is to find any point at which you agree. More often than not in that situation the only point you can agree on tends to be your lowest common denominator."

"I think Gilson was as much an individual as Keith Moon was," Chris added, in what may be a telling analogy. "He had his imprint firmly stamped on every-

thing Squeeze did. The same with John's style of bass playing. And each keyboard player was individual enough to stamp his own identity on Squeeze. It was very much a band. But the enthusiasm for songs, for putting imagination into those songs, was not there."

Meanwhile, Difford and Tilbrook's emergence as star songwriters gave them an identity beyond Squeeze. A London musical, *Labelled With Love*, was built around their songs, and they received offers to compose for Broadway and movies. Yet for all their outside acclaim, Chris and Glenn still met opposition in their own band.

The turning point came when Tilbrook became infatuated with the mid-70s Philly soul of Gamble & Huff, the O'Jay's and the Isley Brothers. "Those songs were very appealing melodically and had a sort of optimistic spirit to them," Glenn explained. "Also, black music hadn't yet reached the stage of sacrificing a song to a production or dance beat. I find that sort of songwriting really inspiring."

Tilbrook's move toward soul is part of a wider trend in post-punk England. Having buried the MOR rock values of the mid-70s, former punks are more eager to expand their musical ideas beyond white noise thrashings. Everyone wants to make dance music these days, and punk

rhythms, after all, never could swing like soul.

But of course Glenn's enthusiasm was not universally shared. I remember sitting in a hotel in Massachusetts two years ago, with John Bentley and Don Snow, listening to an advance cassette of *Sweets From A Stranger*. The two Squeeze members admitted they wished "Black Coffee In Bed" had been left off the album.

"We both got really bored with it," Snow said at the time. "It has the bones of a good song, but it's too repetitive. I enjoy playing it live, but the recorded version is too long. I hope I'm proved wrong. I hope it's a huge success."

Back in 1984 Tilbrook says, "'Black Coffee In Bed' is certainly one of the Squeeze songs I'd still like to do live, and that I see as a thread of continuity. Whereas 'Out Of Touch,' let's say, is more of a leaden rock song, which just doesn't appeal to me anymore."

The opening cut on *Difford And Tilbrook*, "Action Speaks Faster," is also a veteran of the Sweets-era breakdown. "It wasn't the right sort of song for Squeeze to do," Glenn smiles. "When I played it to the band there was the greatest amount of disinterest."

The new album's closing song, a subtle plea for nuclear disarmament called "The Apple Tree," was also vetoed by

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Squeeze—for non-musical reasons.

"The politics of the song weren't in agreement with everybody in Squeeze," Tilbrook explains. "It's difficult to do a statement song when you're a democratic band and have differing viewpoints."

Expressive limitations aside, there were legal and financial advantages to dissolving the Squeeze corporation. Gentlemen don't ask gentlemen questions about personal finances, but, Difford volunteers, "There were lots of things in the working background of Squeeze. We'd been through lots of different managers. We wanted to get rid of all that stuff."

So Squeeze's dissolution was, from the inside, inevitable. By the summer of 1982 all that remained was for Glenn

and Chris to admit it to each other—and tell the band.

Difford recalls the last leg: "We got to Europe at the end of the *Sweets From A Stranger* tour. Glenn and I got the train from Hamburg to Paris. We decided on the train that when we got back the following week we would tell everybody.

"When we did it was like they all knew. Gilson was the only one we had a lot of emotional problems with. Which was sad because he's one of the warmest people I've ever met. Although he's renowned for his drunken ability to be extremely obnoxious, he happened to have a very warm heart. It's weird to just sever a relationship like that. I haven't seen him to speak to in two years. I'd really like to go over to his house and

play him our new album and say, 'What do you think of this?' and have him go, 'Yeah, it's great! Well done!'" Difford looks away and adds, "After such a long time, putting such effort into the band, that would seem like a natural way to react."

Preparing to begin a summer club tour, Difford and Tilbrook feel liberated from the weight of past accomplishments—and are trying to shrug off expectations based on past glories.

"Now we have this new album," Chris says, "and we have a touring band we'll use whenever we need to work. For this record. When we get to the next record we might, like Steely Dan, use completely different people."

"I don't have to bother about anyone's ego in order to accommodate their performance," Glenn adds. "Squeeze was a rock band, and I don't think with this album we've made what I would term a rock album."

But of course, there are a lot of Squeeze fans who share Bentley and Snow's preference for rock over British soul, who will wail, "But I *liked* 'Out Of Touch!'"

"I think that's inevitable," Tilbrook nods. "I think that's why it is important to draw a line between Squeeze and what we're doing now. I think people always feel you have a tremendous responsibility to them because they've supported you. Whereas I don't think you have a responsibility to anybody. People either like you or they don't." ■

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"I've got an Oberheim OB-Xa keyboard that I use on the album, and a trusty Mini-moog I've had since 1978. I've got a Boss Doctor Rhythm drum machine—one of those tiny ones you can program fairly simple patterns on. It's really good. It serves its purpose. And a Roland Square Black Box drum machine.

"At home when I'm doing demos I use a Fender Jazz bass. I alternate between Mesa Boogie amplifiers and a Vox AC-30.

"On 'The Wagon Train' our keyboard player, Guy Fletcher, used the new Yamaha DX7 to put a bass on. That transformed the song for me. The DX7 is an astounding keyboard. I wish they'd give me a sponsorship."

Chris Difford: "I've got a Danny Farrington guitar and a Washburn and I use a Vox AC150 with a tremolo button. That's it."

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DYLAN'S "JOKERMAN"

BY MARY ANNA FECZO

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What you see is what you get" has fast become the credo of music video makers. But some elusive recording artists aren't buying this visual philosophy. Other video hold-outs who eventually succumb are not necessarily enamored of the promo-art form.

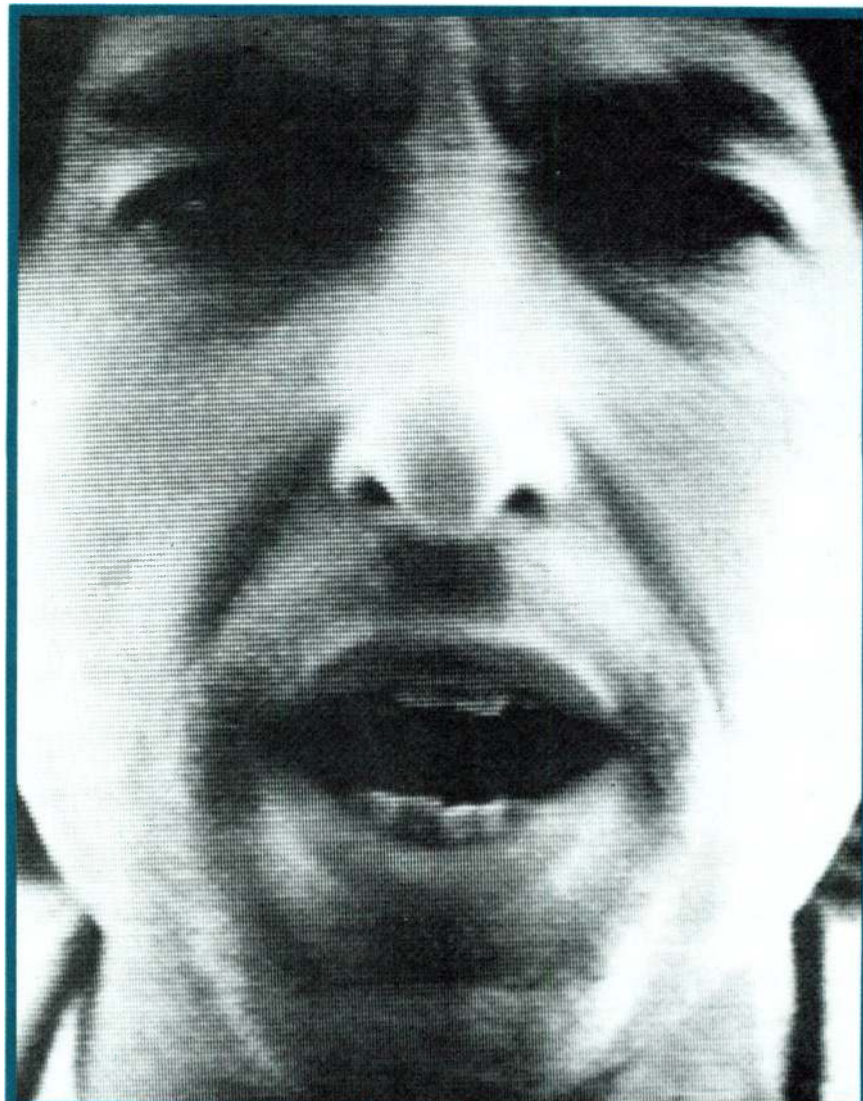
Bruce Springsteen only recently cut his first video clip. The Smiths' Morrissey vows his band will never need to shoot one. Joe Jackson issued a press release enumerating his reasons for refusing to go along with "a shallow, tasteless and formularized way of selling music."

The Reluctant Video Star is no director's delight. But Bob Dylan and George Lois' "Jokerman" video is a unique marriage of similar temperaments. Dylan's rebellious past, of course, is well known. Fifty-three-year-old Lois, a renegade "Greek kid and bad boy" art director, lost clients when he headed a committee, co-chaired by Muhammad Ali, to try to get Rubin "Hurricane" Carter out of jail in the 70s.

"Bobby wrote the song 'Hurricane' for us and put on a concert," Lois says. "He really stuck his neck out for Rubin. I felt I owed him a lot of favors." He agreed to do the video when approached by a mutual friend at Dylan and friend/associate Bill Graham's behest.

Lois had already created the "I Want My MTV" campaign, and believed most music video was "wallpaper" and "chewing gum for the mind." He was enthusiastic about working with Dylan not just to repay a favor, but to refute the advertising industry's glib handling of rock video.

"Because of music video, every commercial director in America froths at the mouth," Lois observes. "They're all starry-eyed. It's almost revolting. They



For Bob Dylan, reluctant video star, George Lois brought the lyrics front and center.

feel they can take a song and wing it. Discipline is gone. Videos are seen as hot stuff where you can use symbolism that doesn't mean anything. Perhaps I'm exaggerating, but that's been the feeling."

Lois decided on "Jokerman" as the song to visualize, and approached the project with all the rigor of an artistic designer (which he is). "Any good graphics person," he says, "is faced every second with protecting a concept, a big idea he knows is right. It's been thought out, and there's function and style behind it. It's not just images out of your ass."

With Dylan intent on shielding his visual image, Lois' concept won out: Dylan's words. The singer had always been wary of letting his lyrics be printed

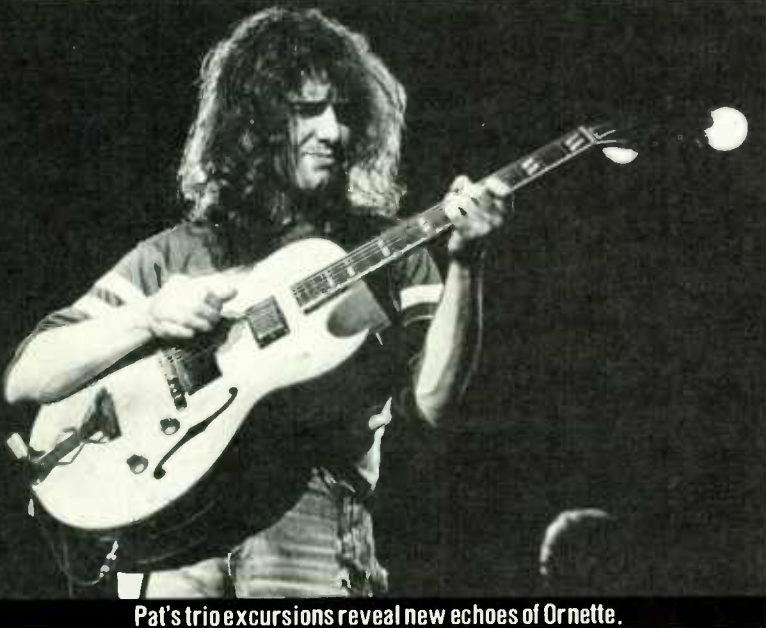
on album sleeves, and Lois acknowledges his thrust "probably boggled Bobby's mind."

The "Jokerman" video superimposes Dylan's phrases over shots of world art masterpieces. The sculptures, drawings, paintings and prints—selected by Lois over the course of a weekend—are replete with references to the Bible, good and evil, and the artist himself.

Lois' kick-off icon, a Christlike self-portrait by Albrecht Durer, is significant. "Durer was attacked all his life for that work," Lois says. "But if man is created in the image of God, then his creativity is in God." The Durer metaphor clearly belongs as much to Lois as Dylan.

"You can't allow yourself to be beaten up by a musician who knows nothing
continued on page 94

FACES



Pat's trio excursions reveal new echoes of Ornette.

PAT METHENY

Haden, Higgins & Harmolodics

Sooner or later everybody comes to the Ornette Coleman touchstone. "Everybody's harmolodic all of a sudden," Pat chuckles. It's 3:30 in the morning, and he's enveloped in the infamous aura of the Village Vanguard kitchen.

"But what I'm doing isn't what I guess Blood Ulmer hears.... To me, what Ornette did was to say that it's okay to bring your own stuff into the music. I didn't grow up in Harlem, I'm not black; I've got a whole different set of things which fit."

It's almost impossible not to summon up Coleman's melodic syntax, mercurial grooves or emotional profundity when you're working with his former rhythm section

(bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins) and playing his tunes. But Metheny's newest release, *Rejoicing*, and a one-week stint at the Village Vanguard showed the guitarist keeping the references opaque enough to let his own light shine through.

Metheny meshed nicely with Haden and Higgins. The trio invoked Coleman on such classic (and should-be-classic) compositions as "Humpty Dumpty," "Rejoicing" and "Tears Inside." And they didn't stray far from the temple on Haden's "Blues For Pat" or the bombastic guitar-synthesizer forays (like Metheny's "The Calling"). Haden has an ingenious way of making any note Metheny plays sound like a chord center. Higgins cradles rhythmic nuances with amazing delicacy and wisdom—and live, his drum sound is much more

full-bodied than ECM's emphasis on his cymbal rivets leads you to believe.

Metheny's straight-ahead playing has grown considerably since his days with Gary Burton; technique has taken a back seat to content. Ornette Coleman has always been a master of emotional directness. It's good to hear Metheny acknowledging it—and taking it from there. —Cliff Tinder

FUGS

Keeping The Broadsides Alive

The Beatles sang "I Feel Fine." The Fugs sang "I Feel Like Homemade Shit." While SSgt. Barry Sadler was extolling the Green Berets, the Fugs took his message even further with "Kill For Peace."

The Fab Four or the good SSgt. didn't have to worry about being knocked off the record charts by some hippie poets turned ragtag rock band from New York's Lower East Side. But in the late 60s the Fugs—their very name an obscenity manque—attracted a devoted following with their trenchant attacks on the hypocrisies of sex and politics.

Fifteen years after the band's last gig, Ed Sanders and Tuli Kupferberg stood in front of a re-formed—but not reformed—Fugs. Only drummer Ken Weaver was missing from the original Fugs brain trust. According to Sanders, he's turned born-again Chris-

tian and is studying Russian to enter a U.S. intelligence agency. Rapturous crowds at all four shows at New York's Bottom Line club proved that the Fugs' humorous musical broadsides have been sorely missed.

The reunion was no sudden impulse. "Virtually for the last four or five years I kept my eye out for musicians that I thought in the aggregate would provide really good music, good singing and a good stage show," Sanders says. The deaths of two ex-Fugs, the advent of that formidable year 1984, and his own increasing reinvolvement in music influenced Sanders' decision to reconvene the legendary band.

The 1984 Fugs indeed work well together. Guitarist Steve Taylor and drummer Coby Batty's vocal harmonies offset Sanders' nasal twang. Visually, the angelic-looking Taylor counterbalances hirsute, lunging bassist/keyboards player Mark Kramer. Clean-cut guitarist Vinny Leary would never be mistaken for a first-generation Fug—though he is—and even the perennially bedraggled Kupferberg has shorn his locks.

Not so Sanders. His flying frizz still juts out at a defiant angle. Except for gray streaks in his moustache and the absence of bright red shoes, the forty-four-year-old Fugs frontman looks remarkably the same as when he used to work up crowds in Tompkins Square Park with inspired between-song babble. He's more low-key now than in the 60s

Sanders and Kupferberg, still engaged after all these years.



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(aren't we all?), and some Fugs oldies—"Slum Goddess," "Crystal Liaison"—have an inevitable period patina. Other songs, though, haven't gone out of style—unfortunately, in the case of "Kill For Peace" and "River Of Shit." And the new material ("Last Night In The Bunker," "Refuse To Be Burnt Out," "Keeping The Issues Alive") shows Sanders and Kupferberg haven't lost their insight or poetic flair.

"We took a gamble," Sanders says. "We didn't know if [audiences] would go for the mixture of slightly randier early tunes with overtly political and socially conscious tunes—even more than we did back in the 60s. We felt it was righteous."

The band had enough confidence in themselves to videotape and record their show on 16-track facilities. Sanders is sure a record company will snap up the album, but isn't too concerned. "I'll make up a label and put it out myself, if push comes to shove."

Let's hope activism never goes out of style. —**Scott Isler**

LAURA NYRO

Organic Feminism

The voice on the other end of the phone is a sweet, slow pianissimo. "I don't do many interviews," Laura Nyro says, "because sometimes even if I say where I'm coming from, writers either can't figure it out or they don't print it. In some stories it's their image of you that dominates, rather than you. Also, sometimes the press wants a more conservative show-business consciousness from me, and that's not my reality. This has been the general situation throughout my career."

The general situation throughout Nyro's career is not one to gladden record company executives. Her early-70s successes (*New York Tendaberry*, *Christmas And The Beads Of Sweat*, *Gonna Take A Miracle*) have receded to the status of



"Is this mom's rock?"

scrapbook mementoes. *Mother's Spiritual*, Nyro's latest, is a full-fledged "women's music" album; its hyper-personal lyrics center around pacifism, human rights, the "superior intelligence of nature" (as Nyro puts it), and the power of the feminine principle to save the universe. These themes emerge in a jazz-folk story cycle about a mother and son adapting the wisdom of mother nature to their own lives. "I've read some terrible reviews," Nyro laughs; praising the IQs of trees is not quite standard AM radio fare.

"If I would have stuck to traditional themes in contemporary music, I would have felt confined. *Nested* (Nyro's previous album, from 1978) was from a one-to-one vision of romantic love, but with *Mother's Spiritual* the theme of love went zap, toward a sense of all of life, all of creation, toward a new vision of the whole spectrum of love. At the time I was very appreciative of nature, so I found myself musically in that spirit. It went in a different direction than the rock music fashion. A sensual kind of magic was in my life at that time, a beautiful kind of darkness. Todd Rundgren was helping me out with the recording and rhythm tracks; when he heard it he asked me, 'Is this mom's rock or something?'"

What the album is becomes clearer when Nyro talks about feminism. The speaking voice gets stronger, the pace quickens: "Music is

affected by the political climate. The climate of the 60s was toward the left and today's is toward the right. I, personally, have never been to the right." She laughs—an arpeggio of pleasure.

"I kind of went clear through the left and into the women's movement. But people are saying out of ignorance that *Mother's Spiritual* is very different from what I was, and that's not true. Some reviewers have found its support of feminism controversial or unfavorable. I think they found its spirit of protest excessive. But I find sexism and violence and nuclear threat excessive.

"My initial attraction to feminism was its spunk, and also its seriousness about alternatives and a peaceful world. I knew the world could use some matriarchal gospel. Women's music is some of the most meaningful and lovely music around, no doubt about it—but *Mother's Spiritual* could be a man's record, too, if he weren't a

chauvinist and if he dug the music. I truly believe that feminism is expansive enough for everyone to go through their own stages and express themselves. That's really the bottom line."

"Women's music" overloaded with feminist polemic can be tough going, but *Mother's Spiritual* is passionate and professional. Laura Nyro has made a beautiful record, and too few people will hear it. —**Laura Flossinger**

BERLIN

Sex & the Single

We didn't write 'Sex' for the radio," Berlin's Terri Nunn muses. "That would have been a very stupid thing to do."

Berlin is not stupid. The Los Angeles band's shrewdly titled "Sex (I'm a...)" last year grabbed enough attention to

Terri Nunn working on a physical metaphor.



MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

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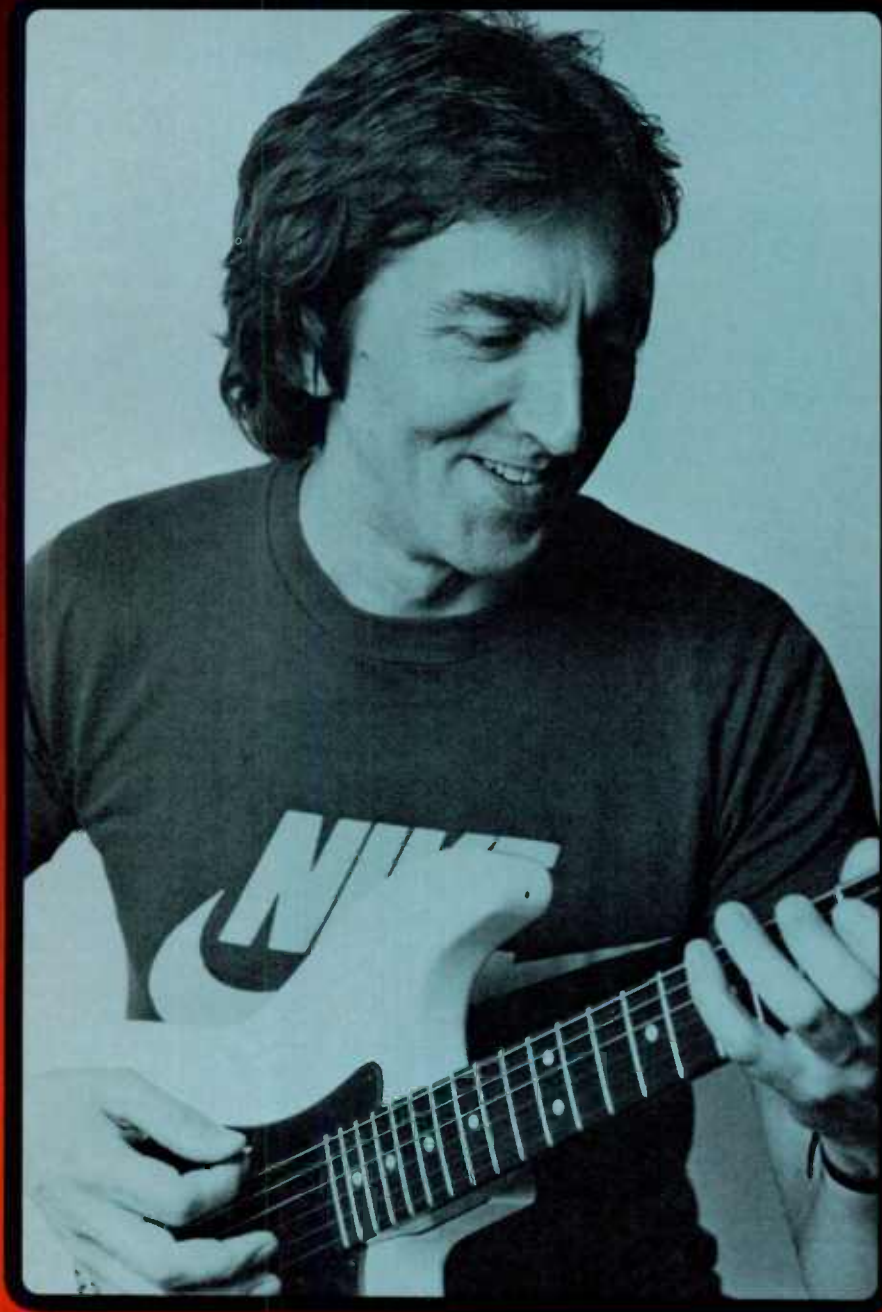
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ERNE BALL THE WORKING STRINGS

propel their debut *Pleasure Victim* EP to near-gold status. Now they're trying to live down their "one idea" image with a new LP, *Love Life*.

"There's an underlying theme in a lot of my songs," notes bassist/songwriter John Crawford: "fear of relationships and fear of being hurt." Crawford is as much quiet, lanky charm as Nunn is brash, diminutive allure. As the nucleus of Berlin, they form a physical metaphor for their musical themes. The lines may be drawn in the war between the sexes, but the rules keep changing.

"Because today's sexual definitions are so confused," Crawford says, "people may think they need to be this way or that—independent, dependent or whatever. So they're confused, frustrated."

It's all too easy to be frustrated and confused with Berlin. The songs, at their best ("No More Words," "In My Dreams," "Pictures Of You," "Now It's My Turn"),

are an accurate appraisal of that singular state of confusion—love and sex and everything in between.

The band can rock out, as they proved at New York's Beacon Theater. Nunn's passion plays, though, tend to cut her off from the audience. Crawford and Nunn say their songs are about communication, yet at the Beacon, they often passed up the chance to make the connection, caught in the bind between synth-pop distance and rock 'n' roll heat. The medium for their message needs a little work.

Crawford says that message has a lot to do with the loss of innocence. Nunn agrees: "People are longing for appreciation. That's what innocence is. You just become awed by things because they're so wonderful."

"So, in a way," Crawford smiles, "passion is a sort of innocence, isn't it?"

Yeah. Rock 'n' roll, too. **-Robin Sagon**

ancient and modern in his work. "There must be a reason for a female chorus. Certain statements or questions can only be voiced by the male, supported, or if necessary contradicted, by the women. In 'Papa's Land' I must be the one bold enough to say, 'We want to know who owns the land?' while the women add strength and unity when they chorus, 'We want to know.'"

"Fire In Soweto," from an album produced and arranged by Eddy Grant for Okosun in London, resurfaced at the Apollo as smoky, incendiary reggae. Creamy female har-

monies belied Okosun's outrage over the Soweto massacre of '76, expressed in an eloquent English-language plea for majority rule in South Africa.

During the rollicking swing of "Tire Ni Oluwa" a gorgeous woman in African garb approached the stage. Assistants helped her ascend to the stage, where she and Okosun danced a romantic *pas de deux*. The singer's shy partner suddenly slipped away to enthusiastic applause, but the barriers had been broken; audience and performers were one. **-Carol Cooper**

SONNY OKOSUN

Politics Can Be Pretty

In Africa they call me a liberation or protest singer because I have chosen to write about the ills of society," admits Nigerian Afro-popster Sonny Okosun. "The severity of the situation in Africa right now just doesn't allow me to concentrate on love songs like the American artists do."

But don't think a lack of romantic material makes an

evening with Okosun and his Ozzidi band a grim exercise in political sloganeering. At New York's Apollo Theater this May during a twenty-city North American tour, Okosun's ensemble included three female singers, two women dancers and a tight male combo long on marimba-toned lead guitars, melodic bass lines and polyrhythmic African percussion.

"I do not use a female chorus just because it sounds pretty," Okosun says, explaining the balance of



Homespun Texan Ely seems an unlikely computer fiend.

JOE ELY

Digital Boogie

Ordinarily, "Computer Bug Bites Musician" is not headline news. Plenty of pasty-faced British boys with funny haircuts have seen to that. However, when the dude in question is Texas rock 'n' roller Joe Ely, that's a horse of a different color!

Strange but true: Ely's new *Hi-Res* (high resolution) possesses the authoritative honky-tonk swagger of his earlier efforts, but it was composed with an Alpha Syntauri synthesizer and Apple computer. "If someone had told me earlier that I'd be writing this way, I'd have said they were crazy," Ely laughs.

How does someone who sings gritty, hard-livin' tunes like "Lipstick In The Night" and "Letter To Laredo" get tangled up in high tech? "Kind of by accident," the mild-mannered Austin resident replies. "My brother Mark, who works with computers, showed me a few things, and before long I was fascinated. I discovered I could record sixteen tracks on a floppy disc before taping."

Inspired by this knowledge, Ely worked up the music to thirty-six new songs with his computer toys at his home studio. Not that he became a total machine head. He set down his streetwise lyrics, as always, "with a ballpoint pen on cafe napkins and matchbook covers." For the actual

continued on page 60

Incendiary Nigerian Sonny Okosun skips the romance.





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*Say,
whatever
happened to
that nice
Velvety
Dream
Syndicate?*

by Steve Pond

L.A.'s GARAGE PSYCHOTICS TIGHTEN UP.

This is the Dream Syndicate? Steve Wynn sits on a couch in San Francisco's Automatt recording studio, listening to the rough mix from his band's upcoming album. The singer/songwriter breaks into a characteristically sardonic grin. "Fucking new wave dance band," he mutters under his breath. "I can't stand these guys. They sold out, let me

“We made Wine And Roses as a tough, emotional album that should either bring you to tears or make you violent. And all we heard about for the next year was the Velvet Underground.”

down, man. Where's *Pebbles* when you need them?"

The garage psychedelia of *Pebbles* isn't. The song blasting out of the speakers grows rougher, harsher, more anarchic. "My baby wants to wear the ring that her mama wore," Wynn sings; Karl Precoda spews out a guitar solo in a raw, jerky rhythm that erupts into a twisted batch of haywire metallic riffs. The narrative gets darker by the moment:

*My baby wants the kind of man that married Ma
Come on baby, don't be long
Gonna take you where you've never been before
What else can I do for Daddy's girl?*

From his seat, Wynn feigns confusion. "They must have sacked the singer," he says. "Guitar solo...no feedback there. Must've sacked the guitarist, too."

The Dream Syndicate didn't sack anybody. (The bassist quit, but that's another story.) The band that recorded "Daddy's Girl" is essentially the same one on the *Dream Syndicate* EP and *Days Of Wine And Roses* album: Wynn, Precoda and drummer Dennis Duck, with David Provost replacing original bassist Kendra Smith. They're the same group that has been bringing unpredictable guitar-fueled mayhem and 60s influences to L.A. clubs for the past two years.

But what got them labeled Velvet Underground retreads—low-tech music, a frayed-nerve feel, the whiny tension in Wynn's untrained voice—is replaced on their new album with a rock-hard, disciplined attack that supports rather than effaces the Syndicate's experimental nature. Hell, "Daddy's Girl" might even play on radio—provided radio is partial these days to nasty little ditties about incest.

Wynn defends the song (at three minutes, the Syndicate's shortest ever) as dealing with "love for the family ties." He'd even like to turn it into a video, he says, but only if he can hire "the Brooke Shields of about five years ago" for his leading lady.

"Actually," Wynn says, "I don't know what song they're gonna choose for the video. When I think about it, 'Daddy's Girl' is probably the *sanest* thing on the whole record."

Such is life inside *The Medicine Show*, the Dream Syndicate's first big-time recording, for A&M Records. This is a crucial moment for a band that started as a lark, a scheme to pick up a few quick bucks playing Rolling Stones tunes at frat parties. They soon found it was more fun to play twenty-minute versions of "Suzie Q," "Season Of The Witch" and "Don't Fear The Reaper"—or Wynn's own abrasive, introspective tunes. Now they've found it can be potentially more lucrative too.

But they've never been consistent. A Dream Syndicate show can be soaring and mesmeric; it can also degenerate into screeching feedback and endless guitar duels. "I suppose that it might be possible," Precoda says, "that in the past, on occasion, we just might have been a little...*boring*."

"The basic structure for a very good pop song," Wynn once said, "is verse, chorus, verse, chorus, Karl solos for half an hour, I solo for half an hour, verse, chorus."

That's hardly the right ticket for dealing with a major label. The Dream Syndicate's challenge was to tighten up without selling out. That, Precoda says, meant a change in attitude.

"Everybody had to say, 'Look, we wanna do this right' and

that means not going about it half-assed. You have to practice your instrument and be ready to play. Something like this needed to be done with this group, badly."

"Karl is kinda my pro conscience," Wynn mutters. "My attitude didn't change much. I just think [producer] Sandy Pearlman knew what we wanted but couldn't articulate: something more hard and wide-scope and powerful, with that power coming from an expansion of our sound. He knew how to do it. I couldn't have done it. We would have made a *Wine And Roses* part two."

The mixing session temporarily halted, Wynn is now in the back room of a bar down the street from the Automatt. Once he tones down the sarcasm he's an intense, serious talker; still, he's at a loss to explain why *The Medicine Show* was such a difficult experience for the Dream Syndicate. The record was initially due in January; Wynn didn't even finish writing lyrics until February. The band made *Days Of Wine And Roses* in under two weeks; *The Medicine Show* took over six months, most of it spent painstakingly embellishing the basic tracks. Los Angeles' gossip channels overflowed with tales of trouble: A&M hated the record, the band was having problems with Pearlman. Dream Syndicate denies both those charges.

Wynn does joke about the new record's lengthy gestation: "It's being passed down from generation to generation; my grandchild will put it out." Asked point-blank why it took so long, however, he can only say, "I've got no answer for that. I don't know why."

Whatever it was, Wynn says it wasn't Sandy Pearlman. "Pearlman, he's pretty cool. He's like the poor kid who ran into a lot of money when he was seventeen and forever has to prove he's from humble beginnings; he wants to prove he's hip, and we're his hip credentials. He didn't come in and say, 'Let's put a lid on your weirdness and make you marketable.' He jumped on the weirdness and pushed it further.

"I thought, 'Major label, I'm gonna sing pretty.' I took a few vocal lessons, sang in my bathroom. Then Sandy came in, took the ugliest vocals he could find, took Karl's ugliest solos, and did everything he could to make them as hard as he could."

What, then, of Precoda's talk about a changed, more professional attitude in one of L.A.'s most proudly self-indulgent bands?

Wynn speaks quietly. "This record just took longer than the others and there were more things to overcome. That's all. More professional?" A long pause. "I guess. 'Cause you can get misinterpreted.

"I thought the *Wine And Roses* album, more than anything, was a really good emotional record. I really did. I think the key to the album was that the catharsis in it was real. It was like going to a good gospel revival church and screaming and singing at the top of your lungs for an hour. You should feel the same way after listening to that album."

He stops again. "And then... for the next year, the angle in all the reviews was the 60s, the Velvet Underground, Lou Reed. I don't mean to second-guess reviewers, but don't you guys listen? You bitch about how records are fabricated, how they're not from the soul, and then you get a record like this

"I've got more devils than Motley Crue will ever see."

and categorize it, put it in a really small ball. What do you want? I made *Wine And Roses* thinking it was a rough, raw, emotional album that should either bring you to tears or make you violent. And all I heard about for the next year was the Velvet Underground."

He quiets down again. "That bugged me a lot. A lot. I know critics want an angle, and what better angle than the second coming of the hippest rock-critic band in the universe? But there was no intention to do that. Yeah, the Velvets had feedback and I sang a little like Lou Reed. Lou Reed in 1967 was a shitty singer who loved Bob Dylan. Steve Wynn in 1982 was a shitty singer who loved Bob Dylan."

He's rolling now. "We're not the Velvets, we didn't try to be, we didn't want to be. We're not 60s, didn't try to be or want to be, and we're not psychedelic, didn't try to be or want to be. We played songs that we liked." He stops. "Here I am getting worked up again. Karl told me I don't know how to do interviews—he said I had to calm down and play hard to get."

"Fuck that."

The Medicine Show sounds like neither the Velvet Underground nor the cathartic outpouring (some of it influenced by Thomas Carlyle, Wynn says) of *Wine And Roses*. Perhaps reflecting Wynn's own dark moods, perhaps as a defense against misunderstood personal lyrics, the new record is full of third-person narratives, tales of sin, violence and darkness. Precoda claims not to pay attention to lyrics—he was just trying to make "a bitchin' sounding record"—but Wynn happily describes the album as "psychotic."

And then he turns around and calls it an accident. "It just happened that way," he says. "They were songs I wanted to write. I wasn't trying to make a psychotic record. No way. That'd be like Motley Crue and *Shout At The Devil*. Fuck the devil. I've got more devils than Motley Crue will ever see."

■ In between the tanned preppies of the early-60s Beach Boys era and the skinhead punks twenty years later, Southern California's string of oceanside communities gave rise to another subculture. Its members wore long hair. They surfed. They worked on their cars in torn rock 'n' roll T-shirts and faded jeans. They listened to Led Zeppelin and its successors—at full blast, of course. Ten years ago, when they were at their most populous, they used words like "bitchin'." Some of them, like Karl Precoda, still do.

Steve Wynn is the acerbic, well-read former rock critic and sportswriter who listens to critically fashionable folk: Dylan, Reed, Alex Chilton. Precoda is a heavy-metal basher who cranks his stereo to room-rattling levels to play Iron Maiden, UFO and Def Leppard. "I like Karl," Wynn says, "because he's kinda like the average rock fan."



EBET ROBERTS

Steve Wynn's more anarchic tendencies may yet keep him off his dream jukebox.

Wynn and Precoda have spent nearly all their lives around Los Angeles. Precoda is twenty-two, Wynn a year older; when *The Velvet Underground And Nico* was recorded, they were just beginning grade school. That means they grew up in the arid musical climate of the 70s, the fallow period between the creativity of the 60s and the adrenaline rush of the punks. Right?

Wrong. Precoda: "The 70s were what got me. In the early 70s there were several totally bitchin' Zeppelin albums, some totally bitchin' Deep Purple albums, some great Black Sabbath albums.... Maybe the critics don't think that was creative; I can't argue. But there were some great things all through the 70s. Boston came out of the 70s. Blue Oyster Cult put out some tremendous records. The first Van Halen record was a fucking exciting record to come out.

"I don't clearly recall 60s music from when I was a kid. The 60s records I own, lemme think...." He mulls it over for a minute. No Velvets. *The Allman Brothers At The Fillmore East*—or was that 70s? A couple of Neil Young records, but later things like *Zuma* and *On The Beach*. He gives up. "Not too much."

"I don't clearly recall 60s music. The 70s were what got me: Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, Black Sabbath..."

Precoda says he met Wynn at Dodger Stadium. They began making music in Wynn's basement, sharing a tiny Fender Champ amplifier and finding common ground in their lack of discipline. Tired of playing (mostly bass) in restrictive and unrewarding bands, Precoda was looking for an outfit to give him free rein. Wynn, meanwhile, was on the lookout for musicians. He'd been playing with Kendra Smith since both attended the University of California at Davis, near Sacramento, and both were in a band with two current members of True West. (Judging from True West's topnotch new album, *Hollywood Holiday*, that band is now carrying on the sound and spirit of the early Syndicate.)

With veteran local drummer Dennis Duck they formed the Dream Syndicate and decided against doing Stones covers. "We started out completely for fun," Precoda says. "It turned out to be more fun to jam and do our own stuff than to rehearse Stones songs. So we got up there and flailed away. I just turned it up; the others found out that if I was gonna play that loud, they'd have to play loud too."

In January 1982—less than a month after their first gig—the Dream Syndicate recorded a four-song demo in a friend's living room/studio. That tape became their debut EP on Wynn's own Down There label. Then, with fewer than half a dozen shows under their belts, the band suddenly found itself one of L.A.'s most widely praised, sought-after outfits. Before the year was out, they had consolidated that standing by signing with Slash Records and releasing the equally well-received *Wine*

And *Roses* LP on that label's Ruby Records affiliate.

Around this time the band found itself pigeonholed as part of the "paisley underground," a fledgling L.A. club movement theoretically made up of local bands with 60s roots, vaguely psychedelic touches and, most important, the same friends. In common with the Bangles, the Three O'Clock, Rain Parade, the Long Riders and Green on Red, the Syndicate didn't like the tag.

"The other bands are my friends, but that's about all," Wynn says. "You're gonna say I'm a liar if I say we weren't 60s-influenced, and you'd be right; you can tell by our records that I have heard Dylan records and Velvet records. So there was a common ground with those other bands: we all happened to want to hear *Highway 61* more than we wanted to hear *Duran Duran* *And The Ragged Demon*, or whatever it is. But it wasn't a movement. Most of those other bands hated us, anyway."

Wynn may have been the songwriter, but from the start his tunes simply provided blueprints for group performance.

"I don't like to write a song you can't play on acoustic guitar. Listen to this song," he says as Peter Schilling's "Major Tom (Coming Home)" comes over the bar's jukebox. "It sounds great, but I couldn't play you 'Major Tom' on acoustic guitar. You'd be bored, because I don't have this echo in my voice or this synthesizer. Today it seems like you can take the worst song in the world, with no development to touch any Hank Williams song or any Leiber & Stoller song or John Fogerty song, and make it sound great.

"But I don't like that stuff. I could play any song I've ever written right now on acoustic guitar, and it'd make sense. The song's the whole basis for everything. I figure you should just surround yourself with people you admire and give them room to play."

The procedure changed somewhat on the new record: producer Pearlman contributed to the songs. Further, Smith claimed she was sick of touring and Provost took her place.

"You change one member in a band like this and you really change the band," Wynn says. "Dave has a really good soul and R&B feel, so he gives us more of a tough, hard groove feel." He slips into a deep—and deeply facetious—tone: "*You trade a chick for a dude, man, you get some action going. If you print that, put it in italics or I'll be in a lot of trouble.*"

With the new lineup, experiments continued in the studio. *The Medicine Show's* longest track, "John Coltrane On The Stereo," had already undergone a year and a half of in-concert changes before the recording sessions. Even so, the twelve different takes had distinctly different feels, according to Wynn: "They ranged from about thirteen minutes to half an hour. One sounds like the 'Last Call For Alcohol Blues Stomp,' some sound like hard R&B."

In other words, the Syndicate may be more professional, but not more routine. "Freedom, and the chance to turn it up, is what attracted everybody to this group," Precoda says. "Even with our 'newfound discipline,' it'll still be freer than a lot of things." He shrugs. "We can't help it."

Early this year Smith gave Wynn some good news: her new band was going out on the road. "I said, 'Hold on!'" Wynn laughs. "You told us you quit our band because you didn't like touring, and now you're happy to be going on a long tour? Why'd you really quit?" She said, "Well, because you're kind of a tyrant and a bastard."

It's a complaint Wynn has heard before but not one that particularly bothers him. He's always been combative and often openly abusive to audiences. "Why do people have to go through the Liberace routine of 'I'm so glad you're here tonight, it's wonderful?'" he asks. "Of course it is, and even if it isn't wonderful, they're paying your bills. You can say, 'Thank goodness you came, because you're paying my electric bill this month. I hope you enjoy it and come back again, because I've got another electric bill next month.' Why do you wanna hear

continued on page 60

LAURA LEVINE



"Professional conscience" Karl Precoda cranks the volume.

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HEAVY

We tried to ignore it. We did our best to make it go away. Nonetheless, America is now on a veritable heavy metal binge. We asked our writers what it all meant, and how and why it had become so popular. Here's what they told us.

ROSS MARINO



METAL

In Defense of Dirtbags and Worthless Puds

Charles M. Young

Last night I watched this great feature-length cartoon called *The Secret of NIMH* on cable. The heroine, a mother mouse who embodies all that is virtuous about the maternal instinct, battles hungry cats, traitorous rats, unfeeling farmers and vivisectionist scientists to save her children. Manly fan of Conan and Indiana Jones though I am, I found myself on the verge of tears several times, remembering all the crises my own mother nurtured me through and all the letters I haven't written since leaving college in 1969. She's the wonderfulest mom who ever lived, and if anyone says anything against her, I'll kill him.



That propounded, I'm going to say something against my mother, which you, reader, are not allowed to agree with or (to reiterate) I will kill you. But you are allowed to think about it, it being: several years ago at the height of my minimal success at *Rolling Stone*, I was very pleased to be hanging out with rich and famous rock stars. My mom didn't know who they were, which was all right because my definition of rock 'n' roll has always been *music mom can't listen to*. Therefore wanting compliments would have been hypocritical. What was not all right was when she said, "Chuck, you still haven't written an article I can show the neighbors."

I know what she meant. I am ashamed to show my articles to the neighbors. Over the past decade, I have accumulated hundreds of hate letters that I reread regularly just to remind myself what a worthless pud I am in the eyes of neighbors. Many writers have this problem and compensate with arrogance, alcohol or wimping out—all temptations to which I have often succumbed. But for me not to give my mom an article on a respectable subject, free of four-letter words, full of sentiments endorsed by all neighbors everywhere, after all this time, constitutes the irrefutably scummiest depth to which any human can plunge. So what I have to say against my mom is: mom, you shouldn't have had such a worthless pud for a son.

Which brings me to Jesus. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes will be those of his own household," Jesus said in Matthew 10:34-36. Christians have traditionally interpreted this passage to mean that if your family isn't Christian, you must be loyal to Jesus at their expense. The untraditional take a broader view, holding that to do anything worth doing, to follow your own path, you must first be a worthless pud in the eyes of your parents, or at least their societal surrogates. I vote for the broader view, having studied the Bible for years and come to roughly the same revelation as my theologian forebears: God approves of what I approve of.

And what I currently approve of is pure and unalloyed worthless puds, who are to be found only in the latest generation of punks. The Butthole Surfers—whom I know slightly—are a prime example. Their singer, Gibby Haynes, gave up a lucrative job with a prestigious accounting firm in Texas to sing songs like "The Revenge Of Anus Presley" (deep exegesis

Hheavy metal is the only form of rock 'n' roll besides punk where that essential element of rebellion still exists."

reveals a certain pungent motif in the BS oeuvre). To live in Texas and be in a band whose name your parents won't even say out loud requires enormous moral courage. I mean, this is making some serious enemies in one's own household. To follow your muse on to the *Tonight Show* and sing about unrequited love requires approximately fifth-rate guts. But following your muse up the alimentary canal—we are talking quest on the level of Odysseus, Jason and Captain Ahab.

Let us now turn to heavy metal, haven for impure and alloyed worthless puds. Take for an example this time Twisted Sister, who look like the Green Bay Packers on Halloween; i.e. large, menacing, well-muscled and dressed in lingerie. Contrary to all these Flock of Haircut bands from England, Twisted Sister does not wait on the breezes of fashion. They have been dressing like women—or at least like extremely vicious androgynes—ever since real men started wearing lipstick in the fabled days of glitter. To dress in such a manner and to live on Long Island requires great physical courage, because if

someone calls you a poof on Long Island for wearing a negligee and high heels, you must beat them up. Which Twisted Sister did every night to its audience for years. In the process, they rallied a huge local following to a banner long ago dropped by Alice Cooper, an important inspiration for worthless puds until he started playing golf with George Burns and denouncing the character he created on late night television.

Dee Snyder, leader and singer of Twisted Sister, refers to himself as a "dirtbag" and is so effective at being one that his father, a cop, keeps no pictures of Dee past the age of twelve. Alienating one's parents to such an extent, as I say, takes courage of true Christian/Butthole Surfer magnitude, courage that Dee is conscientiously attempting to pass on to the next generation through the song and video for "We're Not Gonna Take It." Using the actor who played ROTC commander Doug Niedermeier in *Animal House*, "We're Not Gonna Take It" depicts a horrible bully of a father browbeating his son into the traditional version of American manhood by breaking his spirit. The kid then magically transforms into Dee Snyder who stomps the father, much in the Warner Bros. cartoon tradition of surrealistic violence. The song is catchy, sort of a "We Don't Need No Education" with major chords, and the video is vulgar, melodramatic, overacted, simplistic, lots of fun and exactly the sort of inspiration kids need to become worthless puds.

"That's why heavy metal exists," says Snyder. "It is the only form of rock 'n' roll besides punk where that essential element of rebellion still exists. My parents did to me what happens to that kid in the video. Maybe some kid somewhere who's getting beat up on can feel better thinking about me dragging that father downstairs by his hair. The message of Twisted Sister is personal freedom. If you like what you are, fuck what everybody else thinks. If you don't like what you are, change it. Just don't worry about what's cool. It doesn't matter."

Seven More Laudatory Things About Twisted Sister:

1 Men and women have an equal chance to be offended by Twisted Sister. They sing about murder, mayhem, insanity, vigilante justice, resisting authority and motorcycles. But they do not sing about poontang.

2 Snyder can sort of get away with outrageous stage raps like "Boy George takes it in the ass...from Annie Lennox" because he wears mascara himself and because heavy metal ought to spit on anyone who is honored at the Grammys.

3 Snyder worries about his younger brother who used to be a major-league dirtbag but now wears Bermuda shorts.

4 Snyder is married and is trying to raise his own two year old without beating up on him, mentally or physically.

5 The entire band leads relatively calm lives offstage and, owing to a distaste for drugs and alcohol, appear unlikely to end up dead in a motel room.

6 Their bass player, Mark "The Animal" Mendoza, probably the most terrifying dirtbag ever to glower on stage or street, originated a new stroke back in 1975 when he was in the Dictators: pounding the bass with your fist and bleeding on it.

7 Mendoza is the most creative juvenile delinquent I ever met. To cite just one instance: he and his buddies used to fill fire extinguishers with rancid, stinking whipped cream from the garbage cans at the Redi-Whip factory on Long Island and then spray their high school. Personally speaking, I had a similar reaction to high school—throwing up on it when I'd get off the bus in the morning—but in retrospect I'd probably have had more dates if I'd thought of the whipped cream.

Dirtbags such as Twisted Sister are, however, slightly less exemplary than worthless puds like the Butthole Surfers, because heavy metal is pro-hero worship (mystifying and totalitarian) while punk is anti-hero worship (de-mystifying and democratic). "This is my only shot to be rich and famous," says Snyder. "And I *want* to be a rich and famous rock star, sort of like those evangelists who drive around in Cadillacs and people send them money because they need the fantasy. I'm obsessed with proving to the world I'm cool on my terms. I

want to walk into fancy restaurants and look like a dirtbag and have them serve me caviar."

Yeah, but when you eat that caviar, you're no longer a dirtbag. Two demerits for inane ambition.

Putting aside our moral gradations for the moment, let us turn to Elias Canetti, a Nobel Prize winner who wrote a book called *Crowds and Power*, published in 1960.

"[At classical concerts] all outward reactions are prohibited," Canetti writes. "People sit there motionless, as though they managed to hear *nothing*. It is obvious that a long and artificial training in stagnation has been necessary here. People who allow music to affect them in a natural way behave quite differently, and those who hear it for the first time, never having heard any before, show unbridled excitement. When French sailors played the *Marseillaise* to the aborigines of Tasmania, these expressed their satisfaction by such strange contortions of their body and such astounding gestures that the sailors shook with laughter. One young man was so enchanted by it that he tore out his hair, scratched his head with both hands and repeatedly uttered loud, piercing cries."

Well, well, well. Those lucky enough not to have completed their "long and artificial training in stagnation" (ever read a better capsule description of high school?) have the ability to react to music in the natural way: headbanging.

Canetti goes on to point out that what is really unnatural is the exchange of a short disorganized sound (clapping) for a long organized one (the concert). You may feel your alpha waves kick in during a sonata, but you experience no *discharge*. Discharge Canetti defines as "the moment when all who belong to the crowd get rid of their differences and feel

equal." At heavy metal shows, the discharge actually begins on the street hours before as individual males with long, stringy, unstyled hair and T-shirts emblazoned with snarling, bleeding, feeding monsters recognize each other and form small packs. By concert time, the sense of equality has grown to the point that the normal fear of touching strangers has disappeared. Adults in the crowd now begin to feel angry and frightened (often claiming to remember being different at that age) as they are jostled by teenagers who don't say excuse me. This feeling of equality, it seems to me, is crucial, because for a kid to feel equal is to feel several levels better than his usual sense of being persecuted and powerless. For the adult, who takes his dominant place in the social hierarchy for granted, to feel equal with a teenager is deeply alarming. Hence many rock writers—who have no one to look down on in the social hierarchy except teenagers—tend to sit in protected areas, develop no aesthetic criteria for judging heavy metal other than to note the crowd consists of worthless puds, and continually complain in their year-end evaluations that music is getting worse. Meanwhile, the crowd storms the aisles, howls for encores, throws beer on itself, and shakes violently, which the musicians usually interpret as tribute to their amazing talent. If the discharge is complete, the crowd leaves joyous and spent. If the discharge is incomplete, it may stick around to tear up the seats, as happened recently after a Judas Priest show at Madison Square Garden.

If the discharge arrives early and is uncontrolled, a Cincinnati can result. I flew there the day after the 1979 Who concert in which eleven kids were crushed to death. Talking with some of the parents and surviving friends was by far the most traumatic reporting I ever did, and I hope I am not glossing over the horror of that night. But the cause was simple and wholly unremarkable in the history of crowds: two doors were open for 18,000 people to pass through in forty minutes on the way to something they loved. Similar situations had occurred with many other bands in Cincinnati and no adult authority had thought to change conditions in which thousands of teenagers were clearly experiencing pain and terror.

Much of the analysis, however, followed in the tradition of adults seeking to ban activities from which teenagers derive happiness. Whether rock 'n' roll in the 50s, long hair in the 60s, video games in the 70s, "devil rock" and eighteen-year-old drinking in the 80s, or sex in any decade, the first impulse of many school boards, churches, city councils and newspaper columnists is to take it away. John G. Fuller even wrote a book, *Are The Kids All Right?*, using Cincinnati to build a case that rock 'n' roll produces "physiological and emotional changes that seriously damage the will to live and be creative." Too good a reporter not to give some credit to "brutally stupid crowd planning," Fuller leapt from there to his creative conclusion with the aid of some interesting social science about rock's ability to induce trance and mass suggestibility.

Rock 'n' roll, particularly heavy metal, does induce a trance state in which all sense of individuality is drawn from a crowd. So does the State of the Union Address. The fact is that most people function in some form of trance most of the time, and the people who run the world like it that way because when you have no willpower, they can make you buy and vote for shit. It does not, however, have to be shit. The trance itself is morally neutral. The question then to be asked about any deliberately induced state of mass suggestibility is: what message is getting conveyed to whom?

In the case of heavy metal, I don't think anyone knows for sure. Social science in this area usually amounts to some dried-up geek trying to get tenure with a claim that rats' gonads fall off when they hear Jimi Hendrix. Asking teenagers directly doesn't seem to help much either. I remember when I was fifteen, I got seated next to a record company executive once on an airplane and we got into an impossible discussion about why I liked the Yardbirds and hated the Youngbloods. I had no idea. Now I can say because Jeff Beck could make his

Vicious androgynous Dee Snyder of Twisted Sister.



MARK WEISS

guitar snarl while the Youngbloods sounded like wimps, but even that says nothing about why a personality like me would be attracted to a particular sound. As Kevin Dubrow of Quiet Riot said when I asked if he thought headbanging had anything to do with repressed sexuality, "I think the only thing they're repressing is verbosity."

Nor is there much to be gleaned from the musicians who almost always weasel or fumble on the question of social consequences, insisting heavy metal is meaningless entertainment. One of my regular questions is, "What advice would you have for parents who are trying to raise their kids according to traditional values?" and the reply comes as some variation on (Dubrow again): "The solution is to not have children."

There is something to be learned from demographers. Mike Shallet of the Street Pulse Group, which surveys record buyers, says the male-to-female ratio in the hard rock audience is 80-20 but the number of females appears to be growing as they are exposed to it more through MTV and CHR (contemporary hits radio, which includes much more hard rock in its playlists now than in the late 70s). In terms of age, two thirds of the hard rock record buyers are 16-24, one fifth 15 or under. Half of them hear about records from their friends, indicating a strong, semi-underground culture that can shoot a band like Ratt into the charts with no radio play. My own observation of heavy metal concert crowds leads me to believe that the growing number of females may be having a salutary effect on the males—there being a better chance of getting laid if you haven't passed out.

But the real psychology remains obscure. For example, in the mid-70s, columnist Bob Greene wrote a book in which he was very appalled by Alice Cooper and his fans who were intent on storming the barricades. Are these fans still dirtbags like Dee Snyder, or are they wearing Bermuda shorts like his brother? Did Cooper pass on the courage to rebel to that generation or just a lot of decadent habits? Do they have the guts to voice an unpopular opinion? Are they blue collar or white collar or permanently unemployed? Democrat or Republican or apolitical? Are they still addicted to crowd adrenaline and susceptible to fascism? What percentage has herpes? AIDS? Children? Played golf with George Burns? Are the kids who threw the cherry bombs on their friends from the upper tiers now guidance counselors?

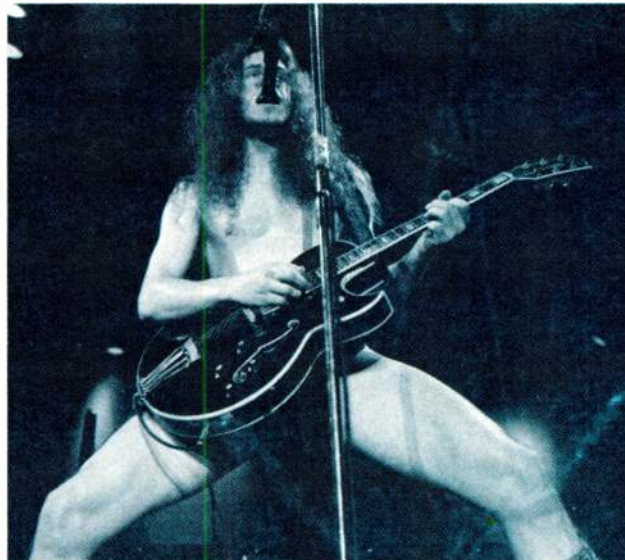
Unless some enterprising Ph.D. candidate was passing out questionnaires during the mayhem of 1974 and has done some in-depth follow-up interviews—doing for dirtbags and worthless puds the same sort of long-term study still being done on a couple of Harvard classes from the 30s (check out *Adaptation to Life* by George Vaillant)—we'll never know if Greene was justifiably appalled. Does sicko rock exorcise sicko behavior or reinforce it? Alice Cooper, we hardly knew ye. It is not too late, however, to find out with Motley Crue, a group Greene and much of the rock press find even more appalling. The Crue's stage patter is obscene, their songs are obscene, their interviews are obscene, and their fans—many of whom are still waiting for their pubic hair—are obscene. This Greene stunningly demonstrates in his May *Esquire* column in which he reprints letters entered in a contest in which kids describe what they would do to meet the band. One thirteen-year-old girl offered to cover her body with whipped cream and let Vince Neil, Motley's singer, lick it off. Greene made a follow-up phone call (the girl wasn't allowed to cardate yet) but many questions remain for social science to pick up on: if this thirteen-year-old girl indeed wins the contest and Motley Crue indeed licks the cream off her body, will she be bored years later when her husband wants to lick whipped cream off her body? Did she get this idea from the *Penthouse* letters column or from the same place I got the idea when I was thirteen, the cover of Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass' *Whipped Cream & Other Delights*? How many of Motley Crue's audience are virgins living vicariously through the band? How many of them are prewalled upon to actually

change their behavior? If I had a daughter and she went backstage with a can of Redi-Whip, would I hang Motley Crue from the nearest flagpole by their nuts? Do the fifty percent of teenagers who are not sexually active feel emotionally unprepared for intimacy, or worry that God will kill them for getting a boner? Do those with undescended testicles take fads from London more seriously?

As I say, I don't know the answers to these questions. I tried to ask Motley Crue, but their publicist told me they were on vacation and couldn't remember where they had been for the last four days. So I asked Ted Nugent in his hotel room instead. Though claiming rather unconvincingly not to play heavy metal, Nugent always seemed to me a model of manly conduct: shit in his pants for a week before his draft physical to get his 4F ("no, Ted, it won't be necessary to cough"), once bit his drummer's ear off, cuts his own firewood with a machine gun, shoots and eats large animals at every opportunity. Seven years ago, when he was one of the biggest touring acts in the world, he told me, "I have life dicked." But since then he's been through a brutal divorce with his wife who died in a car wreck, his record sales have dropped drastically, and he says he's been swindled out of eleven million dollars.

"But I still have life dicked," he says. "In multiple stab wounds." Any advice for a kid who doesn't have life dicked?

"I don't believe in advice. In order to dick life, you have to be so sure of yourself that advice would just confuse you. The only thing I could recommend toward maximizing your experience is don't get high and don't drink. Opportunities are to be seized and not drooled upon."



Real Man Ted Nugent seizes opportunities without drooling.

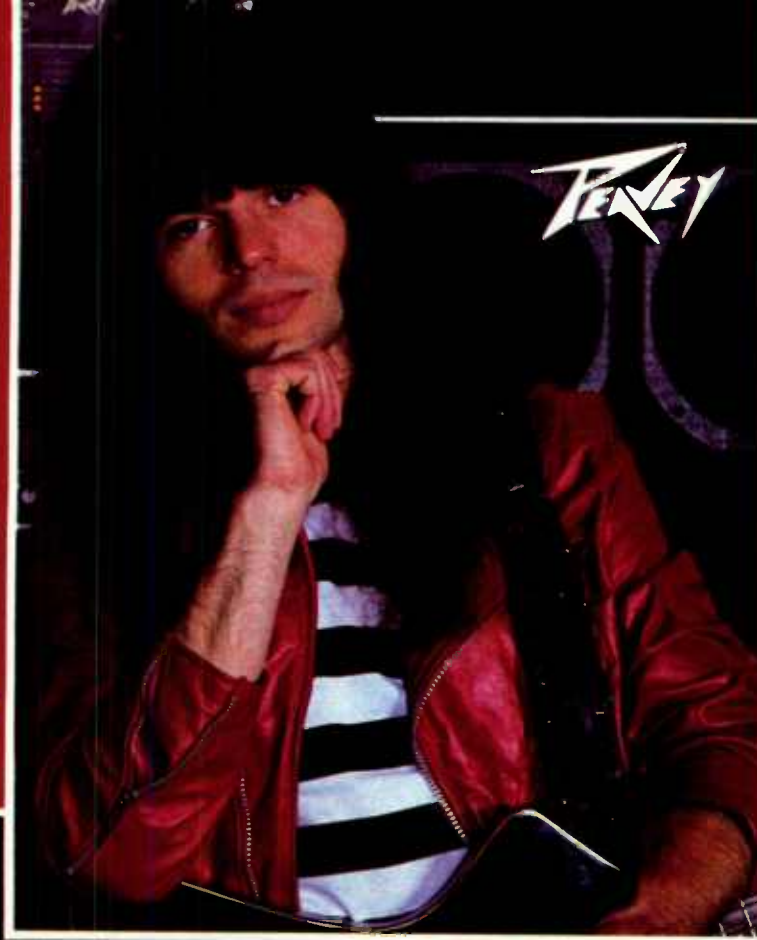
How can you have life dicked when all these terrible things have happened?

"I'm doing what I love to do. I have my guitar, I have my children, I have all that fine pussy in the front row and I have the kids, who I am proud to call my fellow rock 'n' rollers. What else does a man need?"

A gun? "Right."

Nugent, who reads nothing but the newsletter of the National Rifle Association, pulls a .38 automatic from his rear pocket and smiles. Fortunately, the guy knows he's ignorant and doesn't vote, perhaps suspecting something wrong with heavy metal's dominant political philosophy of libertarian fascism ("I live and you die"). And then again, perhaps he doesn't. He's a transitional man, one foot in nineteenth century domination of nature and one foot in the twentieth century rock 'n' roll revival of the irrational. Just as heavy metal is transitional music, infusing dirtbags and worthless puds with the courage to grow up and be a dickhead.☑

Quiet Riot



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PURITY & POWER

Total, Unswerving Devotion to Heavy Metal Form: Judas Priest and the Scorpions

by J.D. Considine

No doubt about it, heavy metal is the Music Which Gets No Respect. Oh, sure, the fans like it. For some of them, metal is the very marrow of their cultural existence. And there are even a few broad-minded critics who are willing to let the music, like any other dog, have its day, even if their appreciation is more sociological than musical.

But for most folks, heavy metal is a musical moron joke, fodder for frustrated teens and dominion of dim-witted devil-worshippers. At best, the phrase conjures up the likable lunk-heads of Rob Reiner's satiric *This Is Spinal Tap*; at worst, the mind turns to Ozzy Osbourne, biting the heads off dead bats in Des Moines or pissing on the Alamo. In all, not exactly what you'd call positive images.

"You get narrow-minded critics reviewing the shows, and all they think about heavy metal is that it is just total ear-splitting, blood-curdling noise without any definition or point," complained Judas Priest's Rob Halford. "This is a very, very professional style of music. It means a great deal to many millions of people. We treat heavy metal music with respect."

Halford paused to gaze out the window at the passing Texas countryside. It was a bright Saturday afternoon. Judas Priest were en route from Houston to San Antonio, smack in the middle of a nine-month American tour which had found the band playing to both narrow-minded critics and adoring heavy metal fans,

PHOTOS: B/W, LAURA LEVINE; COLOR, PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE





the latter being in the distinct majority. Nevertheless, the question of heavy metal's aesthetic worth is one which Halford takes very much to heart. Heavy metal, he insisted, was genuine *art*.

"This might sound like a bizarre statement," he said, leaping back into the fray, "but I don't think playing heavy metal is that far removed from classical music. To do either, you have to spend many years developing your style and your art; whether you're a violinist or a guitarist, it still takes the same belief in your form of music to achieve and create. It is very much a matter of dedication."

As a herd of cattle receded in the distance, I tried to imagine Halford, in white tie and tails, standing center-stage in a New York recital hall to sing the celebrated art song "Eat Me Alive," while somewhere in the Midwest, a leather-clad Robert Mann of the Juilliard String Quartet is screaming into a microphone, asking a rowdy coliseum crowd if they're "ready for some Beethoven?" Somehow the image refused to come.

No, heavy metal isn't exactly serial composition, but then again, art isn't always a matter of complexity. Sometimes, getting and keeping things simple takes as much or more skill.

"A funny story," said Judas Priest's Glenn Tipton, backstage one night. "When we were recording *Defenders Of The Faith* in Spain, this guy from South America came up, a friend of mine. He plays guitar—amazing things, rhythms, phrases, strange South American-type beats, stuff I couldn't begin to play, much more complex than those Police things. Real sambas and stuff, and difficult as hell. All he wanted off me was to learn how to play things with rock accents.

"He couldn't play 'em," Tipton laughs. "An entirely different feeling."

It's that bone-headed simplicity, the art of knowing what *not* to play, that Tipton feels makes heavy metal so ultimately British.

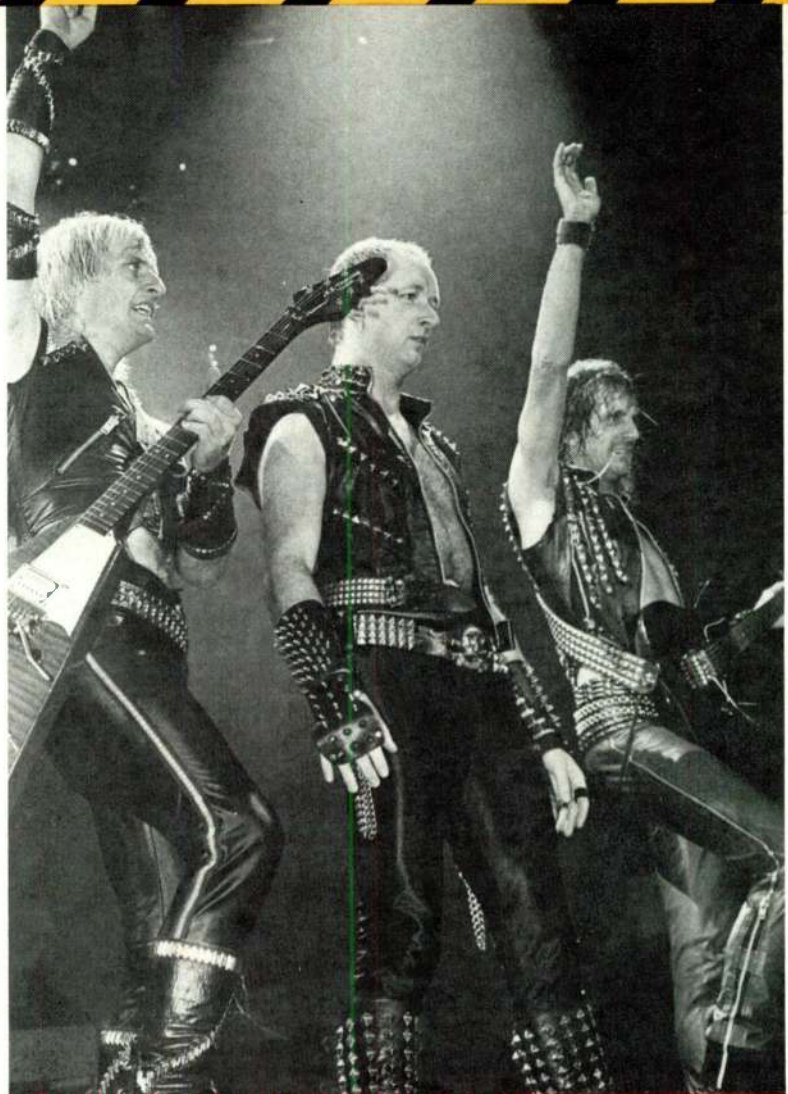
"To me, and I can say this honestly, there are not very many American heavy metal bands.

There are some great rock bands, the best rock bands in the world. But it's not heavy metal. The American bands are too sophisticated. And I think that's it—English bands, like ourselves, have that lack of sophistication which, I suppose, has to do with upbringing, the fact that we were born and raised poverty-struck. I think you can lose that out of your music, if you're not careful."

In other words, great heavy metal turns its limitations into assets, its insularity into a sense of community, and ends up doing everything art is expected to do. True, heavy metal is often musically limited, culturally reactionary and too damned loud; but at its best, it is *transcendently* so. Which is why, ludicrous as it may seem, Rob Halford's analogy between heavy metal and classical music contains a grain of truth: both disciplines ultimately aim for the triumph of emotion over form.

It's Saturday night in San Antonio, the last night of the city's annual Easter Fiesta. There's a buzz of excitement throughout the city, and a roar inside the Civic Arena. When the lights go down for Judas Priest's set, 12,000 kids are on their feet, fists in the air, screaming. As a taped synthesizer growl drones ominously, the curtains part to reveal "the Metallian," a twenty-foot high aluminum gargoyle who holds the drum kit in its left claw. Fog wafts across the stage as the Metallian's vari-light eyes scan the audience; then, in a blinding burst of flashpots, the members of Priest materialize, leaping headlong into the hyper-adrenal pulse of "Love Bites."

As spectacle, it's pretty impressive. With the Metallian loom-



Priest's K.K. Downing, Rob Halford and Glenn Tipton.

EBET ROBERTS

ing above like a malevolent building, Halford's macho strut and the rest of the band's leather-clad choreography seem less a matter of vainglorious posturing than an assertion of will, a dance against the demons of the city. Even at the end of the set, as the Metallian breathes fire through the final, crashing chords to "The Green Manalishi (With The Two-Pronged Crown)," it wields its menace almost in defeat, a vanquished dragon.

Granted, that's a lot of meaning to read into an elaborate prop, but it would be foolish to overlook the resonances of such devices. As Halford puts it, "When we use those props, people see them and they say, 'Oh, what is *this*?' But when they suddenly connect with the props, it's a total unification, music and material object working together."

The night before, in Houston, guitarist K.K. Downing had begun to explain his theory of heavy metal: "In certain parts of Great Britain, some bands started taking progressive blues and playing them in their own way. Heavy metal is our own blues, actually."

This "white man's blues," as Downing is fond of calling it, worked because it translated the emotional impact of American blues into a form that young musicians in Britain's industrial heartland could more easily understand. "It was more aggressive," Downing said. "It's a way of getting rid of your blues by expending energy. And it's a way for the audience to expend energy as well."

This makes sense if you look at the music's structure. "All the licks that we play," explained Glenn Tipton, who shares the

lead guitar role with Downing, "form around the blues. You get something like the lead break in 'Another Thing Comin', it's all blues stuff, all the same runs. Even the fast stuff." Grabbing a guitar and practice amp, he plugged in. "Something like this," he said, spinning off a fast splatter of notes, "is just from cadences like this." He began to play a typical blues riff—up from the 7th to the tonic, up again to the minor 3rd, and back down to the tonic—and slowly sped it up, letting the syncopation bleed out as the figure turned into insistent eighth-notes, moving the pattern up the neck by half-steps. Pure metal, "and it's all blues stuff."

Except, of course, that the rhythm is completely different. Where American blues, whether country acoustic or urban electric, maintain an easy rhythmic bounce, heavy metal surges with almost mechanical regularity, pushing the down-beat instead of laying behind the backbeat. It's not a party energy, certainly not dance music; it's more like a football cheer, group aggression focused through rhythm and sheer volume.

Of course, no football crowd could ever hope to muster a sound like Judas Priest's (much to the relief of Pete Rozelle). Despite the volume, Priest's sound isn't noisy or brittle, but sits comfortably in the midrange with a presence so great you could immerse yourself in it. "A total wallow," Halford cheerfully admitted. And during the three Priest shows I attended, the fans did almost seem to be floating, reacting to shifts in dynamics like toy boats in a bathtub.

"A lot of the access and understanding of our music for so many people is that they're able to relate to what we're singing about," Halford continued. "Beyond the vocals, it's the way a guitar makes you feel when someone hits a particular chord, the way a snare drum is cracked."

Flashing back to Halford's classical analogy, I suddenly realized that the difference between the kid playing air guitar in his bedroom to "Rock Hard, Ride Free" and his father in the family room, conducting the last movement of the *Symphonie Fantastique* along with Herr von Karajan, is not much more than a matter of props. That's not to say that classical music and heavy metal are necessarily equivalents, just that the listener's experience can be, because for both father and son, it's a matter of release through pure sound. So it wasn't hard to nod appreciatively when Halford concluded by remarking, "I just hope that, after seeing us for the first time, people go away from a show fulfilled by what they've experienced."

I'll bet Herr von Karajan feels the same way.

News Item:

In *Esquire*, Bob Greene described a radio promotion in San Antonio, in which listeners were invited to write in and tell what they would do to meet Motley Crue. One typical entry, from a sixteen-year-old girl, began, "First, I would tie you up, spread-eagle and naked, with leather straps..." Greene interviewed the girl's mother, who had delivered the letter to the radio station. "I'm sure she didn't mean anything by it," the mother said. "She's a very Christian girl." While Priest was in San Antonio, I ran into the program director of that station, and asked him about the piece. "Well," he drawled, "I usually figure that any publicity is good publicity, but I think they made too big a deal about it. There are kids like that everywhere."

The Cleveland Coliseum, like the rest of Cleveland, makes a determined effort to demonstrate for all eternity just how ugly concrete can appear. Thus, there was no surge of excitement inside the Scorpions' tour bus as we rumbled across an overpass and through the parking lot. But the fans massed at the Coliseum's service entrance couldn't believe their luck when its doors opened and genuine, honest-to-God rock musicians emerged. They swarmed up for autographs, photos, hugs. One girl was in tears, so happy was she to actually meet guitarist Rudolf Schenker. As we hurried to the

JUDAS PRIEST GEAR

K.K. Downing plays several K.K. Downing model Hamer V's, which, says roadie Tom Calcaterra, "he wants all to sound alike, so he can go from one guitar to another with no change in the sound." They're all set up with Gibson-style tuners, and Kahler tremolos (except for one with a Floyd Rose), and are usually fitted with GHS strings (.008; .010; .014; .020; .030; .038). They're run through five Marshall 50-watt amps with Electro-Voice speakers, and Downing has a Pete Cornish-built pedal board with a 31-band eq, pitch transposer, digital delay, flanger, phaser, overdrive, treble boost, wah-wah, pedals for several pre-set boosts, and a strobotuner. ("He's a killer for being in tune.") Glenn Tipton uses two Glenn Tipton model Hamers, which put an SG-style neck on a Phantom body. He also uses a Strat fitted with Bill Lawrence humbuckers. All three have Kahler tremolos. Like Downing, he uses GHS strings (.009; .010; .013; .022; .032; .038), and plays through four Marshall 50-watt amps, with a mix of Electro-Voice and Celestion speakers. His pedal board features the same effects as Tipton's minus the wah-wah. Bassist Ian Hill plays Hamer Cruise basses, including a double-necked 8- and 4-stringed model, through Acoustic bass amps (two 320-watt heads and one 370-watt head, all driving 18-inch speakers) with GHS strings (.045; .065; .080; .105). All three use Nady wireless units. Drummer Dave Holland plays a Tama kit with two 22-inch bass drums, 15-inch, 14-inch, 16-inch and 18-inch toms (all single-headed), and a 14-inch Ludwig snare. The snare uses Ludwig Rocker's heads; everything else gets Remo Pin Stripes. His cymbals are Paiste, a mixture of Rude and 2002 models, and he has a Paiste gong. All hardware is Tama.

stage door, I asked Klaus Meine's wife if things were like this at every show. "Oh, yes," she said, nodding. "All the time."

The Scorpions' latest album, *Love At First Sting*, has been in the top ten for weeks, and popularity does breed excitement. But there was more to it than that; lust, for instance. When a girl wearing a halter top approached singer Klaus Meine and asked him to sign her stomach, Meine was surprised. "Usually, their favorite place to sign is the tits," he revealed. "They go up like this"—he pantomimes pulling up a T-shirt—"and say, 'Hey, c'mon, sign my tits.' This is a strange thing in America...."

"I don't think playing heavy metal is that far removed from classical music. It takes the same belief in form to achieve and create."

Yes, indeed. Especially when you consider that Meine is not exactly Adonis material, at least not in the David Lee Roth tradition. In the dressing room after their show, the Scorpions were deluged by female admirers. Some were definitely on the make (and demonstrated terrific ingenuity in displaying cleavage without tripping over indecency laws); others' intentions were more innocent. One girl talked about how much she'd like to meet her favorites, Motley Crue, and talk to Nikki Sixx: "His lyrics are so deep." But when I mentioned the *Esquire* piece, she was appalled. "God, I'd never do that," she said, thunderstruck. "I mean, if they'd only let me meet them if I'd be with them, I don't even think I could like that group anymore."

So it goes with eros and morality in the metal demimonde. Actually, it's not all that hard to reconcile the sixteen-year-old San Antonio bondage queen with the demure Cleveland Crue fan. One of the most important things to remember about heavy rock is never to take lyrics at word-for-word value, because, like so much of the metal aesthetic, the lyrics mean more as sound and gesture than as words.

This is particularly true of the Scorpions, as English is not their native language. "When my English was bad, and I had no idea," recalls Meine in his light German accent, "the dictionary was my best friend."

So why didn't he just sing *auf Deutsche*? "For this kind of music, the English language just sounds best," Meine says. "With new wave music, the German language is pretty good. But with heavy rock, it's a different feel. With German lyrics, for example, 'Rock You Like A Hurricane' would sound like 'Der Rocken ab wie im Furiesturm.' It sounds terrible."

"It's a question of taste," adds Schenker. "It's like asking why you play a Gibson or Fender."

And ultimately about as important. That's undoubtedly why the Scorpions can get away with singing songs like "Another Piece Of Meat" (sample lyric: "I want hot love, you know, and I need it now!") and the aforementioned "Hurricane" (sample lyric: "The bitch is hungry, she needs to tell/ So give her inches and feed her well"). The specifics of the songs don't count so much as the Scorp's assertion that they *like* women; it's the real life equivalent of the members of Spinal Tap confusing "sexy" with "sexist."

The Scorpions, after all, are no strangers to album cover controversy. The original cover of *Love At First Sting* featured a Helmut Newton photograph of a leather-clad man embracing a mostly-nude woman with a scorpion tattoo on her thigh. PolyGram Records withdrew the cover when several chains, including K-Mart, refused to carry the album.

"We like the cover," shrugs Meine. "We think it's a little piece of art. The leather, the guy, he can stand for 'Rock You Like A Hurricane'; the girl, she's sophisticated looking, she could stand for the ballad, 'Still Loving You.' When we were doing the cover in Paris with Helmut Newton, I told him not to get too sexy, because we didn't want to have trouble in America. We changed *Love Drive* two years back...."

Love Drive featured several shots of a well-dressed gentleman stretching a wad of bubblegum on an attractive woman's

nipple. Before *that*, the group was unable to get RCA to release the original cover to *Virgin Killer*.

"What can I say?" asks Meine. "We don't understand. You see a little bit of the tits...."

"In Germany," interrupts Schenker, tossing away a recent *Der Stern* (a German newsmagazine which regularly features topless women on its cover), "erotic is very free. It's not like, 'Come on, close the door.'"

In fact, heavy metal's morality is more about opening doors—not necessarily in the drink-and-debauch-all-night sense parents fear, but because metal, as an intensely physical music, helps listeners feel good about their own physicality. That's one reason why pre-teen males, confused about their own sexuality, find the exaggerated macho of Judas Priest or Motley Crue reassuring. At the same time, a heavy metal show is very much a *group* experience, so even the 'nicest' girls can live out their fast-living fantasies in relative safety. "The girls," observes Schenker, "they don't go to shows to see devils and all this stuff. They want to go in, close their eyes, and feel something."

"For us, it's like making love to the audience," adds Meine, summing up the Scorp's concert experience. "And when we're ten months out on the road, the nice girls in America make the whole thing easier, I think."

Call it another side-effect to adolescent glandular mayhem, or just call it zit cream for the soul. In any case, both Priest and the Scorp agree that the key to the heavy metal's popularity is the power transfer between performer and audience. "We have a high energy level," says Scorpion Matthias Jabs, "and when the audience is great, they feel that and give it back to you."

"You can't analyze it much beyond the fact that there are 11,000 separate individual human beings getting off on what you're doing," concludes Priest's Halford, "each of them experiencing an emotional vibe and throwing it back at you. I mean, that's what art is all about. We all need each other." ■

SCORPIONS STINGERS

Matthias Jabs plays mainly '79 Gibson Explorers, stock, but also carries two Strats—a black '63 with Bill Lawrence humbuckers, Schaller machines, a Floyd Rose tremolo and a rosewood fingerboard; and a '61 with P.A.F.s, a Kahler tremolo, Schaller machines and a rosewood fingerboard—and an Ovation Electric Legend. His string are all D'Angelico (the .009s), and he plays through two 50-watt Marshalls, with JBL speakers. His effects are limited to a Maestro echoplex, a Vox wah-wah and a voicebox. Rudolf Schenker plays Gibson Flying Vs (typically four from different years during a given show) with D'Angelico strings (.010s), through 50-watt Marshalls. He also plays an Ovation Electric Legend, which goes through a Roland Jazz Combo amp. Klaus Meine plays a Gibson 335 on one number, using D'Angelico strings (.010s). Bassist Francis Bucholz plays Fender Precision basses, which he collects—all are pre-CBS models, which he keeps set-up stock. He also uses an Alembic on one number per show. His strings are Rotosound roundwounds, and his amps are a mixture of Ampeg SVTs and Marshall 300-watt bass amps. He, like all the other Scorp's, uses a Nady 700 wireless. Drummer Herman Rarebell plays a Ludwig kit, with two 26-inch bass drums, 15-inch, 16-inch, 18-inch and 20-inch toms, and a Black Beauty snare. He uses Silvercoat heads, with two heads on the toms, "because I like the tuning." He has eight Paiste 2002 cymbals, and 15-inch sound-edge high-hats. He uses Ludwig hardware and a Ghost pedal.



Scorpions' screamer Klaus Meine scouting for "nice girls."

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GOOD BAD & UGLY

A Field Guide to Heavy Metal for Confused Consumers, Outraged Critics and Wimpy New Wavers

By J.D. Considine

Almost every rock fan thinks he or she has a pretty good idea of heavy metal, but defining it as a musical style is next to impossible. Everyone agrees that it is excessively loud and almost totally reliant upon guitars; beyond that the consensus breaks down. Depending upon your viewpoint, heavy metal is:

- Blues-based, or a travesty of the blues;
- Prone to simpleminded sci-fi twaddle, or remarkably evocative of fantasy literature;
- Progressive and ever-evolving, or a dinosaur;
- The whitest music ever played, or the most rhythmically dynamic music that isn't complete trash;
- Magnificence, or noise.

The term "heavy metal" was first used to describe a style of pop music by Lester Bangs in *Creem*. It is believed that his inspiration was Steppenwolf's "Born To Be Wild," which contains the phrase "heavy metal thunder." The etymology of "heavy metal" is somewhat less certain. Most sources (e.g. *The Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock & Roll*) credit William Burroughs for coining the term in his novel *Naked Lunch*; however, scientists were using the same label to designate certain radioactive isotopes well before that. This is taken by many as proof that rock critics paid far closer attention in college to "Contemporary American Letters" than to "Physics 101."

Mostly, heavy metal seems to be a matter of attitude, stressing underdog fealty, communal pride and cathartic aggression within a culturally conservative perspective. (If that sounds more sociological than musical, well, so is heavy metal.) Most stylistic developments have been related to notions of *intensity*. Ten years ago, intensity was generated by lengthy guitar and drum solos, while today it's mostly a function of rhythm guitar drive and vocal acrobatics.

One thing which has never changed: almost no one *likes* to be called "heavy metal."

THE TEN BEST HEAVY METAL BANDS

1 Judas Priest. With a high-energy, low-bullshit approach that's the most devastatingly efficient in rock today, Priest clearly are champions of form and sonic impact. Heavy metal gets no better than this.

2 Accept. Incredible musical muscle, but this German band really earns extra points with its lyrics—which are sharp, perceptive and surprisingly articulate.

EBET ROBERTS



3 Joan Jett & the Blackhearts. Tough and punchy with a healthy taste for guitar crunch, but augmented by a sense of humor and rock tradition sadly lacking in most metal.

4 Motorhead. Sonic excess in its purest form, especially when Fast Eddie Clarke was in the fold.

5 AC/DC. Basically a singles band, and severely weakened by the death of Bon Scott, but still the reigning experts on high-velocity hooks.

6 Aerosmith. The missing link between HM and boogie, and the only band in history to convincingly convert James Brown to arena rock. Should be helped immensely by the return of Joe Perry.

7 Krokus. Their sound is AC/DC, and their lyrics are Dead Kennedys; need I say more?

8 Rose Tattoo. Tough, literate prole rock spiked with steely slide guitar and delivered with vintage Aussie anger.

9 Scorpions. A German band with a classically British sense of guitar lunacy and an American feel for melody.

10 Fastway. The Led Zeppelin aesthetic presented at Motorhead speed and AC/DC hooks.

THE TEN WORST HEAVY METAL BANDS

1 Iron Maiden. The only band on earth that can't afford to make fun of Ozzy Osbourne.

2 Motley Crue. Four guys who think that heavy metal has to do with how tight your trousers are.

3 Quiet Riot. David Lee Roth is right—but what do you expect from a band that makes Slade sound slick?

4 Def Leppard. Menudo for metal maniacs.

5 Rainbow. After conclusively demonstrating that Ritchie Blackmore was *not* the creative force behind Deep Purple, they decide they want to be *Journey*!?!?

6 Jefferson Starship. Old hippies never die. They just make you wish they did.

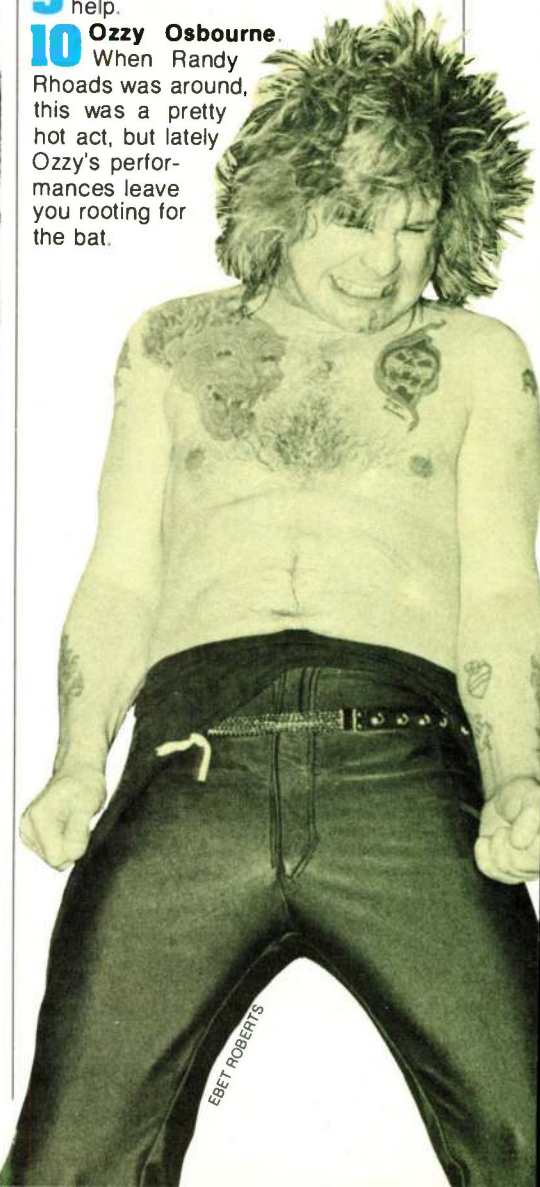
7 Sammy Hagar. The heavy metal equivalent of Cheez Whiz.

8 The Plasmatics. Perhaps the only sound on earth less musical than a chainsaw cutting concrete.

9 Twisted Sister. Make-up doesn't help.

10 Ozzy Osbourne.

When Randy Rhoads was around, this was a pretty hot act, but lately Ozzy's performances leave you rooting for the bat.



EBET ROBERTS

A HOST OF PERSONAL DEFINITIONS, OR, WHAT—ME HEAVY?

Q Do you consider what your band does to be heavy metal?

Robert Plant: No, Led Zeppelin's first album—"Babe I'm Gonna Leave You," "Your Time Is Gonna Come," "How Many More Times"—that was not heavy metal. There was nothing heavy about that at all... It was ethereal.

Eric Bloom, Blue Oyster Cult: I don't think of us as a heavy metal group. To me, a heavy metal group is like Black Sabbath, because they're so linear in their lyric content and chord structure. They don't lighten up at all. I think we lighten up.



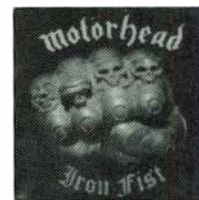
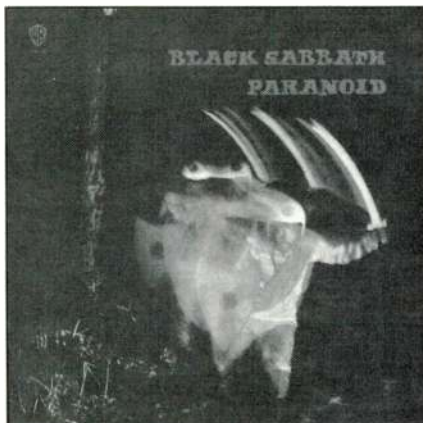
Edward Van Halen, Van Halen: No. I call it rock 'n' roll. When I think of heavy metal, I think of Judas Priest.

Rob Halford, Judas Priest: One-hundred percent, yes. From the day that we started out, our commitment was to achieve the *definition* of heavy metal.

Bruce Dickinson, Iron Maiden: What is your viewpoint? I wouldn't call UFO a heavy metal band, but if you happen to be a fan of Human League, they probably are. And if you're a fan of Motorhead, UFO aren't heavy metal. If we said we are heavy metal, it wouldn't matter much in the way we sound. It's a category.

Rick Medlocke, Blackfoot: No. I consider Blackfoot a hard rock group, like Cream. Led Zeppelin is heavy metal. The difference is the sounds, the feeling.

Ted Nugent: I don't consider myself heavy metal. I was weaned on rock 'n' roll, thank you; I cut my teeth on Chuck Berry and Lonnie Mack and Duane Eddy and the Ventures. So to be called *anything* but rock 'n' roll is unpalatable for me, you know what I mean? Especially when you hear what must be heavy metal, like Black Sabbath, Blue Cheer. I don't see any resemblance.



FIVE CLASSIC METAL ALBUMS, OR, MAMA, WEER ALL BRANE-DED NOW!

1 Black Sabbath — *Paranoid* (Warner Bros.) 1970. With its sing-song melodies, ponderous tempos and drug-induced solos, this is post-psychedelic heaviness at its smirking best, from Ozzy Osbourne's frazzled philosophizing to "Iron Man," a song built around a riff your dog could play. Especially effective after 3 a.m.

2 Deep Purple — *Machine Head* (Warner Bros.) 1972. "Highway Star" is probably the funniest cars/girls/guitars song ever written, especially thanks to Jon Lord's pseudo-classical plumping. So quintessentially Deep Purple, and so transcendently gauche, it's as irresistible as a half-dozen Twinkies with chocolate milk.

3 Kiss — *Alive* (Casablanca) 1975. This is more than the last gasp of American glitter at 145 dBs; it's the anthemic declaration of teenage decadence Alice Cooper would have loved to have made. Granted, that decadence

soon became the stuff of comic-book collecting pre-teens (as did Kiss itself), but don't let your friends bug you—you'll do no better with American metal.

4 Judas Priest — *British Steel* (Columbia) 1980. Hard, fast and punchy in the best "new wave of heavy metal" tradition, Priest finally focused its musical vision with this album. The band also wrote its most consistent set of songs, adding melodic allure to the sonic punch. This album sounds as fresh and aggressive as the day it was released.

5 Motorhead — *Iron Fist* (Mercury) 1982. Because their sound walks the line between HM ferocity and hardcore aggro, Motorhead attracts followers from both sides of the hard rock wasteland. But here, the songs are focused enough to make the hell-for-leather tempos and amphetamine attack seem even more intense than usual. This is as close as any record will come to kicking you in the head.

THE TEN BEST HEAVY METAL SONGS, AND I DON'T CARE IF YOU ARE SICK OF THEM

Blue Oyster Cult: "Don't Fear The Reaper" • Joan Jett: "I Love Rock & Roll" • Cream: "Sunshine Of Your Love" • Judas Priest: "Living After Midnight" • Kiss: "Rock & Roll All Nite" • AC/DC: "Highway To Hell" • Deep Purple: "Smoke On The Water" • Van Halen: "Running With The Devil" • Aerosmith: "Dream On" • Black Sabbath: "Iron Man"

CLOSET METAL, OR THE FIVE BEST HEAVY METAL SONGS THAT WEREN'T HEAVY METAL

Led Zeppelin: "Black Dog" • Sex Pistols: "Holiday In The Sun" • King Crimson: "Red" • Jimi Hendrix: "Purple Haze" • The Isley Brothers: "Fight The Power"

MEAN DUDS

A Heavy Metal Must

By Jon Young



You're an aspiring heavy metal god. You've worked hard to hone those power chords to a cruel razor's edge. But that look has got to go! No matter how hot and nasty you sound, you'll never flatten an audience dressed in the same old jeans and T-shirt.

What to do? You could scout out a boutique in one of the stranger sections of town. But buying off the rack doesn't guarantee a distinctive appearance. Maybe Mom could be conned into playing seamstress, although asking her to sew on a codpiece might be a bit embarrassing. If you can scrape together the bucks, the ideal solution would be to call upon a clothing designer for help.

One of the people you might contact is Laurie Greenan, a Gloria Vanderbilt of heavy metal *haute couture*. She can have you looking like (a figure from) hell in no time! Greenan got into the metal clothes business in 1976, when she went to work for Kiss, first as wardrobe mistress and later as costume designer. She collaborated on and off with them for seven years.

"The band was doing its own designing before I joined them," she recalls. "They were easy to work with because they already had their look—one was a cat, one a spaceman, and so on—and each knew what his character would or wouldn't wear. All I had to do was come up with variations. I added more and more metal studs. Their outfits became progressively more complicated as we went along."

Her inspiration? "I spent a lot of time studying S&M clothing, because it uses so much metal, silver and studs. I just tried to tone it down by removing some of the sexual aspects. S&M was heavy metal long before heavy metal was."

Being in Kiss wasn't quite as much fun as going trick-or-treating on Halloween, she says. "Gene Simmons' costume weighed a full thirty pounds. We tried to find a lighter material but

never did come up with anything that looked the same." And, she adds, they had to maintain duplicates of everything because there often wasn't time to get an outfit cleaned between shows.

Some artists who aspire to mythical status take their cue from other media-generated myths. Manowar, the heavy metal band led by former Dictator Ross the Boss Friedman looked to a comic-book character turned movie hero.

"They were enthralled with Conan the Barbarian. In fact, they flew me down from New York to Ft. Lauderdale where they were staying, just so we could see the movie together and talk about what they liked in it. They wanted to be rough and masculine looking, not as theatrical as Kiss." Greenan created a series of "warmer and older looking" outfits that employed brown and white leather, instead of black, and brass studs instead of silver.

Her favorite client to date is Billy Idol. "He's a very stylish, articulate man who knows exactly what he wants," she says. "When I met him before his first album, Billy was interested in adapting Mel Gibson's *Mad Max* look. So I gave him a costume that included quilted wristbands and a reversible black and red leather vest that had no sides and plenty of buckles."

Most recently, Greenan has lent her expertise to Judas Priest. She's made their current garb "more heavy metal" by adding sharper angles—to the shoulders, for example. "Rob Halford's great to work with, because he's willing to wear anything you think of." [And he likes it!—Ed.]

So Laurie Greenan may be the person you need to kick that career into second gear. Just one note: if you do consult with her, don't expect to encounter a fire-breathing medieval sorceress. Greenan currently lives just down the road from Disney World, where she owns a shop specializing in—get ready—quilts, children's dresses and Christmas ornaments. ☐

ROCKIN' TO A FULL HOUSE.



You're looking at a page packed with five of the hottest and hardest driving albums of the year. Each one is loaded from start to finish with the songs you can't get enough of. Scorpions' "LOVE AT FIRST STING," featuring the tracks, "Rock You Like A Hurricane" and "Still Loving You." Def Leppard's "HIGH 'N' DRY," featuring a totally new remixed version of "Bringin' On The Heartbreak" and the previously unreleased track, "Me and My Wine." Rush's "GRACE

UNDER PRESSURE," featuring "Distant Early Warning" and "The Body Electric." Kiss' new album, "ANIMALIZE," featuring "Thrills In The Night" and "Heaven's On Fire." And Lita Ford's "DANCIN' ON THE EDGE," featuring the tracks, "Gotta Let Go" and "Dressed To Kill." This is the place where the rock never stops, PolyGram Records.



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METAL FOREFATHERS

Historical Precedents from the 60s and 70s: Two Bands Who Were Heavy Before It Was Hip

BLUE CHEER

By David Fricke

"All the other bands in San Francisco were saying 'Kiss babies and eat flowers.' We were saying 'Kiss flowers and eat babies.'"

That, according to singer/bassist Dick Peterson, was Blue Cheer in a nutshell. The original group—Peterson, guitarist Leigh Stephens and drummer Paul Whaley—blew 1967's Summer of Love to smithereens with their amphetamine guitar shriek and Vesuvian bass-drum roar. They bludgeoned their way into the top forty the following year with a white-noise reading of Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues," in the pro-



Original white-noise thrashers Blue Cheer.

cess setting a standard for future heavy metal bands to follow. Their debut album *Vincebus Eruptum* still rivals only Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music* for sheer extremity.

In those days, Blue Cheer was crucified by the rock press for their monster-fuzz, air-raid excesses. Fifteen years later, it's a different story. "I must have forty or fifty magazines with articles where our name is mentioned," Peterson says with amazement. "Michael Anthony of Van Halen said in one story that he saw us play and decided *that* was what he wanted to do. The bass player from Iron Maiden told me we were an influence on him.

"It just came about because we wanted to be louder and heavier than anyone else had ever been," Peterson says of Blue Cheer's beginnings. "We wanted to move air. And we had a place in forming that heavy-metal sound. Although I'm not saying we knew what we were doing, 'cause we didn't. All we knew was we wanted more power. And if that's not a heavy-metal attitude, I don't know what is."

It doesn't stop there either. While living in exile in England during the 70s, Whaley says, "I was always reading how we were a cult band with all these punks like the Sex Pistols." There is also more than a little Blue Cheer in the abrasive guitar sweep of new Yankee troublemakers like the Dream Syndicate and Husker Du.

The reunited (minus Leigh Stephens, who now raises thoroughbred stallions) "new" Cheer's recent East Coast tour

drew a motley crew of nostalgic hippies, punks and bruisers in Iron Maiden and Motorhead T-shirts. Standing ovations and subsequent record company interest encouraged the group to cut a new album for the indie Megaforce label: tentatively entitled *The Beast Is Back*, it divides between new studio tracks and live reprises of moldy oldies like "Out Of Focus," "Parchment Farm" and the inevitable "Summertime Blues." They also have ten years' worth of new technology to help jack up the awesome report of those original Marshall stacks.

"But I've never made anyone's ears bleed," Peterson insists. "I think I hear as well today as the first day I got Marshalls, maybe even better. There's probably no more wax in there."

SLADE

By Roy Trakin

They came from England's Black Country, the smoke-belching industrial midlands, with muttonchop sideburns, stacked heels and a string of stomping football chants that were instantly embraced by their working-class, skinhead constituency. Taking their cue from misspelled graffiti, Slade churned out a series of U.K. hits in the early 70s: "Mama Weer All Crazee Now," "Gudbye T'Jane," "Skweeze Me Pleeze Me" and, certainly not least, "Cum On Feel The Noize."

"We started out playing our own rock interpretations of the Tamla/soul stuff we picked up in import shops," recounts thirty-four-year-old Noddy Holder, Slade's lead singer/guitarist/lyricist. Holder formed the group in 1966 with bassist/co-writer Jim Lea, guitarist Dave Hill and drummer Don Powell, all still in the band. Slade's first European hit was a version of Little Richard's "Get Down And Get With It."

"From the very beginning, when we were playing the club and ballroom circuit, we attracted a foot-stamping, hand-clapping following," Holder says. "Our style was to get the crowd involved in the band. We always needed that audience participation."

The victim of a backfiring hype positing glam-rock as the next big thing, Slade ground on with the 70s, playing clubs and being taken for granted by the U.K. media. But not even the media could ignore the band's knockout appearance at England's 1980 heavy metal Reading Festival. "Until then, we were just considered totally unfashionable," Holder laughs. "We had our day and that was the end to it. But we realized, going out and playing, that we were still going down great with audiences. We went down a storm without having to resort to playing a string of our old hits."

And now, the veteran outfit is basking in the glow of newfound American acceptance. Of course, it didn't hurt that Quiet Riot scored a gold record with "Cum On Feel The Noize" last year. "We thought their version was great," Holder says. "It just proved what we felt all along about our music." Quiet Riot's hit led to Slade re-cutting the song for a widely-aired clothing boutique commercial. More importantly, it also yielded an American record deal and Slade's current LP: the top forty *Keep Your Hands Off My Power Supply* has produced a pair of AOR/video hits in "Run, Runaway" and "My Oh My."

Slade still commands a loyal—and ecumenical—following in its native land. "We get people who like Boy George and Duran Duran," Holder says. "It's really strange. You see kids in leather, kids with long hair and kids with mohawks—all sorts. But they all get on together; they all react the same way. We're probably the only band in England who could bring all those different types in one place without them beating the crap out of one another."

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SUPER-EGOS

By Bill Flanagan

Why do adolescent boys like heavy metal music so much? Wrong. It has nothing to do with sexual frustration or adolescent rebellion, tendencies toward vandalism or the desire to show off. It has to do with comic books. Boys with imaginations fired by superheroes and villains find, when they get to be about thirteen, that comic book reading is frowned upon by those who shave. Subject to peer pressure and teenage insecurity, the kids reluctantly forsake their comics and search for a socially acceptable substitute. (George Lucas and Steven Spielberg understand this—that's why they're zillionaires.)

Heavy metal represents kids' first half-step away from comics, and so most popular headbangers have actually based their public personas—and, in some cases, their lives—on funny book characters. Of course, some subtlety is necessary to preserve fragile adolescent pride. That's why the big weight-lifting blond rocker who called himself Thor never made it. You can't let the outsiders (adults and girls) catch on to what's really happening.

What follows is a list, a veritable baseball card gallery, of heavy metal artists and the superheroes on whom they've based themselves. The run-down could be extended beyond heavy metal's narrow confines to include new wavers like Bowie (Chameleon Boy), Costello (Clark Kent) and Marshall Crenshaw (Peter Parker). But such comparatively wimpy role models have no place here. The name of this game is power. Super power.



WOLVERINE/Ted Nugent: Strong, cunning egotistical—as much wild animal as human being—Wolverine loves stalking wild game even more than superheroing. He regularly forsakes his public responsibilities to vanish into the woods and hunt.



HULK/Ozzy Osbourne: Once a man of intelligence—now a lumbering, rampaging behemoth viewed with fear and disgust by the general population. A small minority claim the monster is misunderstood—but those who've gazed into his eyes say that whatever spark of intelligence once existed there is long gone. (Minority view holds that Oz is actually based on Matter Eater Lad.)



WONDER WOMAN/Joan Jett: A young raven-haired beauty as tough as any he-man, yet pure woman, female to the highest power. Unfortunately her popularity led to the emergence of less noble imitators, like Wonder Girl and Lita Ford.



THE THING/Meat Loaf: More intelligent than the Hulk, which makes his tragedy all the more poignant. Beneath the brutish form beats a sensitive heart. Yet fate has cast him in the crude form of a beast, who can only sit quietly—sulking and waiting for Clobberin' Time (Jim Steinman, of course, is based on the Thing's mentor, Mister Fantastic.)



THE ARCHIES/Cheap Trick: You know the icons. Here's the fair-haired all-American boy—a little underweight but a great date. There's his nutty pal with the funny hat. Then there's the handsome but slightly snotty-looking dark-haired rival (drawn a bit differently over the years). Cheap Trick's only real innovation was to combine befuddled, bespectacled Dilton into Big Moose.

PHOTOS CLOCKWISE: EBET ROBERTS, CHRIS WALTER/RETNA, PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE, EBET ROBERTS, GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA, ROB KAPLAN/RETNA, THE HULK, WOLVERINE, AND THE ARCHIES © 1984 MARVEL COMIC GROUP CONAN © 1984 CONAN PROPERTIES, INC. THE ARCHIES © 1984 ARCHIE COMIC PUBLICATIONS, INC.



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ABSORBING MAN/Quiet Riot: A dim, malevolent brute with the uncanny ability to absorb the characteristics of others. Having sucked off AC/DC, it was easy to swallow Slade whole. Thank Crom they didn't model themselves after Galactus or the whole world might be reduced to a smoking husk.



THUNDRA/Wendy O. Williams: A giant warrior female from the planet of femions who plowed a swath of carnage and debris across our helpless planet. Although not motivated by greed or thievery, the wild woman's very love of destruction made her a menace.



THE SPECTRE/Jimmy Page: Wan, pale and silent, this white-skinned figure with a skeleton's frame is rarely glimpsed—but when he chooses he can summon power enough to shake worlds. Many claim his gifts are born of black sorcery. But none dare say so to his face.

Dream Syndicate from page 36
somebody bullshit you and tell you what a wonderful person you are? It's as much fun to hear someone call you an asshole."

He's on another roll. "I hate the music industry. I like playing music and writing songs, but the business is full of shit. You're supposed to be a certain way, look a certain way and act a certain way. You gotta look cool and say the right thing, be enigmatic. Be enigmatic yet charismatic—no easy feat. Be as cute as Boy George and dance like Michael Jackson. Be a transvestite and say cute things, or show half a breast in your video or throw in women in teddies.

"I say do what you wanna do, and then if people call you a jackass, at least they're calling *you* a jackass, and not some fabrication. I say you better believe in something. If you can write good songs that you believe in, then you can tell people to fuck themselves. If you're good, they'll come around."

But Wynn isn't totally idealistic. His A&M contract, he says, is a compromise intended to expand Dream Syndicate's cultish audience. Now that the band has a major-label, radio-ready record—and even a video—will his rabid anti-industry stance be bad for business? What happens when somebody who hates the record business winds up in demand by MTV, AOR and other initials for which Wynn has little use?

He answers quickly. "I am *not* the kind of guy who's gonna say, 'MTV, I'd rather you not play my video; Rock of the Eighties, please don't tread on me; A&M, jack off.' I would love it if they liked the record, because *I* like the record. All I'm saying is that they'll have to accept what I want to do.

"I made a record I like, so now I want to sell 200 million copies, wear more sunglasses than Michael Jackson, win eight Grammys and say, 'Katharine Hepburn told me to take off my shorts.'"

Postscript: midway through my conversation with Wynn, I left the room to buy another round of drinks. On transcribing the interview tape, I found he had used the few minutes I spent

at the bar to leave a message quietly but firmly expounding his philosophy.

On the tape, "Middle Of The Road" blares out of the bar-room speakers. "This is Steve here," the voice says. "You can hear the Pretenders in the background. Um... I wanna be on the jukebox. That's all I want. *I wanna be on the jukebox.* I wanna be sitting in Des Moines with a jukebox, one of those table-top jukeboxes, and I want to hear 'Daddy's Girl' or something. That's not much to ask. I don't want limousines. I don't want groupies and chicks. They're all right, but I wanna get on a jukebox.

"You know why? Because most of the music I hear is off jukeboxes. Most music sounds better on a jukebox. Sounds like AM radio, and you grew up on AM radio, so it's cool. You don't need a \$10,000 stereo system. Just go down to your local bar or coffeehouse or whatever and listen to the jukebox, and then tell me that 'Dancing In The Streets' isn't a better song than 'Owner Of A Lonely Heart.'

"What the hell?" he finishes softly. "You can have your Casey Kasem and your *Billboard* magazine and your MTV. I wanna be on the jukebox." ☐

Joe Ely from page 30
recording of *Hi-Res*, Ely assembled a real band, limiting synthesizers to tonal shadings.

His first studio LP since 1981's acclaimed *Musta Notta Gotta Lotta* sports arresting computer graphics designed by one Earle Epiphone, a.k.a. Ely. His enthusiasm has even led him to create an electronic bulletin board, on which a computer

owner with a modem can leave messages and find out tour information. Nevertheless, the dusty-voiced Ely remains a homespun rocker at heart.

"I think of the computer as a tool, not as an end in itself. The instruments of the computer age don't have to sound like robots on drugs. They can be just as human as you want them to be." —**Jon Young**



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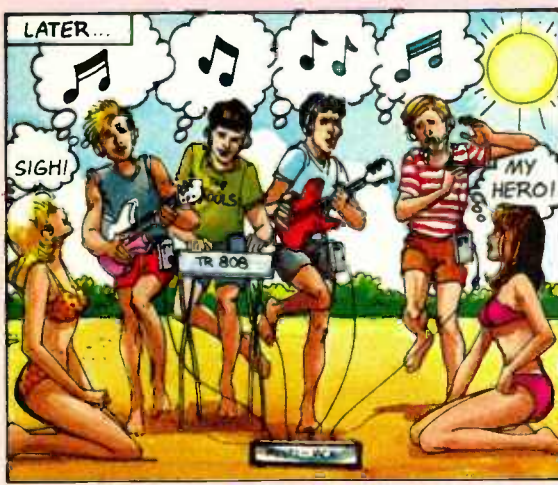
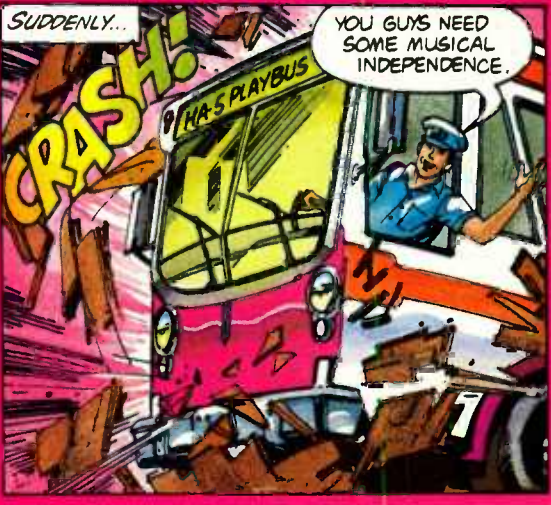
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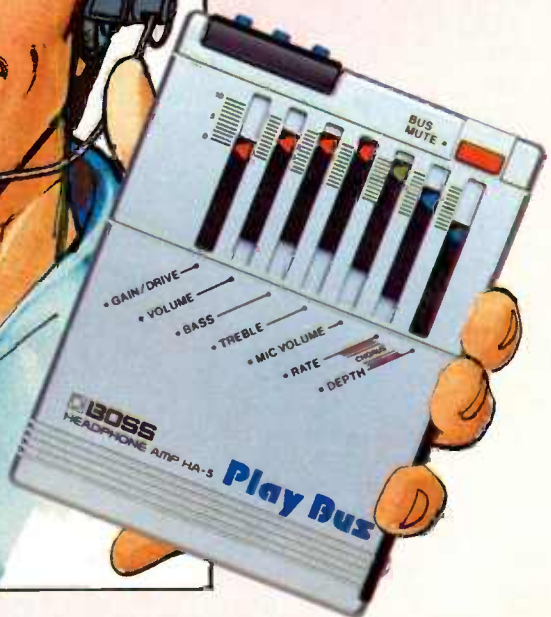
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Let's Hear It For the Board

By Don Snowden

*A Fusion-Funk Keyboard
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Likes of Deniece Williams,
Jeffrey Osborne,
Rufus & Philip Bailey.*

GEORGE DUKE

"There were times last year when I would walk in here and say, 'Look at this,'" muses George Duke, surveying the now calm control room of his Le Gonks West home studio. "Sister Sledge would be finishing up a session, Philip Bailey would be on his way in for one and Jeffrey Osborne would call me in the evening about this one song. It was insane.

"I felt like I needed two or three of me and I've been asked to do that, get a stable of producers and run from one studio to the next. I don't want that machine-run stuff. The enjoyment I get is working with the artist and you should keep it personal."

The offers to staff clone factories are just one measure of the current high demand for that personal Duke touch. Add LPs with Rufus and Deniece Williams to the aforementioned trio of artists, his own records and role in the Clarke/Duke Project, toss in a tour or two for good measure and it's no wonder that George Duke hasn't found the time yet to properly break in the Bosendorfer grand he bought over a year ago.

Of course, the one-two punch of Osborne's "Stay With Me Tonight" and Williams' "Let's Hear It For The Boy" have conspired to keep the phone lines to Duke's Hollywood Hills home burning and his schedule a workaholic's dream. Strange as it may seem, funky fusioner, Zappa zany George Duke has arrived in 1984 as one of the driving production forces in mainstream R&B/pop.

It's certainly a long way from the early 60s when a teenaged George Duke combined daylight studies on a trombone scholarship to the San Francisco Conservatory of Music with nocturnal piano trio engagements around Bay Area clubs. By decade's end, Duke had led several small combos, spent a year

with Don Ellis and received his baptism of fusion fire in the company of Jean-Luc Ponty.

The early 70s found a period with Cannonball Adderley (for love and learning) sandwiched around stints in Frank Zappa's musical circus (for money and broadened horizons). Duke had sufficient standing as a cult figure to command solo contracts with MPS and later Epic, moving from straight-ahead jazz workouts to increasingly weird melanges of material spiced with outbursts of bizarre humor. But the allure of melding his jazz, funk and rock sensibilities was gradually waning.

"I was really interested in fusion because it had the hard edge of rock and the technical proficiency of jazz," Duke remembers. "I also wanted to see if I could incorporate the real R&B funk into that fusion element.

"I gradually got tired of all the notes. Everybody was just playing scales as fast as they could and the melody went out of it for me. I totally turned off and went the other way."

That other way yielded the "Reach For It" hit in 1978 that helped establish his credentials in commercial R&B circles. Doomsday warnings of an impending record industry slump in the late 70s prompted Duke to complement his artistic career by venturing into the produc-



LESTER COHEN

Chart-topping client Deniece Williams checks George's levels.

tion sphere.

He followed the standard trail of building a track record with jazz artists—including Michael White, Raul De Souza, Flora Purim, Seawind and Dee Dee Bridgewater—before sliding into the pop realm with *A Taste of Honey*. Originally tapped to provide arranging and general musical preparation for the "Boogie Oogie Oogie" bunch, Duke arrived at the studio eagerly anticipating the first day of recording...only to discover coproducer Bobby Colomby (ex-Blood, Sweat & Tears) was backing out and leaving the entire project in George's hands.

"A Taste of Honey is where I really found out what this whole record game is about," recalls Duke. "The group and the record company made me aware of what I had to do to produce a big act and sell a million records. "It was flabbergasting. I used to watch Quincy put records together but I could have croaked behind the pressure with no experience of making a pop or R&B hit. I feel great we sold two million records but that's a hard one to talk about because they paid the price for me to learn what to do."

"Sukiyaki" gave him the prized hit single that sends any fledgling producer's market value skyrocketing, but Duke learned a more valuable lesson when inexperience kept him from cancelling the session to reassess the material. The off-the-cuff spontaneity prized by jazz and certain rock performers doesn't cut it with mainstream R&B artists looking for chart hits. "There's no point in even going into the studio if you don't have the material," he explains. "The largest responsibility for any single producer is to find the right song to match the artist. Beyond that, we're probably all wanking off because all this equipment doesn't make a hit.

"I'm still listening to material for Jeffrey's new album and we're halfway through the thing. I'm still getting stuff for Deniece Williams and the record is out. On the average, I would say I go through at least a hundred cassettes, of which two songs might make the record."

Location and atmosphere also place higher on Duke's list of priorities than purely technical considerations. Le Gonks West was pressed into service before it was a studio proper. "Many of Taste of Honey's vocals were done right in this office," Duke relates. "We came in to save money, moved the couch out, set the microphone right here and recorded. For Jeff's first record, we had to turn the refrigerator off, take the clock out for the ticking and put foam in the windows to keep the birds and dogs from coming through."

But the seeming informality doesn't mean that Duke's mondo bizarro public image governs his production projects. Despite his breezy manner and the



JOHN SEVERT

Duke in former keyboard incarnation.

hearty guffaws that frequently punctuate the conversation, producer Duke is a strict—although not tyrannical—studio disciplinarian. And his wild and woolly musical eclecticism takes a back seat when assembling material for another artist; calculating current commercial trends is a must.

"It's tough to keep your finger on what radio's playing now and where you're going to make your dent in the marketplace," he declares. "You've got to project ahead because you may be recording in August and by January, when the record comes out, the thing you're doing may be over.

"The main thing for any producer—I hate to say this because it may come out too strong—is they have to be the control. That's the reason they're there but they have to listen to an artist with something to say. They can't just go off on their own trip and make their record."

Duke can attest to the wisdom of keeping an open ear, since he arched a quizzical eyebrow in Deniece Williams' direction on first hearing "Let's Hear It For The Boy." "Niecy was just ecstatic, so if she feels it's that great, I've got to find something in the song and bring it out," he declares. "I started doing the tracks, got an idea and brought Paulinho da Costa in to add Latin percussion. I felt it needed that for the impetus of the song even though that sound has nothing to do with Utah or Nebraska or wherever the movie takes place.

"It's funny, I almost felt like I didn't do enough to it. I was wondering if I was stealing their money, because my part was literally done in a day. I programmed the drum machine, which took two or three hours, played the bass part on

Minimoog, played the synthesizer part, doubled it, brought Paul Jackson in on guitar and he was through in an hour-and-a-half. The singers did the backgrounds the same day Niecy did the leads. Then we mixed it; it took three days."

Duke also had to conquer his skepticism when Osborne brought in "Stay With Me Tonight" ("It was probably the worst demo I'd ever heard in my life"). Duke played a far less prominent creative role during the single day spent recording the Raymond Jones song. "'Stay With Me Tonight' was actually done with drums, bass and a reference keyboard part. From there, we built the synthesizer parts and pulled the acoustic piano out except for one spot.

"Raymond had great ideas and it was a matter of me taking the elements of what he had and organizing it so the sounds spoke right. The hardest part was mixing because it was the first time we used Simmons drums and we weren't accustomed to the sound."

Keyboard prowess may have cemented Duke's early reputation, but he scrupulously avoids going overboard on extraneous keyboard parts in his production work. "I try to produce as I go. I'm thinking about the final outcome all the time so I don't wind up erasing a bunch of stuff. There are certain cases where I want alternatives. I don't mind having two vocal tracks so I can switch to another track if one word or something is a little funny.

"I know Quincy records a lot of tracks—he may do a whole tape of different guitar players—bounces it all down, uses what he wants and figures it out later. That allows a certain amount of flexibility, but I would rather work with the guy, get what I want now and know I got it. Saves a lot of headaches in the end."

The only headaches in the Duke household these days are figuring out which projects to turn down. Tracks with Shalamar, Stephanie Mills, Melissa Manchester and Osborne on the way, more soundtrack work on the horizon, a freshly signed Elektra contract in his hip pocket—it all could add up to a portrait of the jazzman gone Hollywood, content to kick back and coast on success after years of dues-paying.

But appearances can be deceptive. Still mindful of A&M's initial resistance to releasing "Stay With Me Tonight" as a single because it departed from Osborne's balladeer image, George Duke hopes to use the leverage of his new mainstream standing to challenge and ultimately change standard industry procedure.

"I want to be known as a comprehensive producer just like I'm known as a comprehensive artist. All my keyboard playing and school background have

continued on page 78

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"You've got to take chances"; Nils' gritty Strat attack hovers near the edge.

NILS LOFGREN: SECOND THAT EMOTION

Springsteen's New Guitarist Bounces Back

By Bill Flanagan

Maybe it would have been best for Nils Lofgren if Neil Young hadn't discovered him when he was only eighteen. Maybe it would be best if Nils were only now, at thirty-two, making his first album.

The bad side: rock fans would be out fourteen years of great songs scattered over eleven LPs alternately uneven and terrific. The good side: a rock 'n' roll writer/singer/guitarist/performer at the height of his considerable powers would now be appreciated, perhaps lauded as Next Big Thing, instead of finding himself without a record deal.

In 1983 Nils released *Wonderland*, a fine album that included an irresistible single, "Across The Tracks," with hot guitar, great melody and (this is the 80s) terrific video. When the record didn't take off as expected, MCA dropped

Lofgren. Nils responded by heading out on a bar tour. On the first leg, Lofgren, drummer Andy Newmark and bassist Kevin McCormick played blistering hard rock as exciting as Graham Parker or the Stones. Nils wasn't just back; he was better. Lofgren cemented his rep with the acoustic tour he and brother Tom launched a few weeks later. Those concerts were a revisionist overview, proof of how wide-ranging Lofgren's accomplishments have been.

Lofgren's obvious emulation of Keith Richards (he is, after all, the guy who wrote "Keith Don't Go") never kept him from producing Beatles-like melodies or mythic western sagas. His love for British rock didn't keep Nils from a peculiarly American stoicism ("Outlaw," "No Mercy," "I Wait For You") in line with the visions of Neil Young, his patron, and Bruce Springsteen, an old fan. The bond between Lofgren and Young has been periodically reaffirmed in the fourteen years since Neil played on Lofgren's first album and Nils worked on *After The Gold Rush*. *Tonight's The Night* (1975) reunited the two guitarists for a drunken rock wake, and last year's *Trans* tour of Europe (seen in the U.S. as an HBO special) contrasted Ninja Nils with Young's twenty-first century lumberjack.

"Neil and I are the exact same type of guitarist," Lofgren asserts. "When the two of us play together, my style comes out sounding more precise, so people say I'm more of a technician. But that's a bunch of bull. When I play I take chances all the time. Whether people realize it or not, every night I work with Neil I make as many mistakes as he does. Maybe my mistakes are less obvious because of the crisp sound of the Strat, or because of the definition I use with the thumb pick; I do a lot of bouncing, so there's a lot more rhythms coming at you. Maybe that gives people the impression of a technician. It's peaks and valleys. If you're really looking for those special explosions of great emotion, you've got to take chances. At least in the kind of music Neil and I do. It's all based on emotion. If guitar players like us don't take chances, we're hopeless."

Lofgren found a bond with the late Pretenders guitarist James Honeyman-Scott similar to the rapport he shares with Young. During the short life of the original Pretenders, Lofgren played so many shows with them that rumor had him joining the band.

"To me Jimmy was one of the greatest guitar players. Our styles fit together great. Whenever we got onstage to play, it just clicked so easily. We felt each

continued on page 98

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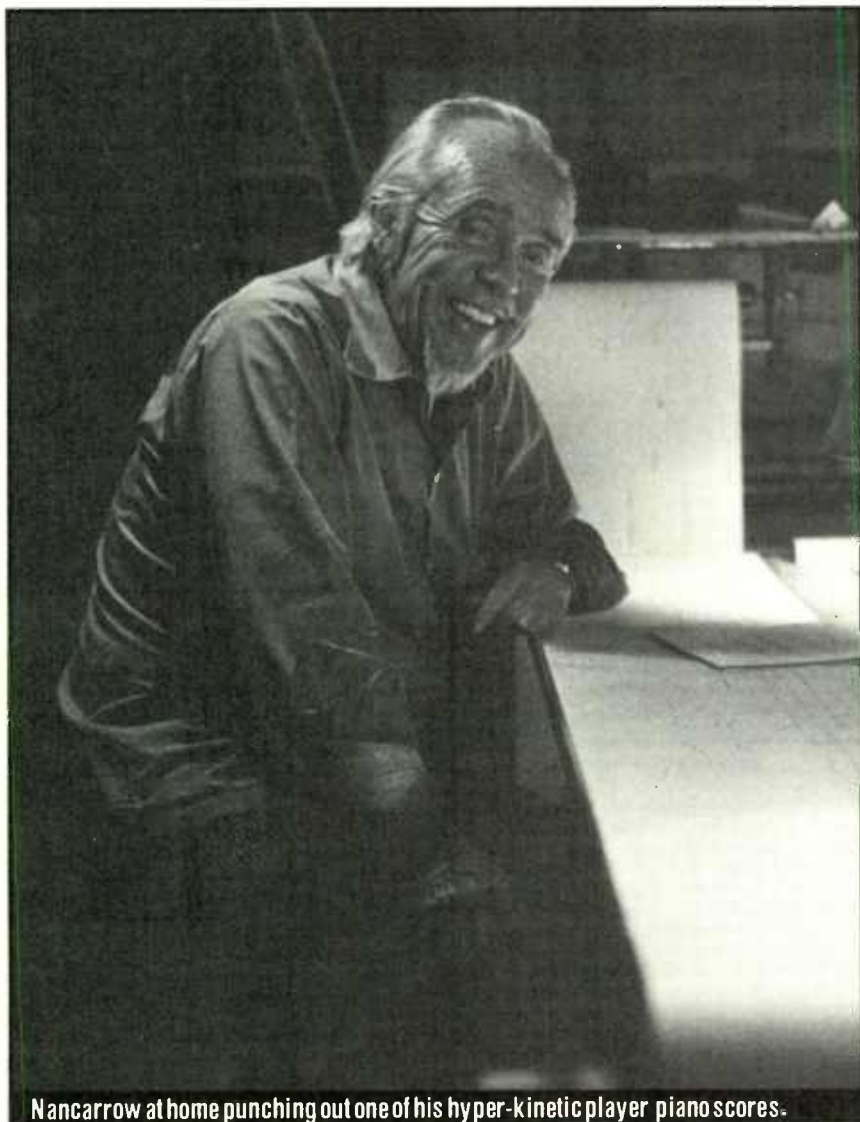
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A Digital



Nancarrow at home punching out one of his hyper-kinetic player piano scores.

CONLON NANCARROW, AVANT-GARDE AVATAR

A Visit With a Mythical Player- Piano Composer

By Josef Woodard

Consider Conlon Nancarrow, the man: one of the most brilliant musical "discoveries" of the last few decades—maybe, as some enthusiasts suggest, a sort of creative find-of-the-century—who, at age seventy-one,

sports a kempt white goatee framing a generous, frequent smile. It is the smile, washing over his face like a spot shower, that betrays his personality—affable, a little devious and somewhat bemused by his sudden foray into fame. This belatedly celebrated avatar of the avant-garde continues to make his home in Mexico City, where he has lived and created since exiling himself from the U.S. forty years ago, far from the madding crowd and bleedover from what he calls "the musical mafia."

In short, a humble composite of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Ives and Paul

Gauguin (not to mention Scott Joplin and Igor Stravinsky). A reclusive genius who has effectively stumped the system by staying completely outside of it.

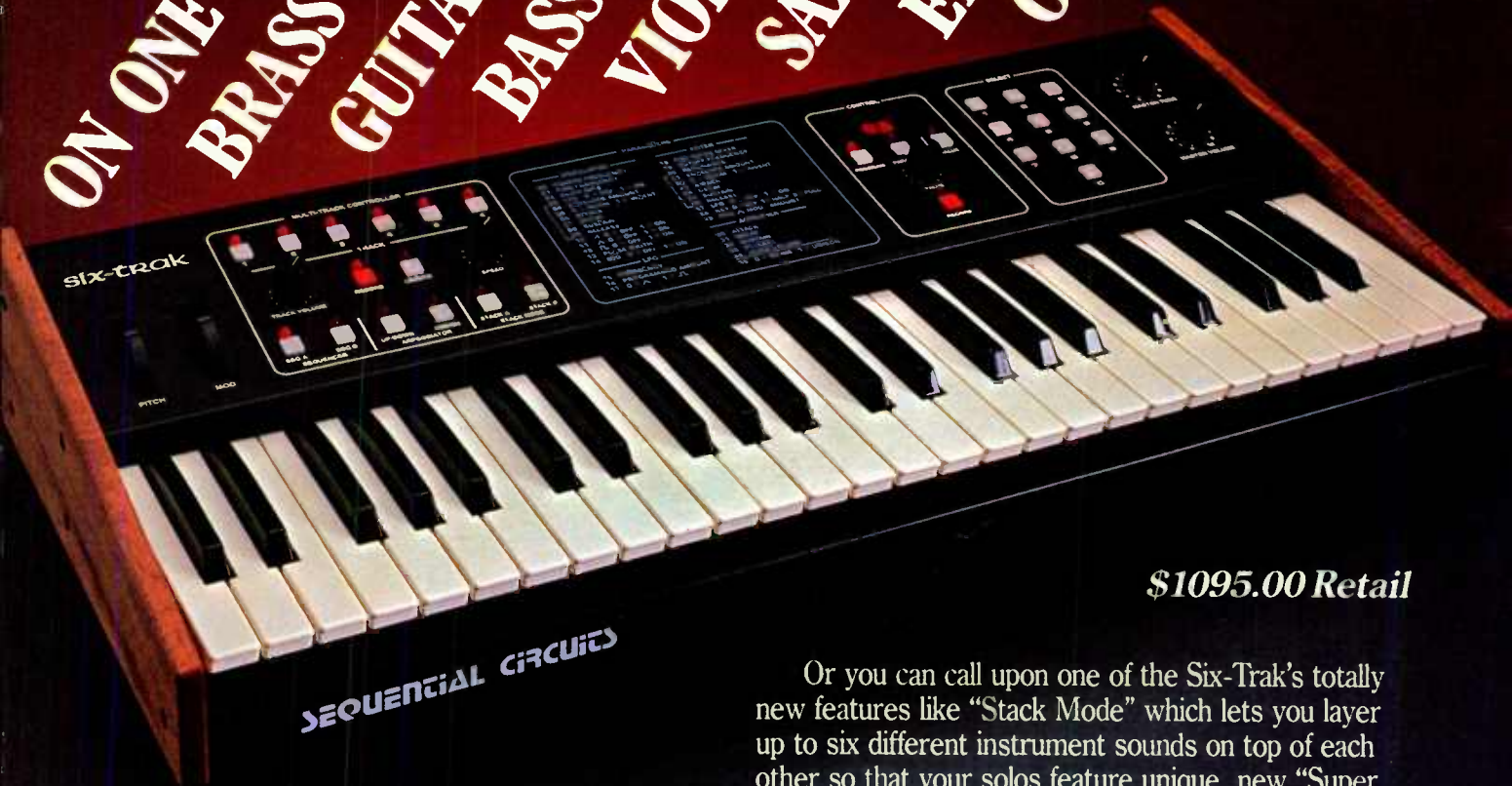
Consider Nancarrow's music: some of the most dizzyingly intricate, convulsively polyrhythmic and wildly polyphonic writing ever to seize a piano. Contrasting phrases careen about like madmen at a demolition derby, tonalities and tempos thrashing with no regard for conventional musical life. Lightning keyboard sweeps—up to 175 notes per second—and heaping, dovetailing melodic lines unfold erratically, but with impeccable exactitude and riveting crescendos.

There are rough echoes of swing phrasing and jazz means turned inside out. The meaning of the blues is given new armor, an aggressively percussive piano timbre and an imploded symphonic sense. The rules of order have been subjected to a bloodless coup. Experiencing Nancarrow's music can be as emotionally drenching as it is technically fascinating, as the physical velocity and complexity reach a superhuman pitch.

And, of course, there lies the rub: Nancarrow's chosen musical weapon has been the literally superhuman and once-lowly player piano. For the past forty-odd years, Nancarrow has been steadily composing player piano studies—now numbering into the forties—in his secluded, soundproofed studio, laboriously punching out scores that sometimes took as long as a year's effort for a piece of several minutes duration. His pioneering experiments—especially as regards polytempo—went virtually unnoticed until recent years. While composers such as John Cage knew of and visited the distant composer, it was only in the 70s that the world caught wind of Nancarrow's work, first from a release on Columbia Masterworks, then from a series of records on Berkeley's 1750 Arch Records, who in 1977, at the insistence of rabble rouser Charles Amirkhanian, brought out the first of the thus far four volumes of Nancarrow's studies. Suddenly the noble loner's work was accessible to any and all interested parties.

Those parties expanded greatly in 1981, when Nancarrow was the toast of the New Music America Festival held in San Francisco. The ecstatic response rippled in New Music circles and beyond. *Newsweek's* Allyn Swan declared, "Many experimental composers deserve attention; Nancarrow commands it." He was the recipient of a \$300,000 "genius" grant from the MacArthur Foundation in 1982, and commis-

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sions poured in to congratulate Nancarrow's geyser of creative output.

But the most definitive plaudit came from renowned composer Gyorgy Ligeti, who heard the early records and swooned in a 1981 letter to Amirkharian: "His music is so utterly original, enjoyable, constructive and at the same time emotional. For me, it is the best music by any living composer of today."

Home for Nancarrow is his workshop, a studio on a sizable plot of land he staked his claim to early in his Mexican expatriation. It was much later that he built a house on the property, in which he now lives with his archeologist wife, Yoko and son Mako, age twelve.

Tracking down the composer proved to be an adventure to vie with trying to follow one of the voices in Nancarrow's mad canons. All roads lead to the netherworld. The path from downtown Mexico D.F. to his house gives a quick sketch of the cultural environment he calls his neighborhood. The taxi plummets (key traffic term here) out toward San Angel—a well-appointed section of this notoriously impoverished city—past Chapultepec Park, where the legendary Archeological Museum pays opulent homage to the ancient Mayan and Aztec civilizations that are this country's proud pillars. Out past the poorer areas where Mexicans freely

congregate in clumps, and the hand-me-downs of American consumeristic glitz—*Discolandia*, *Superama*, decked with flat primary colors. And up to the San Angel Inn, which the driver explains is a former convent patronized by the Kennedys "and many American celebrities" who have slept there. He'd gone too far and asked the locals for directions. Turning around, he says, in broken English, "We have a saying in Mexico: 'Ask questions and you'll get through.'"

Asking questions won't necessarily get you through to the enigma of Nancarrow, though. A perfectly cordial conversationalist happy to spend an afternoon talking over cognac, Nancarrow is still a selective interviewee. He openly discusses his equipment, his rhythmic techniques, his belief in Ivan Ilyich's *Deschooling Society* and Soviet cultural suppression ("What a tragedy Stalin started," he frowns with disillusionment, as if the Bolshevik uprising took place just last week. "That revolution could have really been something."). But he is willfully skeletal on certain biographical data or anything approaching theoretic frothing. For example:

Musician: *Precision is paramount with you, in terms of interlocking rhythms, and yet the music has an air of abandon. Were you always attracted to this*

dichotomy?

Nancarrow: I never thought of it as a dichotomy.

Musician: *Are there specific studies you feel represent a sort of creative zenith?*

Nancarrow: No. Maybe I peaked a long time ago. Who knows?

Musician: *So you view it more as an ongoing process of discovery?*

Nancarrow: Well, for the moment. As long as it lasts.

Musician: *How would you capsule your musical objective in all of this?*

Nancarrow: Well... (shrugs, long pause).

Born in Texarkana, Arkansas in 1912 (the hometown of Scott Joplin, Nancarrow is quick to point out), Nancarrow's introduction to music was less than prescient. "When I was very young, my parents wanted me to play the piano, of course. I must have been four years old and they sent me to this monster of a piano teacher, whom I couldn't stand. Finally they let me change to trumpet, which I studied with the leader of the town band. It was classical training and band music, marches—standard trumpet things. Well," he clarifies, "I started out on trumpet; I stayed on trumpet. I don't play piano. My piano plays it for me." He went on to a conservatory in Cincinnati, *continued on page 78*

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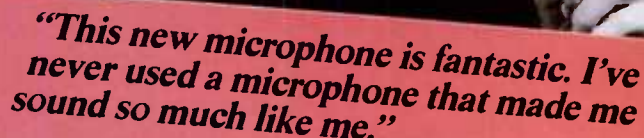
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NO BLUES IN CHICAGO

Feeling Bullish at the Summer N.A.M.M. Expo

By Jock Baird

The two top stories at this summer's behemoth musical instrument expo, N.A.M.M. Chicago, were more MIDI software for even more electronic keyboards, and the rampant proliferation of Simmons-type electronic drums. But it was what was going on behind these spotlight-grabbers that may prove to be more important to the rock 'n' roll rank & file. A spate of new products showed many companies feeling bullish, even the guitar and amp makers, a group who in recent years has had to work hard just to avoid a bunker mentality.

The great synthesizer powers were expected to finally get the bugs out of the computer software for their MIDI systems and get them on the market, and despite ongoing revisions, most of



them succeeded handily. Yamaha revealed seven impressive MIDI programs for their DX series synths, including the 32-track Personal Composer system for IBM PC and the DX PRO, an Apple program that can store up to eight hundred DX sounds on a single floppy disc. Roland, Sequential Circuits and Moog also exploited their MIDI head starts while Korg joined the hunt with their KMS30 five-input MIDI synchronizer. Octave Plateau interfaced their Voyetra 8 (newly equipped with weighted keyboard action) with a potent multi-track and parameter-controlling IBM PC program. Alpha Syntauri unveiled the 16-track Metatrack system, complete with digital oscillator.

Chicago N.A.M.M. also saw a whole new breed of Great Powers: major league booths by companies that made virtually no hardware, but mainly software. Passport showed their impressive MIDI 4 and Polywriter programs as well



Emulator II

as an array of programmed sounds and songs, from the Beatles to new wave. An ambitious effort by Sight & Sound, a publishing company specializing in the Casio home market, not only included a terrific computers-for-idiots training program (featuring "Micro Jackson"), but a formidable demonstration by Japanese guitarist/keysman Ryo Kawasaki of some MIDI pieces he'd created on Sight & Sound's IBM PC software (complete with video art). Perhaps the biggest show buzz came from MusicData, a Beverly Hills company offering a mixed bag of cassette or ROM sound programs for keyboards and drum machines worked up by well-known artists like Skunk Baxter, Ray Manzarek, Carmine Appice, Berlin's David Diamond, Nicky Hopkins and (gasp!) Craig Anderton (we knew all rock writers wanted to be stars!). MusicData also showed a Commodore 64 MIDI sequencer (a program for Apple II is due soon) and promised software for it that would change lounge gigs forever and for better. Less visible but equally fluent in MIDI were smaller companies like Boulder's Noteworthy, L.A.'s Hybrid Arts and Marina del Rey MIDI retrofit

specialist J.L. Cooper.

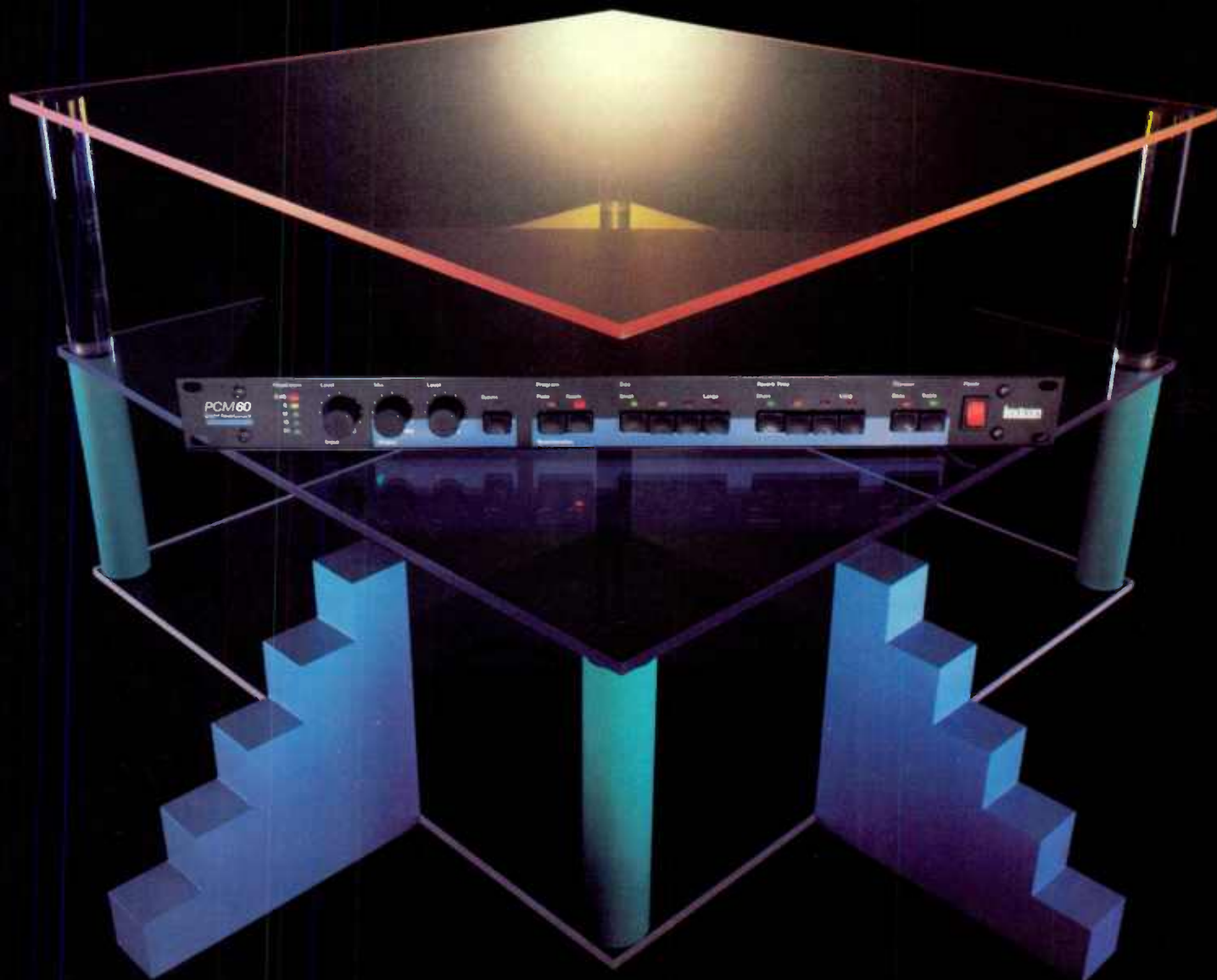
The maturity of MIDI accelerated the split into separate stripped down keyboard controllers and synthesizer modules. Of the latter, the N.A.M.M. debut of Oberheim's Xpander was a noticeable crowd-generator. Those with smaller budgets found solace with the Korg EX 800 Expander module. Roland checked in with their Total MIDI System, a basic patch-memory-equipped keyboard controller (the MXB-1000 or -300) and a remote rack-mounted analog synth module dubbed the Super Jupiter. Both Korg (the RK 100) and Yamaha (the KX5) came out with basic onstage MIDI keyboards, complete with guitar-like left-hand extensions.

Other show synthesizer action included a \$10,000 version of Yamaha's DX series, the DX1, and a surprise entry from piano-maker Kimball, a new three-computer synth designed by electronic music pioneer Ralph Buchla (the Kimball offensive also included a full line of mid-priced synths). Akai brought out a new programmable MIDI-equipped analog synth, the AX80. E-Mu Systems took advantage of the plummeting cost of computer memory to put a megabyte



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of disc storage on their Emulator II and redid their data encoding technique for better frequency response. It can now sample up to seventeen seconds and has capability for further analog synthesis. The Emulator II also features an 8-channel sequencer, MIDI and RS-232 ports, SMPTE code reader/generator and a new velocity-sensitive five-octave keyboard. Other sampling action saw the shipment of actual production models of the Kurzweil after a year of rising consumer curiosity. In the less rarified price ranges, Technics put out a home keyboard line with pulse code modulation technology, while Seiko, Siel, Kawai and Casio synths also hung tough.

Poor Simmons. After pioneering electronic drum kits, they looked around the floor and discovered dozens of settlers building cabins in their clearing. (If you don't think it's a rapacious industry, consider the fact that even the Jakstan, winter N.A.M.M.'s ingenious little seven-dollar plastic guitar stand, had an imitator.) Many of these were inexpensive sets whose snare drum sounds sounded like aluminum foil, but a number of the Simmons copykits may prove more serious competitors. The most common design used one basic preset sound and then offered a series of controls for electronically altering it. In this race, drummakers like Tama (the Techstar TS500 & 600), Pearl (the Fightman) and Gretsch used their prior expertise to take the inside corner against a large field.

There were fewer entries in the category of electronic drums that used interchangeable digital drum samples. Audiotec's MFB was the only real kit, its oval pads triggering up to fifty cassette-loaded samples. The other digital entries were really glorified pads: E-Mu's E-Drums boasted a large library of cartridge loaded sounds, a pedal pitch controller

Tuscam 225 Syncaset deck



and great dynamic sensitivity on the pad. Akai's Memorycussion AM10 was another data-loading pad kit. For MIDI maestros, Roland showed the eight-pad MPC-8 hooked into their MIDI demonstration. Most intriguing was the Inpulse, a suitcase-shaped prototype from Allen and Heath Brenell that fused eight drum pads with a programmable digital drum machine and a cassette library in a high-stakes bid to take on the LinnDrum and OberheimDMX.

If you thought the tide of digital drum machines would begin to recede, guess again. Yamaha's five-hundred-dollar RX15 Rhythm Programmer, though not equipped with interchangeable sounds, may nonetheless trigger a whole new round of price wars. The first digital divisions in that war were already at the front: Korg's digital DD-110 Super Drums and DD-220 Super Percussion drum machines and PVI's Ensoniq (not to mention their Drum-Key Apple software/peripheral card). More are expected. But the most surprising drum news was not electronic at all: Peavey came out with a line of acoustic drums ranging in price from \$1000 to \$1700. Zildjian also debuted a new batch of cymbals within the K. line.

Well, we told you there were only two big stories at Chicago N.A.M.M., but many showgoers would add the concert that *Musician*, Sequential Circuits, Simmons and Lexicon (with sound by Electro-Voice and lights by Dyna-lights) put on at the Hotel Continental Ballroom. A demonstrative standing-room-only mob watched a soundcheck-less Andy West Band get the better of a tough situation (though many drummers in the crowd sniggered nastily as the computer running the trio's digital drum machine broke down). Then the sweating multitude gasped and roared through a tremendous set from the Steve Morse Band, with Morse assisted not only by able regulars Jerry Peek and Rod Morgensein, but by special drop-in Albert Lee. Then Lee Ritenour brought in a seasoned pack of L.A. session guns, including Harvey Mason, Ernie Watts, Jimmy Johnson and Don Grusin. Though Lee regrettably chose not to

play any vocal tunes from his fine new pop album, *Banded Together*, Rit's six-string charisma and Mason's eager inventiveness redeemed the band's extended jam pacing.

All this guitar playing may not have been responsible for the noticeably upbeat mood of the guitar powers, but word from British manufacturers that kids are buying guitars again in droves may have had something to do with it. If new endorsees were the measurement of a guitar company's presence, Grover Jackson of Charvel/Jackson probably won hands down: at Chicago, he fielded Jeff Beck, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Allan Holdsworth, rising Texas phenom Eric Johnson, some heavy metal stars, and live-and-in-person demonstrator, Zappa's Steve Vai. Ibanez (whose demo band, buoyed by bassist Randy Jackson, took show honors) has been selling so many Roadstars they plopped five



TOA 380SE synth cabinet

more models into the line, plus two X-body assault weapons for powerchord fanatics. Ibanez also readied the Comet to get in on the just-over-\$150 market, heated up by the Squire Bullet. Heavy metalmongers who got overexcited by the girls at the Dean booth took it out on savage body types like B.C. Rich's Ironbird, JTG's Infinox, or the Flying Star models Guild is making for Motley Crue. Magnesium Guitars showed not only the wild horseshoe-shaped double neck instrument they made for Missing Persons' Warren Cuccurullo, but some remarkable half-inch-thick, solid metal guitars as well. Those with more traditional values ducked into the Schecter and ESP booths to pay homage to ultra-custom Strats, Teles and P-Basses, or noted that upwardly mobile Strings 'n' Things had changed its name to St. Blues. Trend of the show: Kahler whammy bars *everywhere*.

Gibson, who also plans to re-release its Stratlike Victory guitar, went back to

the next step



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one of its early strengths and did a reissue series of acoustic guitar classics like the Hummingbird, the Dove and the J-200. They also got Earl Scruggs to do a signature banjo. A new electric violin, the Raad, flush from a cover story in *Strad* magazine, showed why it's creating such a stir in fiddlers' circles.

Few would've predicted all the amp action at Chicago. In a field revitalized by new-tech overachievers like Dean Markley, Seymour Duncan and Randall, big boys Roland and Yamaha unleashed extensive new guitar/bass series, Roland with its compact Super Cubes and Yamaha with its American-made G100s and B100s. Gallien-Krueger brought in some ballsy new stand-mounted amps, the Stereo Effects Series. The Scholz Rockman people unveiled the less noisy X-100 update which now works better as a preamp/effects unit for amplification. Nady showed its rack-mounted Thunder and Lightning series (along with a new line of effects pedals). Audiotec showed the Engl Digitalamp, a valve amp with four user-programmable digital memories for tone, volume and effects levels. The search for the perfect keyboard amp system went into high gear, with Peavey's KB series amps and TOA's "synthable" 380SE speaker system early leaders. Among the P.A./studio power brokers, Peavey also impressed with its ultra-efficient digital DECA/600 Digital Energy Conversion stereo amps, as did JBL/Urei with their 6230/60s.

The cassette home studio sweepstakes saw a new high and low price point. At the top was a bold offering from Akai, a computerized twelve-channel SMPTE-based mixer/recorder called the MG1212 that uses ½-inch audio tape on a Beta videocassette format and sells for just under six grand. At the other extreme was the Tascam 225, a ¼-track (two tracks in either direction) with simulsync priced at an astounding \$350. Other home studio competition saw Fostex chortling over the recent retail success of its new Regulated Phase coaxial 2-way reference monitors, the RM765s and 780s; a well-priced new digital reverb unit from Lexicon, the PCM 60, with both room and plate echo; and the continued vigor of John Simonton's SMPL System. Computer control at the mixing board was also designed into a new AHB console. Microphone developments saw a great new supercardioid condenser from Shure, the SM87, inexpensive new electret/condensers from Peavey and Tascam, and the forecast from Astatic of a condenser addition to its Blue Line series that will knock the bottom out of the mike market.

For now, the bottom is knocked out of our feet. If next winter's N.A.M.M. show gets any bigger, we're bringing roller skates. Till then.... ☐

Duke from page 66

helped make me what I am at this point, a producer who can talk to musicians on their own level and be aware of what it takes to make a hit record.

"You have to focus on what you're doing and solidify that first. I concentrated my efforts at one point on jazz, moved to basic R&B and then to the pop thing. At each step, you're talking about making more money and growing in your audience and artist acceptance. Now I've grown into dealing with white pop artists and that allows me to not have to do one kind of music: 'Well, this is a black artist so automatically I'm going to do this kind of cut.'

"I know I gotta play the game so I do but I'm fighting that all the time. Take these chains off of me. Let the music come back to musicians. They all want to play together anyway. It's so stupid what record companies do, polarizing this music. Let's bring it back to the artist the way it was before and I'm not talking about the good old days, either. I kind of like 1984, actually." ☐

Nancarrow from page 72

playing in the symphony and on darker turf—in German beer halls, playing jazz and whatnot. Later, in Boston, he studied with the renowned likes of Walter Piston, Nicolas Slonimsky and Roger Sessions. But Nancarrow downplays his scholastic stint and its importance. "It was mostly with Sessions, but even that was just counterpoint. I never had any real formal training," he claims with an overtone of pride.

Nancarrow seems to put a damper on certain chunks of his history, like, for instance, the formative stages of his composing career. "In the early 30s, I wrote quite a few pieces that I guess you could say were very traditional, if very crude musically. A year or two ago, someone dug up a score of mine in some library, a trio, a scherzo and a sarabande for oboe, bassoon and piano. I must have written that over fifty years ago. I recognized the handwriting on the score, but I didn't recognize the music—completely just a blank. But obviously I did it. And it was a very conventional thing," says the diehard experimenter. "Naturally one develops and grows or it's nothing. You go from one thing to another."

Political conscience reared its thorny head in the late 1930s, and Nancarrow took up arms along with the 5,000-strong, American-based Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War. His anti-Franco battle cry wound up detouring the course of his life. While he confesses no regrets about the experience, nor does he have memories of chivalric nobility, "Something like that is hardly inspiring. Pretty grim. One of the worst

continued on page 92

Dukey Sticks

Aside from a Fairlight CMI and soon-to-be-purchased Synclavier, Duke uses an unexotic arsenal of keyboard instruments for composing and playing. "Most of the time, I compose on the acoustic piano or Rhodes. The LinnDrum machine has helped a lot because it gives me the pulse and I have a Minimoog and also the Jupiter 8 for bass sounds.

"The basic stable of instruments I use on almost everything is the Memorymoog MIDI'd to the DX7, or the Prophet MIDI'd to a DX7 or Memorymoog, sometimes all three. The Memorymoog is fat and that's where the gusto comes from. It's like driving a truck. The DX7 has a cleanness and clearness I like and a certain timbre that reminds me of the Jupiters. I use the Korg Poly 6 for certain things because it has a nice clear quality and I've been using a Prophet for years."

Le Gonks West also features nothing out of the ordinary beyond the life-size doll replica of Duke that was very nearly pumped full of lead by an edgy L.A.P.D. officer investigating a burglary call one night. The studio itself has a live and dead side, allowing Duke to record everything there except strings and large vocal choirs when he prefers a room with a high ceiling.

The Le Gonks control room features a standard assortment of outboard gear, including an EMT reverb unit George has dubbed "R2D2," a Dolby noise reduction rack, an Eventide delay, Series 2 Kepex Noise Gates, a dbx and Urei 76 limiters. His main deck is a 3M model 7924-track with an Audio Kinetics auto locator; he masters onto Ampex analog and Mitsubishi digital 2-tracks; his tape of choice is Ampex 456. George uses two monitor systems: the smaller, more generally used one is a Headley 4-way system and NS-10 Yamaha speakers. The mains are Yamaha NS1000s biamped with a Hafler amp for the lows and a Bryston West mike inventory includes Neumann U-47s, Sennheiser 250s, Shure SM57s, 58s and 89s, Schoeps and AKG 414s and a 451 for overhead drum miking. The console is a Soundcraft Series 3B.

The key element in capturing the crisp, punchy sound Duke favors—"We definitely go for the gusto"—is routing the signal through pre-amps, eq and limiters built by Earth, Wind & Fire engineer George Massenburg. "I think his stuff generally has more head room, the parameters are wider and the overall sound is cleaner at those parameters."

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R E C O R D S V I E W S

Stylistic Seizures from the Love Laboratory: Prince Lets His Latest Out of the Bottle



PRINCE & THE REVOLUTION

Purple Rain
(Warner Bros.)

Since first brandishing his incisive *Dirty Mind* in 1980, Prince has galvanized a generation of dance-makers with adult erotics and audacious rhythms, charmed pop fans with catchy wordplay and taunting melodies, and still managed to angle lust, celebration and fear into his singing. He has it all—the charismatic quirks of Al Green, the ominous edge of Sly Stone, the messianic moves of Bob Marley. But his greatest musical gift is for structure—lovey pop tracks that knock against their formal limits like little hammers, sensual groove tunes that expand bedrooms into love laboratories, and taut rainbow jams that go their own way.

When this Minneapolis marvel's strange and wonderful grasp of rock 'n' roll, soul, gospel, pop and disco loosens slightly to include some wildly spirited psychedelia, you get *Purple Rain*, the music from his upcoming film; and while

that notoriously indulgent 60s genre has seldom promoted clarity in the past, *Purple Rain* is no boring acid flashback. With synthetic settings surrounded by drum set flesh and guitar blood, Prince lets you know he'd rather be in bed with Funkadelic than the Airplane.

He opens *Purple Rain* from behind the pulpit, beginning the speedy, maze-like party song "Let's Go Crazy" with a punk sermon that says, yes, there's an after-life and no, this ain't it. On the sweeping title ballad he's a battered lover consoled by a guitar that sobs like *Layla*-era Clapton and cries like Hendrix. In between he jets through deep-beat boasts like "I Would Die For You" and "Baby I'm A Star," sings about spending time with a passion junkie ("You could call her a sex fiend," Prince guesses) on the funny "Darling Nikki." And he duets with one Appolonia (Miss Vanity's excitable replacement) on "Take Me With U,"

a jangly come-on with its head in the clouds.

Elsewhere, Prince attempts—and pulls off—three very ambitious tracks. "When Doves Cry" is a raw-nerved rock-dance tormented further by synths unyielding enough to cause breakdowns. Astonishingly, it suggests white-knuckled Dreiserian drama from the perspective of an emotional utopia rippling with peaceful hippie colors. Like "The Beautiful Ones"—a grave, I'm-your-man ballad with radiant pop-soul chord changes and a desire-mad eccentric falsetto (Prince's) eventually turning into a full-fledged screaming fit—the mix is harsh, thrashing and mean. But because Prince's control of motion and collage is so fluid, so authoritative, his evocations seem appropriately urgent rather than gratuitously ugly. The final stunner is "Computer Blue," which equates love unachieved

SCOTT WEINER/RETNA

with synthpop unaccomplished, and in the process teaches Nile Rodgers that guitars can growl around (not just click) through feisty dance grooves. Prince flows out of one beat-and-texture movement after another with the irresistible force of James Brown.

But—voodoo commands from hell and stylistic seizures bulleting into the next notwithstanding—Prince is a very different sort of rhythmic gymnast from the king. From "Uptown" to "Do Me Baby" to "Little Red Corvette," he's the late twentieth century genius kid who lost it at the movies. As scene specific as *Dirty Mind*, as romantically lit as *Controversy*, and as well-edited and assembled as 1999, *Purple Rain* is the first Prince album with a real movie behind it. And after listening to him act on "When Doves Cry," emote on "Beautiful Ones" and "Purple Rain," dance on "Computer Blue" and get nuts on "Let's Go Crazy," you have to wonder what's left for the film.

Probably plenty. —James Hunter



DIFFORD & TILBROOK

Difford & Tilbrook
(A&M)

Talk about critical over-reaction: Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook set out to write tight, modest pop songs and their songwriting prowess is compared to that of Lennon/McCartney and Leiber/Stoller. It ain't bad company, but they're not *that* good. A more accurate comparison would be their buddy Elvis Costello—all are talented craftsmen who occasionally capture the heart as well as the head.

On *Sweets From A Stranger*, Difford & Tilbrook wove together such disparate genres as techno-pop and lounge music into a bold, idiosyncratic State of Pop Message. This eclecticism sometimes led to showing off, but the album's best songs ("Black Coffee In Bed," "His House Her Home") belied an emotional commitment as powerful as their craftsmanship. After five albums, it finally sounded like Tilbrook believed in what he was singing. And while *Sweets* never captured the effervescent swing of Squeeze's *Argybargy*, Difford & Tilbrook's growing infatuation with R&B

seemed even more promising.

But if *Difford And Tilbrook* is the logical next step after *Sweets*, it never turns that step into a real progression. Every song on this album is well produced (thank you Tony Visconti), tastefully arranged and, well, dull. None of the songs work at gut level; sometimes craftsmanship is not enough.

Like Paul Weller with *Style Council*, Difford & Tilbrook are now most successful when they operate within a standard R&B framework, as in "Action Speaks Faster" and "Picking Up The Pieces." But, as with Weller, overreach and experimentation for its own sake immobilize several songs. Dissonant vocal and instrumental harmonies pervade the LP; the first time it's exciting, the seventh time, it's just a gimmick. Difford's gravelly voice, a welcome complement to Tilbrook's sweet tenor during the Squeeze days, is here absent, thus an integral part of Difford & Tilbrook's sound, namely Difford, is missing.

For songwriters as accomplished as Difford & Tilbrook, their scenarios are pretty banal. "Man For All Seasons" makes sexual equality sound boring; "The Apple Tree" does the same for the aftermath of nuclear war. Inspired word-play is prevalent on the album, but it's counteracted by such forced rhythms as "weep like a willow/ tears on your pillow" ("You Can't Hurt The Girl").

Difford & Tilbrook have a genuine gift for the hook and their album is a pleasantly diverting entertainment. But as a benchmark in the career of two often gifted songwriters, *Difford And Tilbrook* is no more imaginative than its title.

—Jimmy Guterman



VARIOUS ARTISTS

That's The Way I Feel Now
A Tribute To Thelonious Monk
(A&M)

That's The Way I Feel Now wavers between praising Thelonious Monk and burying him. In an attempt at musical cross-fertilization, producer Hal Willner has assembled a massive cast of respected jazz Monkophiles including Steve Lacy, Barry Harris, Randy Weston and Charlie Rouse; jazz dabbling pop-stars like Joe Jackson, Donald Fagen

and Peter Frampton; and a melange of unclassifiable jazzers and rockers whose eclecticism slips through the cracks (Carla Bley, Bobby McFerrin, Bob Dorough, Dr. John, Mark Bingham, Todd Rundgren, John Zorn, Terry Adams & NRBQ, Was (Not Was) and Shockabilly) to interpret twenty-three Monk compositions. Most of this well intentioned project is worthy of its composer; it gets into trouble when Willner uses Monk's artistic irreverence to justify free license.

The fascination of Monk's music is the manner in which pristine beauty intertwines with the bizarre, formalism with self-mockery. In other words, you don't have to mess with Monk to make him sound weird; he is weird. The least successful cuts on this LP are the ones that try to out-Monk Monk—Rundgren's techno-pop "Four In One," Zorn's Spike Jones treatment of "Shuffle Boil" and Bingham's lugubrious horror show on "Brilliant Corners." All try to exaggerate humor, rhythmic eccentricities and stop-start melodic complexities that were already on the sheet music, turning Monk's sly wit into broad lampoon.

The pop-rock treatments which maintain Monk's compositional framework while adding their own rhythmic touches are more successful. Frampton and Chris Spedding's heavy metal "Work" generates its own lunk-headed charm, while NRBQ's "Little Rootie Toot" weds an R&B backbeat to a straight but exuberant reading of the melody. Neither tries to be "shocking," they work because they seem unselfconscious. Elsewhere, Dr. John's jaunty "Blue Monk" solo and his funky work with Steve Swallow and New Orleans buddy Ed Blackwell on "Bye-Ya" achieve everything this project strives for.

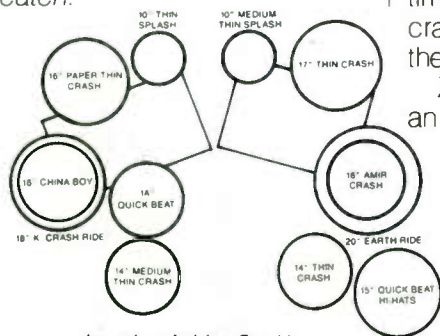
Fagen's and Jackson's cuts fall curiously between these extremes. Monk's two best known ballads "'Round Midnight" and "Reflections" are treated as sweet mood pieces, without the jagged edges that made them so special in the first place. "Reflections" is saved by Fagen's intriguing synth textures against Steve Kahn's acoustic guitar, but "'Round Midnight" is simply a mellowed-out and rather precious chamber concert.

The jazz instrumentalists have a better handle on the manic/lyric quality of Monk's art. Willner's production is every bit as imaginative, but here the audacity has more context. Highlights include soprano saxist Steve Lacy's luminous duets with Elvin Jones, Gil Evans and former Monk tenorist Charlie Rouse, as well as his own solo spot. Pianists Randy Weston and Barry Harris (on tack piano) show off their psychic understanding of Monk's off-center accents and slippery changes. The most provocative setting mates Carla Bley's band with tenor giant Johnny Griffin on "Misterioso," a Griffin

JONATHAN MOFFETT

THE ONE-HANDED CYMBAL CATCH

Late one evening during a marathon practice session at his home in New Orleans, Jonathan Moffett came up with a special technique to do a cymbal crash within the rhythm pattern without affecting the overall flow or timing of the rhythm. By hitting and catching the cymbal with the same hand, he found that his other hand and feet could continue the rhythm beneath the cymbal catch.



Jonathan's Live Set-Up

"You hit the side of the cymbal midway up the stick, slide it off the edge, then you catch the cymbal with the same hand for a controlled 'choke' effect. I can control the amount of cymbal decay after the first hit by timing the closing of my hand. This gives me anything from a knife-edge sound to a hi-hat effect. Doing the catch with both hands lets me double the effect.

"I've found this technique to be especially effective for soloing and easily applicable to odd time accent situations.

When you do it between alternating hands, it can be mixed into the rhythm for some very colorful drum/cymbal combinations.

"With the Jacksons, I'll use it to accent certain moments before the vocal chorus. Or when Michael makes a move and stops real quick, I'll accent that with a catch. You've got to do it fast and drop back into the rhythm without breaking time. My Thin and Paper Thin crashes work well here because they're easy to control."

Zildjian cymbals have played an important part in the ongoing development of Jonathan's exciting approach to the drum set.

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showcase with Monk twenty-five years ago. This loving *and* logical meeting of old and new is what a continuum is all about. Monk would have gotten a charge from it. —**Steve Futterman**



ROSCOE MITCHELL

And The Sound And Space Ensembles
(Black Saint)

This is not fancy stuff, the best of it. The modal hard bop of "Linefine Lyon Seven" is played with engaging raggedness and Mitchell himself attacks his solo with a flatness that seems more aggressive and less sardonic than usual. Compared to the wild funk tune "You Wastin' My Time," which contains what must be Mitchell's first rap on record ("Well a-tickety-tock goes the big ol' clock and what's it tryin' to say"), "Linefine" is chamber music. Wonderful stuff, easy to love. The rest of the album is chamber music, and a different story.

Not that I'm an antifer of Mitchell's chamber work—it's provided some of the eeriest and most brilliant illuminations of my last ten years of listening—but it can be harder to get to, and on this album, as so often recently, there is the classically trained tenor voice of Tom Buckner to cope with, and most often I can't. Giddins beat me to it: he does sound like Dudley Do-Right. If only he were into a Snidely Whiplash bag we might have something, though it is a richly funny conception to have Buckner, on the long "Words," project in ideally pear-shaped tones a list of ten-dollar words (arbitrage, novella, gainsay, locus, impute) that might have been culled from the ludicrous reviews with which my cronies and I ritually festoon Mitchell albums (I recognize my own Tabula Rasa), although living well, Roscoe, is probably still the best revenge. Buckner comes across better on the even longer "Variations On Sketches From Bamboo," portions of which remind one what gorgeous impressionist melody Mitchell can write when he's of a mind to; the collective improves on these melodies alternately jell and fail to. The same might be said of the two short collective constructs that round out the

album.

The record is homey and inconsistent and unshattering and Roscoe Mitchell still strikes me as the most important primary inventor the music has had since the first wave of 1960s innovation and outrage. At least two generations of more fluent, diversified and fashionable artists have been crucially inspired by his practices and his example; seen on this scale this album is relatively minor work. The still recent *Snurdy McGurdy And Her Dancin' Shoes*, on Nessa, is a more consistently wonderful example of current Mitchell, and the radical, chilling *Nonaah*, also on Nessa, remains a signal masterwork of this here epoch and a continuing insult to superficial expectation. For minimalist chamber work there is *L-R-G*, that's on Nessa, too, "Uncle" was the most brilliant composition on the Art Ensemble's last ECM album, and there you jolly well are. Aren't you. —**Rafi Zabor**



THE BANGLES

All Over The Place
(Columbia)

On their first LP, Los Angeles' other all-girl rock group show enough talent and the moxie to triumph over the onus of living in the shadow of the You-Know-Who-Who's. Like L.A.'s all-platinum heartthrobs, the Bangles reach back to 60s pop for the basis of their sound, but there's also a toughness, and a tough-mindedness, about this quartet's music that distances them from the goopiness that sometimes sabotages the all-femme format.

Not that their new album isn't pretty: guitarists Susanna Hoffs and Vicki Peterson and drummer Debbi Peterson can all sing, and more often than not their songs feature beautifully textured ensemble harmonies frankly reminiscent of the Mamas & the Papas. But lyrics—particularly on "Hero Takes A Fall" (the album's first single), "Restless" and "Silent Treatment"—often take an unforgiving woman's viewpoint on failed and fickle romance that is as pointed as it is unexpected. These girls are *not* pushovers.

The Bangles' music has become as

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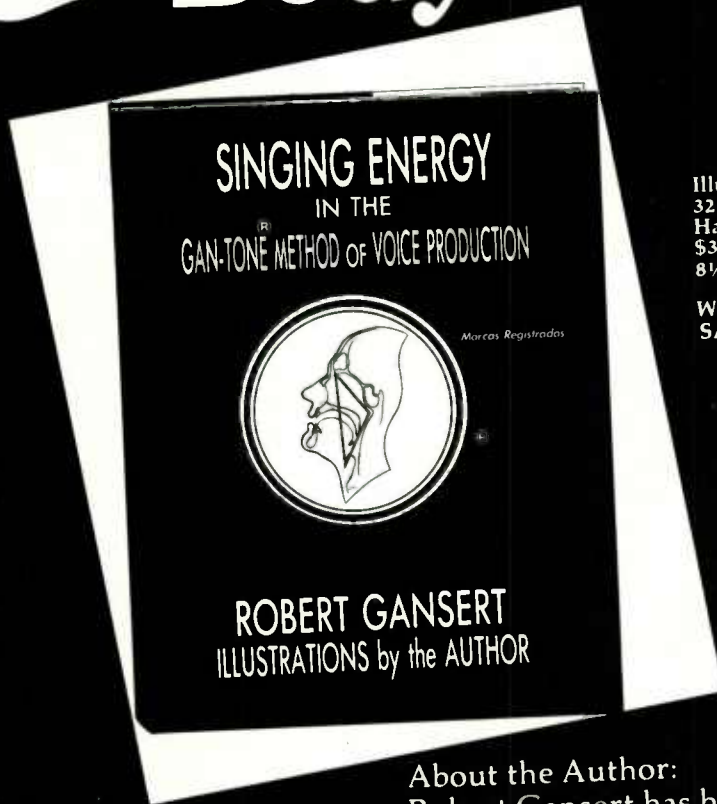
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About the Author:
Robert Gansert has been a performing vocalist for over twenty years, and has been featured in numerous concerts and recordings. His work has been internationally acclaimed. He is currently a noted instructor at the Carnegie Hall studios.



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strong and mature as their outlook. Though the Bangles have always been outspoken about their love of the Beatles—one L.A. card has noted with glee their frequent use of McCartney's patented "Taxman" bass line—here they've moved beyond role models to develop a personal sound that is at once hard and uniquely melodic. One listen to the cringing vocal/guitar hook of "Goin' Down To Liverpool," the album's most aurally intoxicating cut, is proof enough of the Bangles' increasing instrumental and vocal prowess.

All Over The Place, sharply produced by David Kahne, is almost entirely winning; only the string-laden "More Than Meets The Eye" falls into the category of "forced experimentation." After this record, the Bangles don't have to take a back seat anymore. —Chris Morris



ROD STEWART

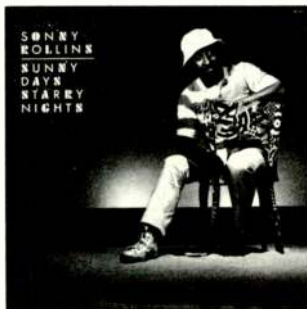
Camouflage
(Wamer Bros.)

There's something truly sad about the humbling of a once-proud superstar. Sure, Rod Stewart's an obnoxious twit, but only the cruelest critics could have wished him the humiliation of *Camouflage*. This sorry disc goes beyond the self-parody of his recent efforts by nearly turning Stewart into a nonentity. On his own record!

With inspiration on the wane, Stewart got the bright idea to call on Michael Omartian for help. The producer of Christopher Cross, as well as Donna Summer's *She Works Hard For The Money*, Omartian clearly has that commercial touch—too bad he can't handle a rock 'n' roll singer. *Camouflage* is an overstuffed producer's album, full of hopped-up dance rhythms that leave little room for a voice. On the single, "Infatuation," Omartian piles on guitars, synths and horns until it's an ugly mess; meanwhile, poor Rod is trying valiantly to strut his he-man stuff and fooling no one. The sequencer-dominated cover of Free's "All Right Now" is especially offensive—however bad he gets, you don't expect Stewart to trash a classic from the British blues era.

Stewart does gain control of the proceedings a couple of times on side two.

The determinedly raunchy "Bad For You" features Rod at his most predatory, taking lust to nasty, distasteful extremes. (Born-again Christian Omartian disowns the track on the inner sleeve.) "Heart Is On The Line" finally offers a glimpse of his vulnerable side, and shows he can still wring heartbreak from simple lyrics. —Jon Young



SONNY ROLLINS

Sunny Days Starry Nights
(Milestone)

When I first heard *Sunny Days*' three kinetic calypsos my first thoughts were not of Rollins immortal 1956 Caribbean stomp "St. Thomas" but rather "Flowers For Albert," the similarly-styled finale to David Murray's 1983 LP, *Murray's Steps*. Judging from his ferocious playing on *Sunny Days* Rollins would not only have kept up with Murray's young lions, he might easily have blown them away. After three decades, Sonny Rollins remains at once classic and contemporary.

The same cannot be said for his rhythm section. Thanks to a trombonist who merely sketches themes and adds incidental color, Rollins is left leading a serviceable keyboards, electric bass and drums unit that simply tries to stay out of his way, and sometimes fails even that. Granted that Rollins, with his inborn and multi-directional rhythmic sense, is one of the trickiest of hornmen to follow; still, the drumming on *Sunny Days* is technically inept to the point of embarrassment. Listen—if you can—to the botched attempt at trading fours with Rollins on "I'm Old Fashioned." Thankfully there is still plenty of peak form Rollins to tune into whenever your ears start to ache.

The absence of out and out funk numbers is cause for celebration. Aside from the calypsos, there are two standards and a gorgeous long lined Rollins ballad, "Wynton," dedicated to you know who (no, not Kelly). There are no throw-away cuts on this record: Rollins flies with a wild abandon on every solo. *Sunny Days* makes me happy; something in Rollins' private life must be inspiring him to play so well. I know one thing—it isn't his band. —Steve Futterman



STEPHANIE CHERNIKOWSKI

THE dB's

Like This
(Bearsville)

They spent two years in exile on a British label and nearly half that making this album. They also lost founding member Chris Stamey on the eve of recording. But *Like This*, the long-awaited U.S. LP debut by expatriate North Carolinians the dB's, isn't just better late than never. As a demonstration of the radio magic at the heart of the New Guitar Pop—that seductive Yankee hybrid of Byrdsy resonance, *Rubber Soul* overhaul and scrappy CBGB thump—*Like This* is definitely like wow.

You can hear the dB's bar band roots in the edgy guitar crossfire and in the way drummer Will Rigby tugs at his 4/4 leash. Fortified by guitarist Peter Holsapple's ragged wail and a rubbery Duane Eddy twang in the chorus, "Rendezvous" opens like an out of bounds frat party. "New Gun In Town" bolts out of the followup spot with all the surly crunch of Blue Oyster Cult and none of the phony menace.

But while homespun boogie charm has been liberally filtered through New York's art-punk eccentricity (the Television guitars and dark frantic changes of "Spitting Into The Wind"), the dB's garage ethic still has more to do with the Flamin' Groovies and Todd Rundgren's Nazz than it does R.E.M. "Love Is For Lovers," with its steely layered guitars and the upward slide of its compound hooks, subtly tests the limits of British Invasion classicism without breaking its spell. Producer and ex-Waitress Chris Butler, a past master of bright and batty pop, provides quietly expansive gestures like the pastel keyboards on "Lonely Is (As Lonely Does)" and the country Burritos hee-haw of "White Train."

In many ways, this album is like Big Star without the chip on Alex Chilton's shoulder; even "Amplifier," a re-recording of a 1981 import track, tempers its morbid snickering with hum-a-long cheek. But in every way, *Like This* is the dB's just reward, a power-bop triumph for a great underdog band that deserves to go way overground. Like now. —David Fricke

How changing your pickup will improve your guitar's sound.

There's a frustrating time in a guitar player's development when you have the fingering right, you're bending the strings at the right time, but you still don't sound the way the record does.

It happened to me when I shared a bill once with Robbie Robertson. (Later he was in The Band.) When we played together between sets, trading off licks, I couldn't get close to

the sounds he was getting out of his Telecaster* guitar.

I thought it might be an effects box, but no: you can juggle the signal with effects boxes, but you can't improve the original sound except with a pickup. His pickups had more windings and bigger magnets than my stock pickups, and were more sensitive and responsive to hard or soft picking.


My own Telecaster guitar was so comfortable in my hands, I couldn't bear to play anything else. But it didn't have the professional sound I needed on stage. Putting in a new pickup was like getting a new guitar.

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S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



Smokey Robinson — *Essar* (Tamla).

The songs aren't the obvious hits they once were, but that doesn't mean that S.R. has lost his touch—not when the melodies float so effortlessly, or when the wordplay is as witty as on this album. Granted, Robinson does seem at a loss when it comes to giving the groove the same sort of gloss lavished on the vocals and harmonic accompaniment, but even Sonny Burke's heaviest slam-dunk pulse can't derail a song as delightful as "Train Of Thought." And when Smokey's voice leans into material as rich as "I Can't Find" or "Close Encounters Of The First Kind," the record hits home in a way guaranteed to make any listener's personal hit parade.

Box Of Frogs — *Box Of Frogs* (Epic). If, like me, you thought that the Yardbirds' sound was strictly a matter of lead guitarists, prepare to think again. Chris Dreja, Paul Samwell-Smith and Jim McCarty have put together a quartet that deftly re-creates the angular blues and semi-psychedelic textures of the post-Clapton Yardbirds, and does so without sliding into needless nostalgia or AOR excess. Of course, the presence of such guest Frogs as Jeff Beck and Rory Gallagher doesn't hurt, but it's always the song and the band that dominate. Just like in the good ol' days.

Public Image Ltd. — "Bad Life" b/w "Question Mark" (Virgin Import 12-inch). It figures that just when it seemed PiL had dropped off the face of the earth, John Lydon & company turn up with their strongest single yet. "Bad Life" is a curious amalgam of the band's past fixations, with a driven, almost obsessive pulse that mixes beatbox technology with the sort of megawhomp aggression that fueled *Metal Box*. Best of all, Lydon's Arabian soul man shtick has never been

more expressive. Or tuneful. Could this be the big one?

Marcus Miller — *Marcus Miller* (Warner Bros.). Although as a singer Miller is still a ways from putting pal Luther Vandross out of business, the ease with which he mixes anxiety and lust for "My Best Friend's Girlfriend" shows that the man definitely knows how to sell a song. What really makes this album happen, though, are the instrumental tracks, where Miller's one-man-band approach assembles devastating grooves out of the fewest possible parts. Sophistifunk doesn't come any cannier than this.

Various Artists — *The Official Music Of The XXIIIrd Olympiad* (Columbia). 2.8; 2.5; 3.2; 3.0; 2.7; 3.1; 2.4.

The Cure — *The Top* (Sire). This is almost a new genre for the Cure: Cryptopop. How better to describe the way Robert Smith slips delicious slivers of melody into his aural wastelands, or buries a bit of tunefulness under a raucous jumble of guitars? There are some overtly accessible bits, like "Dressing Up" or "Piggy In The Mirror," that seem even to go over the top. Which is not to say that the Cure are entertaining notions of chart success—just that they've decided to let the listener have as much fun as they are.

Lyres — *On Fyre* (Ace of Hearts). There's nothing new in the *Nuggets*-like grit of these ten tunes, and that's as it should be. The Lyres are garage band classicists who understand that form is function, and who know how to make the most of an 8-bar guitar break or organ rave-up. And, best of all, they lack chops in exactly the right places. (P.O. Box 579, Kenmore Station, Boston, MA 02215)

David Knopfler — *Release* (Passport). If David Knopfler's gravelly voice and word-drunk lyrics tempt you to write this off as second-hand Dire Straits, feel free. Just remember that this Knopfler has as much right to that sound as his brother; in fact, given the tight focus and resonant mood of these songs, maybe more. Guitar solos aren't everything, y'know. (3619 Kennedy Road, South Plainfield, NJ 07080)

Chequered Past — *Chequered Past* (EMI America). Take two former Blondies, one ex-Sex Pistol, one journeyman guitarist and a singer whose last claim to fame was Silverhead, and whaddaya got? A new wave Quiet Riot, that's what.

Karen Brooks — *Hearts On Fire* (Warner Bros.). As the upscale factions

of Nashville slowly-but-surely go about transforming country music into the SoCal rock of the 80s, albums like this—blandly pretty, vaguely poppish and largely forgettable—have more or less become the rule, from the overlush backing tracks to the singer's Ralph Lauren clothes. A pity, too, as Brooks has the kind of voice that deserves better than ending up as a twangy Jennifer Warnes.

Leon McAuliffe — *Leon McAuliffe And His Western Swing Band* (Columbia Historic). On the other hand, there's still hope so long as labels like Columbia are willing to dig into their vaults for country gold like this. McAuliffe, whose major break came in 1933 when he was drafted into the Light Crust Doughboys when Bob Wills and his nascent Playboys lit out, was an early slide guitar virtuoso who matched a Charlie Christian sense of swing with Bird-like fluidity to churn out some of the most exhilarating licks ever heard in Western swing. These ten examples are absolute ear-openers, and should *not* go unnoticed.

The Balkan Rhythm Band — *The Jazziest Balkan Dance Band Around* (Flying Fish). Jazz, progressive bluegrass and Bulgarian *ruchenicas* are not common ingredients in anybody's musical stew, but that doesn't stop the Balkan Rhythm Band from mixing things up convincingly. Despite occasional attacks of overreach, such as their awkwardly fused "Night In Tunisia," there's a delightful sense of discovery overriding these selections that turns complex rhythms and unorthodox scales into delightful melodic surprises. (1304 W. Schubert, Chicago, IL 60614)

Randy Newman — *Original Music From The Natural* (Warner Bros.). Unlike his score to *Ragtime*, which expanded logically upon the orchestral elements of *Good Old Boys* and *Sail Away*, this album seems more a tribute to the conventional Hollywood style of Newman's Uncle Lionel. Which is fine, if you like old-style movie soundtracks. And boring as hell if you don't.

Icehouse — *Sidewalk* (Chrysalis). Iva Davies' sonorous Bowie-isms are hardly cause for complaint, even if they are considerably more pronounced than on *Sidewalk's* predecessor *Primitive Man*. Unfortunately, the fact that neither the songs nor the playing manage to rise above that level of indebtedness is far less forgivable. Fanatics only.

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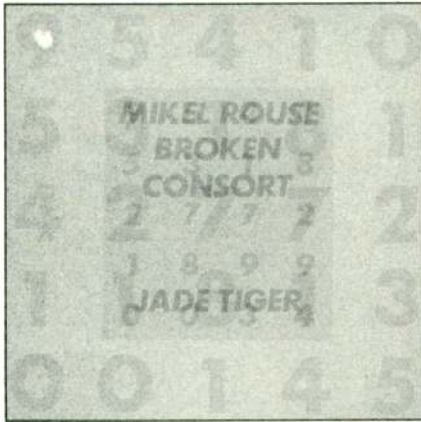
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JAZZ

S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



I've asked the *Village Voice's* Gregory Sandow to mind the store for me this month. The records he's chosen are not jazz records, but they're close enough for jazz, as the saying goes, and that's close enough for me. —Francis Davis

Mikel Rouse — *Jade Tiger, Mikel Rouse Broken Consort* (Les Disques du Crepuscule). Two or three things I know about him: he's young, he had a band in New York called Tirez Tirez, and he's one hell of a musician. When this record arrived, I thought Rouse had to be an assured jazz composer I'd somehow never heard of, an accomplished sort who, like a great painter trying sculpture just for fun, had just discovered Steve Reich and said: "Hey, I can do that." Not that Steve Reich's style is easy; I figured that Rouse, whoever he was, was good enough to say, "I see how that works, and I can do it myself, in my own way." The catch is that *short*, minimal pieces are hard to write. The minimal process you set up is bound to move slowly—your music wouldn't be minimal if it didn't, would it?—and it's going to need time to assert itself. How can you signal listeners that something's actually happened after only five minutes have passed? Rouse succeeds, and writes spiky, even danceable music besides.

Diamanda Galas — *Diamanda Galas* (Metalanguage/New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012). The screamer herself. More seriously: what we have here is an artist who doesn't see the point of art if she can't go to extremes, a performer who can be quite literally overwhelming—not just for me, but for thousands who've heard her live. Her instrument is her

voice, which she keeps rigorously trained with four lessons a week in old-time operatic technique. Her sounds are moans, howls, indescribable noises made while she inhales—a range of frightening emotions turned so directly into sound that other singers who advertise what they call "extended vocal technique" sound like kids in their first year of music school by comparison. She describes herself as a combination of Maria Callas and James Brown (with a bit of Vampirella thrown in, others might add), and she's not kidding; the Maria Callas part is impressive enough to make big people in the classical music world wonder if she might not eat up the stage in straight opera. Her venues range from rock clubs to the New York Philharmonic. She performs mostly her own work, designed as a series of precisely defined emotional states within which she improvises her unlikely sounds. This is the first record that gives any good idea of what she's like.

John Zorn — *Locus Solus* (Rift Records); *The Classic Guide To Strategy* (Lumina/NMDS). Zorn's an acquired taste, perhaps, and the hint that *The Classic Guide To Strategy* is somehow based on Musashi's *Book of Five Rings* (a three hundred year old Japanese combat manual, now popular as a guide to corporate infighting) doesn't make his music any easier. Nor does putting maps of classic battles on the album cover. Despite its name, *Locus Solus* contains group performances of rock songs (more or less) improvised according to rules set down in advance. On the *Classic Guide* you'll hear rarified solo improvisations by Zorn on a variety of reeds, including, (if memory serves), his famous duck calls—which ought to give you an idea of the raucous, spirited, and always rather friendly music.

Terry Riley — *Songs For The Ten Voices Of The Two Prophets* (Kuckuck). "What's that wailing?" my girlfriend asked when I called her with this record on. And yes, the founder (some think) of minimalism has indulged himself once again in 60's style ruminations on Eastern themes. Droning voice and Prophet 5 synthesizers (hence his title) are his instruments—and what saves the record is that he really seems to have planned where he was going before he set out. Perhaps as a result, he came up

with voice and Prophet licks that are distinctive, complex, and even memorable, if you don't listen for too long at a stretch. I like this record, with reservations; others will like it more.

Carl Stone — *Woo Lae Oak* (Wizard/NMDS). What can you do with someone who names his pieces after Korean restaurants in L.A.? That's Stone's whimsical streak; "in actuality" (as they used to say of Clark Kent's other life as Superman) he's a quite serious composer, a virtuoso who in live performance mixes tapes with the sure touch of Monk playing the piano or Mahler writing for orchestra. One piece, unrecorded so far, overdubs Baroque harpsichord music with more than a thousand clones of itself, until it disappears in a haze as rich in memory as the dust of a thousand ruined cities. *Woo Lae Oak* hums for close to an hour, hardly changing, unless you listen very closely, while wisps of melody float peacefully overhead. The piece is neither lulling nor repetitive; to me the music sounds as if Stone were musing about a distant paradise.

Paul Marotta — *Agit-Prop Piano* (Do Speak/NMDS). What label was that? They're in Oakland, and they do things right; they've even gone to the trouble and expense of getting direct metal German Teldec pressings for this surprising record by an artist who winningly describes himself as a product of the '70's Cleveland music scene." Eight tracks of seemingly random rumbling confront your ear, which with a little patience can break them into aimless melodies in the tenor, random pings in the piano's highest range, and rumbling in the bass. But *Agit-Prop Piano* isn't really like that. The music isn't random; each part makes sense on its own, and as part of the mix. The tone of the music changes, in fact, as the emphasis of the music shifts from one register to another. I've run into other intriguingly extreme keyboard records—Lubomyr Melnyk's sweeping *Lund-St. Petri Symphony* (Apparition Records), a genuinely transcendent work; and Borah Bergman's lithe *A New Frontier* (Soul Note), a torrent of precisely defined attacks, each the product of thought both spontaneous and complex, and presented with all but clinical clarity. Marotta's, though, is the improbable charmer of the lot. It belongs on your shelf next to Diamanda Galas.

Gregory Sandow

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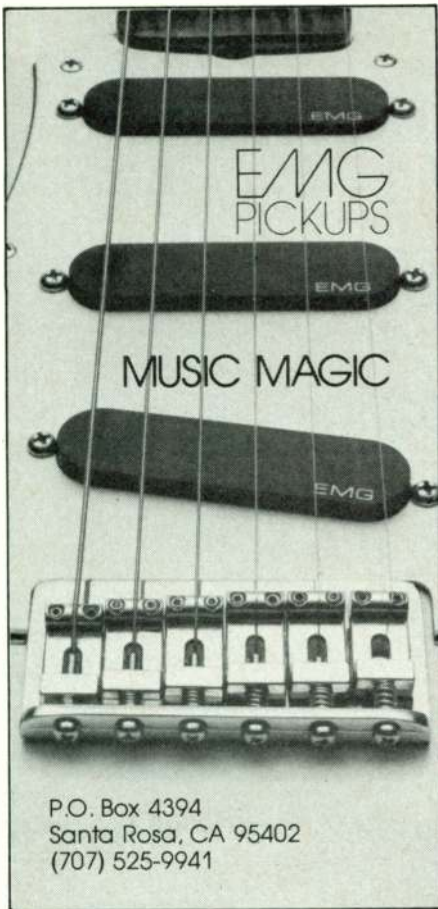
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Nancarrow from page 78

things was that by the end of the war we were practically starving to death. There was no food, nothing. That's one of the reasons we lost the war; not only no food—no guns, no nothing. The other side had German equipment and Italian equipment, everything." Upon returning to America, he was denied a passport—1940 being a bad season for political radicals—and, rather than live under such punitive conditions, Nancarrow chose to flee. The choice was up or down—Canada or Mexico. Why did he pick the latter—for reasons of Spanish *simpatico*? "Oh, no. It's just that I didn't like cold climates," he laughs.

But any way you slice it, Mexico City is no hotbed for contemporary musical discourse. Nancarrow found no sounding board, in terms of musicians or listeners, for his compelling musical ideas. The solution came in a flash from his childhood: "I was fascinated by this player piano we had in the living room when I was growing up. We had everything: I remember Chopin, all kinds of things. It really fascinated me, watching this just playing music like that. At that time, I wasn't even dreaming of composing, let alone composing for player piano, but I guess deep down it hit me. When I finally got fed up with the difficulties of writing things that people couldn't play, it began dawning on me that this player piano could do it. And, alas, it could."

The player piano, it turned out, was an extremely obedient musician, always available for rehearsal and game for whatever temporal mazes Nancarrow could put out on his custom hand-punching machine. Still, he's a bit pensive on his instrumental fate. "When I was writing music for people to play—forty years ago or more—the difference between then and now, what performers can do, is enormous. Back then anything slightly out of the ordinary got neglected. One string quartet I wrote long ago I heard for the first time last year in California, very well played. Well, it's a difference of then and now; the musicians are much better. Partly the composers over the years have been presenting more and more difficult things and they just have to learn to play it. But now I'm stuck with player piano, so I'll stay with player piano. As a matter of fact I've gotten into things that, even with what performers can do today, are just unthinkable away from the player piano."

His search for the special tools of his mission took Nancarrow to QRS in Brooklyn, the kingpin of piano roll factories, still cranking them out assembly-line fashion now in Buffalo. Armed with a customized hand-punching machine encoded with the entire piano range, Nancarrow burrowed into his studio to

begin the rungs of his masterpiece. Jazz-minded listeners will find special pleasure in the early studies; the #3 set recalls honky-tonk piano vamps with cunning curveball changes, blues chords overlapping and out of phase. Later work leans progressively toward more abstract designs, yet you can detect traces of Gershwin, of Serial writing, and, chiefly, the ghost of Igor Stravinsky.

"Stravinsky is one of those rare composers who, throughout his whole career, I feel, always put the right note at the right time," Nancarrow explains. "Stravinsky always maintained that the piano is a percussion instrument. Of course all the virtuoso pianists say, 'This is a *singing* instrument.' They want it to sing. But it is a percussion instrument, no matter how you look at it. As a matter of fact, Stravinsky was always sort of interested in the player piano. But this Robert Craft, who was practically his full-time assistant, secretary, conductor and everything else, would get hysterical when Stravinsky even hinted that he might do something with player piano. He put up a violent block against it. I don't know if that influenced Stravinsky in not doing it, but he never did, unfortunately."

The rhythmic hypertension of Nancarrow's tempo mating generally keeps you on seat's edge. The studies are bracing (and sometimes abrasive), thanks also to his stark harmonic persuasion. Read: Bartok spars with Cecil Taylor, Webern as referee. As for melodic content, Nancarrow avoids the clean-cut structure of statement, repetition, elaboration and reiteration almost religiously. He is self-effacing on the subject: "It's not deliberate. I just don't have much melodic talent, that's all (laughs). I use a melody in a rhythmical sense, to accentuate certain rhythmical contours. To me, melody is just a crutch." He grins slyly. "What of chords? "I use blocks of notes, but they're usually not chords in the functional harmonic sense of the nineteenth century harmony. For me, chords are just blocks of notes I can use to make a rhythm."

"As for repetition, some of the canons I've done use it, in a way. One I've done for four different voices in four different tempos; it's the same melody going through four times at different speeds. So they're repeated, you might say (cracks a Nancarrow smile), except that they're going like this (makes a loom out of his hands)."

To increase the attack of his pianos, he had the hammers hardened, resulting in a crisper, more metallic sound. And, adversely, more broken strings. "A normal piano, in fact a very luxurious Steinway, is basically a harmonic instrument. All the sounds blend. I wanted a sharp distinction between the sounds,



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like, for example, a harpsichord. The notes stand out sharply." It is the piercing clarity of the piano timbre that gives fine definition to his "temporal relationships," which he now delineates directly onto the piano roll rather than the long-hand of standard notation. The evenly-spaced hash marks drawn on the long roll give him a metric foundation, beyond the call of 4/4 or 13/8.

"To pick a very simple, primitive relationship—2 against 3. On one line, you've got the equivalent of, say, 16th notes of 2 and the other has 16th notes of 3. And then I start writing the piece, on that relationship. Those are the given things; it has to be in that. But it's not the rhythm or the melody or anything...the beginning. That all comes later, although beforehand I have some ideas of what it's going to be, especially for length and proportions."

To hear Nancarrow explain his procedures, it would seem that the emphasis is on process over content, or that his elaborate, individualized system falls into the category of what critic John Rockwell likes to call "eye music"—where the score is at least as interesting as the actual musical by-product. But have him sit you down in his studio at dusk and listen to the bold, steamrolling wit of his #42 (as yet unreleased). Watch the keys quiver surreally in their phantom assault. As the piece builds on its original pseudo-Stride piano motif, it craftily modulates and climbs to a frenetic, flailing, all-around-the-beat lock-step climax. No academic starch here; it grabs you by the emotional jowls and won't let go until its abrupt finish. The cluttered room feels eerily still after such an aural hurricane. How to classify it? "One German headline called me 'old-fashioned avant-garde.' That's as good as anything, I suppose."

The inevitable question that arises with Nancarrow regards his electronic bloodline: the player piano, on which the programming aspect is at least as crucial as performance, is an obvious ancestor of the synthesizer. IRCAM, an experimental electronic center in Paris which hosted a Nancarrow concert late in 1982, has proposed to program some of his work for synthesized sound. "I'm delighted," Nancarrow says. "Of course, they could take a piece of mine and program it for all kinds of different sounds. I'd be very curious to see what they could do with it. That's much more practical than arranging a piece for orchestra."

But could Nancarrow make the transition from an Ampico to, say, a Fairlight CMI? "Look, before I went into the player piano thing, I always dreamed of something like electronic music," he asserts his case. "The limitation of the player piano is the sound of the piano—that's all you have. Electronic music is a whole

world of sounds. When it first started, it was so primitive, and now it's getting more and more sophisticated. Now I wouldn't dream of trying to learn a new technique, a new technology and everything else. I'm into player piano. But I think the future of music probably is in electronics. Unfortunately, I'm sort of disappointed that it hasn't developed more than it has, because it has unlimited possibilities. *Unlimited.*" He shakes his head in dismay. "Ruts is the word. They just got into their rut and they stayed there."

And ruts spell doom to Nancarrow, whose life and music have been in determined avoidance of the complacent. And in zealous pursuit of new, expressionistic perceptions of music. Fame, too, could easily become a rut. "What happens if I get too big?" he echoes my question. "I'll just have to go back into my hermitage." ☐

Video from page 25

about graphics," Lois states. "If I'm a good communicator I know better than the artist. Then I can be strong with someone and not coddle him because I know what I'm doing is right for him and for people to see. For his own good I roughed Dylan up."

The battle of wits between the two perfectionists began as soon as Dylan flew in from Malibu. He wanted to shelve "Jokerman" and do "Neighborhood Bully" instead. Lois prevailed, though, on this and various other matters as well. Dylan hated the idea of lip-synching. He lip-synched. Dylan hated looking at the camera.

The singer's "style and psyche consist of his singing to himself," Lois observes. "It goes beyond shyness. When he finishes singing, it's very difficult for him to meet the camera." Dylan's flirtatious eye contact at the clip's end, according to Lois, is the star's "struggle to look into the lens. He was a good sport and worked his ass off."

Lois shot "Jokerman" for "\$70,000 and a lot of love." Columbia Records "went nuts" when they saw it; Bill Graham sent the director flowers for a whole week. Three days after getting the tape, a reticent Dylan called Graham to say how great he thought it was.

Despite Lois' heavy involvement, he considers "Jokerman" Dylan's statement. "I'm very client-conscious," the director explains. "This is Bobby saying, 'Here's what I think about life, about my own life, about the past and about the future. And here's what I think about music videos. I don't have to look like the rest of the world because I've got something to say with words, visuals and intensity when I sing to you.'"

"My job is to put down what a man is about," Lois says. If only every video were in such capable hands. ☐

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Lofgren from page 68

other out very well. It was that sort of natural rapport that Keith Richards says he and Ronnie Wood got to after three or four years. That's special to him. Well, Jimmy and I had that from the first time we played together, at a soundcheck in Baltimore. Jimmy said to Chrissie, 'Could we do "Kid" with Nils?' 'Kid' was my favorite song. We did it then and it was so good it was scary. At the end of the tune we got into a two-guitar jam. For some reason we were just walkin' in and out of each other. Totally off the cuff, feeling it out, it got better and better for ten minutes. By the end the whole band was shakin' and laughin'. It was one of the best moments of my life."

Discussing guitar teams seems an appropriate time to get to the bottom of the years of rumors that Nils almost achieved Rolling Stonehood when Mick Taylor quit in 1975. "That kind of got blown out of proportion," Lofgren explains. "I was in my car, going bowling I think [bowling?!], when I heard that Mick quit. I immediately said, 'It's my favorite band! I gotta go audition!' Then I realized, 'Of course! Ronnie Wood! He's Keith's mate and they like to play together.' Then two or three weeks went by and there was no announcement, so I gave Ronnie a call and said, 'You're in the Stones aren't you?' And he said, 'No, I'm committed to Rod Stewart and I'm gonna stay with Faces.' I said, 'Gosh, would you mind finding out what the situation is?'

"Keith was at Ronnie's house in London playing with different guitar players in the cottage out back. He was trying to find someone and getting sick of doing it by himself. Ronnie told Keith about me and we talked for a long time. He said, 'Listen, I've been doing this by myself and I'm tired of it. Please come and audition. Ronnie says you might be great, and even though I want Ronnie, if he won't do it he won't do it.' But about three days later Ronnie changed his mind, which was the right thing for him to do."

One Nils Lofgren collaboration is intriguing in part because it had nothing to do with shared rapport. In the late 70s Lofgren teamed up with Lou Reed to write songs. In 1979 Reed included two, "Stupid Man" and "City Lights," on *The Bells* while Nils recorded "I'll Cry Tomorrow" and "A Fool Like Me" on *Nils Lofgren*. The unusual partnership was, Lofgren admits, an attempt by each to draw on the other's strengths.

"Writing melodies is the easiest thing in the world for me," Nils explains. "Lyrics are very difficult. I wish to God I didn't have that problem. Working with Lou Reed was great because he was the exact opposite. He was frustrated with music. But he could just sit and spew out words. He didn't have to think about it. It was the most painless collaboration! I just sent him a cassette of twelve songs

with titles—which he asked for—and melodies. Just me going, 'Dum-de dum-dum-dum.' He called me up three weeks later and said, 'Listen, I've been up for two days, I've got twelve sets of lyrics, get a pencil.'"

Would that selling MCA on *Wonderland* had been so easy. "It was a real shock to me," Lofgren says. "It was the best album I ever made! I thought 'Across The Tracks' was a hit and I've never said that about any record I made. But—it was overlooked. For a number of reasons. No one got hurt by it more than I, but it did happen and the only thing to do is move on."

"The reaction from people has been amazing. Writers, producers, musicians, important DJs called me at home and said, 'Listen, man, you got shafted. Your



LAURA BALDUCCI

Nils with his new Boss.

record was great! Just 'cause the company blew it, don't let it get you down.' That's been really nice."

Much as we don't want to steal all Nils' secrets before he can bounce back, *Wonderland* does have a few tricks too hip to go uninvestigated. "Across The Tracks" has a big, tough guitar sound fatter than a Telecaster, crisper than a Les Paul, and yet grittier than anything produced on a Stratocaster since Hendrix passed on.

"That's two tracks of Strat," Lofgren explains. "One track caught between the treble and middle pickups so it gets that clacky, biting sound. The other track is a full treble pickup with a much more distorted sound, cranking the amp to where it was very muddy. We combined the two and mixed them to keep the bite but get more fullness in it."

Another standout track is "Everybody Wants," a reggae track on which Lofgren puts a wild, gonzo solo that sounds like Tom Verlaine imitating Blood Ulmer. "That was a strange one," Nils agrees. "I worked that tune up as a shuffle for the Neil Young tour, but it wasn't happening. In the studio Andy Newmark and Kevin McCormick and I started

messing around with the reggae feel. It wasn't intentional. We just said, 'This is a nice groove, let's cut it this way.' I just went in and started playing, coming up with some things. Kevin encouraged me saying, 'God! This is from left field, I love it! Go in that direction!' It could have gone the other way. I sometimes wind up being a bundle of contradictions."

Before we let Nils go, we agreed to check back with him before this story went to press, just in case new career developments presented themselves. Calling Nils' home in early June, we were told that Lofgren was headed off to replace Miami Steve Van Zant on the summer tour of old pal Bruce Springsteen. It makes perfect sense—the common values both share are evident in *Wonderland* tracks like "I Wait For You." When Bruce served as Nils' opening act more than a decade ago, he was reported to have praised Lofgren to the skies.

The Springsteen gig was only part of Lofgren's changing fortunes: before Bruce's offer, Nils had just negotiated a record deal with an up-and-coming British label called Towerbell (a U.S. label has yet to be inked). Nils now plans to cut an LP during the eight-week break next winter between Bruce's U.S. and European tours. This new twist gives our story a happy ending and this lesson: record companies do screw up. In fact, they sometimes miss the whole point of rock 'n' roll. In adding Nils to his summer juggernaut, Springsteen proves what we all know in our hearts, that rock 'n' roll prospers when musicians remember where they came from.

Ninja Nils

"Basically I use two Stratocasters, a '59 and a '60, that are pretty much stock. In one I have some pickups Bill Lawrence made, and in the other brand new Seymour Duncans. And I have a Stratoblaster in each one. I occasionally use a gold top Les Paul. It's a '51 or '52—the first year they made them. It has a Bigsby on it. The first guitar I ever got was a '59 Tele which I don't use that much." For strings, Nils prefers Dean Markleys. His amps are a Fender Super and a Music Man.

"For acoustic I use a D-18 Martin from the 40s. It was a gift from Neil Young. He wrote all the Buffalo Springfield tunes on it. He gave it to me for recording *After The Goldrush*. That's my favorite acoustic. I take a Takemine on the road, though. They're more practical, they're durable, and they're not that expensive. I have an acoustic 12-string that was built by Phil Petillo from New Jersey. I also have an acoustic Gibson L-10. It's about a 1922. I bought an Express, a little guitar made by Phil Kubicki, as a travel guitar. I ended up doing quite a bit of writing on it, through a Scholz Rockman. The one song on the last album I didn't write that way was 'Wonderland' which I wrote on a little Casiotone MT-40. Casiotones are not to be underestimated."

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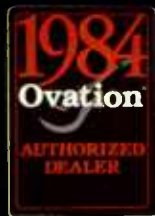
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