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BY BILL FLANAGAN



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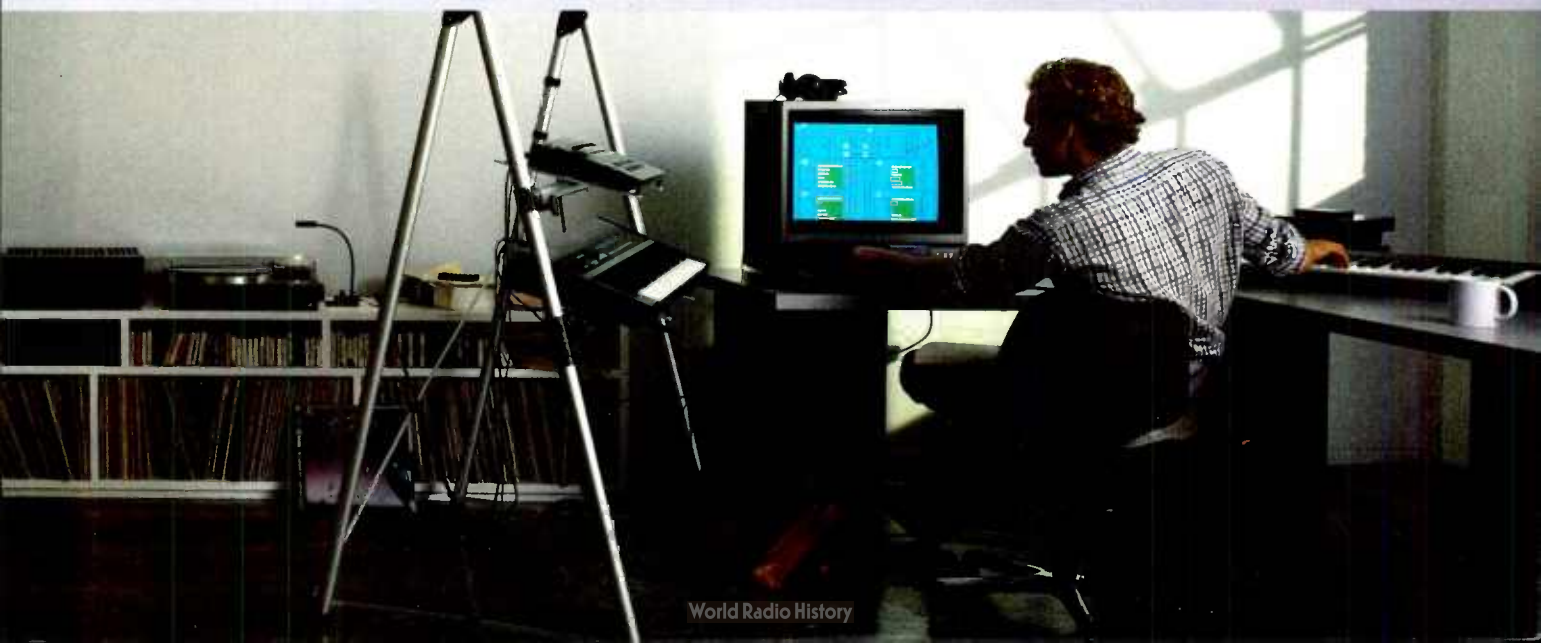
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MUSICIAN

DECEMBER 1985

NO. 86



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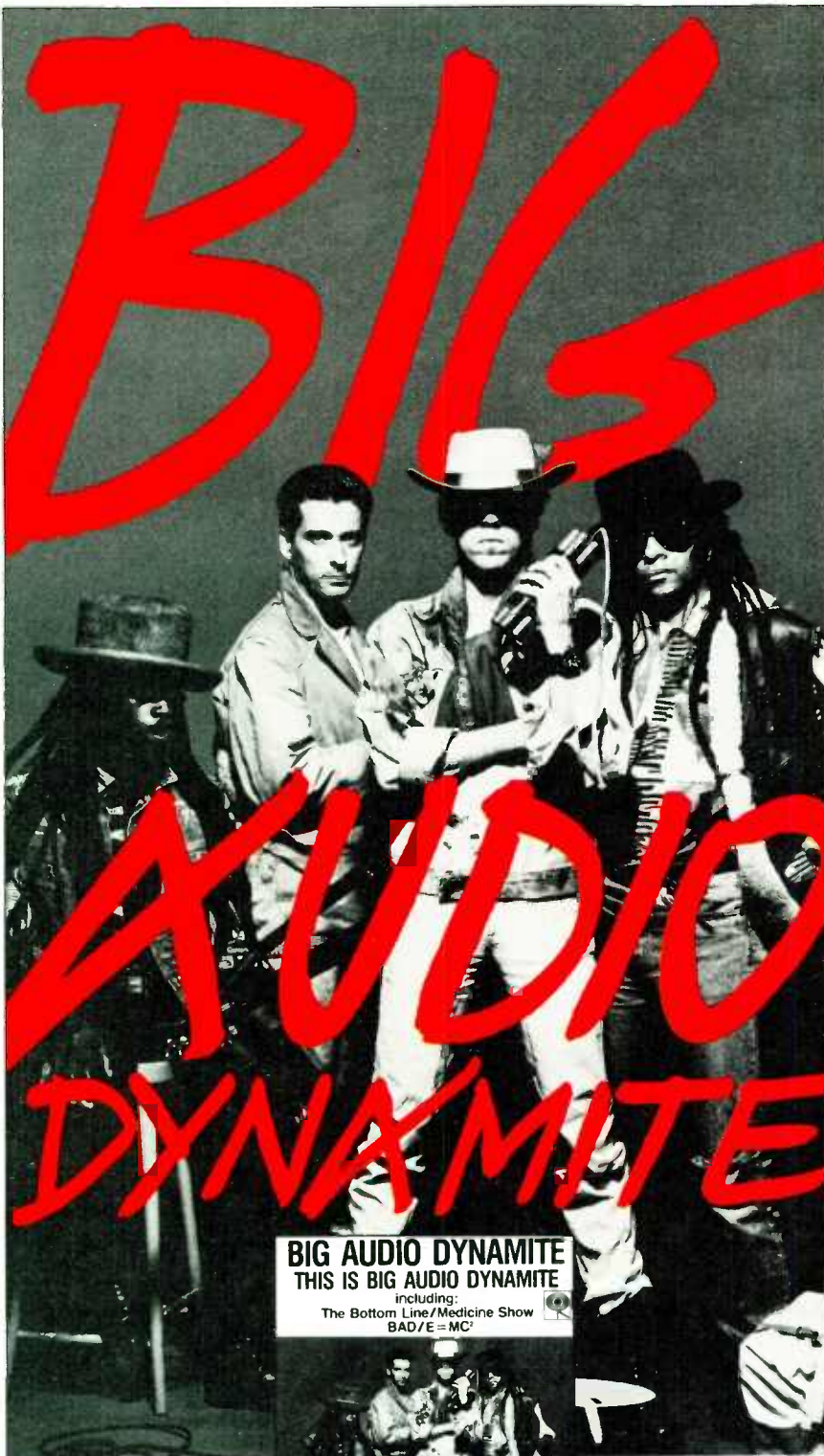
Joni Mitchell

Joni Mitchell is mad. Angry about the New Right and old wrongs, she retraces her long creative journey and reflects on songwriting satisfaction.

By Bill Flanagan 64

NORMAN SEEFF

Cover Photo by Howard Rosenberg



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MUSICIAN (USPS 431-910) is published monthly by

Amordian Press, Inc., P.O. Box 701, 31 Commercial

St., Gloucester, MA 01930. (617) 281-3110. Amordian

Press, Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Billboard

Publications, Inc., One Astor Place, 1515 Broadway,

New York City, NY 10036. Musician is a trademark of

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reserved. Second class postage paid at Gloucester,

MA 01930 and at additional mailing offices. Subscrip-

tions \$20 per year, \$38 for two years, \$54 for three

years. Canada and elsewhere, add \$8 per year. U.S.

funds only. **Subscription address: Musician, Box**

1923, Marion, OH 43305. Postmaster send form 3579

to above address.

Current and back issues are available on microfilm

from University Microfilms Intl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann

Arbor, MI 48106.

Billboard Publications, Inc., **President and Chief**

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Ah Dunno, Sergeant

September's article on R.E.M. was quite enjoyable, and I compliment you on your taste. Still, you managed to let a mistake slip by...twice. On page 56 and again on page 92 you report that Rev. Howard Finster was responsible for the cover art on R.E.M.'s *Reckoning* LP, when actually it was a collaborative effort by Finster and R.E.M.'s own Michael Stipe. Stipe painted the two-headed snake, and Finster drew the little creatures and faces surrounding the snake (most of which are partially obscured by slipshod printing). And you know what that other son of the South, Gomer Pyle USMC, once said: "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me." But I guess Gomer said it without the semi-colon.

Other than that though, a fine issue. Keep up the good work and good taste. You've got your reputation as the *New Yorker* of music magazines to maintain.

Gary McBride
Kettering, OH

REM



R.E.M. is probably the greatest band in America right now and they really deserve an entire cover story. C'mon, as the foremost music magazine in the country you could at least have the balls to devote a cover to R.E.M. The article was very fine, but the cover...well, it's just a matter of principle.

John Shipley
Tim Brady
Marquette University
Milwaukee, WI

I'd read pieces on R.E.M. in *Rolling Stone*, *Record*, *Bam*, *Creem*, *International Musician* and *Recording World*,

and other reviews of *Fables Of The Reconstruction*. None seemed to capture the essence of them at all. But Mr. Isler's conversation with the group was objective, interesting and worked well as a whole. The band came off as unpretentious and intelligent. Just regular guys. Thanks to R.E.M., I no longer feel I should be living on the West Coast. L.A.? No thanks.

Rose Esquivel
San Antonio, TX

Last but not least: If R.E.M. is the voice of America, I'm changing my citizenship.

Michael Taylor
Des Plaines, IL

Cage Meets Eno

Thanks to Rob Tannenbaum for the enlightening article on John Cage and Brian Eno. Since I was primarily interested in Eno's views, the fact that he did most of the talking, while Cage did most of the probing, was fine by me. I remember reading an article once where a critic derisively called Eno's work "child's play." I suspect that Mr. Eno would take this as a compliment. Like a child, he possesses boundless curiosity, and his music usually has a touch of wonderful innocence. His fun approach to music is a noble one.

Tim Butler
St. Petersburg, FL

Strait Talk

Musician is the only magazine of several I subscribe to that takes a good four to six weeks to finish. Being a radio disc jockey, the more I know the better. I nearly missed a movie because I couldn't put down the Mark Knopfler interview. The Walter Becker article was also a breath of fresh air—you continue to amaze me by your high calibre of journalistic expertise. Just one thing irks me, though: Now that I'm a subscriber, why am I still tormented by those annoying "special introductory offer" subscrip-

tion postcards falling out of every issue?

Joe Moss
Oneonta, NY



Mark Knopfler
M

My most sincere applause goes out to Bill Flanagan for his piece on Mark Knopfler and Dire Straits. It is a delight to find such thoughtful and professional journalism. Knopfler is indeed a brilliant artist with an inspiring personality. As a long-time fan of Mark Knopfler and his musical mates, it is refreshing to note Mark's genuine dedication to the band. Continued success to Dire Straits and *Musician*.

Robert E. Sullivan
Cheshire, CT

How about a wetnurse?

Last February the organizers of the Grammy Awards decided that the public wasn't interested in jazz. Now it seems that *Musician* is following suit. I am, of course, referring to the disappearance of the "Jazz Shorts" department from your magazine in September.

The fact is that jazz needs all the attention it can get. It is currently in a period of consolidation which may well precede vital new developments. The media could act as midwives in this process, but it seems that they would rather be abortionists. I am disappointed.

Glenn Bartz
Santa Cruz, CA

Hang in there, baby

I was shocked and offended by the caption on the New Order photo in the September issue: "...Albrecht, Gilbert, Hook and Morris hang." Given the circumstances surrounding the suicide of former singer Ian Curtis, the caption was

not only a bad pun, but in poor taste. We've come to expect witty irreverent captions from your competitors, but such thoughtlessness is rarely found in the pages of *Musician*. Please tell us it was unintentional.

Marie London
San Francisco, CA

[That was not an error, just bad taste.]

Which sadistic employee is responsible for page fifteen's (September 1985) blatantly hair-raising error? I am referring to the picture caption for New Order. Perhaps your magazine should "hang" in the museum of publications dedicated to blissful ignorance. I wish I could sign my name Ian Curtis to parallel your magazine's melancholy satire.

David W. Barton
Richmond, VA

Rafi Relevant?

Zabor's review of Sting's *Dream Of The Blue Turtles* was disturbing. I would like a translation of the line regarding "Fortress Around Your Heart" that read..."An undertow of harmonic contradictions tugs at its flawless surface..." For God's sake, speak English, and say something relevant. Rafi Zabor is a perfect example of the expression, "If you can't do, teach." Correct me if I'm wrong: He's not a songwriter or a player of any kind; and if he were, it still wouldn't merit his mindless comments. Let the music speak for itself. As for Mr. Zabor, you should stick to your day job—it certainly isn't record reviewing.

Lili Anel
Brooklyn, NY

I was very impressed with the attention your August issue paid to computer music, and believe your publication validly represents today's musical interests.

Craig Livaich
HeavenlyRecordingStudios,
Sacramento, CA



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PAPA JO & PHILLY JOE

BY CHIP STERN

LAST CALL FOR A SWING ARCHITECT AND HIS BEBOP HEIR

What does it mean when an epoch ends? How do we retrace the path to the elders who taught a planet to swing? How does one calculate a loss? Jo Jones and Philly Joe Jones, great American drummers, spiritual father and son, both died last Labor Day weekend. Philly Joe and Papa Jo are linked in death as in life, a joke they'd have keenly enjoyed. So why don't I feel like laughing?

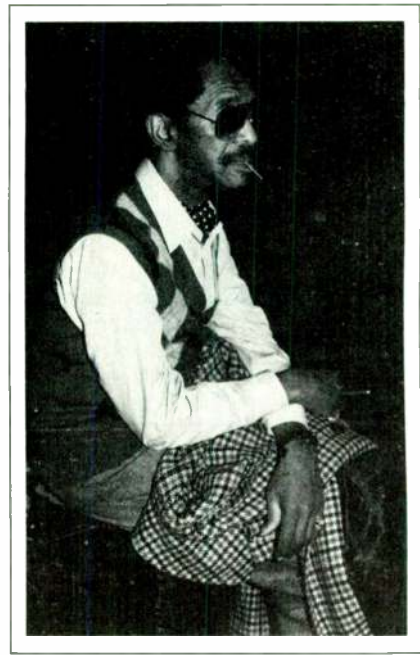
"Everything always happens in threes," sighed Art Blakey, suddenly lonelier on rhythm's Mount Rushmore. "Philly and old man Papa Jo, and Klook

cluded, on his way to a gig. Blakey, a contemporary of all these innovators, is keenly aware of what is gone.

Ever since Louis Armstrong, as the rhythm section goes, so go the great breakthroughs in American music. Papa Jo and Philly Joe ruddered two of the stateliest ships of swing ever to circle the globe, those of the Count Basie Orchestra and the Miles Davis Quintet. Jo (in the company of his All-American section mates Walter Page, William Basie and Freddie Greene) and Philly (with Paul Chambers and Red Garland) each revolutionized that uniquely American synthesis of syncopation, celebration and graceful flowing interaction called *swing*. Basie and Miles had two of the most modern and influential rhythm section sounds this side of Motown and the Beatles.

"If I've explained it once, I've explained it a thousand times," Papa loved to repeat, "that before Basie you had a horn section, you had a brass section, but never a rhythm section. Cats used to go off North, South, East, West—but we went one way."

The Basie band epitomized pop music when they rocked dancers back in the thirties and early forties, and that pulse can be heard through the next fifty years of jazz, funk, rhythm and blues, and rock 'n' roll. Comprising rem-



Philly Joe at rest

trademark *ting-ting-a-ding* high-hat pulse. "The two mediums met, and that's what made the Basie rhythm section so special, because Benny Moten played '1' and '3,' while Walter Page played on '2' and '4.' When they wedded you had '1-2-3-4'—like a bouncing ball." Between Walter Page's big, supple extensions of the bass pulse (a longer, more extended elision of harmony and rhythm than the preceding generations' tuba upbeats), and Freddie Greene's indomitable rhythm guitar rustlings, Jo Jones streamlined the drummer's sense of the beat, now shading now shouting, italicizing or airbrushing wide open Southwestern spaces, leaving room for Lester Young's harmonic flights and a continual dialogue with Basie's puckish, skittering piano. Whether dropping bombs or drawing textural pastels with brushes and cymbals, Jo Jones codified the rhythm practices of his day and anticipated a more active role for the modern trap drummer, conducting and commenting on the music rather than simply beating time in lock-step accompaniment.

"It's very difficult to teach people how to play *with* people, not *for* people," Papa Jo said. "The key word is understanding. We never spoke a word to each other on the bandstand and nobody spoke to us. We never played with the band—we played with ourselves. Each one of us had a personal life and we incorporated that: the kinds of lives we lived, the people we touched out and reached. I myself am really hundreds of peoples that I've met." And



Jo Jones (left) with Joe Williams: Building the modern beat

in January," he mused, referring to the great Kenny Clarke, whose innovations forged the transition from the 30s swing trinity of Chick Webb/Big Sid Catlett/Jo Jones to the 50s bebop breakthroughs of Roach/Blakey/Roy Haynes/Philly Joe Jones. "Not many of us left," he con-

nants of Walter Page's Blue Devils and the Benny Moten Orchestra, the Basie rhythm section coined an irrepressibly jubilant yet relaxed denomination of swing—what Albert Murray called "Kansas City 4/4, the velocity of celebration"—centered in Papa Jo's

from that lost era of silent movies and sound effects, medicine shows and territorial bands, sand dancers and chorus girls, comedians and blues singers, Papa Jo Jones fathered three generations of drummers, while keeping alive oral traditions older than jazz or blues.

Of all Papa's children, none was dearer to him than Philly Joe. "I told all the cats in New York, that when Philly Joe came to town he was going to boot their asses off all them gigs. Rudolph's always been very special." Like his elder, Philly Joe was a consummate student of drum history; an urbane and witty man, knowledgeable and well-read. And on the drums, in a word, *slick*.

Philly was a great natural actor and comedian, and no one ever swung harder. Where Blakey's beat was a primal brushfire, Max's a perfectly symmetrical clock-like meshing of gears and Roy Haynes' a percolating snap-crackle-pop of steam whistles, pistons and static electricity, Philly Joe's groove mirrored and mocked the melodic line in an angular game of hide and seek with upbeats, downbeats and barlines.

"You've got to understand that Philly was a pug," longtime friend Chuck Stewart noted by way of perspective, "and he played drums just the way he boxed. He'd feint and fake, bob and weave, lull you to sleep with little time

steps, then step inside the time and knock the shit right out of you." Sparring with his bandmates at the *front* of the stage, Philly Joe engaged in aggressive right-left/left-right tattoos and comic displacements of off-beats. He modified his style to fit each soloist in the Davis Quintet—sly jabs and footwork for Miles, jarring counterpunches and hooks for Coltrane, coy rope-a-dope and deceptively tricky combinations for fellow pug Red Garland.

Being a drummer, I gravitated towards all the great players when I got Manhattan in my blood; interviewed some; hung with others; was privileged to listen to them all. Philly and I just missed each other, but I got to hear his energetic parodies of Papa Jo's licks in an '83 tribute to the ailing drummer, and last summer he serenaded me, face-to-bass-drum, at Lush Life with his baby big band, Dameronia—a celebration of Tadd Dameron and bebop. It was Philly Joe's most personal, coherent work as a leader since leaving Miles. Gazing out of his peepye and his popeye with wry regal delight he conducted a personalized tour of a fun house that had more sleight-of-hand magic and elegant power than I'd ever imagined possible. Dameronia made clear not only Philly Joe's connections and extensions of Papa, but his own pervasive influence on Dannie Richmond, Art Taylor, Andrew Cyrille, Tony Williams, Billy Hart, Jack DeJohnette and Jeff Watts. I imagined that this seemingly ageless master drummer would be around for a long time, while amazed that Papa Jo was still here at all.

Because Papa Jo used to hold court at the Professional Percussion Center and up at the West End Cafe, I got to hear him play every week, and made tentative steps towards sitting in at his corner booth where he'd preach, fuss and reminisce like old man river.

"Tune and tempo," Papa once counseled me, "I never played nothing but melody. Put another cat up against the wall with me—he ain't shit. Walkin', ridin', fartin', shootin' and shittin'. No drummer ever had what I had: my coordination, my reflexes, my background. Look at the people I got to rub shoulders with," he sighed wistfully, ghosts doing a buck and wing across his brow.

Jo Jones was the most spiritual man I ever met: epic in both comedy and tragedy, a myth-riddled enigma. He offered me "crumbs from the table," a "private stock" of remembrances and insights. He didn't answer questions (directly), and the drums, well: "I show nobody nothing. Not even my own son. You have to find out for yourself. You can *watch me*...unn, uhh—it's my secret and I'll keep it to myself. I wouldn't give a crippled crab a crutch to crawl across



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Brigitte Bardot's pussy." One second he was raining hellfire down on me for evidence of oafish spazmoscity, the next he'd answer a question about cymbals by saying that "you know the answer, your touch is a lot like mine." Tell me to give up the drums, it's too late, then offer me bread for taking time off his hands; and when I preferred to have him show me how to *really* play brushes, I received a sly bemused look of aged pride, a deadpan "maybe" and the reassuring gesture that it "was really very simple." Once I brought him a white Bible on his birthday, and perhaps I forgot my place or something, because he went out and called me a...well, as Lester Young once said, "Sometimes you'll think a cat is shouting at you, but he's really calling *himself* a motherfucker, and you just happen to be in the room."

Toward the end Jonathan David Samuel Jones rolled and tumbled, losing the sense of the song but never the time. Still onstage, always on. With one foot in the grave, one foot in his mouth and both hands on his heart, Papa Jo was adrift in a sea of curtain calls and causes of his own making; a generous man with nothing left to give; a forgotten bit player in a show he helped write. "I have to play to stay alive," he confided to me, and when Buddy Rich invited him to test out a new arrangement of "One O'Clock Jump" at the Bottom Line (on a drum set Jo later characterized as a "lumberyard and an anvil"), he would not stop playing until they carried him offstage. Later, after treating me to a concert of old records and a personal seminar of American history in his apartment, he turned pensive and nostalgic, and remarked that "I wish you could have been back there with me, you would have had so much fun." I'd finally been invited into his hall of memories.

I couldn't interpret the signs in August when multiples of the number three kept tapdancing across my watch, license plates and anything else I chanced to look at. My age? The Lotto Supplemental number? August 30 Philly Joe died. Papa Jo died on September 3. Months before Papa'd been out to see Philly Joe with Jon Hendricks, and he told one of Jon's young singers that "I'm leaving my legacy to Philly Joe." Yes, everything happens in threes.

It put me in mind of a dream Papa said he'd had of Chick Webb shortly after that great drummer's death, and of secrets revealed to him that he couldn't confide to anyone else—secrets that had given him strength and guidance all through his life. And of a strange dream onboard a transatlantic flight last year on his way back from a French hospital: "I was in a room with

continued on page 26

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World Radio History

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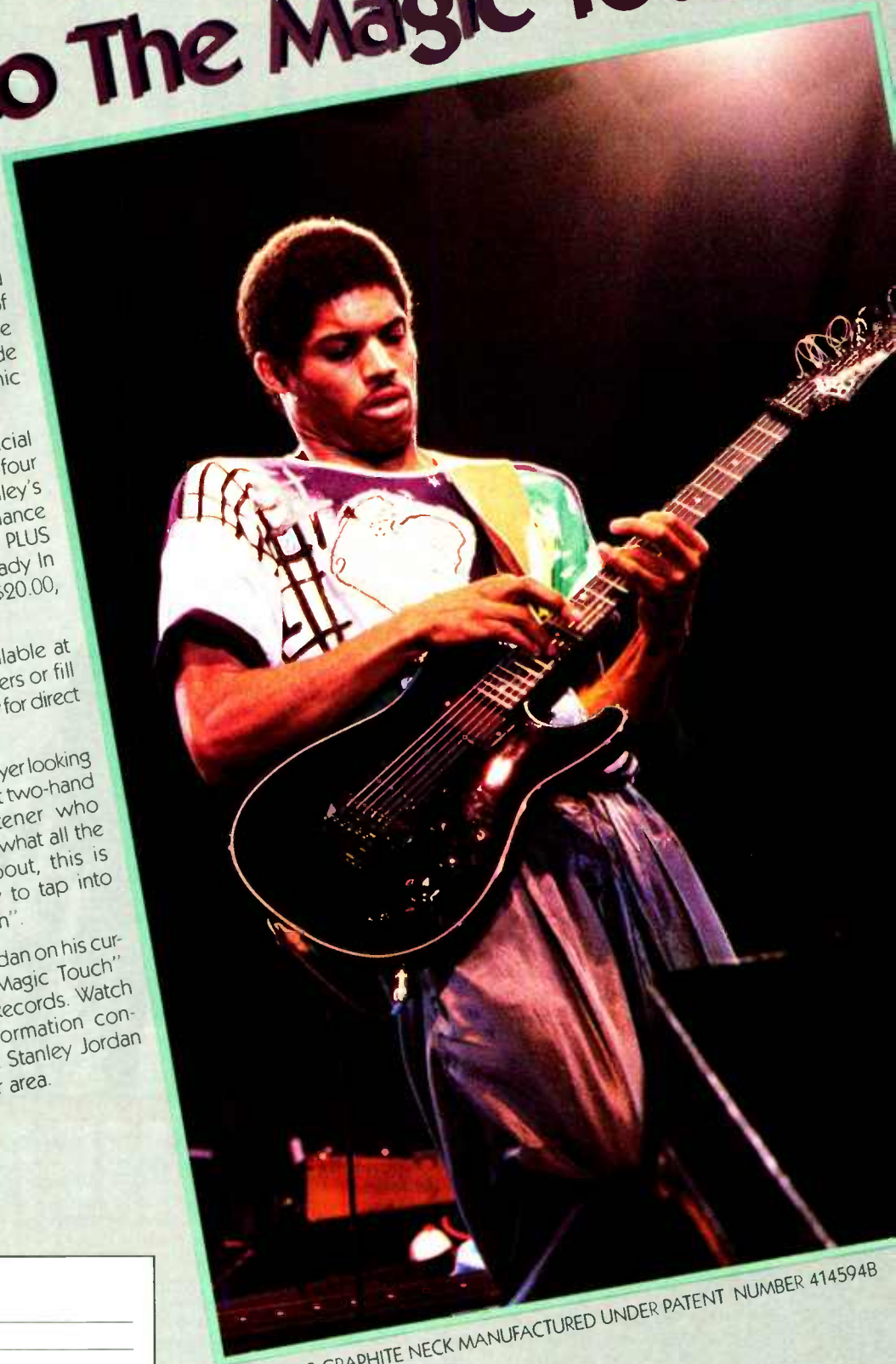
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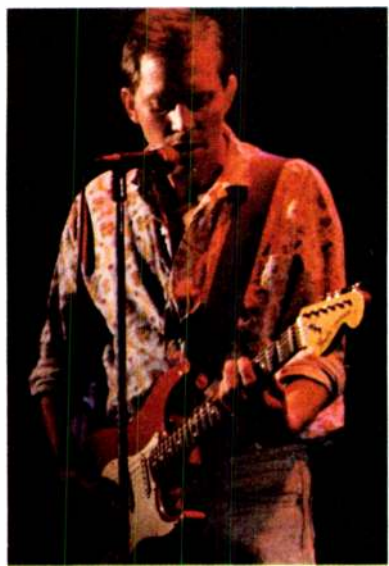
JONATHAN RICHMAN

BY ASA BREBNER

A MODERN LOVER'S EUROPEAN TOUR DIARY

The avocado-green, semi-hollow body, double cutaway Harmony electric guitar with faders for tone and volume and a whammy bar lies gleaming in the morning sun. The faders have been painted a gaudy nail-polish red, and the strap is held haphazardly in place by an oversized plastic knob from a dresser drawer. The Gotoh tuning pegs, the one concession to caution, cost more than the guitar itself, which I found several years ago in the basement of Morgies, a Boston goodwill store.

It seemed appropriate that this would be the guitar to take on my third Euro-

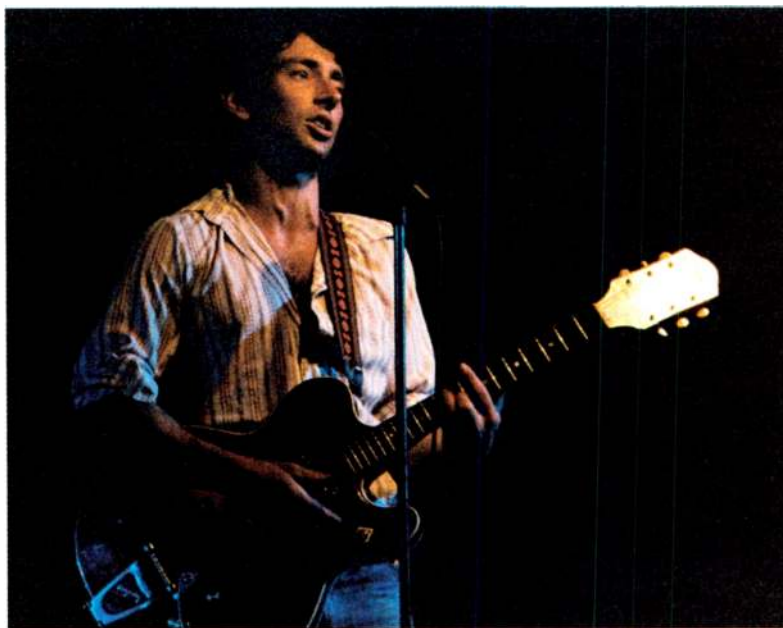


The author at work

pean tour with Jonathan Richman. But first I had to make sure that the neck was straight. Who could predict? I might actually have to play the damn thing.

MAY 30, 1985

In a last minute attack of stage fright, I kiss my girlfriend, my dog, and my one-thousand dollar candy apple red



Jonathan going faster miles an hour. Some call him JoJo.

Stratocaster goodbye and head to the airport to meet this tour's only other Modern Lover besides JoJo. Andy Paley and I are leaving the country, virtually unrehearsed, for our first gigs together on the European continent. Back at the dawn of the 70s Andy's group, the Sidewinders, had been rivals of Jonathan's Modern Lovers. Andy had recorded with his brother for Sire Records (The Paley Brothers), and toured Europe as Patti Smith's keyboard player. Although he has produced much of Jonathan's work, the recent Rough Trade album *Rockin' And Romance* is the only Paley production to have been released. For this tour Jonathan asked Andy to play drums. JoJo and I would both play guitar. No bass. Real garage rock.

On the plane I reminisce. My first tour with JoJo was seven years ago. In September of '77 I was as green as could be, fresh out from the infancy of the Boston "punk nouveau" scene. In the wake of JoJo's hits "Roadrunner" and "Egyptian Reggae," we played all over Europe in 3000-seat venues, full to capacity, with the current rock royalty all in attendance, including members of the Clash, the Sex Pistols, Nick Lowe, and the Damned, many of whom were influenced by the John Cale-produced Modern Lovers' demos on Beserkeley.

Years later I still feel green. Despite the years recording several albums with Robin Lane for Warner Bros., countless gigs and sessions, and studious listen-

ing to all of JoJo's new recordings, I feel that same old inability to prepare. You can never tell what Jonathan might do, what forgotten melody of the past he might invoke, what tune he might make up on the spot. The nakedest act in rock (a slogan JoJo suggested for tour posters) in the umpteenth incarnation of the Modern Lovers is about to be unleashed on the unsuspecting public. Scary, but it might be fun.

JUNE 1

We all meet in London. Our new tour manager Andy Proudfoot is being driven mad by our bastardized attempts at his native slang. "Ya lorry load o' bleeding wankers!" yells JoJo gleefully. Proudfoot makes our arrangements and then leaves us on our own until we pick up a car in Hamburg in two days. We rehearse in the hotel for an hour, and then become the Three Stooges, running for the plane with guitars, suitcases, drums, and jet lag.

After the flight and a long bus ride, we arrive at the Seinajoki festival in Finland. JoJo and I walk around the thousands of tents and Finnish kids, most of whom are reeling around totally drunk. Many more Mohawks and green hair than I would have expected in the land of the midnight sun. We wonder who else is playing who'd attract this kind of crowd. We amble back to the hotel where the local promoter informs us that we are headlining and that most of the kids are here to see us!

In this particular dream I have, the band I am playing in has just been announced onstage at a large foreign pop festival to a mixed variety of seemingly hip types. All eyes are upon us as we begin our set, sandwiched between competent new wave and pop acts. We have no bass player and the volume is low. The drums consist of kick, snare, tom and one cymbal. The lead singer looks like Jerry Mathers of "Leave It To Beaver." As we launch into a raunchy out-of-tune version of "Louie, Louie" the audience stares blankly, only a few heads bobbing in time. I slowly become aware that this is the kind of exposure dream I used to have as a kid, when I would dream of appearing naked in a large crowd. But wait a minute! This is *no dream! This is really happening!*

Finnish journalists to Jonathan: "Is honesty important in your music?"
 "That's a good question. We'll come back to it in five minutes."
 "Do you care about your fans?"
 "I can't stand the filthy swine!"
 "Why do you always seem to be the eternal child?"
 "I don't know. Waaaaaah!"
 I've seen Jonathan—when left without his merry bandmembers to laugh at his jokes—get sullen, even angry,

leaving reporters with the impression that he is basically rude. "Ugly" I believe some German hacks said after they refused to stop asking about the Velvet Underground and John Cale. But JoJo had made it clear he wanted to talk about now and not fifteen years ago.

JUNE 3

Rejoice! We conquer! After our set was over in Finland the audience was on our side. Some of my confidence reinstilled, we fly to Hamburg.

Tour manager Proudfoot shows up and we drive off to soundcheck in Bremen. For a P.A. we're using two Hi-Watt cabinets with a two hundred watt head. We have one for monitors but never use it. For guitar amps Jonathan uses a Fender Vibro-champ and I use a Vox AC30. I am somewhat skeptical at first of this high school dance setup but later it proves its capabilities in just about all situations, and is lighter than the huge monitor wedges that were always stricken from the stages we played by disgruntled house soundmen. Looming off to the sides of our stripped-down show are the huge horns and bass bins we never use.

Before the show we sit in the old auditorium, Andy playing a Steinway concert grand and Jonathan doing hilarious

Tony Bennett cocktail versions of "Roadrunner," "She Cracked," "I Wanna Be Your Dog," and "Heroin." He has us all in hysterics. We beg him to duplicate the performance the next time any obnoxious fans request old songs.

JUNE 12

The show in Bordeaux is magical: The house is packed and singing along in tune with the band on a good many songs, and ultimately ecstatic.

Over the years I have wondered about the success of some of these whisper-volume shows, and it seems to me that, because of the low volume, the audience has to actually *listen*, as opposed to louder shows where perception has become passive, almost bludgeoned into submission. With Jonathan, listening becomes an act of the will, of sacrifice. Because of this participation, the listener feels like a contributor to the show. Jonathan frequently exchanges one-liners with the audience. This could work against us, as the low volume can't really drown out hecklers. But most hecklers are paper tigers who feel secure only on known ground. (Once I saw a full milkshake almost hit JoJo. In response he took off his shirt to "give them a better target.")

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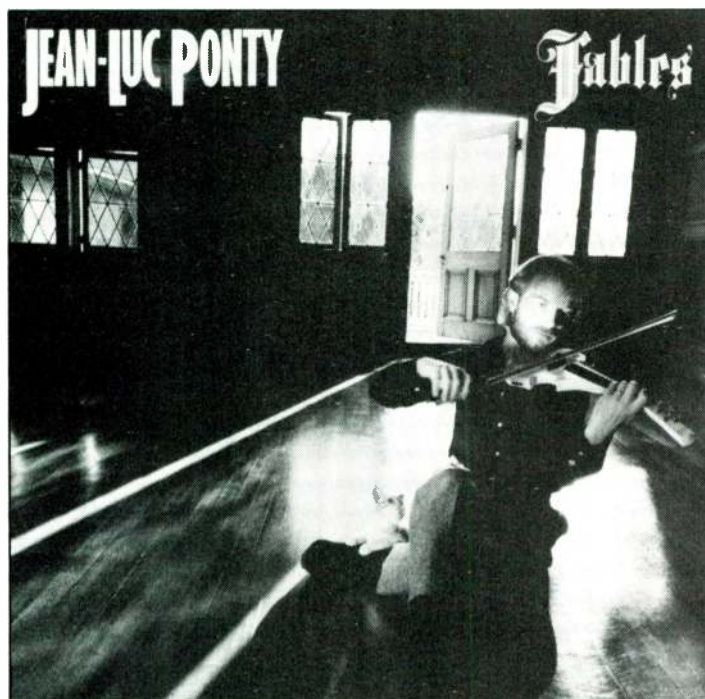
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JUNE 15

Day off in Paris. We stay with Jonathan's friend Jean Toutous in his apartment overlooking the Tuilleries, the Louvre, the Eiffel Tower, and the Arc de Triomphe. Magnificent! We are sitting around the table with Jean's houseguests, including two young Canadian girls on school vacation for the summer. We were playing guitar and casually exchanging stories, when one of the girls remarks that Jonathan looks like Springsteen. This gives rise to some hilarious imitations by our Boss. One of the girls says that they'd seen the Jonathan Richman show at the Rex the other night. Andy Paley, noticing immediately what is about to transpire says, "Oh, really? How was it?"

"Oh, it was pretty good. He had stage presence and did some nice romantic songs, although some of them sounded a lot the same." JoJo baits the trap: "Oh, yeah? What did this Jonathan look like?"

"Oh, he was sort of a wimp. Kind of skinny and all..." "You mean he wouldn't have forearms like this?" Jonathan says, rolling up his sleeves and flexing.

"No, he was skinny and had glasses." (Jonathan wears no glasses.)

"And this Jonathan guy wouldn't have a chest like this?" Jonathan takes off his shirt and poses. "No. No. Skinny. Wimpy."

"I hate those kind of guys," says JoJo pounding the table with his massive fists, incensed that such a skinny wimp should be allowed to exist.

Then JoJo starts to sing "Ice Cream Man." Some doubt, a sense of discomfort began to manifest itself in the girls. But still...No! It was impossible! He must have seen the show! After several more renditions, one of the girls whispers a frantic question to our host and then both retreat, mortified, to their rooms.

This calls for an impromptu Modern Lovers concert, and when the girls have recovered enough to face us again, we all go out to a Rock Against Racism show. There we run into ex-Modern Lover Jerry Harrison, who in his free time from the Talking Heads is doing a short tour of Europe with Elliott Murphy. Ghosts of Modern Lovers past.

JUNE 18

London. A press conference at the offices of Rough Trade Records. Enter the Modern Lovers. Clean white room, tasteful buffet, fruit, wine, breadsticks, about thirty or so writers from various music publications seated facing the chairs reserved for us. Jonathan hates interviews and hopes to dispense with a whole bunch at once.

"Any questions, gentlemen?" A few hands go up.

A journalist raises his hand and iden-

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tifies himself. "Why do you write only happy songs?"

"Have you really listened to my records?" Sullen silence....

"Do you bottle in anger?"

"No sir, I don't. If you were to ask me a question that I didn't like it's possible that I might knock you down."

"Any more questions?"

Someone from *NME* raises a trembling hand. "So what have you been doing these last couple years?"

"Before I answer your question, answer one of mine. Would you answer a question from a newspaper that published a totally fictional interview and did not issue an apology after I wrote

to them?" "Ahaahaah...er...er...er." The writer said he hadn't been at the paper when this took place.

"Any more burning questions?"

The group is silent. Several simply stare at their notes or move their feet uncomfortably. They have become the class whose dog ate the homework. I have to admit I am a bit uncomfortable myself, imagining the published repercussions of this debacle.

Afterwards, we have a group fantasy. We pose as representatives of various unlikely publications, and JoJo answers all questions in a deadpan fashion. "Mr. Richman! Hiram Rutherford, *National Geographic*. You once said that the

wazuri maga had more lives than Carters had little pills. Now, what do you mean by that?"

"Joe Slaughter, *Soldier of Fortune* magazine. What do you think of the new Claymore mines?"

"Amy Poole, *American Bridal Monthly*. What's the right color for this spring's bridesmaids? And do you still keep in touch with Mo Tucker?"

JUNE 20

Glastonbury Festival. Rainy, wet, seas of mud. We give four poor drowned-rat teenagers a ride to the outskirts of the festival, wishing them luck but declining to get them in free. We go on after a "progressive" new age (not new wave) band whose long-haired fans are still shouting for more. They announce Jonathan.

"Who's he?" yells someone. My amp blows up at that moment and I break a string. I retreat to the back of the stage to frantically tear through my guitar case while onstage Jonathan calmly breaks into "On The Beach." No solution, no problem. "On the beach is one of the best things we got. It's not what you have on but what you have not...."

Rejoining them onstage with a borrowed orange Roland Cube (very small amp), I gaze out across the sea of mud-covered people: elderly hippies, punks, bikers, Rastafarians and every conceivable cross-pollination. Jonathan breaks a string after the third song and I play the rest of the set alone. Because of the rain delay the stage manager doesn't want us to do an encore. The audience won't take no for an answer. I can't believe it. The mighty toy rock band wins again. Afterwards I spy Jonathan doing an a cappella version of his "Rockin' Leprechaun" backstage to a gaggle of fans. Adoring, they cling to the fence, threatening to push it over. Before we opened JoJo had sung about half a set of material for a lone open-mouthed fan. Will he never shut up?

Swiss national radio for an hour. I had to restrain JoJo from throttling the DJ when he asked about naivete by invoking the names of Henri Rousseau and Grandma Moses.

JUNE 23

Austria. Bregenz. We played in the musicians' worst nightmare, a huge hangar-like warehouse: nothing but echoes. Afterwards the promoter offered to take us all out to dinner. We went to a German Pizzeria. One of the sound crew from the local show started talking about rockabilly music. Then he said he hated Elvis.

"How can you hate Elvis?" asked Andy Paley, an avid Presley fan.

"I'm glad Elvis is dead," the guy said. He repeats it, as if to finalize the matter.

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"I'll just pretend I didn't hear that," Andy sneered.

From Paley's brooding expression I knew him to be contemplating premeditated cultural revenge.

"So!" he said with exaggerated cheerfulness. "I hear there's a lot of yodeling going on around here!"

Dead silence.

"...and lederhosen," he continued. "They're really big with the New York fashion models." Suddenly he had them on the retreat. Hamstrung by their embarrassing folk culture, the Austrians seemed to shrink.

"Well, there's not as much yodeling as there used to be, and besides it's

mostly for the tourists."

Paley showed no mercy. "Yes, I suppose you could try to hide it..." cupping his hands over his mouth... "Yodel-ay-hee-hoooo. But there's really no way to hide yodeling."

The poor Austrians huddled close to their plates.

"Yeah," said Jonathan. "You guys get the same reaction talking about yodeling that I get when someone asks me to play 'Roadrunner.'"

JUNE 24

Turin, Italy. One of the best shows of the tour. The audience was great. Paparazzi pop up onstage like Jack-in-

the-boxes from a Fellini movie, cameras flashing.

Interviewed backstage, Jonathan talks about his concern that the trees of the world are vanishing, and with them water and oxygen.

JULY 2

No one could have prepared us for the enthusiasm of the audiences of Spain. They clap in time. They sing harmonies. They add minor sevenths. We do two shows in a huge disco, both nights packed to capacity, the mammoth sound system standing obsolete as we struggle on against the juggernaut of progress.

Both nights start off in a flurry of anxiety and end in exultation. They will not let us go. I almost get writers' cramp signing autographs.

While in Madrid we run into Ernie Brooks, another original Modern Lover, and go out drinking at late-night discos. Sensing the impending end of the tour I allow myself the luxury of getting drunk for the first time. *Estoy enamorado con tigo... Mentiras... Goodbye*. At last totally drunk. Hello oblivion; oblivion, I greet you. Hello, urinal. Freshmen. Please do not eat the large white mints ... chaos...silence.

JULY 5

Back in England, we play the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith, two shows. Amazingly, the first was the worst of the tour, the second was the best. I see my friends Dave Knopfler, ex-Dire Strait, and Adrian Wright from the Human League. More champagne. Congratulations. The tour is over.

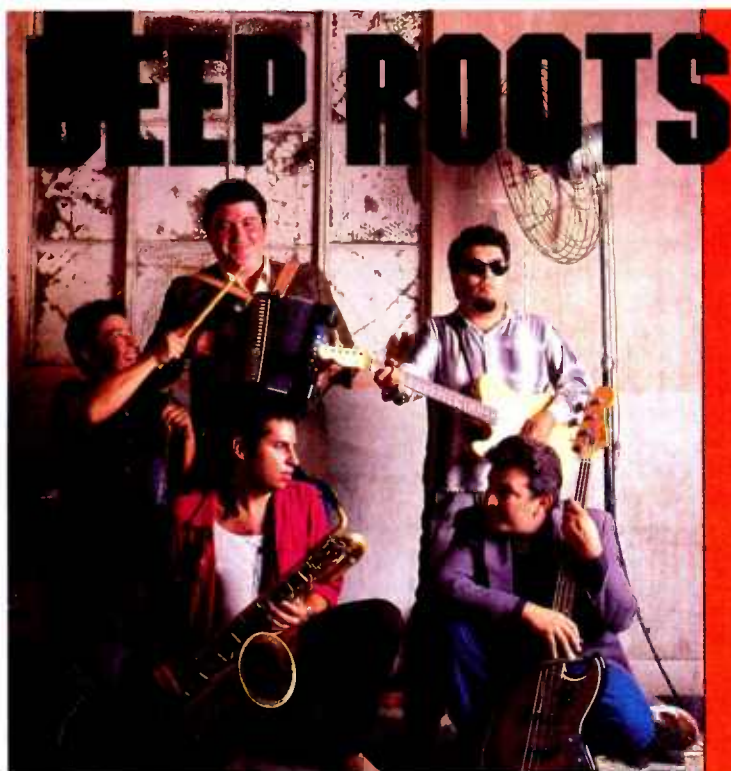
I get on the plane with one of the worst hangovers I've ever had in my life. I am so homesick for the USA that I just know I am going to faint going down that last seaisick rampway, and not be allowed on the plane. Somehow I'll end up back in Finland and the whole thing will start all over again.

Jonathan told me a few months ago that he wanted more than anything to create an atmosphere. That was the word he used. He said that was something that the Velvet Underground used to achieve. He said he wanted something stark and wild, the kind of music you could play only with guitars. Music that would suit a desert cantina or a mariachi band, bringing back that lost feeling of ancient days before stroboscopic tuners.

*I walked back just a while before
And I couldn't stand that new mall
any more.*

*I don't expect you to feel the way I do,
But I want them to bring back that
corner store.*

But Jonathan, it's 1985. Most of the



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Richman from previous page
 original Modern Lovers are in big-name bands like the Cars and Talking Heads, and a whole generation of bands that you influenced are headlining shows that you might occasionally open. Why do you still do it?

Before we went on this tour I had a dream. I am on my way up river on a paddleboat. Jonathan is playing a show somewhere and I am going to see it. It's in an old opera hall, rickety but homey. He has designed all the sets himself, as well as the costumes for this "musical" right down to the heart-covered boxer shorts he reveals when his pants drop for a sight gag. After several tunes he begins juggling ripe tomatoes, allowing several to drop "accidentally" into the audience, encouraging a volley. The audience is intimidated but, since I am his friend, I comply, and hurl away.

When I told Jonathan about the dream, his response was, "It just goes to show. Even while the world sleeps, I'm still a ham."

Who knows? With a new band, a new album out now and another one planned for release in early winter, maybe Jonathan Richman is, as his new single suggests, "just beginning to live." I am reminded of the story of Castro landing in Cuba to start his revolution, his forces decimated, supplies cut off, bullets

whizzing by, and surrounded by the enemy. He said later, "I knew then that I had won. They should never have let me land." ☒

H & O & K & R from page 36
 "My favorite live album was always *Temptations Live!*" says Oates. "It's funny that we're sharing the first live Apollo album since James Brown put out his two volumes in '63 and '68."

"Boy," says Kendrick, "this was always the place to be."

The shooting during the 1975 Smokey Robinson show was catastrophic for the Apollo because it was the desecration of an open and trusting institution. The Apollo was home, hearth, and hallowed ground for all it represented artistically, professionally, and spiritually to Harlem and to its black talent. It was a far cry from the lowlife skullduggery of the dives on the Chitlin' Circuit. You could hone your craft, have your initial impact and make any sorts of mistakes you cared to out of town, but when you finally arrived at the sanctorum on 125th Street, you walked the line.

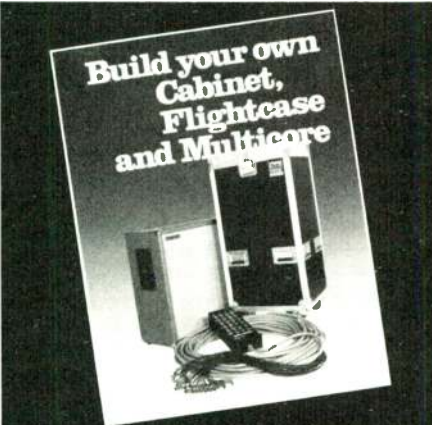
"The Apollo Theater has been called many things: an 'uptown Met,' a 'black Grand Ole Opry,' and 'the black equivalent of the Palace,' writes Ted Fox in his book *Show Time At The Apollo*. "Yet it is not entirely accurate to say that the Apollo was a fomenter of cultural revolutions; rather, it was a legitimizer—the Apollo was the establishment."

And it was rooted in one timeless standard: delivering the goods. The real thing. No tricks. No pretensions.

"The Apollo show meant a lot to David and Eddie," says John Oates, "but it also meant a lot to Daryl and me to see our names on that marquee. It was an honor, but we'd worked for it. It wasn't just luck that got us all here."

Later on, in a quiet moment, David Ruffin puts it another way. "My stepmother, Erline Ruffin, a teacher at Alcorn College and the Tuskegee Institute, was the woman who raised me," he says, his voice trembling slightly. "She was a bright, humble woman and she used to tell me, 'Don't be downhearted about a detour sign in life. Just get back on the main road by the most direct route possible. You gotta hold on for the next moment, because in that moment anything can happen. *Anything!*'" ☒

Joos Jones from page 14
 Basie, and I told him, 'Man, it's time for us to get the Section back together. What do I have to do to get with you?' And Basie looked at me and said, 'Look here, there's only one way we're getting back together. You got this tie that I like. You find that tie and let me have it, and you and me'll be alright.' The next day Basie was dead—I'm still looking for that tie." ☒



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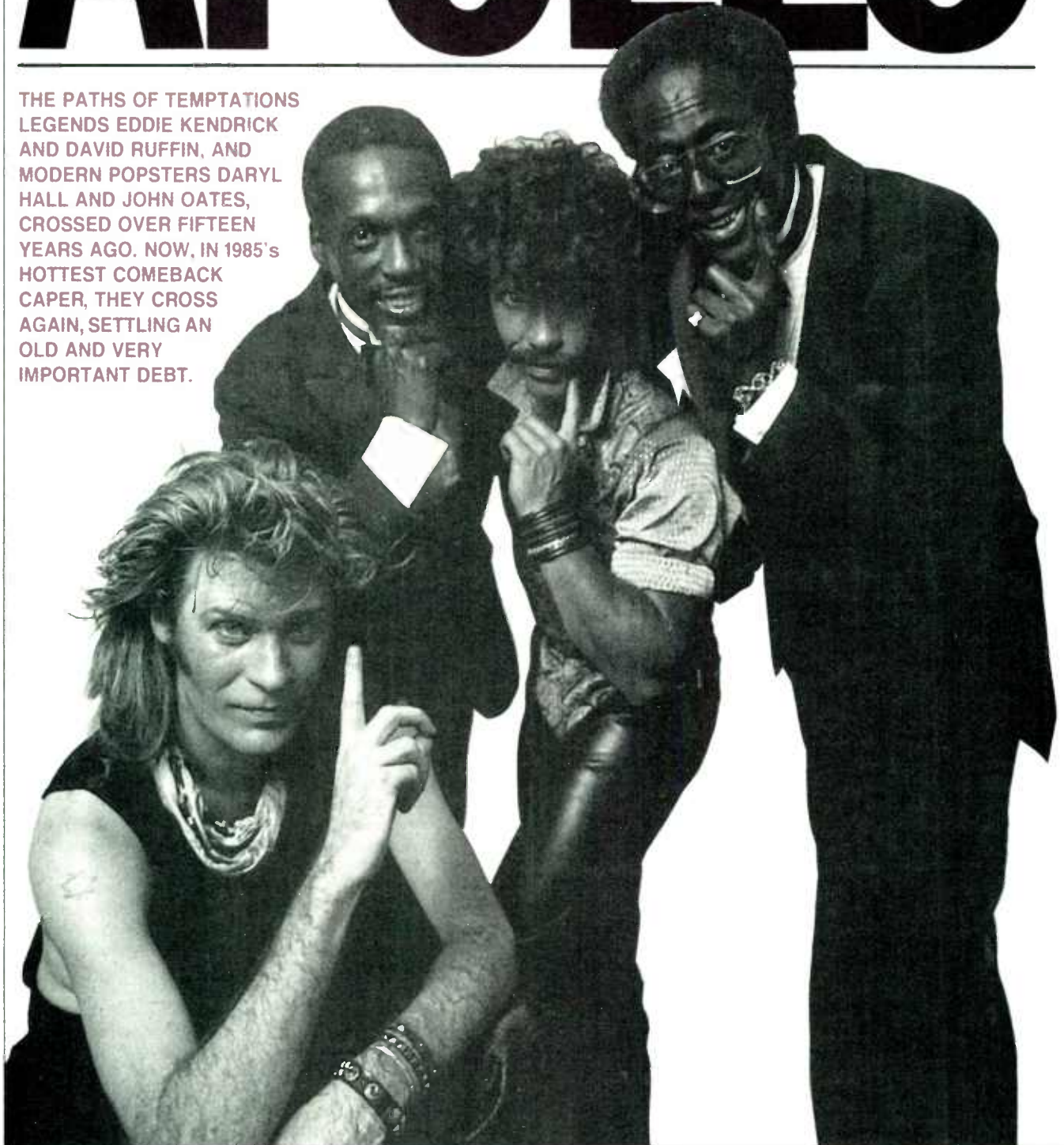
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THE ROAD BACK TO THE APOLLO

THE PATHS OF TEMPTATIONS LEGENDS EDDIE KENDRICK AND DAVID RUFFIN, AND MODERN POPSTERS DARYL HALL AND JOHN OATES, CROSSED OVER FIFTEEN YEARS AGO. NOW, IN 1985'S HOTTEST COMEBACK CAPER, THEY CROSS AGAIN, SETTLING AN OLD AND VERY IMPORTANT DEBT.



Hold on, Daryl! Stop the music! You got to put a little perfume on yourself, boy!!” “What are you saying?” asks Daryl Hall, eyeing David Ruffin with an incredulous grin.

Ruffin shifts his appraising stance on the bandstand, taps the disheveled Hall on the collar of his baggy black sweatshirt and roles, “We got to get the *whole* body language down.”

He cues the Hall & Oates band and the rehearsal studio on West 52nd Street is once again consumed with the booming soul strains of “The Way You Do The Things You Do.” As the classic Motown ode to the girl who “could have been anything that you wanted to” unfolds—her smile as bright as a candle, her love squeeze fit for a handle, her other attributes akin to both a broom and some perfume—the gangly Ruffin rips through the patented Temptations pantomime choreography, right down to the fluid details of unscrewing an invisible bottle of Chanel No. 5 and applying the scent to the back of each earlobe.

Meanwhile, Messrs. Hall, John Oates and Eddie Kendrick are so convulsed by this quaint spectacle they can hardly keep their feet.

“I hope—” begins a red-faced Hall, nearly losing a large gulp of beer as he grapples with laughing and swallowing, “—that there’ll be room left here for actual singing!”

Who’s in charge here? Well, there’s no easy answer for that one. Hall & Oates & Kendrick & Ruffin are practicing harmonies for the 2nd Annual MTV Awards ceremony. Despite the shared bonhomie, Ruffin and Kendrick seem a trifle nervous amidst all the activity, Eddie wondering about the coordination of the solos, David dearly wanting the dance steps to be in dead sync. But when they step up to the mikes, the vocal meld documented on *Daryl Hall & John Oates—Live At The Apollo With David Ruffin &*

Eddie Kendrick is still securely in place.

As if on cue, Tommy Motola, Hall & Oates’ manager, bursts in with a gleaming stack of the new LPs, fresh from the pressing plant. Smiles and handslaps are exchanged, and then Ruffin and Kendrick amble into an adjoining room for a little reflection about the night last **May 23** that changed the course of their careers.

It was a benefit concert for the United Negro College Fund, a show that also marked the finale of Apollo Week, organized to celebrate the ten-million-dollar renovation of the great Harlem theatre. Hall & Oates, the thirty-six-year-old stars of the show, took the stage for their encore and brought on Eddie Kendrick and then David Ruffin for a rousing Temptations medley that included “Get Ready,” “Ain’t Too Proud To Beg,” “The Way You Do The Things You Do” and “My Girl.” The two ex-Temps were in excellent voice, but it was the way in which their vocals blended with Hall & Oates that jolted the tuxedoed and gowned audience into hearing with new ears. Kendrick’s feathery falsetto was enriched by Oates’ darker high notes, Ruffin’s honey-coated burr was burnished by Hall’s deftly declarative croon. It was clearly no accident that Hall & Oates have had more singles on the black charts than any other white group.

As current Apollo overseer/entrepreneur Percy Sutton put it, “American pop culture is a field where black and white influences intertwined to create something unique. No group shows that as much as Daryl Hall and John Oates.” It was never demonstrated to better mutual advantage than on that triumphant night at the Apollo.

“Our whole new thing began with a phone call,” says Eddie Kendrick, forty-six, shaking his head in amazement. “David and I had just played the Premier Theater in Detroit and then gone home for a rest, me to

Birmingham, Alabama and him to his farm in Michigan. Daryl and John tried to reach me through my mother, but she had no idea who they were and didn’t pass on the messages. Finally they found me through my booking agency, and I contacted David. Man, it happened in the space of two days, with one rehearsal. Then David and I had some commitments to fill before doing Live Aid. And lemme tell you, *that* gig was a long way from the days of getting out at night on some dark Southern back road in the early 60s and pushing those old broken-down World War II bus company charters on those Motor Town Revue tours. Phew!”

The Temptations were known as the Elgins when they cut “Oh, Mother O Mine” for Motown founder Berry

gave me a job packing records. I’d had a little song out on Vega Records called ‘You And I,’ and Berry and Smokey Robinson tried me out singing backup with Marvin Gaye, Lamont Dozier, Harvey & the Moonglows. I also did some solo singles; ‘Actions Speak Louder Than Words’ was a hit and I sang it at the Apollo. I joined the Temptations around 1963, singing lead on ‘Since I Lost My Baby,’ ‘Don’t Look Back,’ ‘I Wish It Would Rain,’ ‘Too Proud To Beg,’ ‘(I Know) I’m Losing You’ and ‘Beauty’s Only Skin Deep,’ which was inspired by a white woman I was seeing.”

“We worked constantly, day and night, either on the road or in the studio,” says Kendrick. “One night in 1962 I was ordered to get out of bed where I was sick with the flu because Motown wanted

LEMME TELL YOU, LIVE AID WAS A LONG WAY FROM THE DAYS OF GETTING OUT AT NIGHT ON SOME DARK SOUTHERN BACK ROAD IN THE EARLY 60s AND PUSHING THOSE OLD BROKEN-DOWN WORLD WAR II BUS COMPANY CHARTERS ON THOSE MOTOR TOWN REVUE TOURS. PHEW!”

Gordy’s Miracle label in 1961. The lineup was Paul Williams, Eddie Kendrick, Otis Williams, Eldridge Bryant and Melvin Franklin. Eight singles later, Bryant had quit and David Ruffin replaced him.

“I had started out in Motown in the mid-50s,” says the forty-four-year-old Ruffin, a shy man who hides behind his tinted gold-rimmed glasses. “I was a singing jockey—horses that is—from Why Knot, Mississippi who had just moved to Detroit, and Berry Gordy

us to do an instant cover of Nolan Strong’s new Fortune hit, ‘Mind Over Matter,’ so that they could kill his record. Everybody was diligent, initially out of dedication. We’d cut at least two songs at every session, and on an album like *Temptations Sing Smokey*, we recorded the entire record in eight straight hours. On top of that, you did backup and contributed to every other song being worked on, whether it was me doing high tenor on Mary Wells’ ‘You Beat Me To The Punch’ or ‘Two Lovers’ or

BY TIMOTHY WHITE

stomping on a stack of wooden slats and clapping to get that easy-marching effect on the Supremes' 'Where Did Our Love Go.'"

"A lot of the time," adds Ruffin, "we did our own vocals in the hallway because of the natural echo, but we'd go to much greater lengths than that to get a sound. That 'thunder' you hear in 'I Wish It Would Rain,' was actually the microphone stuck into a flushed toilet. Maybe we should have called the song, 'I Wish It Would Flush!'"

"Actually, that's a sad story," says Kendrick, "because the fellow who wrote that song, Roger Penzabene, took a gun and blew his brains out not long after the song was finished. He really was in a depressed and stressed frame of mind. See, Motown asked a lot of you. We got checks for six dollars for each backup vocal session; that was it. Sometimes you'd get two-fifty for handclaps and unison vocals. We were sometimes too embarrassed to cash the checks, since it took more money for gas just to get to the bank.

"There were a lot of other things to think about besides the music too. Cholly Atkins gets a lot of credit for the choreography of the acts, and he should, but not for ours. Paul Williams had that all worked out by the time Cholly ever came on board, and the

rest of the acts were encouraged to borrow from us. As for the clothes and grooming, I designed all the costumes with Johnny Burton, a tailor in Houston, and Harvey Krantz, who's out in L.A. We gave our souls to the company, but I thank God we never *sold* it to them, because it all started to go sour."

In '67, Ruffin was forced out of the Temptations and went on to a modest solo career ("My Whole World Ended" and "Walk Away From Love" scored) before leaving Motown in 1969 for an unproductive stint at Warner Bros.

Kendrick explains that he left in 1971, just after the success of "Just My Imagination (Running Away With Me)"; over a dispute concerning a solo album he wanted to release in order to generate income to settle IRS back taxes. Motown refused and he left the act. He issued the well-received "Keep On Truckin', Pt. 1" and "Boogie Down" before leaving the label for Arista in 1978 and then trying Atlantic in 1981.

Their faltering solo fortunes led both men to rejoin the Temptations for their *Reunion* LP and tour, a testy affair after which Ruffin dropped out of the business and Kendrick resumed a stretch of club dates. Huddled together at SIR, the two soul survivors share a boyish bond that allows them to view much of the last twenty years through a fellow-

ship-blurred lens. But when cornered separately, they come to grips with the pain of the recent past and their gratitude for the present.

"During my entire time at Motown," Kendrick confides, "I was always signed as an individual, never as a band member. In all, I did some fifteen solo albums, and I never saw any royalties. Motown would give my deals to my manager, not to me, and the money would be paid out for the production budget. I had a contract to honor but it was a rough time for me; I had my own bouts with *bad* depression. Motown was *not* what I'd call a family. Clive Davis treated me better, and Atlantic was okay on my *Love Keys* LP, but I was struggling. Another blow came when Paul Williams killed himself just before the reunion tour began. The Temptations provided a lot of highs and lows. You've just got to count your blessings and keep on stepping."

Ruffin had his own management problems, and the IRS eventually lost patience with his perplexity over them.

"I'd stayed on the road for so long, with so many different managers," David says in a soft voice edged with exasperation. "My financial picture had grown so complex, with records all over the map in a number of different cities. I had all my receipts, etc., but I wasn't

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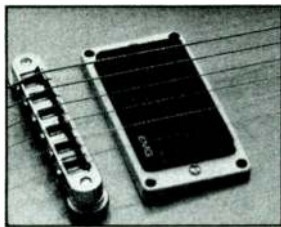


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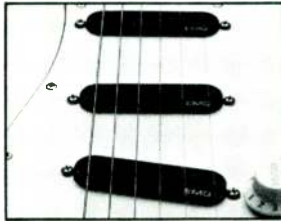
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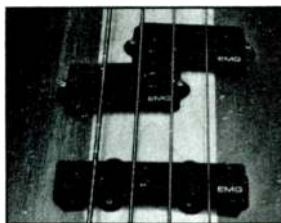
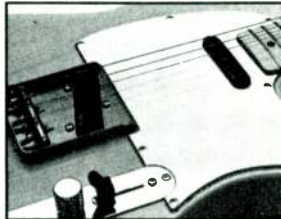
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filing for taxes. The IRS came after me, and I spent six months in Terre Haute Federal Prison in Indiana, from November 16, 1982 to April 1, 1983.

"The government let me do the Temptations *Reunion* tour and then I had to turn myself in. I went down to the Federal Building in Detroit after it ended and told them I was there to fulfill my obligation. The Terre Haute farm was a minimum security facility, with more baseball diamonds, track and field grounds and pool tables than it had guards—there were only three on duty—but still it was prison. I decided not to feel sorry for myself, and organized a formal music room, getting people to donate amps and equipment. I formed a band and we did some shows on weekends with spiritual and church groups. I made myself useful.

"After I was released, I rounded up all my scattered tax records and laid the paperwork to rest. Then I moved out of Detroit, settling in Pickney, Michigan and raising horses for two and a half years. I wrote songs, went into the studio every other week and tried to find myself again."

Some of the material Ruffin developed during his reclusive period is expected to appear on an album he and Kendrick will be recording in the studio this winter with compatriots Hall & Oates producing and providing songs. (Ruffin and Kendrick also appear on Little Steven Van Zandt's anti-apartheid *Sun City* record.) After that, they'll go on the road in the spring to support the studio LP, while Daryl works on a solo record with Eurythmic Dave Stewart. John, who has "just retired" from years of auto racing, is taking flying lessons and will turn his attention to film scores and some video projects.

"A long time ago, Paul Williams of the Temps gave me a piece of advice," says Daryl Hall after the rehearsal as we slip through Central Park in his limousine. "No matter how high you fly, how well you do, you better not lose your voice in your work. You've gotta keep that channel of emotion, that soul and essence that gives it true value for other people. As I'll explain, this collaboration with David and Eddie is part of everything I've admired, gotten excited about, wanted for myself and those I care about ever since I was a kid. It feels so good for John and me because it's exactly right."

For Daryl Hall and John Oates, the long road to headlining the Apollo with boyhood heroes Ruffin and Kendrick was paved with barking pistols.

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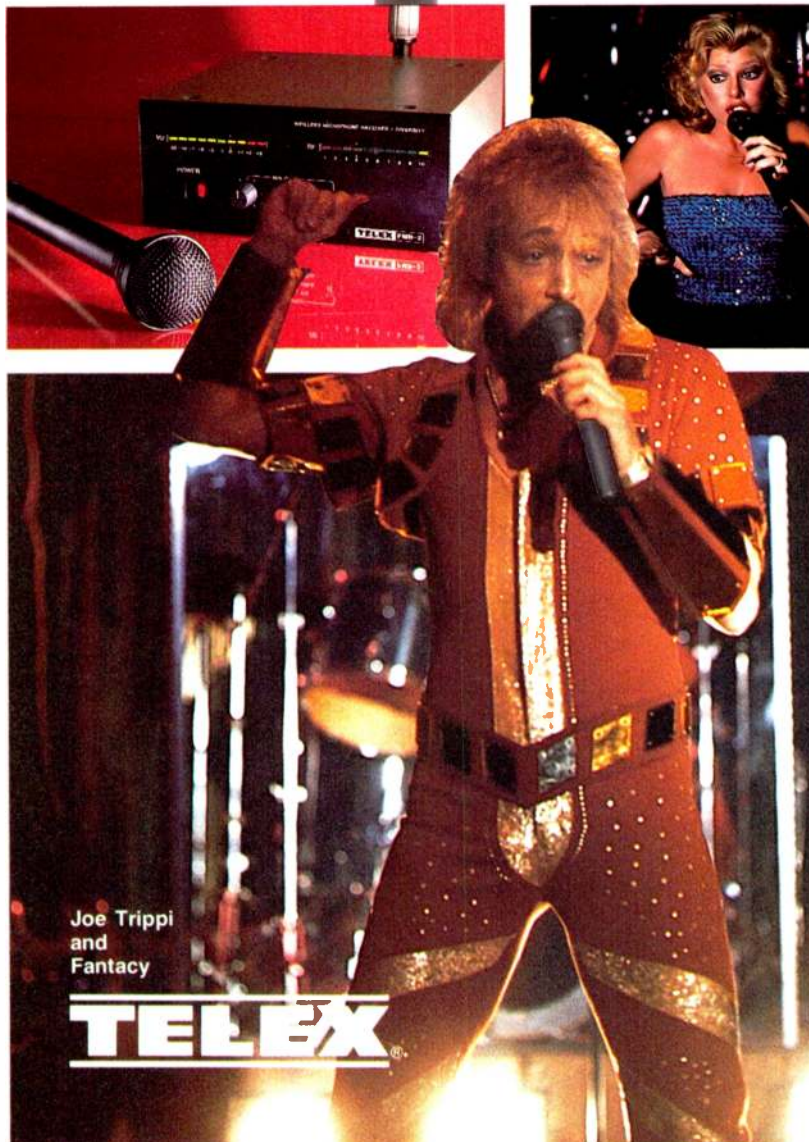
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Joe Trippi and Fantasy

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Checker's "Twist" to the Dovells' "Bristol Stomp," there was dance fever in Philly, and Daryl Hohl (he changed the spelling in '68) was in the thick of it. Dovell's lead singer Len Barry introduced Hohl, an aspiring singer/songwriter, to Leon Huff (then producing for the local Arctic Records), as well as to members of the Three Degrees, Delfonics and Stylistics. Daryl Hohl and four friends formed an all-white Temptations cover band called the Temptones. They clicked big on the self-absorbed Philly scene and challenged the blue-eyed hegemony of not only the Dovells but also the Magnificent Men, the Italian outfit that was then scoring national hits with a singer/guitarist named John Oates. All of the groups were making periodic appearances at the prestigious Uptown Theater, and got tight with the Temptations themselves through several years of backstage bull sessions.

The Temptones shared a bill with Motown greats like Smokey Robinson and Marvin Gaye at Asbury Park's Convention Hall, which is where fellow Temple student John Oates first caught Hohl's act.

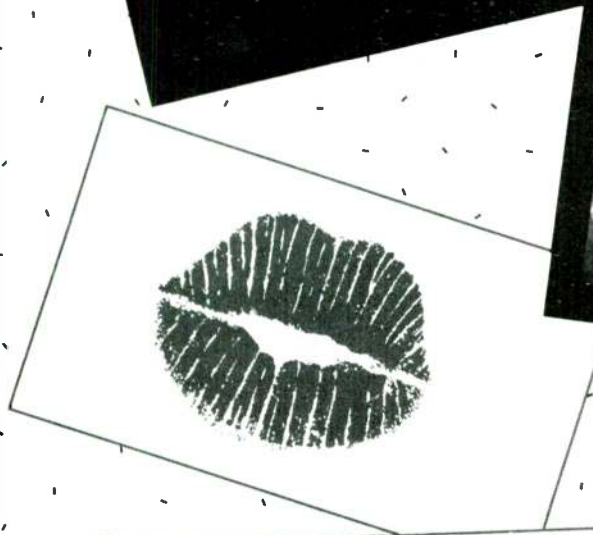
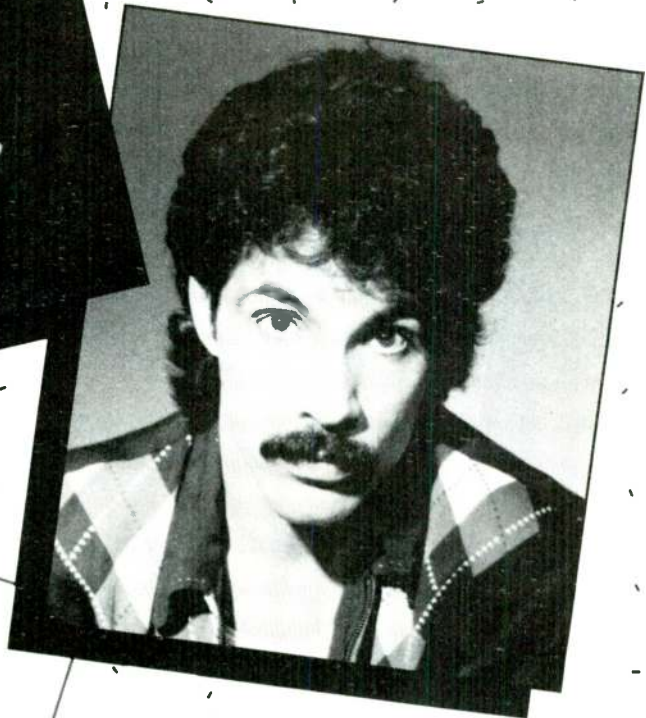
But Hohl and Oates didn't meet until late in 1967 when gunshots rang out at a record hop at the Adelphi Ballroom in West Philly. One black gang member decided to give a rival honcho a lead headache, and Oates and Hohl, each there to lip-synch his band's new single, made a hasty retreat by way of the freight elevator. They got to talking as the doors closed. Daryl said he'd just recorded with Kenny Gamble and the Romeos (among them Leon Huff and Thom Bell). John told him of his experiences cutting sides with [future Gamble & Huff arranger] Bobby Martin for the local Crimson label.

"In those days, we tried to attach ourselves to anybody," says Oates. "We were leeches, musical mosquitos. What's important to remember is that the Philly scene was completely integrated, with white session guys playing on Stylistics dates. It was all a reflection of the fully integrated Philadelphia school system. You had Lenny Pakula on organ and Vince Montana on vibes, both of them white, with Earl Young on drums, Roland Chambers and Bobby Eli on guitar—and anybody who showed up at Sigma could contribute. Nobody gave you the cold shoulder for any racial reason.

"It wasn't until Gamble & Huff got so ripped off that they were forced to start the Philadelphia International label that it got more black, and that was a reflection of something bigger going on nationally with black pride. We stayed on great terms with everybody."

By the early 70s—the time when the Temptations and Motown were chang-

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ing personnel—the Philly International label moved in to fill the gap with a smoother, lusher soul music. When Kendrick and Ruffin turned on their radios they heard the O'Jays and the Spinners and Billy Paul, the P.I. sound. Pretty soon they were hearing Hall & Oates, too.

Times change and the Apollo Theater was also drifting into the past. Its reign ended on a December evening in 1975, with more barking pistols.

Smokey Robinson, tearing into his closing number, was doing his damndest to live up to the expectations of the SRO Apollo throng when a gunman stepped into the upper-right-hand box and greeted its inhabitants with some hot-lead hospitality. Bullets tore into the torso of eighteen-year-old Darryl Scullack, fresh from the slammer on \$500 bail after being accused of

knocking off an Eighth Avenue ginmill. As bystanders began catching slugs and Smokey headed for the wings, the gunman beat his own exit. He was never apprehended.

Darryl Scullack was dead, and so was the Apollo.

Robinson fulfilled the rest of his week-long engagement, but vowed he would never again take the stage of what for four decades had been the nation's premier black music showcase. A month later, the Apollo was closed. In the next few years, several efforts at refurbishing the theater's shabby appearance and reputation were mounted but the Motown Records stable, which had been the leading source of talent for the Apollo, now shunned the venue. Its comeback didn't come.

Now, a decade later, Hall & Oates wander the refurbished Apollo with

Kendrick and Ruffin, and explain why it mattered that their debt to the Temptations be repaid in this old hall: The first time Hall & Oates came to the Apollo, in 1968, it was the Temptations who brought them there.

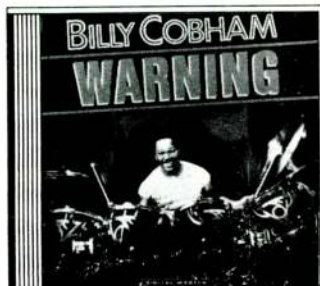
"John and I had to make the pilgrimage," says Daryl. "Paul Williams was the Temptation I was especially close to, and he was always giving us advice. He even took my band down to Krass Brothers and bought us these magenta sharkskin suits. If we were going to sound like the Temps—and I'd memorized every one of David's vocal parts [he gives a grinning Ruffin a wink], he wanted us to get the look down too. So us finally getting together like this was a goddamned dream."

"Man, I'm glad you had that dream," says Ruffin with a raspy chuckle.

continued on page 26



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ABC

Intelligently Stupid Music

Vanity kills/ It don't pay bills." **Martin Fry:** "What we try to do on all of our records is to mix stupidity with smartness." Over the course of three albums, ABC has done just that, varying wildly from brilliantly glossy neo-soul to awful guitar-heavy rock. Throughout they've maintained only a devout commitment to self-expression and technical perfectionism, and undying adoration for black musicians. While Fry's lyrics often offer surprising insights and sharp Elvis Costello-like punny wit, they are also capable of such tripe as "She's a vegetarian except when it comes to sex." Stupidity and smartness indeed.

Although ABC presents itself as a quartet, Fry (vocals) and Mark White (guitar/keyboards) do all the writing and production. From their

lush first LP in 1982, to the likable if inconsistent *How To Be A Zillionaire*, the Sheffield-based ABC has dedicated itself to permanent change. With the hip-hop help of American R&B drummer/drum programmer Keith LeBlanc, the new LP offers smooth romance ("Be Near Me"), scathing sarcasm ("How To Be A Millionaire," "Vanity Kills," "So Hip It Hurts") and a mix of musical styles that shows the band's growing range.

The studio-reclusive ABC don't expect to hit the road to support the album until early 1986. They haven't played live since a four-month world excursion with a sixteen-piece band ended in March, 1983. "You've got to have something worth the price of admission," Fry explains. "Who wants to bore people? There are a lot of other things you can do in the world than go to a rock gig." If only all bands could be so considerate.

—Ira Robbins



TRUE BELIEVERS

The Wide Open Spaces

T rue Believers seem an easy enough read on the surface: Austin, Texas lineage; linchpin Alejandro Escovedo once a member of Rank & File—authentic cowpunk deluxe plugged into the current roots rock renaissance, right? But at Hollywood's Club Lingerie the Texas quintet's blistering three-guitar attack owed more to Lou Reed than Lone Star beer or Alejandro's *timbalera* niece, Sheila E.

Born in San Antonio, Alejandro and younger brother Javier Escovedo received their early rock 'n' roll education in southern California; their early musical experience was in West Coast punk bands the Nuns and Zeros. They formed True Believers with bassist Denny DeGorio two years ago, surviving several personnel

changes and an abortive Columbia Records demo session before cementing the current line-up with guitarist Jon Dee Graham and drummer Kevin Foley.

"We wanted a harder rock 'n' roll band," Alejandro Escovedo says, "with louder guitars that leaned more towards what the Zeros were like than Rank & File. A lot of songs I write are still in that Rank style—western more than country & western—because I like songs with a lot of space in 'em."

The group's triple-axe attack is neither redundant nor given to pointless duels. The brothers Escovedo function primarily as rhythm players, with Graham chopping out metallic lead lines.

"That's what I love about the band," Alejandro Escovedo says of the True Believers' mad-dog edge. "There's a certain freedom, nights that we want to be wild and just do it. We have all this power at our fingertips." —Don Snowden





SONIC YOUTH

Rock 'n' Roll Klangfarbenmelodie

Guitars that are used as mallet instruments don't last as long as guitars that are played with a pick. From a pay phone in a truckstop in Iowa, guitarist **Lee Ranaldo** of Sonic Youth talks about the processes by which his New York band creates its sometimes violent, sometimes somber landscapes of sound.

"We always work with non-standard tuning," Ranaldo says. "It's not a mathematical process, but more just sitting with an instrument and getting to know its particular sound properties. We try to find tunings that suit the personality of each guitar. Once we have a tuning worked out, we'll get a pair of guitars." That's when the fun starts. Ranaldo guts the instruments, removing everything but the pickups and jack hole. Then he and **Thurston Moore** jam drumsticks, blocks of wood, and pieces of pipe under the bridges, and bang, bow and scrape the strings with anything from screwdrivers to drumsticks.

The Lower East Side quartet built its reputation by generating screaming,

molar-rotating noise. The Sonics have been tagged as a "noise band," an epithet Ranaldo considers a "stupid dismissal. You would never call Schoenberg 'noise music.'" And on the band's new Homestead LP, *Bad Moon Rising*, its tonal palette ranges from wild cacophony to subtle introspection.

"We're trying to expand our vocabulary," Ranaldo says, "and don't see any reason to do another gritty, violent-sounding record. I don't view things in terms of dissonance and consonance so much as I do in terms of different textural effects. Sometimes we'll tune strings to the same note and then put them slightly out of tune, so they produce a waffling effect called 'beating.' We'll do things that range from that to really heavy dissonance—and consonant tunings as well."

Like most American albums made in 1985, *Bad Moon Rising* wears its national identity on its sleeve. "We were very interested in being cited as an American thing musically," Moore says. "Rock 'n' roll is an American phenomenon." Born-in-the-U.S.A. jingoism from a band that can't make a living in the States? "Hey," Ranaldo says, "we totally dig the Boss."

—John Leland

JOHNNY RENO

Make Way for a Sax Hero

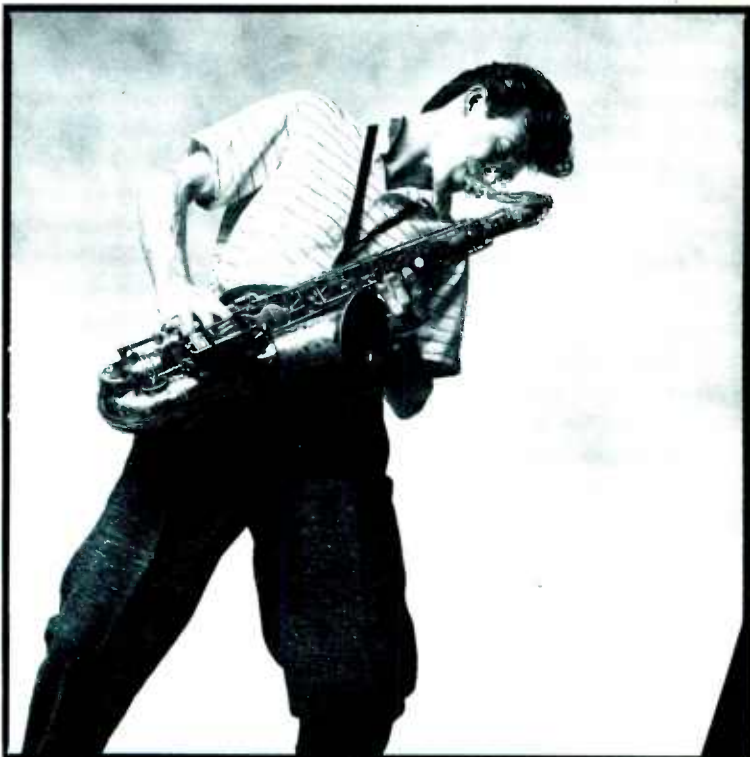
Johnny Reno never picked up a saxophone until he was twenty-six. But in the eight years since, he's put the burry, wide-open Texas tenor style back into R&B and is now translating it into a pop context.

A fan but never a musician, Reno got interested in sax

[Coleman, also from Fort Worth] does.

"You don't think of the sax as a powerful instrument, but Texas tenor is," he continues. "It's growling, screaming, soaring, abandoned, extroverted, full-bodied. Clarence Clemons was just starting to put guts back into rock 'n' roll sax, but I wondered, why isn't anybody working this style?"

After a 1978-79 Austin stint with Stevie Ray Vaughan's original Double Trouble



while hanging around the Bluebird, a Fort Worth R&B club where King Curtis got his start in the late 40s. A guitarist in the house band played Reno sides by Curtis, Junior Walker, Joe Houston, Red Prysock, Arnett Cobb and Illinois Jacquet. Most were Texans, as Reno recalls, "I became aware of this tradition of Texas tenor that goes right up to Fathead Newman. You can even hear it in a lot of what Ornette

(featuring Lou Ann Barton on lead vocals) and a longer stretch with Fort Worth's Juke Jumpers, Reno set his sights outside the Texas R&B circuit. Enter the Sax Maniacs, with whom he's cut an EP and the current *Full Blown Rounder* LP, co-produced by T-Bone Burnett. Songs like "Runnin' For Cover"—the video of which made MTV—point to a new direction.

"We still definitely use the components of R&B, but

with pop appeal," Reno explains. "I've never been into technique. I'm more like a sound sculptor, using a sound to get over ideas and feelings. Instead of making a linear statement like jazz, I use the sax as another layer of sound, a voice."

Reno & the Sax Maniacs work 200 nights a year, including a couple trips to each coast and three or four up through the Midwest.

Lean and blessed with movie-star good looks, Reno backs his honking and screaming with a bar-walking, back-bending performance which "also comes out of that R&B tradition where the show is as much fun as the music. There's a lotta guitar heroes already," he adds. "I think there's room for a sax hero out there too."

— John Morthland



THE BLUE NILE

The Luck of the Scottish

The Blue Nile is a humble trio. Polite and reserved, the Scottish band members are as understated as the moody and muted tunes on their first LP, *A Walk Across The Rooftops*. Employing cool, speak 'n' sing vocals and spacious (but not spaced out) music, the songs grow on you with a pesky subtlety. But the record—which Steve Lillywhite lauded as "the best debut album in the last five years" (no, he didn't produce it)—might never have existed if not for a fortuitous meeting between the band and an unlikely backer.

They had just completed a batch of demo tapes in an Edinburgh studio when the engineer played one for a visitor from Linn-Sondek Products, a manufacturer of high-end turntables. "He really liked it," keyboard player **Paul Moore** says. "And even though Linn didn't have

anything to do with records, they offered to finance the recording of an album." Six months later, the Blue Nile had a finished record and were in the process of choosing cover art. Then, guitarist **Robert Bell** chuckles, "We realized that Linn Records didn't really exist and they didn't know what to do with the album. So we started going to London and spoke with anybody who would talk to us about putting out a record. Finally we got Virgin to distribute it in Europe, and A&M is doing the same thing in the States."

While the band has clearly maintained their sense of modesty—"The less I have, the better I feel," Moore says—some trappings of rock 'n' roll success have inadvertently come their way. "We don't have to eat baked potatoes practically every night anymore," states **Paul Buchanan**, who sings and plays guitar, "and green smoke no longer comes out of our cars when we start them up."

—Michael Kaplan

BARRENCE WHITFIELD & THE SAVAGES

Rock 'n' Roll Gone Too Far

Boston bands like the Cars, Face to Face and 'Til Tuesday have given the local music scene a glossy, high-tech image. Barrence Whitfield & the Savages not only fly in the face of this trend, they've been increasingly successful as roots-conscious R&B wonders. Guitarist Peter Greenburg started the group in May, 1982 as a side project from the throb-rocking Lyres. The Savages cohered as Greenburg, bassist Phil Lenker and drummer Howie Ferguson each parted company with Lyres leader Jeff "Monoman" Connolly. The frontman was yet to come.

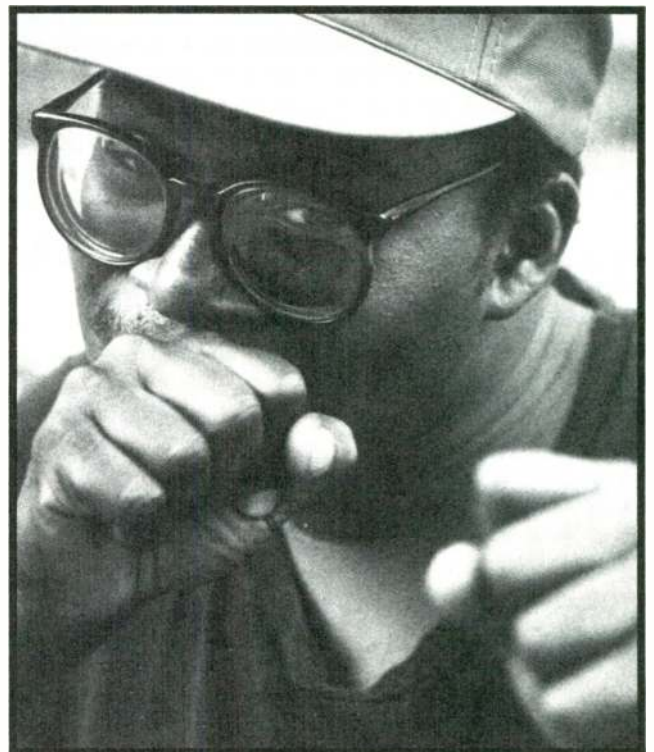
Barry White, from Georgia and East Orange, New Jersey, was studying at Boston University. Greenburg heard about White's vocal prowess through a mutual friend, and the two got together. For obvious reasons White chose Barrence Whitfield as his stage name. Saxophonist

Steve LaGrega completed the line-up.

After releasing an indie debut album last May, the Savages took their act on the road. Word of mouth spread on the group, and Rounder Records signed them to a three-album deal. Greenburg says the band chose Rounder because of the label's "integrity": "If you look at the artists they have, like Solomon Burke for instance, you know that they're into music that doesn't rely on fashion."

"I call the 80s 'The Look Decade'," echoes Whitfield. "Everyone has got to have 'the look' to make the best label deal, a video, etc. I don't care about that. That's just cosmetics."

Part gospel, part soul and part graveyard rockabilly, the Savages certainly aren't into cosmetics. Rather, they teeter on the edge of rock 'n' roll chaos. If their live performances are nearly riotous affairs, that suits them just fine. "We try to push our audiences over the edge," Greenburg says with a sinister laugh. —Wayne Cresser





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Simple Minds

*Jim Kerr Ghostdances
Through A Stormy Landscape*

By Fred Schruers





*J*im Kerr, listening to a playback of "Ghostdancing," is getting down. Or maybe getting up. It's hard to say, because we're seated at a small table in a New York restaurant and as the playback goes from a cassette player through earphones to reverberate through my headbones, he's losing a sonic generation or two. No problem – the guy's not missing a lick, and even as he mimes a section of guitar-rapidly-accelerating-into-drum-roll he waggles his thumb to indicate a little volume wouldn't hurt. And even as my temples are fibrillating I'm wondering what our fellow lunch patrons are thinking of this little mime show. "It's okay," I want to

Photograph By Laura Levine

tell them, "the guy is famous for this—he did the same thing during this song in front of millions of people at Live Aid a couple of months ago...."

Kerr indicates a verbal message and I slide the earphones back. "The backing track to this song," he says, "is absolute chaos. Sounds like the Who or something. Over seven or

"Don't You Forget About Me' is a good stylish pop record, but there's something more to Simple Minds and I want to express that."

eight years we've lost that garage band rawness we started with and on this track it's come back. I'm very, very pleased about that."

But hold it, you're saying. We were promised Art Rock. Isn't Kerr's band called Simple Minds because, nudge, nudge, wink, wink, they have been so complex, deep and unsummarizable? Well, of course, it's not as...simple as all that. The name came about partly as a logical loop-de-loop—they were highly intellectualized—but also as an emblem of their pride in their scruffy Glasgow origins. They knew they had heart, and a heart is a kind of simple mind that's usually right. Plus, the band had been suffering under the punkish name of Johnny & the Self-Abusers in 1978. But Kerr was a fan of Iggy Pop's solo *The Idiot*. And the lads' hero, David Bowie, had produced that LP after writing his own song about the Ig, "Jean Genie," with its line "He's so simpleminded he can't drive his module...."

Not so simple at all. But they're striving now for a musical clarity that sheds old influences and claims new territory: "We wanted to really burst open, to make a record that has absolutely no inhibitions. We wanted to improve, like, five times. As much as I'm a fan of this band, we've always been learning, on the way up, and I feel now we're coming into our own.

"Seven or eight years ago we started like everyone else, a garage band. Since then the guys have really mastered their instruments. When that happens you feel great, but you also feel you've lost some of that garage-band rawness. This track's as raw as anything the Clash have ever done."

Kerr pushes a hand back over his brow—a characteristic gesture onstage as well—and takes a taste of chowder. Like his wife of a year, Chrissie Hynde, he's a vegetarian. They've got a baby girl now, and after some years made thinner than they had to be by the band's adventuresomeness, he's coming off the accidental number one, "Don't You Forget About Me," with an LP behind which he's happy to tour his butt off. Kerr's not afraid to call his new music "uplifting," but he'll leave any notion of an album *concept* to his audience: "I think when the lyric sheet is set out something will come through...I'm not sure exactly what. There's probably a song in there about every big issue in our lives these last two years, from a song for absent friends to this song "Ghost-dancing," showing the chaos, the speed the world is tumbling at, to a song about Glasgow and family ties, a love song—well every song I've ever written has been some kind of love song—one about driving through the Catskills and seeing this amazing view...our songs are all kaleidoscopes in the end." As Kerr comes up for air, he's a little bemused, but far from sheepish, over his own enthusiasm. "The record's really made up of eight one-off's that just came through as this really glorious noise."

Kerr's dad is a "brickie," a laborer on construction sites, and his mother sells cakes in a cake shop. "No one starves in Glasgow, but you couldn't really get more working-class, more downscale than that," he says in a melodious burr full of quiet compassion. "But we didn't lack for anything. They're very proud people, would spend every penny on making ya well-dressed and clean and good food and a spotless house. That kind of pride."

From his birth twenty-five years ago until he reached age five, his family lived in the Gorbals, Glasgow's notorious slum. Part of its blightedness comes from the British working-man's refuge in alcohol, in pub culture, and Kerr senior was no exception: "I used to see my dad three weeks a year. He worked from eight to five and then went for a few drinks, then Saturday was football, and probably work overtime Sunday."

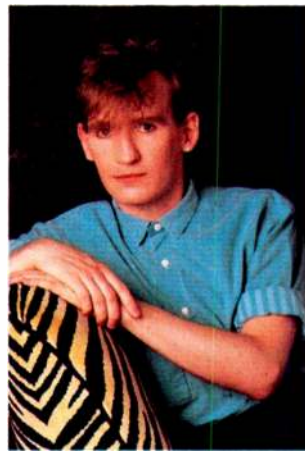
Jim and his two younger brothers (the elder of them, Paul, twenty-three, has progressed from humping equipment to road-managing Simple Minds) found their own diversions. Fortunately they eschewed razor gangs in favor of football and later, music. Kerr was seven when he met Simple Minds guitarist Charlie Burchill in the Toryglen neighborhood they then shared. They grew up as rock 'n' roll scruffs, sneaking their whole gang into the Apollo by recycling one ticket which was tossed out a window in a cigarette pack. They had a steady diet of what Kerr calls "pomp-rock"—Yes, Genesis, ELP and the like—with the occasional happy surprise of a Lou Reed or Roxy Music show. As Kerr recalled for biog-



Jim Kerr: "A bit of a method actor:"

rapher Alfred Bos, he was entranced by "the winking red lights on the amps" and the feeling of being part of a young crowd.

An outrageous, camp-dressing school acquaintance by the name of Alan Cairnduff had the idea for a band he would call Johnny & the Self-Abusers. Charlie and Jim called his bluff and one night in February of 1977, after a week's practice, they took the stage of a local club, the Doune Castle. They were sufficiently coarse to pass for punk, and their



Simple Minds: Keyboardist Mick MacNeil, guitarist Charlie Burchill, bassist John Gibling, and below, drummer Mel Gaynor



five-song demo, while rejected by Stiff, won over the independent Chiswick label. Their "Saints And Sinners"/"Dead Vandals" single would come out in early winter as an instant rarity, since the band had broken up by the time of its release.

Not looking back, Burchill and Kerr got their first booking as Simple Minds in a disco lounge in February of 1978. They graduated to a Sunday night residency at a club called the Mars Bar, and as a following grew up, called on music business jack-of-all-trades Bruce Findlay, whose Zoom label was run from his Edinburgh office. "They looked weird," he recalls. "Eye makeup, pale faces, winklepicker shoes, and Jim had this short, Richard III haircut."

Findlay saw in Kerr "a bit of the method actor—a little Marlon Brando." Kerr was, it's true, already radically unlike the Gorbals lad he might have been. His alienation wasn't willed: "It wasn't like, 'I'm not gonna do that.' I tried to fit in, do what everybody else did, and found out I couldn't drink because it made me sick, couldn't contribute to these conversations because I found myself floatin' off in other areas. It wasn't like, 'Hey, I'm smart,' it was like, 'Why can't I be like the rest of the guys?'"

His parents had seen his apartness, and scraped together the money to send him to an elite Catholic secondary school. Likewise, they encouraged him to visit the Glasgow City Theater, a politicized, avant-garde institution where he got into the old magic of show-business ("You could smell the makeup," he told Bos). He and Charlie dropped out of school just before exam time. "We hitchhiked around Europe, and the world really felt like ours. We'd get left somewhere, stuck in the middle of some field in France, and lie there under this amazing sky. We knew it wasn't gonna rain—just knew it wasn't. We had no rucksacks, stoves or all that, no money. But we felt we could go anywhere in the world, and those kind of thoughts led to a whole sort of emancipation, that 'Hey, we can do what we want. We know we gotta work, we're not lazy, we'll work hard at anything—why don't we work hard at something we like?' That coincided with the spirit of music at the time."

It took three trips to the Mars Bar to convince Findlay to sign on as manager for the band that was trucking their gear around in an old diesel-powered ambulance. The lineup included Jim, Charlie on guitar, Derek Forbes on bass and Brian McGee on drums. Seeking to veer away from punk, they brought in keyboardist Michael (Mick) MacNeil, who owned a small synthesizer. Findlay shopped their demo to British Arista, who were already releasing his singles on the Zoom label, and a deal was struck. But the label and band were never to be happy with each other.

The band had hoped to have John Cale produce them, but Arista nixed that. Second choice John Leckie had produced Magazine, a band Simple Minds would constantly be

compared to, and he was enlisted. The band would do their growing up in public, as they made three albums with Leckie before Kerr was twenty-one. *Life In A Day*, released early in 1979, was leaking at the seams with 70s influences. Kerr now hears too much Patti Smith, Boomtown Rats and Roxy Music in it, and Findlay too much art rock; despite such tuneful items as "Chelsea Girl," the band writes it off as a warm-up to the next year's *Real To Real Cacophony*. Songs like "Premonition" sought to blow away the bad taste of their debut LP through sheer power.

They were making their living in the European capitals, criss-crossing France, Germany, Belgium and Holland. "We found a really great audience there," says Kerr, "willing to take us for what we were, as opposed to the hep scene, the fashion scene, in Britain. Back there everyone was listening to Mod and ska and the Two-Tone thing was very big; bands of our ilk were looked at as sort of obscure art-school bands."

This pilgrimage through strange cities led to the lead-off track on 1980's *Empires And Dance*, "I Travel." Its first line, "Cities. Buildings falling down..." is repeated at the start of "Ghostdancing," to drive home Kerr's conviction that the chaos he saw then is still being felt. "This was the year before all the riots in Britain, but we could see what was gonna happen. When we were in Paris, a bomb in a synagogue; a week later in Munich, one in a train station. There were a lot of terrorist acts, a lot of turmoil, and I thought, 'In five years' time I'll come back and try to write a sequel.'"

What "Ghostdancing" is saying is not just, "This is bad," but, "I believe there's more than that. It's very easy to turn on the news and see bad news, bad news, bad news, and I believe you can't just get submerged in that."

The dimly seen protagonist of *Empires And Dance* is a fugitive, Kerr says, traveling through a post-World War II landscape—notably Berlin. That atmosphere synergized with the danceability of the record, and part of the appeal of songs that came out of this synth-heavy Simple Minds period was a flirtation with decadence. "Premonition" and "Change-ling" were dance-club hits despite mediocre album sales.

In the case of *Empires* the poor sales were partly due to Arista's failure to press enough copies to meet the demand when it had its foot in the door of the British top thirty.

Even though Simple Minds' world-wide sales totaled barely 100,000 copies, Virgin Records had been sniffing out the band for a while, sensing unfulfilled potential. In a serpentine courtship-turned-negotiation with Virgin Records head Simon Draper and Virgin director Richard Branson, a deal was struck—a deal that, crucially for the next phase of their career, included support for an American tour.

Though their first U.S. tour would pack little commercial wallop (Findlay recalls playing to about thirty people in a New Jersey club) Kerr and bandmates had a new landscape to put music to. They incorporated a subtle brand of funk into the first Virgin album, *Sons And Fascination*. It was time to change producers, but when Todd Rundgren refused to

Jimmy Iovine said, "I'm gonna make you get the songs up front, and you're gonna have to work really hard on your arrangements..."

leave his home studio to come work on their turf, they again got their second choice: unreconstructed art-rock muso Steve Hillage. Though the sessions were rocky—the band seemed almost frightened by their expanded possibilities—they were so productive that a companion disc, the seven-song *Sister Feelings Call*, went out with *Sons* as a free bonus. It would later be released on its own, and indeed, songs like "The American" and "Sound In 70 Cities" were evocative, danceable instrumentals of a high order.

As brilliant as Simple Minds could occasionally be, they hadn't truly jelled until 1982's "Promised You A Miracle." There Kerr's vocal had true grit edged with warmth and ethereality. By now original drummer Brian McGee had married and departed the band and interim drummer Kenny Hyslop had patched together the melody and riff that became "Promised" from a funk song fragment he'd taped off a radio station in New York. The result was, coincidentally, built like a radio hit, and it would help catapult *New Gold Dream ('81-'82-'83-'84)*, produced by Peter Walsh, to double the sales of all previous Simple Minds albums. The ominous "King Is White And In The Crowd" was sparked by the shocking film footage of Anwar Sadat's assassination. The entire album, with its almost kitschy Christian cross enclosing a flaming heart on the cover, declared the presence of a band to be reckoned with. It reached number three in the United Kingdom.

The cross aroused curiosity. So similar in many ways to their friends in U2, were Simple Minds also dedicated Christians? Were they born again? "I've never been away," Kerr told Bos, but in our New York meeting, he was careful to stake out his spiritual territory: "They say once a Catholic always a Catholic but I don't go to a Catholic church or nothin'—I don't believe in any of those corporations and I find so much of their stuff is based on fear. Ya don't fear God—God has compassion. I don't like all these icons and stuff. A lot of the bigger Catholic countries, I've noticed, have been the first to become fascist countries almost overnight. But I still think there's a sacred heart in all these books, in Krishna or whatever, a deep spiritual heart in the Catholic church. But it's been lost at this point in time."

By the time of 1984's *Sparkle In The Rain*, the cross had given way to an artless heraldic shield, Hyslop had given way to ace drummer Mel Gaynor, and under Steve Lillywhite, they put together an LP that may end up as a classic. "Up On The Catwalk" shudders with dangerous energy, "Waterfront" makes an anthem out of an evening stroll by the Glasgow harbor and "East At Easter," like some of U2's more powerful compositions, faces down a violent world with a kind of angry love. Mick MacNeil's keyboards and Charlie Burchill's guitar, sometimes indistinguishable, lash about like snapped cables. Even the often-derided cover of Lou Reed's "Street Hassle" feeds into the overall landscape of a lonely soul on the prowl.

Sparkle shot to the head of the British charts, but, in the typical profile of a successful U.K. band, Simple Minds were looking towards America even as the nay-sayers of the British press shot salvos at them for climbing on top. Despite given their wish to crack something major in America, though, the success of "Don't You Forget About Me" was a virtual accident. Kerr and band undertook it as a job, never asking for a share of the writing credit even though they wrought considerable changes in Keith Forsey's original composition, and Kerr was heard to complain about the song even as it rocketed up the U.S. charts. He blunts those complaints now: "A lot of people loved that song, it's a good stylish pop record, but there's something more to Simple Minds and I wanted to express that. The great thing about it is it went to #1, not #2, 'cause we said, 'This is gonna open a lot of doors for us in terms of radio playlists—people would give us a chance now.'"

But Plan A had been in motion long before the hit. The band actively sought out two favorite American studio wizards—Jimmy Iovine and Bob Clearmountain—and asked them separately, then together, if they'd like to produce them. "As it turned out," says Clearmountain, "Jimmy and I had been thinking of collaborating on a project—something good enough that we would both want to do it." Iovine, of course, has a list of prestige projects as long as a mike boom, from Lennon to Petty to Nicks to most recently, Lone Justice. Clearmountain, though a producer in his own right (Bryan Adams, Hall & Oates) is best known as the super-mixer of Springsteen's "Hungry Heart" and *Born In The U.S.A.*, the Stones' "Miss You," Jagger/Bowie's "Dancin' In The Street," and many other hits.

Simple Minds wanted, this time out, to be hounded into an album that was uncompromising but ready for airplay. "Steve (Lillywhite) is a great English producer," says Kerr, "He tends to get you feeling good and then lets you play. These guys really put us through it. It's like, 'Impress me, impress me,' the whole time. We knew up front we had to be extra-prepared, 'cause we met with Jimmy and he said, 'I'm gonna make you get the songs up front—'cause we usually come in with just jams and ideas—And you're gonna have to work really hard on your arrangements before you go into the studio.'"

Kerr et al, worked hard on songs through the late winter and early spring of '85. Meanwhile they acquired a new bass player, John Gibling, a Londoner of Jamaican descent. Gibling, like Mel Gaynor, had been doing sessions with the likes of Joan Armatrading and David Bowie since he was 15. Simple Minds met him while he was backing Peter Gabriel. John happened to own his own rehearsal studio on the London outskirts, and the band camped out there for a couple of weeks before hooking up with their co-producers at The Townhouse studio. They knew they had about seven weeks to make the record.

"Their desire was as strong as anybody's I've ever met," says Iovine, "The seven of us made this record." More than once, Iovine sent Kerr deeper into his notebook to polish a

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"Every song I've ever written has been a love song."

song. When "Sanctify Yourself" grew out of a compelling Mick MacNeil riff late in the schedule, Kerr stayed up the better part of two days to finish the lyrics. "It's a little bit like lifting weights," says Iovine. "Sometimes you don't accomplish anything 'til you burn a little bit."

As players, claims Iovine, few current bands touch Simple Minds. "A drummer like Mel Gaynor only comes along once in a great while," he says, and Clearmountain remembers looking out the control room window in amazement as Mel, never losing a beat, stuck a stick under one arm while he swigged Perrier. "Then he'd end up with a fill and look at us to see if we caught it." Gibling proved adept at finishing off songs, throwing in bridges and transitions at points where the band's three principal songwriters got stymied. MacNeil's central role is evident; the band is almost too reliant on his keyboards to provide the spines that snake nimbly from line to line and verse to verse. And Burchill, who Kerr conspicuously showcased during their Live Aid appearance, has ever-better control of a biting guitar tone that avoids clichés but energizes whole tracts of space in the arrangements. "Just

beautiful little notes," says Kerr, "Sometimes I say, 'Charles, listen to what you're doing there.' You couldn't get Charlie to jam with the Rolling Stones the same way you couldn't get Edge to jam with the Stones. At the end of the decade I think Charlie and Edge will have done a lot for guitar in the 80s."

You know Kerr feels his own vocal skills are growing, but he doesn't seem to feel a need to say or hear it. On "O Jungleground" ("I know Bruce has a 'Jungleground,' but he's not the only one") he's doing perhaps the most full-throated belting of his career; by stark contrast, he pulls up in "All The Things She Said" to make the line "Oh to be near you in the first morning light," a whispery soul chant. The intermittent R&B -style background vocals from the Simms Brothers (heard on recent Bowie work) unflinchingly lend drama to the new LP, especially on "Alive And Kicking," but it's when Robin Clark (who sang on Bowie's *Young Americans*) throws in that you're suddenly aware of Kerr's growth. He's loose and heated at the same time, and thanks to an early decision by Iovine and Clearmountain ("We really hit a chord on this whole project," says Iovine), he's loud and clear as never before in the mix.

The whole recording job, from London to Bearsville to New York mix-downs, appears to have been a Scottish-American love feast. It's not solely because of his Ohio-bred wife Chrissie that Kerr's looking forward to the two-installment tour that should take them all around the States in the coming months. They've made a video for "Alive And Kicking," getting soaked in a September hurricane to shoot it. The mood is up. "I feel people are really wanting the band to win just now," Kerr says. "We do want to grow up at a good pace, with a certain gracefulness. The college audience has been our lifeblood in America, and we want to do smaller venues when the promoters are saying, 'Do the big one, do 14,000.'"

One wonders about the prospects of enforced isolation from his new wife and child. "Ask me in five years. We've only been married a year and she hasn't toured and I haven't toured so it's been easy. We'll just have to see. We're both very strong, realistic individuals. People say to me, 'It must be really hard to keep it together,' but can you imagine if I was married to, say, a girl who works in a shoe shop in Glasgow?"

Back when Jim Kerr dropped out of secondary school, he had a chance to work in the civil service. "Like, 'Wow, you've made it, you won't have to work in the rain.'" He turned it down, of course, and it's been eight years of some struggle to be poised where he is now. He's ready to do the job. "Rock 'n' roll's a fantastic art form. You make a record that goes out to all these radio stations around the world. If you did a painting it would take forever to. So that communication's a great, great thing. You meet people who are getting from your records the same thing you're getting. I take rock very seriously. We have the greatest job in the world. And we're gonna do it with taste. We're gonna get there." ☐

Complex Devices

Mel Gaynor plays Premier drums and Zildjian cymbals and uses his own snare as well as Bob Clearmountain's Ludwig on record. **John Gibling** plucks Music Man basses, fretted and fretless. **Charlie Burchill** plangs a "somewhat customized" Strat through a MESA/Boogie. His effects include a Roland chorus echo, Roland digital delay, Yamaha analog delay, MXR pitch shifter and compressors.

Mick MacNeil plinks a Jupiter 8, a JX3P, an OB-8, a Yamaha CB-70 electric grand and DX7, a Korg CX3 organ, a Hammond B-3 on record, and a Bösendorfer grand. This is augmented with "the same stuff as Charlie." MacNeil also used an Emulator II to sample rehearsal sounds, which later became part of the rhythm track for "Sanctify Yourself." **Jim Kerr** ululates through a Neumann U-87. Clearmountain says it gives a very neutral, natural sound.

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By Scott Isler

Parent *TERRO*R

Insidious Rock Lyrics:
The Inquisition Begins

BBPLOOMHGHCEEK!!

The gentle P. A. speakers planted in room SR-253's ceiling aren't used to Van Halen's "Hot For Teacher" at nine in the morning. Neither is anyone in the U.S. Senate hearing room, for that matter. The sudden blasts of Eddie Van Halen's guitar caroming off the marble pilasters are a fitting aural anomaly. It's *The Day Rock Went To Washington*.

And not willingly. Normally the recording industry loves publicity—but not necessarily the kind that links rock music with rape, murder and teenage suicide. Yet those were the bum raps that rock, and especially heavy metal were facing on September 19 before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. At 9:30 that morning the committee was holding a "Hearing on Record Labeling"—and they didn't mean the piece of paper glued to the center of a vinyl disc.

The controversy dates back to April, when a group of Washington mothers circulated a letter accusing rock music of becoming "pornographic and sexually explicit." What made music-biz executives take notice weren't the women so much as their husbands, among them Secretary of the Treasury James A. Baker III and Senator Albert Gore Jr. Rock music has always had its detractors,

Illustration by Tim Gabor

for including "pictures of women dressed in leather bondage masks, with whips in their hands, in chains and wrapped up in handcuffs."

But Ling clearly relished the lyrics best. The expletives started as a trickle, then picked up with his pulse. Ling climaxed with the masterful "Golden Showers" from the previously unknown Mentors: "All through my excrements you shall roam/ Bend up and smell my anal vapor/ Your face is my toilet paper."

There might have been more, but Danforth chose to gavel Ling down, adding deadpan "Sorry, your time has expired." The spectators burst out with laughter. More gavel.

Under questioning by the senators, Tipper Gore said there is currently "no way of knowing" what's on the records her daughter buys. Baker mentioned she bought Prince's *Purple Rain* album for her daughter unaware of "Darling Nikki" (misquoted by Ling) lurking within. She did, however, admit to Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.V.) that "sex and violence pervade every level of our society today... We certainly do not blame music for all of the ills that exist in the teenage population."

Sen. J. James Exon (D-Neb.) spoke up for the first time. A robust, grandfatherly type, Exon started by declaring, "This is the largest media event I have ever seen." He then asked Tipper Gore if, as he was led to believe, the PMRC sought neither federal legislation nor federal regulation on song lyrics "at least at this time." She agreed. "I suppose it's nice to have these hearings," Exon continued, addressing Danforth, "but I wonder, Mr. Chairman: If we're not talking about federal regulation and we're not talking about federal legislation, what is the reason for these hearings?" A round of applause. Danforth defended the session as "a forum for airing what a lot of people perceive as a real problem." "We indulge in too many publicity events," Exon countered, "that are far beyond the scope of legislation and regulation, which I think is our primary purpose."

Speaking of publicity events, the next witness was Frank Zappa. The guitarist/composer/misanthrope entered the room drastically attired in a tie and dark blue suit. His hair was neatly trimmed. He has gray sideburns and a discreet bald spot. Before Zappa would read his statement he said he needed to know whether the senators were planning legislation dealing with song lyrics; he had heard conflicting opinions. Exon replied, "I might join with Sen. Hollings or others on some kind of legislation or regulation unless the free enterprise system... sees fit to clean up your act." Zappa then read the First Amendment to the Constitution, "for reference," and a pared-down version of his lengthy printed statement.

He called the PMRC proposal "an ill-conceived piece of nonsense which fails to deliver any real benefits to children, infringes the civil liberties of people who are not children, and promises to keep the courts busy for years... No one has forced Mrs. Baker or Mrs. Gore to bring Prince or Sheena Easton into their homes... Apparently they insist on purchasing the works of contemporary recording artists in order to support a personal illusion of aerobic sophistication. Ladies, be advised: The \$8.98 purchase price does not entitle you to a kiss on the foot from the composer of performer."

Zappa also blasted major record labels and the Recording Industry Association of America for "bargain[ing] away the rights of composers, performers and retailers in order to pass H.R. 2911, the Blank Tape Tax." He decried the issue of sex in lyrics as a smokescreen to "distract people from thinking about an unfair tax." But he seemed angriest at a perceived conflict of interest: "Is it proper," Zappa asked rhetorically, "that the husband of a PMRC non-member/founder/person sits on any committee considering business pertaining to the Blank Tape Tax or his wife's lobbying organization? This committee has three that we know about: Senator Packwood, Senator Danforth and Senator Gore." (Dan-

forth and Packwood's wives *plus* the wives of committee members Hollings and Paul S. Trible, Jr., R-Wa., signed a May 31 PMRC letter to the Recording Industry Association of America outlining their request.)

Easing up a bit from his attack on "somebody's hobby project," Zappa announced a way to "give parents what they really want, which is accurate information as to what is inside the album, without providing a stigma for the musicians who have played on the album": full disclosure of lyrics on a sheet shrink-wrapped over an album's back cover. This was one of the PMRC's requests, and not as simple as it sounds.



Papa Frank Zappa en route to Toys 'R' Us.

Music publishers, not record companies, usually own copyrights on lyrics. Zappa acknowledged that reprinting lyrics would cost money, and suggested that perhaps the government should pay for the service.

Albert Gore began committee questioning of Zappa by admitting he was a fan "believe it or not, and I respect you as a true original and a tremendously talented musician." If so, Gore was the only fan Zappa had on the committee. Slade Gorton (R-Wash.), "astounded at the courtesy" Gore displayed, called Zappa's statement "boorish, incredibly and insensitively insulting" to the PMRC, and said Zappa gave "the first amendment of the Constitution of the U.S. a bad name, if I felt you had the slightest understanding of it, which I don't." Gorton also said Zappa didn't know the difference between "government action" and "private action." "Is this private action?" Zappa retorted.

Exon, "surprised" at Gore's familiarity with Zappa, confessed he had "never heard any of your music, to my knowledge." "I would be more than happy to recite *my* lyrics to you!" Zappa replied. Gore, possibly wanting to score points with his idol, turned to Exon and said, "You've probably never heard of the Mothers of Invention." "I have heard of Glenn Miller and Mitch Miller," Exon said, and addressed Zappa: "You ever performed with them?" "As a matter of fact," Zappa answered, "I took music lessons in grade school from Mitch Miller's brother." "Ah," Exon sighed, "that's the first sign of hope we've had."

Hawkins, not a member of the committee but still present, next engaged Zappa in a dialogue so bizarre only a transcript can do it justice. Referring to an earlier comment of Zappa's, the distinguished senator from Florida began:

HAWKINS: You say you have four children?

ZAPPA: Yes.

HAWKINS: Do you ever purchase toys for those children?

ZAPPA: No, my wife does.

HAWKINS: [unsettled] Well, I might tell you that if you were

to go into toy stores—which is very educational for fathers, by the way, it's a paternal responsibility to buy toys for children—that you may look on the box and the box says, "suitable for five to seven years of age"—or "eight to fifteen," or "fifteen and above"—to give you some guidance for a toy for a child. Do you object to that?

ZAPPA: In a way, I do. Because that means somebody in an office someplace is making a decision about how smart my child is.

HAWKINS: I'd be interested to see what toys your kids have.

ZAPPA: Why would you be interested?

HAWKINS: Just as a point of interest.

ZAPPA: Well, come on over to the house, I'll show 'em to you.

HAWKINS: I might do that. Do you make a profit from sales of rock records?

ZAPPA: Yes.

HAWKINS: So you do profit from sales of rock records?

ZAPPA: Yes.

HAWKINS: Thank you. I think that statement tells the story to the committee. [*hisses from spectators*]

In striking contrast to Zappa, the next witness was golden boy John Denver. With gleaming cheeks of tan, Denver all but saluted the flag as he announced what a "great honor and privilege" it was to appear and "take advantage of the opportunity given me in our free society to speak my mind." But anyone who thought Denver had come out against smut was selling him short. If the government intervened in the matter of song lyrics, Denver argued, "this would approach

censorship...I am strongly opposed to censorship of any kind, in our society or anywhere else in the world." He cited his own "Rocky Mountain High," banned from some radio stations as a "drug-related" song "by people who had never seen or been to the Rocky Mountains"; and his film *Oh, God!* which, he said, some newspapers refused to advertise and some theaters refused to name on their marquees.

Denver suggested that "explicit lyrics and graphic videos are not so far removed from what is seen on television every day and night... That we should point our fingers at the record industry while watching the general public at a nationally televised baseball game chant in unison, 'The Blue Jays suck,' is ludicrous."

Danforth placated Denver, saying there was "zero chance" of legislation to deal with song lyrics. The singer reminded the senator that several of his colleagues had said "if it's possible to make legislation, you would go further with this." He couldn't have been reassured by Hollings, who threatened that unless the record industry developed some discipline, "there's going to have to be legislation."

"I've been a fan of yours for a long time," Gore gushed to Denver, thus revealing broad musical taste or a severe credibility problem. He cited the statistical increase in young people's suicides that the PMRC's Baker mentioned earlier; was it responsible, he asked, for a record company to issue a song glorifying suicide? Denver paused before answering. "I would not like to be the one to tell a record company or an artist what to do."

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The Artists Speak

NEVER DID AND NEVER WILL

Mark Knopfler

It's just another diversionary tactic engineered by a cynical and manipulative regime. I have visions of Germany, of the burning of the books. And it's not paranoid, because it happened already. There was the burning of the early rock 'n' roll records in America. Who's to say it's not going to happen again? Where do you stop?

Without getting pompous about it, censorship works to the detriment of society in the long run. Why stop at records? Let's take a look at all these dodgy Shakespeare plays. I can think of many more potential targets for these good citizens and patriots. Don't get me started...."

June Pointer

I am against the ratings. Parents should take care of their own kids—it's a parent's responsibility to know what their kids are doing, what they're listening to or watching. Kids can already see violent or sexy things on TV. If parents are in control, they'll be in control of that."

AC/DC

There's only one demon in America—it's called censorship. People who want to strangle other people's rights are possessed by one of the worst devils around. Rock 'n' roll is about one simple thing: Freedom. The freedom to be who you want, to dream and to feel what you want. Rock 'n' roll isn't deadly serious stuff, it's fun, but these gloomy types don't seem to understand that."

John Cougar Mellencamp

If the attempt to label records goes through... They'll label records X or R rated, and K-Mart's and family stores will refuse to carry them. They've started with the pretense that it's sex and violence they're after. But in the long run they're going to start censoring anything political... They tried to get Woody Guthrie off the airwaves in the 30s, and in the 80s they're trying to get Mark Twain off the shelves. Is that where this country is going?"

Marianne Faithfull

I didn't like the inherent threat that if the record industry doesn't police itself somebody else will. One of the things I'm worried about is the title of my new album—*Sex At The Top*—that with all this going around if I should use a title like that, even though it's obviously an ironic one. I think I will though—I'm not about to change a title because of those ladies in Washington and their wimpy kids.

I take the issue very seriously. If there is anything vital about rock 'n' roll, it's that it is [uncensored]. Rock has to be pushed as far as possible to get anything out of it. I think this comes up every now and then when people think records are getting too important, and have too much influence on their kids' lives. It also reminds me of the era of 'race' records—'This music is contaminating our children.' It's the same vibe—this music is dirtying the white children's minds. But it all goes back to Oscar Wilde, that there's no such thing as a bad book, it's all in people's minds. Well, there's no such thing as a dirty record."

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Finally, the headliner: Twisted Sister's Dee Snider ambled in wearing blue jeans, a faded denim sleeveless jacket, black muscle T-shirt, shades and that mountain of hair—but no makeup. Hollings gaped in awe. Snider began by spelling out his name (probably for the benefit of *People* magazine), and identifying himself as thirty years old, married and the father of a three-year-old son. "I was born and raised a Christian, and I still adhere to those principles. Believe it or not, I do not drink, I do not smoke, and I do not do drugs....I pride myself on writing songs that are consistent with my above-mentioned beliefs."

Snider concentrated on redressing three instances of "character assassination" by the PMRC. Tipper Gore had charged Twisted Sister's song "Under The Blade" with "encouraging sadomasochism, bondage and rape." "On the contrary," Snider said, "the words in question are about surgery and the fear it instills in people....I can state categorically that the only sadomasochism, bondage and rape in this song is in the mind of Ms. Gore."

Another Twisted Sister track, "We're Not Gonna Take It," made a PMRC list of fifteen "blatant" songs for its "violent lyric content." "There is absolutely no violence of any type either sung about or implied anywhere in the song," Snider maintained. Theorizing that the PMRC confused the video—in which a boy wreaks revenge on his bullying father—with the song, Snider explained that the visual presentation "was meant to be a cartoon with human actors playing variations on the Road Runner/Wile E. Coyote theme." He added that the United Way of America "has been granted a request to use portions of the video in a program on the changing American family."

Third, Snider quoted Tipper Gore referring to T-shirts: "You see 'Twisted Sister' and a woman in handcuffs sort of

spread-eagled.' This is an outright lie....We have always taken great pains to steer clear of sexism in our merchandise, records, stage show and personal lives....I'm tired of running into kids on the street who tell me they can't play our records anymore because of the misinformation their parents are being fed by the PMRC....Parents can thank the PMRC for reminding them that there is no substitute for parental guidance. But that is where the PMRC's job ends."

When Senator Gore's turn came to question Snider, the singer put in the first word. "Excuse me," Snider interrupted, "are you gonna tell me you're a big fan of my music?" But Gore, or his wife, had done his homework. The senator merely asked what the initials of Snider's fan club, the S.M.F. Friends of Twisted Sister, stood for. "The Sick Motherfucking Friends of Twisted Sister," Snider said without wincing. "Is this also a Christian group?" Gore asked. "I don't believe profanity has anything to do with Christianity," Snider replied.

Coming to the defense of his attacked wife, Gore asked, apropos of "Under The Blade," if Snider ever had surgery with his legs tied and hands strapped—images taken from the song. Snider explained the song "was written about my guitar player Eddie Ojeda. He was having a polyp removed from his throat and he was very fearful of this operation....I said it was about the *fear* of operations." He admitted there was no reference to a hospital in the song.

"So it's not a wild leap of imagination," Gore deduced triumphantly, "to jump to the conclusion that that's about something other than surgery or hospitals, neither of which are mentioned in the song." Snider responded, "Ms. Gore was looking for sadomasochism and bondage, and she found it. Someone looking for surgical references would have found it as well."

"Ayup," Gore puffed, unconvinced. "If lyrics aren't printed,

John Paul Jones

As a parent I have myself been slightly taken aback by some rock lyrics in the past, but it's nothing to the evil of censorship."

Joni Mitchell

I think it's really dangerous. It's not going to stop anything, the X rating is like any repression. Look at bootlegging in this country during prohibition—it doesn't work. All it does is go underground and makes it more enticing than ever, and something that would probably go right in your kid's ear and out the other now suddenly is juicier and more tempting. I think it's a really stupid solution; it's typical of this conservative approach to everything. Good and evil in this country suddenly are polarized again to a Gothic degree. Jimmy Swaggart, to me, is just as god-awful evil-looking as the guys prancing around in spiderwebs and studs. He's supposed to be playing Mr. Theater of Good, and they're Mr. Theater of Evil, but, except for costumes, I don't see them looking that much different. Any primitive culture always have their demons dressed up and bouncing around, and I think these demons are part of our culture and that they are important—they represent all things murky and dark. An evangelist gets up and goes—"the Devil!"—all show biz, they play the same halls.

They should remember *House of Wax* and some of the movies that titillated them in their youth and they should ask themselves, "How badly did that scar me as an adult? What am I protecting my kid from?"

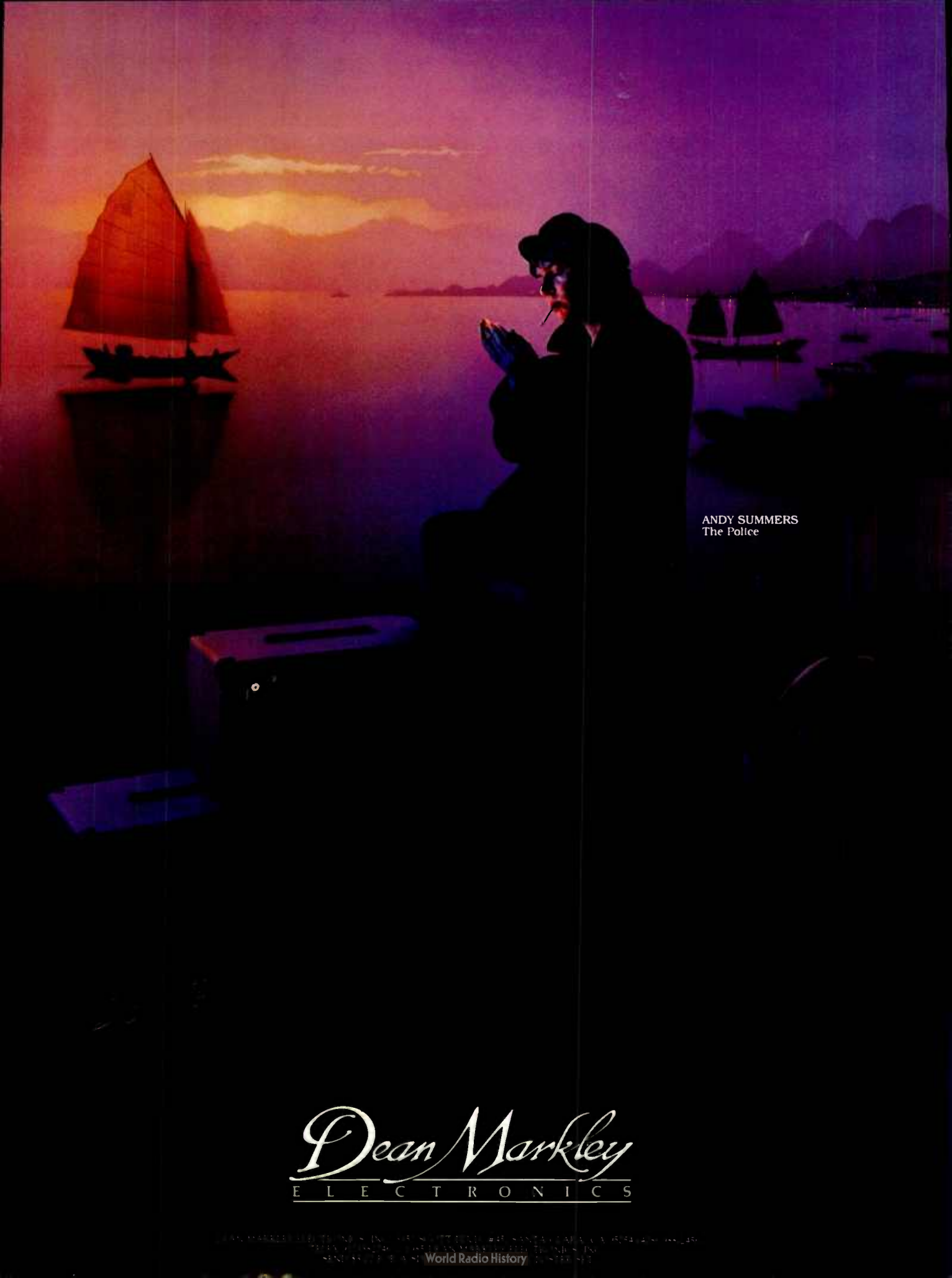
T-Bone Burnett

I read in the newspaper that there was a government survey of violence in videos. And the three examples they chose were the Rolling Stones' "Undercover Of The Night," "Thriller" by Michael Jackson, and "The Murder Weapon" by T-Bone Burnett. And although I was flattered to be put in such exalted company, I thought it was ironic that the song was actually about the *tongue* and how wicked it can be. It's an anti-violence song in the extreme; it's not just saying all nuclear weapons are bad, it's saying our tongues are bad. But just because of its title it was called a violent video.

"Much of what passes for music these days is diabolical—but in a deeper sense than is being protested in Washington. There's little joy—and by that I do not mean happiness—or generosity or discovery in the music itself, let alone the lyrics.

"I have two daughters myself. I think rating records is like putting a band-aid on someone who's had his head cut off. The record companies aren't in the business of protecting the morality of the society. As long as people want to buy the stuff they'll distribute it.

The problem has more to do with the Babylonian houses many of those people in Washington live in. Some kid on the street has already heard much worse than anything he's going to hear on some rock 'n' roll record. I've read that in certain courts in Europe in the olden days if a certain discord was hit by the court musicians the king would abdicate. If that's true then our politicians should have beaten their swords into plows long ago.



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what choice does a parent have, to sit down and listen to every song on the album?"

"Well, if they're really concerned about it," Snider said, "I think that they have to."

Gore: "Do you think that's reasonable to expect parents to do that?"

Snider: "Being a parent isn't a reasonable thing."

After Gore's fulmination, Rockefeller asked Snider if, "when your child is twelve and in school," he would take his son on tour with him. Snider said he would not take his child out of school. "Then how will it be possible for you, as a responsible parent, to spend the time you suggest listening to these records, finding out what you want your son to listen to?"

"To be perfectly honest," Snider replied to laughter and applause, "nine years from now I will be well retired. I'll have more time with my son than any parent probably ever spent. That's one beautiful thing about rock 'n' roll: that I can retire—hopefully—at a very early age."

When Snider mentioned that he and his wife will be going through their son's records "later on," Rockefeller shot back, "Do you expect me to believe that?" "You can," Snider said, "I'm terminally teenage. I'll be listening to my son's records." Rockefeller asked if it didn't strike Snider "as just a little bit naive and unrealistic" to expect working parents to listen to "record after record, tape after tape." Snider recalled that "as a record buyer, with my allowance, I was lucky to afford one album a week—usually it was one a month. Listening to one record a week I don't consider a hardship."

After Snider left the show was over, though the hearing was still on. It was 12:30 p.m., and the room emptied of visitors, flash-happy photographers, journalists—and some senators. That left a skeleton crew to hear probably the most

important figure to appear before the committee, even though he wasn't a celebrity.

Stanley M. Gortikov is president of the RIAA, whose member companies supply, by his estimate, about eighty-five percent of the records and prerecorded tapes sold in the U.S. As a figurehead, Gortikov is the person taking the most heat on the issue of rock lyrics. His initial response to the PMRC was a long letter, dated August 5, in which he pointed out that several of the women's requests to record companies were beyond their control. These included requests that objectionable album covers be sold under wraps or "behind the counter"; for concert ratings "according to lyrics and onstage performance"; for video ratings; and that radio stations be supplied with printed lyrics along with recordings.

In July Gortikov met with representatives of nineteen companies supplying "approximately eighty percent" of the U.S. prerecorded music market. They agreed to apply individually a uniform printed warning to recordings with "blatant explicit lyric content." Gortikov suggested a possible wording of "Parental Guidance: Explicit Lyrics."

This wasn't good enough for the PMRC. Howar responded immediately to Gortikov's missive, insisting on printed lyrics and a panel to set "specific guidelines" for the warning. On September 12 Gortikov and Tipper Gore faced off as part of a panel on "porn rock" held at the Radio '85 convention in Dallas. Probably tired of being the whipping boy (no sadomasochistic imagery intended), a testy Gortikov implied the PMRC was getting carried away by a whirlwind of publicity: "Your medium," he said, "is becoming more vital than your message."

Gortikov tried to maintain the offensive in Washington. His statement to the senate committee alluded to the PMRC's "unfairness" in characterizing "all artists and all [recording] companies as universal practitioners of evil." And "why is only rock music unfairly singled out for the scrutiny of the PMRC and the United States Senate," he asked, "while all other explicit negative influences on younger children go untargeted?...The PMRC has said clearly that it does not want censorship. I fear that the only acceptable translation of the wishes of the PMRC will constitute an ad hoc first-stage form of censorship."

But Gortikov found himself on the ropes after a relentless grilling by the senators. Danforth, noting that "I don't think it's right to attack others," found it "perfectly reasonable and even commendable for concerned parents" to call attention to "what's going on in this country." "It's reasonable," Gortikov countered, "providing the perspective is accurate. The perspective is not."

"Do you deny the testimony of the PMRC," Danforth asked, "the lyrics that they read to us this morning?" Gortikov brought up USA For Africa's "We Are The World" as an example of "positive messages that are just as important as the negative ones....We are taking action. We ask that that action be given a chance in the marketplace to work."

Danforth questioned the effectiveness of voluntary individual warnings: "I can't blame [the PMRC] for being a little bit wary...I don't feel there is much basis for feeling that record companies are terribly responsible. Why [will] somebody who is making a profit selling records glorifying incest be a responsible body to disclose anything?" When Gortikov suggested the film industry is responsible through the Motion Pictures Association of America, Danforth reminded him that "you don't want your association to rate anybody. You want each company to do it individually." "Because I don't think there are standards that can be developed for lyrics," Gortikov replied. "I've even suggested to the PMRC that if it has a preferred set of standards or guidelines, give them to me; let me communicate those to the record companies. I have not had a response."

Tom Waits

I haven't really thought about that issue. For some reason I thought it didn't really touch me. It's the Jerry Falwells. It's an ongoing thing.

They rate films. That was a big thing. Then we got used to it. To the point where every filmmaker does three different versions of his film—with and without nudity, with and without profanity, television, HBO.

I don't condone it at all. I just haven't been confronted. If I were directly confronted by somebody trying to manipulate what I do, we would probably have to mix it up. So I'll wait 'til that happens. Then you'll hear the explosion.

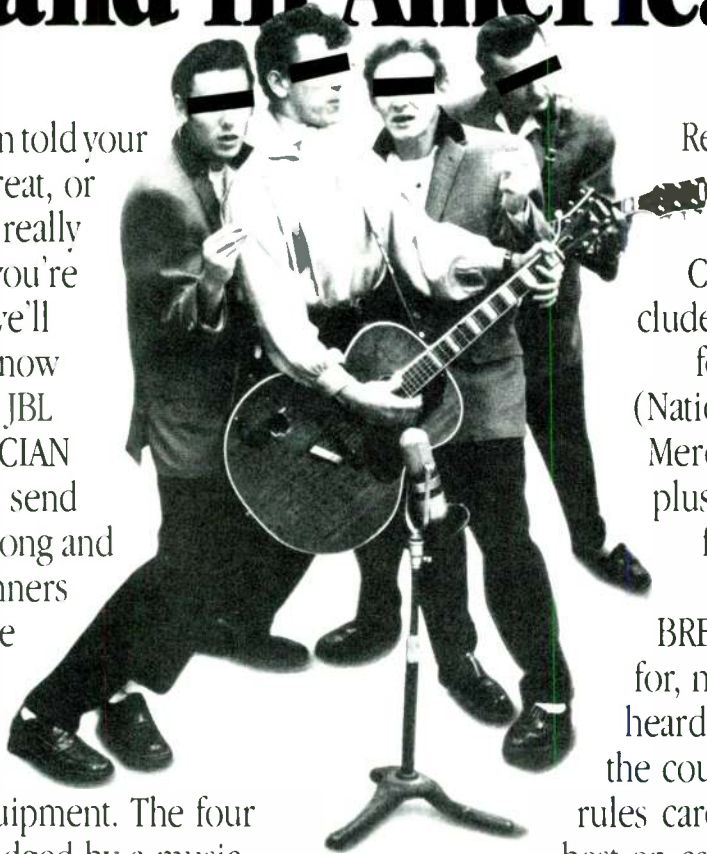
Paul Kantner

I'm all for total censorship. It's been one of the sounding boards of rock 'n' roll since Bill Haley. And it's probably sold more records than anything else. It's a repressive tool, but in the long run it serves nobody's purpose better than our own. The Frank Zappa attitude is to get real offended by all of this, but as you get—I hate to say this—older, you see that it's not that big a deal, and it does help record sales.

"This country's great at striking a balance. There are so many different elements, it's so huge, that for anybody to take over in one fashion would be almost impossible. This country's founded on outlaw genes, people who don't want to be fucked with. That's one of the reasons I like this country so much."

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The rest of the hearing ground on with Danforth, Larry Pressler (R-S.D.) and Gore the only senators in attendance (who knows what Gore would have faced at home if he had left early.) They heard Joe Stuessy, a University of Texas (San Antonio) music professor who teaches college kids the history of rock music. In his testimony, Stuessy described heavy metal as "a mean-spirited music" which has "as a central characteristic the element of hate." Stuessy also brought up the pseudo-issue of backward masking, which not even the PMRC has been talking about lately. Appearing with Stuessy was Paul King, a Memphis psychiatrist who works with disturbed teenagers. "Nearly all of my patients worship heavy metal music," King said, neglecting to add if most of them also wore sneakers.

The last, collective "witness" was a panel of four radio figures. Edward Fritts, president of the National Association of Broadcasters, mentioned that the RIAA "has formally rejected" his request that lyric sheets be sent to radio stations with recordings. William Steding, executive vice president of the Central Broadcast Division, Bonneville International Corporation, recounted how Bonneville's KAFM in Dallas/Fort Worth rose "to great success over the last three years since entering the Contemporary Hit Radio format and adopting policies of eliminating offensive music." Robert Sabatini Jr. of WRKC-FM, King's College, Wilkes-Barre, Pa. was appropriately well-intentioned and muddled warning that record ratings "would encourage record companies to sign artists that don't cause controversy...This would cut back on the availability of programming for alternative music stations." ("The cynicism of whoever's running your college station blows my mind," Danforth marveled afterward.) Last but not least, DJ Cerphe Colwell noted that "young people in general have become more sophisticated.... Many musicians are viewed as little more than glorified comic book characters."


And then, five hours after the hearing started, it was over. But it wasn't really over. Although the senate hearing provided a catharsis, the issue was still there. Exactly a week later, the New Music Seminar in New York held a well-attended panel on the rock lyrics controversy. The PMRC declined to participate, yet the panelists did not present a united front. Writer Dave Marsh claimed he had a copy of a June 7 RIAA memo in which Gortikov hints at a blacklist to appease the PMRC. After the panel, Gortikov claimed he hadn't received much feedback since his day in Washington; "the crescendo was the hearing." He maintained his opposition

to printing lyrics on album covers, not to mention the "impossibility of displaying lyrics on cassette boxes." His attitude now, he said, was to ride out the storm: "To do nothing is okay. Let's see what doing nothing will do."

Nothing's not enough for Danny Goldberg, who established the Musical Majority in mid-September. The group's roster of industry figures includes John Cougar Mellencamp, Hall & Oates, Glenn Frey, Toto and Billy Squier. On September 30, at Goldberg's urging, Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley denounced the PMRC's call for record ratings. "We wanted some government people to stand up for the music community," Goldberg says. At the same press conference, MCA Records president Irving Azoff announced his company would not place warning labels on any of its recordings, and would investigate ways to get lyric sheets into stores. MCA joins A&M, Geffen, Island, I.R.S., Tommy Boy, Modern and Goldberg's own Gold Mountain in refusing to toe the RIAA line.

"The RIAA has done a very bad job of articulating the good things about our business," Goldberg says. He also accuses RIAA president Stanley Gortikov of not standing up to senatorial intimidation for fear of jeopardizing possible legislation on home-taping royalties. "If anyone thinks a tape tax is in any way going to balance out a record warning label, they're out of their mind," notes Goldberg adding, "none of us expected that in America we'd have to defend our right to run a business."

So the PMRC has the record industry caught between rock and a hard place—the home taping issue. But even if these self-proclaimed guardians of morality get their way, the results may be antithetical to their intention. "It's only gonna help sell Mentors records," says Bill Hein, chairman of the board of directors, Enigma Entertainment Corporation. Enigma presses and distributes Metalblade Records, whose Mentors Hein describes as an "utterly ridiculous parody band."

"There's a difference between a heavy metal record and yelling 'fire' in a crowded theater," Hein says. "The suggestion that a heavy metal lyric will cause someone to be a wild-eyed murderer is really stretching it. It's like blaming Wagner for Hitler." 

DANFORTH: You must understand, sir, that a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between. This is a sharp time now, a precise time—we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world. Now, by God's grace, the shining sun is up. — *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller

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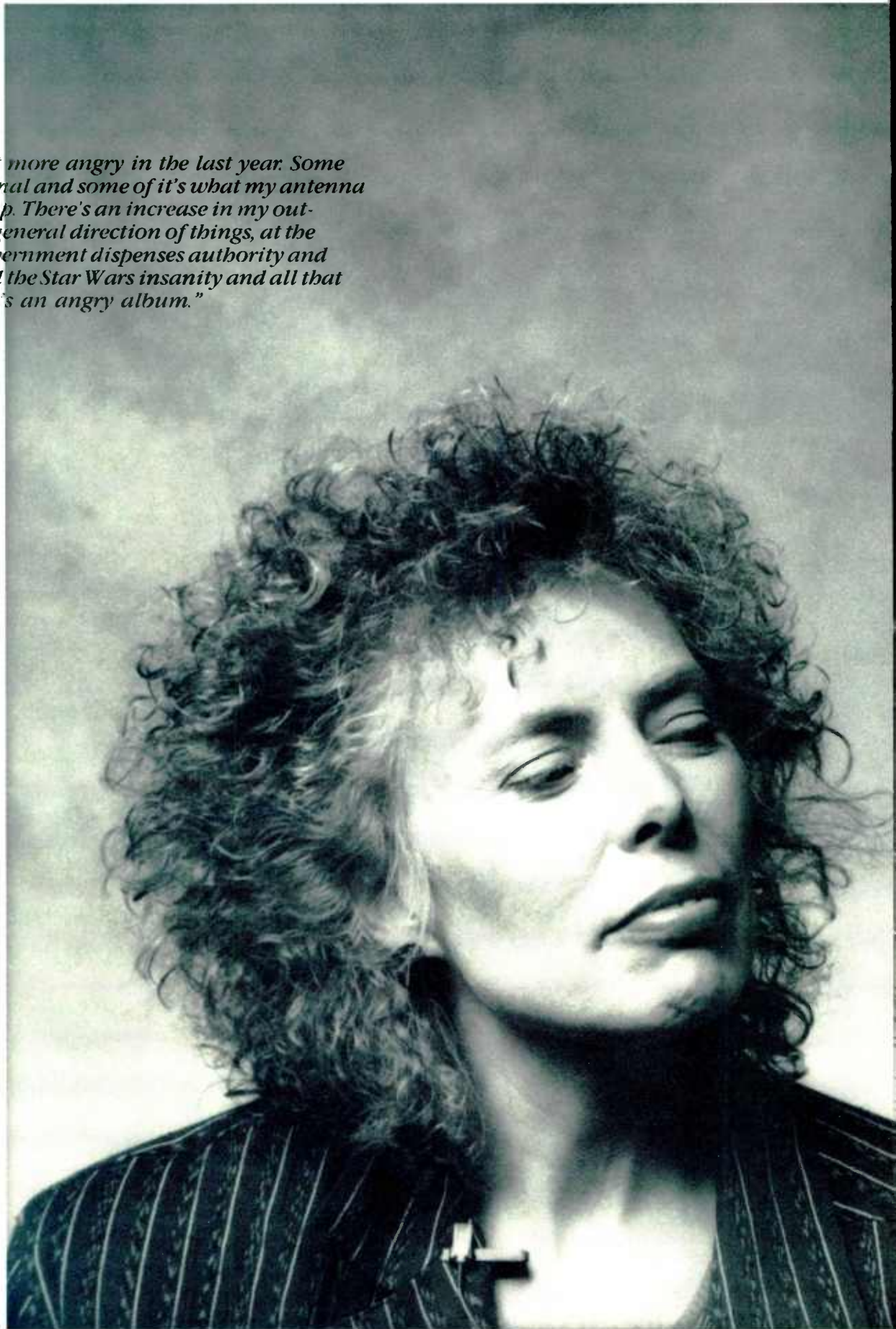
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I have felt more angry in the last year. Some of it's personal and some of it's what my antenna is picking up. There's an increase in my outrage at the general direction of things, at the way the government dispenses authority and money, and the Star Wars insanity and all that business. It's an angry album."

NORMAN SEEFF





JONI MITCHELL LOSES HER COOL

—
BY BILL FLANAGAN
—

Joni Mitchell's songs pour from her soul, but her head gets in there, too. When Mitchell came up with the line "Sometimes change comes at you like a broadside accident," she first paired it with, "You get minor cuts and bruises, that's all/You could hammer out the dents." That was a cute little metaphor in the tradition of "Electricity" and "You Turn Me On, I'm a Radio," but the songwriter wasn't happy with it. After some fiddling she changed the second line to: "There is chaos to the order, random things you can't prevent."

That said more; perspiration added to the inspiration. Mitchell finished the song, called it "Good Friends," and cut it as a duet with Michael McDonald. A nice tune, if not as autobiographical as her best-loved work.

Then one night Mitchell and her husband, bassist Larry Klein, were driving down California's Pacific Coast Highway when—BaBoom—a drunk driver plows right into them. Joni destroyed the windshield with her head, her car was totaled—but she and her husband both walked away okay.

Sometimes autobiography is imposed from above.

"If we hadn't been driving a luxury car we probably would have been killed," Mitchell says. "That tank saved our lives." Which brings up a subject almost as central to Mitchell's recent work as autobiography: Money.

"I can't say that I don't like money," she admits, mentioning her penchant for buying out the local art store's whole supply of her favorite paint. "But I don't like what money does to people. I know I could live quite happily with so much less, but once you've had something and you come down to less you're really in danger of embitterment. No furry human animal likes to have less than they had before."

Dog Eat Dog, Joni Mitchell's new album, is full of the fruit of the root of all evil. Throughout the LP untaxed TV evangelists sprout hypocrisies while Ethiopian children suffer the fall-out of corporate greed. Mitchell has always been sensitive to social issues, from "The Fiddle And The Drum" to "Woodstock," but this latest collection represents her most sustained political statement. "There's danger in this land," she declares in one song, making no bones about her contempt for the rightward swing of the political pendulum. Hard to believe Joni and Neil Young go so far back together.

Melodically *Dog Eat Dog* continues in the pop vein of Mitchell's last LP *Wild Things Run Fast*. The arrangements, prone as ever to the songwriter's audio idiosyncracies, make use of the Fairlight and other rich man's machinery.

Before the album began Larry Klein got up early mornings to take Fairlight lessons, and when recording started sonic scientist Thomas Dolby was brought in to act as co-producer/synth tour guide. But the new technology Mitchell employed never overpowers her material in the way that the jazz players on *Mingus* sometimes challenged her spotlight. Every sound on *Dog Eat Dog* serves its song. And the sounds need not

When I did Mingus the jazz camp considered me an opportunist. Little did they know that album cost me everything."



have been generated by high-tech gear to merit inclusion; on "Empty, Try Another," an ode to frustrated smokers, Joni used a cigarette machine for percussion. Tone colors add nuance to the pieces, but space is used as generously as virtuosity.

Maybe in the long run the biggest lesson Charles Mingus taught Joni Mitchell was how to know what not to say.

Dog Eat Dog is articulate, beautifully crafted and heartfelt.

The only possible source of concern for long-time fans is that the pop figure who has written most movingly about love here all but ignores the subject. Could it mean that marriage is the antidote to romance?

"No," Mitchell smiles. "The last album was so dominantly about love, I guess for a while I just exhausted the field. You know, you plant wheat one year and maybe flax the next. I don't like to repeat myself too much."

Repeating herself has never been one of Mitchell's problems. She was the doe-eyed folkie of "Both Sides Now" and "Chelsea Morning," the confessional poet of *Blue* and *For The Roses*, and the slick pop craftsman of "Help Me" and "Free Man In Paris." At the height of her fame Mitchell began exploring unusual rhythms and long, droning structures with *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*, a still controversial album which, a decade after its 1975 recording, Prince said was the last album he loved. That gave Mitchell a big kick not because Prince is a superstar to a new generation (he's paid tribute to her by performing "Case Of You" live and dubbing a Time album *Ice Cream Castles*) but because he said it in *Rolling Stone*, the magazine that labeled *Hissing* the worst record of its year. Ten years later Mitchell still feels bad about that. She still feels bad, too, about the abuse she took for *Mingus*, a collection of collaborations initiated by the great bassist but not realized until after his death. That album cost Mitchell the world, but it helped her to realize her soul.

In Hollywood in the fall of '85 Joni Mitchell carries all these years, all that history, and all the contrasting impressions. Her manner as open and outspoken as her new songs, Mitchell is willing to answer any question and let the writer decide what's fit to print.

"I'm a pretty open person," she explains. "One of the reasons I have a rep for being reclusive is because I'm either open all the way or I'm shut down. There's a penalty you pay for going through life being an open person: You deliver information into the hands of people who will use it against you. So you pay the dues and after a certain point you have to withdraw to charge your batteries. Then you go out again when you get strong enough. I don't know how to keep things at arm's length. I'm a truth monger."

MUSICIAN: Do you ever feel you have an unfair advantage in a song? You get to tell the story from your perspective, and everyone hears your point of view. It must be rough on your subjects: "I Had A King," "The Last Time I Saw Richard."

MITCHELL: I never thought of it as an unfair advantage. I often thought that in daily life there's an unfair disadvantage. It's the great afterthought. You say things to people and suddenly you're aware they think you're an asshole. You're not, but they don't have the background on what you meant and misinterpret it. I think songwriting is an advantage. All poetry is. I picked up a girl hitchhiking and she said, "I used to write poetry." I said, "What do you mean 'used to'?" She said, "I used to stutter. When I stopped stuttering I stopped writing poetry." I thought that was a great analogy. Because if you were really having a good time, if everything were going really well, if every communication you have in the course of the day goes smoothly and gives you a sense of unity with your fellow man, well what kind of day is that? Those are rare days. Nothing you say is misunderstood. For most people the day is full of misunderstandings. That's why they come home with nervous tension around their neck. They lie in bed and say, "Why didn't I say that!" The Great Afterthought.

So yes, it's a luxury to have a voice to be able to express these things. It doesn't matter if it's private; just to write it down helps. And the process of making this thing—a poem or a painting—probably prevents cancer.

MUSICIAN: But sometimes you really nail somebody. Like in "Just Like This Train."

MITCHELL: Oh that was intentionally mean. "I hope your hairline recedes" [laughs]. That was mean. That was the meanest I ever got, though. You should've heard the first draft for "Carey"! Oh, that was a mean song. I wrote it for this guy's birthday. He was very mean to me, but he was a character and I liked him anyway. He just picked on me unnecessarily. It could have been anyone, any woman. So for his birthday I wrote him this song and after every verse said, "Oh, you're a mean old daddy but I like you." It had a few stings. I'm a double Scorpio, you know. Supposedly that makes me a stinger. I think I've pulled a lot of punches, considering what the stars endowed me with.

If you have a power, you can use or abuse it. I really enjoyed playing clubs for about forty people. I liked being center of attention. It was like being the life of the party. That I could handle. When it got to the big stage I found that I didn't enjoy it. It frightened me initially. I had a lot of bad experiences, including running off many a stage. I just thought it was too big for me, it was out of proportion. This kind of attention was absurd. I never believed that there were that many people who felt and thought that way, since I hadn't run into it as an individual. There was something deceptive about it. So I couldn't enjoy that power.

At that point I decided, "Okay, if you're going to worship me you'd better know who you're worshipping." Let me be on a pedestal that is not *separating* so much.

That was a conscious choice. It was a turning point. It was almost testing people. "How much human frailty can you take from your stars?" I think in retrospect it was worth it.

I don't like receiving things that don't mean anything. I couldn't get work in these little piddling clubs, and then I couldn't believe that suddenly overnight all these people loved me for the same songs. These same people sat in clubs when I was the opening act and talked through my show. Now suddenly they were rapt? I wanted to see where they were at. I wanted to show them where I was at.

I had a great seventh grade English teacher who told me it was important to write in my own blood. And I had become a fan of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*: "The Poet is the vainest of the vain, even before the ugliest of water buffalo doth he fan his tail. I've looked among him for an honest man and all I've dredged up are old god heads....He muddies his waters that he may appear deep." And on and on, insulting the poet mentality. His disciple says, "But Zarathustra, how can you say this? Aren't you a poet?" And Zarathustra says, "How else do I know?" [laughter].

And at the end he says, "But I see a new breed. They are the penitents of spirit. They write in their own blood." And I thought, "Yeah, that's the only way to do this with any kind



"Marriage is the new church," spake Cohen. "Ditto," said Joni.

of dignity." I don't think I even thought about the risk. I just thought this had to be done. But then you find out that when you get slammed, it's *you* that's getting slammed, not your act. Everything is that much more personal.

When Dylan sang, "You've got a lotta nerve..." I thought, hallelujah, man, the American pop song has grown up. It's wide open. Now you can write about anything that literature can write about. Up until that time rock 'n' roll songs were pretty much limited to "I'm a fool for ya baby."

Actresses often complain that there are no good parts for women. In my job I have the luxury of creating a soliloquy that I think is valuable at the time. So out of the nonsense that pours from my pen, I have to do my own censorship

based on what I want to put into the world. What do I think is nurturing, what do I think is valuable.

Like that line in "Just Like This Train." I thought, do I really want to say this? It seemed like a valuable human line. If I were given that line to read in a play I'd think "What a pithy part!" Obviously not all of what a person is, feels, thinks is worthy of putting in a song. You don't have to display your asshole any more than you have to limit yourself to only heroic roles. I guess the best of it would be to chronicle as much as possible the heroic parts of your thinking as well as your frailties, so you give a balanced picture. That's what makes a good part in any art form. Otherwise it becomes a caricature.

MUSICIAN: *The tonal colors on your new album are beautiful. That was a great strength Charles Mingus had.*

MITCHELL: Charles was a very poetic character. He was a very open person. His nature had a larger spectrum of display than anybody I ever met. Now I met him when he was paralyzed and couldn't really do the violence he was capable of. But he was a very open person and very vulnerable. He cried easily and got angry easily and couldn't stand bullshit. If he thought a guy was faking his notes, playing jive, showing off, he was liable to come swinging at the guy right on the bandstand. He was very true in a certain way and kind of crazy because of it. That's my take on him, anyway. I may have romanticized it some because I was so fond of him.

MUSICIAN: *I hope this isn't touchy, but what you just said made me think of a lot of Jaco Pastorius' playing with you. I often felt he wasn't playing for the song, he was just playing for Jaco.*

MITCHELL: Well that's Jaco. Jaco had at that time what I thought was a beautiful inflated ego. He had a huge ego and it offended a lot of people, but I didn't mind it. He'd say things like "I'm the baddest! I ain't braggin,' I'm just tellin the truth." He was one of the few other people I ever met who thought Nietzsche was funny. We used to laugh about "Thus Spake Zarathustra." Jaco was a good friend, I enjoyed his company. But as he got on the scene, he kind of went too far over the other way. He used to push his bass up in the mix. Everybody thought it was because he was my new boyfriend! They'd say, "You can always tell who Joni's going with by who's loudest in the mix." But he was just such an absolutely dominant male that I couldn't control him.

As a matter of fact he said to me one time, "Joni you've got to take more control of your sessions!" And right after that we had this session in New York with a great band: Don Elias on drums, John McLaughlin on guitar, Tony Williams on kit and Jaco. It was a great band! It was during the *Mingus* project, and there was *no* chemistry that night. Jaco was up on McLaughlin that night, playing in his ear. It was a duet as far as Jaco was concerned. I said to Elias, "Watch this. Jaco says I've got to take command of the band." So I went

up and said right in his ear, "Jaco!" Nothing. No response. I'm in his ear saying his name and he's still playing all his flashy licks for McLaughlin. At that point he was a monster. You couldn't get his attention.

But I liked his playing enough, he was such an innovator, that in a way I was proud to present him. Even though those mixes are awful because of it. It's his solo and I'm the background singer. And I allowed that to happen on my own date. But one of the things I like about being my own producer is that I get to make my own mistakes. I've got no one to blame. I can just chalk it up to experience.

MUSICIAN: *Do you feel Mingus' influence in your current work?*

MITCHELL: Oh yeah. Even in the coffee houses folk musicians were divided into two camps: those who played Gibsons and those who played Martins. And the Gibson players played the blues and the Martin players preferred more melodic English and Irish ballads. To tell you the truth, the blues never really registered for me at that point. Although I had great opportunities to see Mississippi John Hurt, it wasn't enough. I didn't get it. It didn't come out of my roots. I went for the Anglo-melodic.

Charles pulled me through the die of—very sophisticated—blues. His music was based on blues—with this wide polyphonic harmony that I had gradually gotten into, ironically, because of the open guitar tunings. Those tunings originally come from black blues players, but I had modernized them by putting them into very broad twentieth century harmony. Being pulled through the die of his more sophisticated blues on the other side of it, all the blues opened up. So he did me this one service. I don't think up until that point I could really sing rock 'n' roll. Now my roots have changed. I can feel that as if it's part of my being. It's not pretension. It's a spirit.

MUSICIAN: *Was part of the reason you moved away from standard pop forms to avoid competing with your past work? Did you say, "I don't want to have to do Blue again?"*

MITCHELL: I'm as fickle as anyone. I'm part of this culture, too. I crave change and I assumed that I was in sync with my times and other people needing change would be able to follow. Why would you want to repeat yourself? You want to show some kind of growth. I had no choice but to go with jazz musicians—I tried to play with all of the rock bands that were the usual sections for James Taylor when we made our transition from folk to folk rock. They couldn't play my music because it's so eccentric. They would try, but the straight ahead 2/4 rock 'n' roll running through it would steamroller right over a bar of 3/4. My music had all these little eccentricities in it, and it would just not feel right to me. Finally one bass player said, "Joni, you know really you should be playing with jazz musicians." People used to call my harmony weird. In context of today's pop music it's really not weird, but it was much broader polyphonic harmony than was prevalent ten, fifteen years ago. Now, much of it has been assimilated. But they couldn't figure out how to play those chords. In the standard tuning they're really virtuosic chords. The way I'm playing them in open tuning you can do it all with one finger. So with a simple left hand I was getting these chords that I liked the sound of, but which look like *minor ninth inversions*. Write these chords out and they have long names. So that's when I started playing with the L.A. Express and while they could play the changes, a jazz drum kit is light compared to a rock 'n' roll kit. The two camps were so orthodox then. They didn't like each other. Rock 'n' rollers were down on jazz. They thought it was *too cool* and they had all sorts of slanderous things to say about it and vice-versa. The two camps were absolutely polarized at that time, and I found few exceptions. I couldn't find anybody who liked both. Now there's a new generation, there's a whole crop of Berklee students who started in high school playing rock 'n' roll, went



Rickie Lee lookalike winner

on to a higher musical education, studied classical music, can sight read, spent some time playing in jazz bands, and love heavy metal. Now, I know dozens and dozens of players, but there wasn't then. So I had no choice but to play with the virtuosity available. Just people who could understand these little rhythm changes. Otherwise, I was going to have to just play by myself. So, all things transpired in a natural order. I did one album cover dressed up like a black man; Charles Mingus who was dying saw it, and called me to write his epitaph. And who would refuse a thing like that?

I've never been a jazz musician, but I have been called jazz in the rock 'n' roll press. And jazz—they don't want to have anything to do with me! "Who is this Joni-come-lately?" So I'm a person without a country now. All because I'm an eclectic, I like a lot of different kinds of music. So I went through this kind of persecution which culminated with the *Mingus* album, because when I moved to do that the jazz camp was all up in arms, considered me an *opportunist*. Little did they know that album cost me everything. They stopped playing me on the radio. Because I did not fit into any orthodox camp. The record company, Joe Smith, sent a letter saying, "In all my years in business, I have never been so honored as to present this album." Then he shipped five copies! [laughter] So few copies went out, that the thing actually began to move up the charts! I mean, they sold ten pieces or something like that, but there were *reorders* coming in, so now the thing is going up the charts—it sold nothing because they shipped nothing—and it passes Carly Simon, whose thing is selling a lot. I heard about this because *she* found out and she was p.o.'d! I don't blame her. This shows you how the charts can be misleading. I've been out here in no-man's land, where jazz is a dirty word to the record company. The thing that killed me in playing this record was one of the executives heard "Lucky Girl" and he said, "I really like this one—it's good. It's jazzy!" I thought I'd die. Suddenly, jazz is hip! They're thinking about putting this thing out as a single because *Sting*—with all his personal power from being a huge pop star and craving virtuosity—has now made the possibility of playing with virtuosos and still being popular kind of hip. So go figure.

MUSICIAN: *I've heard several people say about Sting's project "Isn't this what Joni Mitchell was doing years ago?"*

MITCHELL: Doesn't matter who did what where or when, I consider it excellent. When I did it, obviously I did not have enough personal power to make the thing open up. And he does. The fact that he's doing this kind of music and selling a lot of records is good for the whole industry. Because there's now a lot of really good music on the airwaves that went to #1; it's not dumb music. Not only Sting, but what's this little English group now—Tears for Fears. That's a great album, it's a very musical album. It's almost like a symphony with a little bit of pop vocal. A lot of musicality there. The fact that it went to #1 thrills me. Because it was always my optimism that eventually we would have an American music—it wouldn't be all divided into these little cliquy camps—this is idealism speaking—that an artist would not be persecuted for a diverse interest in music. It seems to me a crime against the artistic impulse to persecute a person for being broad-minded. I would like to see that change—I don't care who does it. Sting can do it—Hallelujah! It can only bode well.

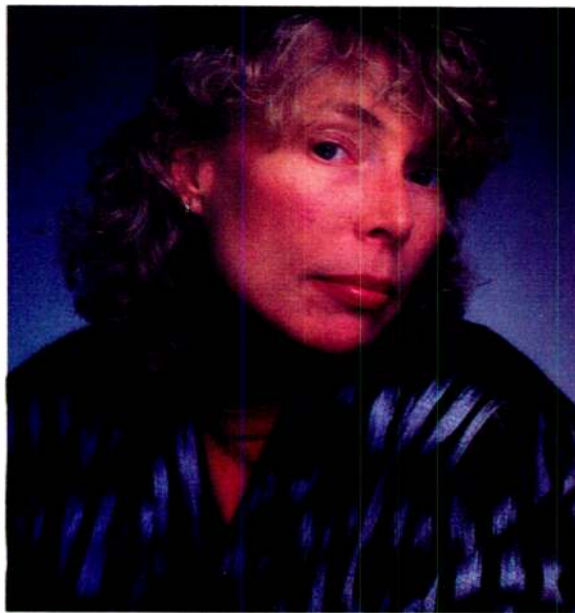
MUSICIAN: *You were rumored to be about to work with the Police a few years ago.*

MITCHELL: Yeah. I put in a call because more than any band that I had heard in a long time I thought there was a band intact that could play this music, that would understand it. In a way what they were doing was kind of what I heard in the back of my head. I love the Police. They were mixing up in Montreal and I was going to ship up there. I forget what happened. Oh, I met my husband and his band! And we

started working together. So all things fell in.

MUSICIAN: *Marriage—and all its icons—has a double-edge in your songs. There's a great attraction but there's also a resistance to it as a trap. Now that you're married have your feelings about it changed?*

MITCHELL: I like my marriage. It's the kind of relationship I was looking for in a marriage. While the singles game is real exciting—and we like excitement—it's pretty repetitious. In the excitement of a new relationship, you're mutually charming. You run your best stories and show off your best aspect and you have this enthralled audience. It's very exciting, but it's very hectic. If you had to stay in that space—the early



*Jaco had a beautiful
inflamed ego...I was proud to
present him. Even though those
mixes are awful because of it."*

courtship is *nerve-wracking*. It's very hard on the nervous system. You can't live there. And yet some people get an appetite for that romantic thing and spend their whole lives going only for that. The only way you can keep a relationship alive for a long time—and it's a hard thing to do—is to not get an image, to never think you know the other person. Everytime you see that person fresh, when you don't see them through a collected image you've stored up, it's right back to the beginning of the relationship. Everything is new and exciting. But you have a tendency to build up images of people. As soon as you look at your loved one with this file you've built up—"There he is, he always leaves the cap off the toothpaste"—things begin to deteriorate.

Leonard Cohen said years ago that marriage is the new church. I ditto that. Relationship is everything. Obviously both people have to have patience. Everybody is a pain in the ass sometimes. But you can't run out the first time a person is burdensome. I'm really glad I'm married. It frees me up in a lot of ways.

MUSICIAN: *There's an awful lot of anger in Dog Eat Dog. That will surprise people.*

MITCHELL: Yeah. I want to ask you a question. Do you feel angrier in general this year than you did last year? Do you feel an increase?

MUSICIAN: No. I think I felt worse right around the time Reagan was elected. Things like Nicaragua make me feel bad, but I can't say I feel worse.

MITCHELL: I just wondered. Because it is an angry album, and I have felt more angry in the last year, I would say. Some of it's personal and some of it is general—that's what my

Actresses often complain that there are no good parts for women. In my job I have the luxury of creating a soliloquy."

antenna is picking up. I just noticed an increase in my outrage at the general direction of things. At the way the government dispenses authority and money, and the Star Wars insanity and all that business. It's an angry album.

MUSICIAN: Was "Ethiopia" written for the We Are The World album?

MITCHELL: No, it was written after the fact. It was written after I did the Canadian Band-Aid thing. "We Are The World" is a beautiful idea. I believe that we are the world—it's a very idealistic idea, but a good one. I just felt that in singing the words that the general overtone of these anthems was self-congratulatory and that there's another way to look at we are the world; it can narrow down to simply "we." All this heroism. In all the big charity events of the past—Bangladesh, No Nukes—a lot of self-congratulation went on, and everybody that appeared in these things was "the new consciousness," and inevitably it did all their careers some good and everything—and the money never got to the people. Never. It got stripped off by the government, by the inevitable expenses of presenting such a thing. It never got there.

So, you say well why do you go to those things? You go there with optimism that if you gain an inch, it's worth it.

You can take these evangelists with their tax-free, the government doesn't take the cut, so the chances are if they were true benefactors, which is how they present themselves, that they are in a position where that would not happen. They have direct access to money and they can actually put it into effect without anybody stripping it off. But it gets stripped off in the production cost of the hundred and one million reels that are running and these things which are broadcasting their message all over the place. That's the truth and the irony of it.

MUSICIAN: Are many of your songs completely fictional?

MITCHELL: When I first started writing, I used to write more fictionally. The first three albums were more or less characters, like "Marcy." Like any fiction writer there was some basis in something that happened, but after the *Blue* album I went through a period where I wrote very personal songs. I did a series of self-portraits, scrapings of the soul and I went through that for a long time. By the time I got to *Hissing Of Summer Lawns* I was back to doing portraits again. By that point, people were used to me being a confessional artist and the result of that subtle change was a lot of people didn't like *Hissing* because if I was saying "I'm like this, that "I" could either be them—if they wanted it to be—or if it got too vulnerable, they could go "it's her." But the moment I started doing portraits again, saying "you," a lot of people saw themselves more than they wanted to. Then they would get mad at me. That happened a lot. "Shades Of Scarlet Conquering"

for instance, is a portrait of somebody. I had girls come up to me after that really mad and say "Who do you think you are?" There's no way you can control how people interpret or what they see in those things. It has nothing to do with you really.

MUSICIAN: Fifteen years ago it was perfectly acceptable for a man to sit down and sing about the whole range of his emotions. But now it's not. Of all the new groups on MTV the one who sounds like the most interesting person to me is Aimee Mann of 'Til Tuesday....

MITCHELL: Yeah, exactly! Because nobody for a long time has really dared to put back the anxiety. It's true. I think that's really astute.

MUSICIAN: Every male rock artist now measures himself against Bruce—and the way most of them do it is to get out there and strike a leather jacket pose. I don't think that a new guy can come on and expose himself the way that James Taylor did fifteen years ago and get away with it. Yet people accept it from a woman.

MITCHELL: Do you think they accept it from a woman? I don't know. The feedback that I get in my personal life is almost like, "You wanted it, libertine!" I feel like I'm in the same bind. That's not going to stop me, I'm still going to do it but I don't feel like I have the luxury because of my gender to do this. Uh uh. It's just as hard. The things that to me as a writer have the most vitality are those kind of details. Those are the things that would make a novel or a screenplay good and have some depth as opposed to just being a caricature. I sacrifice myself to them. I've never really sat that easy. I just don't know any other way to be. If I could think of a way to change and get consistently strong so that I could sing about strong things...no, it's a delicate thing. I wouldn't go

Blinded With Science

"For years I played a Martin D-28. When I went electric, I went to an Ibanez George Benson. I have five of them all set up differently to contain the different tunings. I play in open tuning, so they have to be specially worked on, 'cause to hold that on an electric guitar is kind of tricky. On an acoustic, you just twiddle the knobs and do it the best you can, but on an electric, we had a little bit of work done on all of them. So they hold families of tunings with different weights of strings to balance up the tensions that that creates. With open tunings those electronic tuners don't work that great. You have to compensate. Say you have a slack bass string that's going to be flapping around anyway; to get true pitch to measure on those things is tricky. You almost have to play the first four or five chords of a piece of music to get it relatively in tune between the low chords and the higher-up-the-neck chords.

"Dog Eat Dog was written the old way on acoustic piano and guitar and then translated over to electronics. But now that I have all this equipment, I noticed in the process of playing around with it that starting with it would make you write differently. In a Fairlight setting where your sample has a pulse, if you hold it down, every note the pulse rate is different. If it's not looped quite right it speeds up and down.

"For instance, on a particular chord I really liked the tempo of the beat in the sample. So I was thinking to lay about four minutes of holding this down. This would be your click track. Now, it would keep me from modulating, because the sample was a chordal sample; it wasn't a single note. It was a chord with a pulse so if you laid down four minutes of that and then began to add your chordal movement against that, it would make a monochromatic kind of music that I've never done, because I'm a modulation freak. I jump all over the place. I'm sure playing with the equipment will change the way I write."

Found Sound

MUSICIAN: I assume the cigarette machine sound on "Empty Try Another" is a Fairlight sampling.

MITCHELL: No. On the last record, three years ago, we were particularly bogged down in the studio. No progress. I went outside. They had a cigarette machine in the parking lot and the man who serviced it hadn't come very regularly and during the course of the record first my favorite brand was out, then my next favorite brand, and then it was down to Camel plains and Kools. It got to be, even for a hard core smoker, a disgusting choice. So one night we were bogged down and we needed to shake something up, so I said, "Skip, get the long extension, cord. We're gonna tape the cigarette machine." When you hit the open channel the light would come on and it would say, "Empty, try another/make another selection" and the gears made that sound. So that's not even a loop—we recorded four minutes just playing the cycle, and then Larry played bass on it, and I put this chant on

it. It didn't fit on the last record which was thematically kind of a romantic album, my love album, so I decided to put it on this.

Everyone kept saying, "Why don't you sample it?" And I thought, "Why would you want to sample it? It sounds good. We could spend days trying to synthesize that sound. The same thing happened on "The Three Great Stimulants." I made a super-8 movie of a wall of graffiti in SoHo. When I got the film back I couldn't believe what I heard in the background; there was a guy hammering and a burglar alarm going off in that natural amphitheatre of New York City. The concrete resonance gave it this incredible forboding sound. So when we started putting together "The Three Great Stimulants," I wanted a five beat punctuation with that sound: "Deep in the Night," Bam Bam Bam Bam. Everybody was critical of the fidelity of it but I thought, "We'll be here for days diddling with machines and I'll never get that sound again."

so hated really, but one thing that I did was I changed "I" to "you." Dylan sang a lot of personal things saying you. As a male that's better. It's easier for a man to go "you." I'm sure that when he says "you," part of it is actually a "you" and some of it is an "I." But I hadn't used that device. I had been writing "I" this and "I" that. And it was easier to stomach or something because when I started writing "you" people said, "Who does she think she is?" And "Why is she taking pot shots at us?" This simple dramatical device became a large point of contention. That constituted an enormous change for some of my fans.

It would be like a person you knew who was sort of wimpy. If a person you met when they were vulnerable suddenly got strong it would threaten you, because you have to readjust

your role. Now your friend is not someone you protect or comfort. They are standing on both feet. How nice did you treat them? What was going through your mind? Will they get you now? What will they think now that they're strong? Sometimes somebody's strength makes another person weak. Some people have a hard time making those transitions.

MUSICIAN: You wrote a pretty funny letter to Musician about Rickie Lee Jones.

MITCHELL: Oh...I can just see me when I'm an old woman, writing nasty letters-to-the-editor all over the country.

MUSICIAN: She made a crack in Musician about Linda Ronstadt trying to sing jazz, and you wrote that jazz wasn't a private sidewalk; anybody who wants to can walk there.

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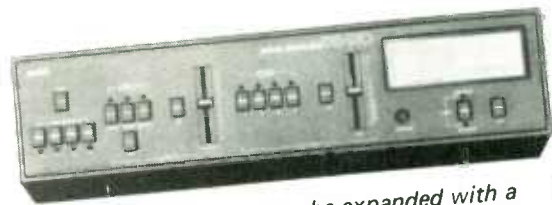
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MITCHELL: She said that Peter Asher had appeared at a concert of hers, and she knew for sure that night that she would go and tell Linda to do a jazz album because jazz was now hip. What she didn't know was that Linda had this idea to do those albums with Nelson Riddle all on her own, had no support. Peter was chewing his arm up to the elbow thinking, "Oh God, this is terrible, this could kill her!" Just like *Mingus*. It was very risky.

MUSICIAN: *Losing another one to jazz.*

MITCHELL: Yeah. This did not look like a good move. She did it purely on her own impulse. It was something she wanted to do. It was completely her own idea and her own artistic motivation. So at first I tried to write the letter from that tack, and then I thought of Geraldine Campbell when I was a kid. She used to chase me with a hatchet if I crossed in front of her house. If I'd go up the back alley she'd be there saying "This is my property. You can't cross over it!" And I thought, man, it was like Rickie was *possessing* jazz. It was there before her, it'll be there after her. I was dabbling in jazz and being persecuted for it by the time she had some public success with it. And I'm not the innovator of it, I didn't invent it. It's all a totem pole.

MUSICIAN: *Well, just to take this completely to National Enquirer level, do you feel Rickie Lee has lifted stuff from you?*

MITCHELL: No. I can feel she's influenced by me, but she's made it her own. First picture I saw of her, though, I thought, "Where did they get that picture of me?" She was smoking a brown cigarette, she has a turned up nose and a long space above her lip which makes our faces there kind of similar, and her hair was long and sandy and she had this beret on. I used to wear a beret all the time. I didn't see the name at first and I thought, "Oh no! They've put out a Greatest Hits or something." And then I looked and it said, "The Real

Thing." And I thought, wait a minute! We don't look that much alike but this one photograph, the way it was angled and all these little details, looked exactly like me.

But in her music she's got her own synthesis. I hear a lot of Tom Waits, I hear a lot of Laura Nyro, I hear myself. I hear various influences. Some early black rock 'n' roll girl singing. I don't hear that much jazz. That's what I don't understand. I don't think of her as a jazz singer. I don't know where she gets that idea she's a jazz singer. Any more than I am or Laura is. We're not. That's kind of a traditional form. It has some kind of modality and chord structures we all borrowed from, but I don't think you could call any of us jazz singers.

MUSICIAN: *I think what Rickie Lee is thinking of is more what a novelist would pick up about jazz; the wet streets and smokey saloons.*

MITCHELL: I know, it's more environmental. Because when I did the album with Charley (Mingus) an article came out and she got really mad at me in it. And I thought, well, maybe she played in a lot of clubs and got a lot of comparisons to me and wants to kill mommy or something. At this point she probably hates me just 'cause she heard my name a lot. Well-meaning people used to say to me, "Gee, you sound just like Peter, Paul & Mary."

Anyway, she said that she could sing jazz and I couldn't because I didn't walk on the jazz side of life. And I thought, "What does that mean? Do you have to shoot up to like this music? What is 'the jazz side of life'?" Who's to say? She doesn't even know me. She doesn't know if I'm straight or....

MUSICIAN: *Maybe you are on the jazz side of life.*

MITCHELL: Maybe I am.

MUSICIAN: *For all we know you're the Charlie Parker of the 80s.*

MITCHELL: For all you know I'm a bad junkie with a spit shine on my shoes. ☒

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THE DARKER SIDE OF MICHAEL McDONALD



“Writing is something I’ve come to love and hate, and sometimes I hate it more than I love it. It’s a horrible experience – I just get crazy. And I think in a warped kind of way, it makes my stuff better.”

As you’ll recall, pop music was skittering along through the mid-1970s trying to remember its lost sense of manifest destiny from ten years earlier, yet having bolstered the Industry aspect of music to new heights of fiscal heave-ho. It was the fullest of times, it was the hollowest of times.

Into this fragile environment came certain catalysts; from the U.K. came anarchy and willful musical primitivism, while out Los Angeles way (and elsewhere) came a new-found sophistopop – a meld of concision and small-scale experimentation, airplay smarts and jazz chords. Michael McDonald was, quite possibly, the kingpin of the entire blue-eyed soul phenomenon that gripped pop in the late 70s. He burst into ear-shot in 1976 – the standout feature of the Doobie Brothers’ *Takin’ It To Streets*. Bellowing and *testifying* with a near gospel-toned evangelism, McDonald’s teeming tenor was clearly one of the redeeming musical

virtues of a decade in flux. He was the kind of guy in whose general direction Johnny Rotten spat.

McDonald’s impressive musical resume threads its way to the recently released, second solo album *No Lookin’ Back* – his first in three years. Yet perhaps his public image is most indelibly linked with the late 70s – that confused, but unjustly maligned chapter in musical history. As irony and revisionist tactics would have it, McDonald should now enjoy a satisfaction born of stylistic prophecy. An approximate historical chronology: The gnarl of punk begat a craftier New Wave, which begat a more fashion-aware New Romanticism, which begat the current spate of synth soul – a strong parallel to McDonald’s initial achievements, dating back to that dread decade. History reveals itself, reviles itself and, finally, revels in itself.

But don’t talk about historical vindication or aesthetic politics with McDonald; the man is too busy work-

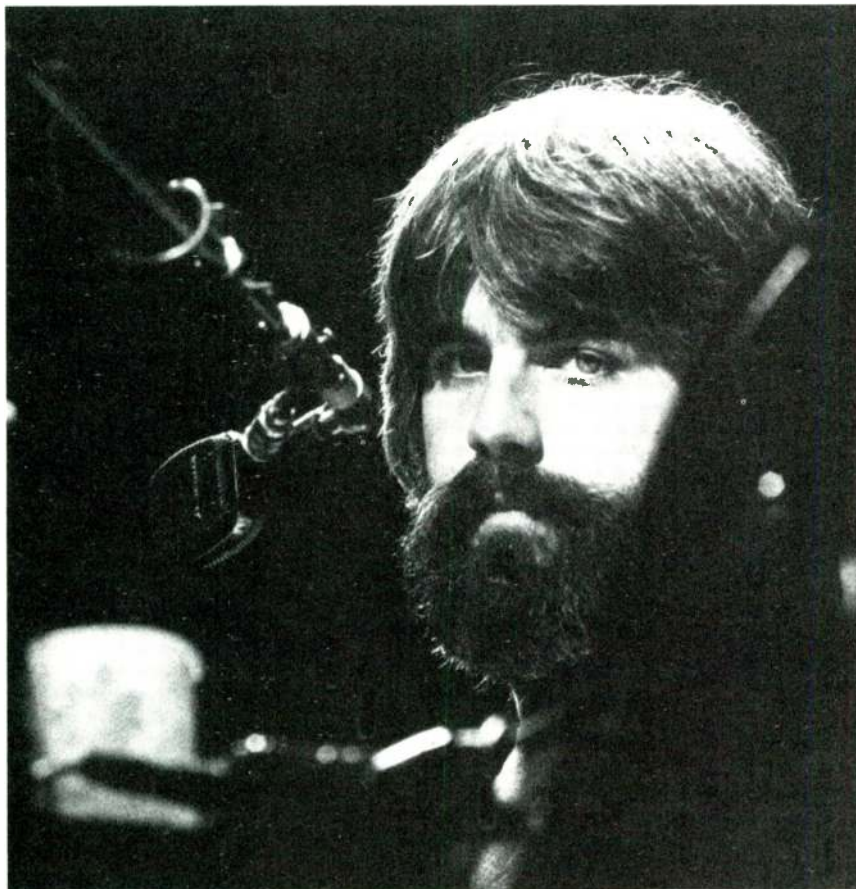
BY JOSEF WOODARD

ing to concern himself with the banter of theory. It's not that McDonald doesn't understand his heritage. It's not that he's unaware of the compound of elements comprising his bleached soul style. It's just that, when all is said and done, he'd rather do it than say it.

Typically, there's nothing pretentious or overwrought about the infectious material on *No Lookin' Back*. The tracks, all painted in shades of R&B and unabashedly pop hook-baiting, are most remarkable, in fact, for their directness, sparseness and clarity. Subtle deployment of MIDI'd synths are counterbalanced by the fleshy clutch of the Jeff

ically *fine* pop record, easily among the year's best.

Contrary to the title, McDonald is presently in a mood to look back, to reflect on his roughly decade-long stint in pop star shoes (no mean feat, that). Two of his cohorts on the new album, in fact, played pivotal roles in McDonald's rise to the spotlight. Chuck Sabatino, who co-wrote three of the tunes and laid down some keyboards, was a fellow soulmate/soul freak of McDonald's back in the hometown—St. Louis. More significantly, Jeff Porcaro was responsible for McDonald's entree into the ranks of the pop elite.



D.I.Y. convert McDonald recorded most of his new LP at home.

Porcaro/Willie Weeks rhythm section and by pointed cameos from Cornelius Bumpus' sax and Robben Ford's guitar. With less extra-lyrical riffing than on almost any previous record, McDonald's voice nonetheless conveys a palpable essence of soul and affirmation. Move directly past the self-help pep song of the title cut—the album's first single—and listen to the control and vulnerability wrestling for power as he sings "Bad Times" or "Any Foolish Thing." The McDonald touch is fully engaged. Without catering to Hollywood pop glitter or to any imported haircut-of-the-month club, McDonald has made an archetyp-

McDonald had come out to brave L.A.'s singer/songwriter crapshoot on a production contract that wasn't yielding much action. Playing a throw-together Christmas party, the nineteen-year-old McDonald met Porcaro, then a SoCal prodigy keeping company with Steely Dan during the making of *Pretzel Logic*. Through the drummer's introduction, McDonald wound up playing piano and singing—especially the latter—on the Dan's last road work. His voice graced the next few Dan discs, but through Jeff Baxter he found a more lucrative home in the Doobie Brothers.

McDonald's robust, soulful delivery

and his often inventively detailed songwriting resulted in such handsome Doobie chartclimbers as "It Keeps You Running," the searing "What A Fool Believes," "Minute By Minute" and "Real Love." But by the early 80s, the schism between the sleek R&B faction and the latent Chugger's Rock impulse in the Doobies was getting serious; the band was a house divided.

The time was overripe for McDonald, ever the humble team player, to launch a solo career. *If That's What It Takes* (1982) was a fairly solid step in the right direction, with decent airplay and a strange follow-up tour in which McDonald shared the stage with Edgar Winter. McDonald then retreated a bit from the glare, taking time to produce albums by his wife, Amy Holland, and a band featuring his sister Maureen.

These days, McDonald maintains two homes; one is a lush plot in Santa Barbara, the other an unassuming tract house in North Hollywood, in which the garage has been fully transformed into a 24-track studio. Most of *No Lookin' Back* was recorded here in his backyard, as well as some tracking at Jeff Porcaro's home studio across town. With his cachet of hair going from pepper to salt and his eyes like hotpools of blue, exuding sincerity, McDonald is a modest, readily likeable pop star. You believe him. This ain't mere show biz.

A certain chaos reigns around the McDonald home; his oversized dogs are given to yapping and barfing this August afternoon, while assorted people run in and out. A malfunctioning fire alarm periodically spits its piercing screech out into the North Hollywood suburb. Yet in this tense setting, McDonald still projects this uncanny calm-under-pressure that one imagines is his natural state. It's the sort of calm that no wise man has the power to reason away.

MUSICIAN: How easily did you make the transition from a Doobie Brother to solo artist? Was it a disorienting period?

MCDONALD: I don't think I really planned it. I was always afraid of it. It was one of those things that couldn't have scared me more, and yet I knew I had to do it. I knew that anything short of doing it would be wasting time and that I'd probably eventually hate myself more for that. A lot of people led me to the decision. Being in the Doobie Brothers was so comfortable for me, and it was such security. I was happy. I didn't really want much more out of the music business or my life with it. When the band actually broke up, that was real disorienting. The first six months after that, I found myself sitting at the kitchen table just kind of staring. I never really realized I'd ever get to the

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point where I wouldn't know what the fuck to do with myself. I wouldn't know how to get out the door in the morning and put my life back together, go from point A to point B with a project. That was around the time I was doing my first album, so Teddy [Templeman] picked up the slack, taking care of a lot of things he shouldn't have had to.

MUSICIAN: *Many people felt that you were really the focus of that group in the last few years.*

MCDONALD: No, not really. The focus was really somewhere between everybody, if you know what I mean. The band really was a band unto itself. We knocked it around collectively a whole lot. Maybe you'd have to be there to know that. We were naive in a technical sense but we really enjoyed getting together at the house up in Monterey and practicing, learning our songs together and each guy coming up with his own part. It wasn't ever any one guy telling everybody what to play.

MUSICIAN: *Your tendency towards collaboration in songwriting has only increased over the years. Is it difficult to generate ideas on your own?*

MCDONALD: Yeah, I guess I started collaborating a lot with Kenny Loggins, outside of writing myself or writing with guys in the band. It was a real awakening. I suddenly felt I could go a lot further that way, with this new input. It was a way of the band not shrinking in on itself, getting stale with its own sound. Then I started doing it a lot, simply because I enjoy it. It's a nice experience, and you come up with a lot of things you wouldn't otherwise.

Now I almost find myself reserving the right to write something myself for special ideas. Business-wise it's not the smartest thing in the world to do, because you might tend to be known more as a co-writer than as a writer. I look at it as periods of time; I think I'll go back to a period when I write more myself. There are certain songs I feel I have to write myself, such as "Bad Times" off this album. It was an idea I had around for a while, and any number of people I played the idea for liked it and wanted to work on it with me. But I held it back, because I felt a certain affinity for it. As opposed to a lot of situations where you want to annex your own thoughts with somebody else's, this was one where I was afraid it would go someplace I didn't want it to go.

MUSICIAN: *Is it hard to focus on one tune at a time, to finish it in one sitting?*

MCDONALD: It is. Writing is one of those things I've come to love and hate, and sometimes I hate it more than I love it, in all honesty. It's a horrible experience for me in a lot of ways, because I just get crazy. I don't know why; I second-guess myself a whole lot when I'm writ-

ing. And I think, in a warped kind of way, it makes your stuff better. I work slower than a lot of people and I put myself through a lot of changes.

With this record, the only part that was really tense—the usual bloodbath that record-making is about—was the writing part of it. I just couldn't be happy enough with the stuff. I really wanted to make sure that this record wasn't anything short of the best I could do at this time, a solid collection. I wasn't going to try to take ten years doing it or make a lifetime project out of it. But it did have to have a certain solidity, and validity to it. I love [Phil Collins'] *Face Value* album in that I can listen to the whole album, instead of just two cuts over and over again. I wanted to get somewhere in that realm.

MUSICIAN: *On the new album, the byword is compactness. The tunes are tightly structured—not much solo space.*

MCDONALD: Not a lot of instruments, either, not nearly as much as you're used to hearing with this kind of stuff. Basically, we had always started off with more instruments. Cutting the basic tracks live, we always wanted to make sure we were covered and we had fairly good-sized rhythm sections to begin with. The overdubs were little things, touches, details. But on this new album, the basic tracks were the smallest parts—usually one synth and a drum machine—and the overdubs were everything. It was really working in reverse. It gives you a lot of leeway to make decisions. It can cost you more time in the process, but if you have a home studio like this, the initial expense is the bulk of it. We do what we can not to make a project a financial burden. You're not sitting around paying \$200 an hour, so you take that time. It makes for a better record.

MUSICIAN: *I was somewhat surprised at how many acoustic instruments you do use. Given your talents and drawing on MIDI technology, it could have been a one-man album.*

MCDONALD: It could have been. I just don't feel that I play all that well that I'd want to do a one-man album. Also, too, I had a phobia about doing a totally synthesized record, full of synth timbres. One thing I noticed on the demos, which were primarily all synthesizers and drum machines, was that every time we put a real cymbal or something on it, it sounded beautiful. You'd be fooled into thinking that you had the whole spectrum covered with synths, but the minute you put something acoustic in the middle of those synths, they couldn't compare to the beauty of a real sound; they somehow didn't have the real ambience, the real life that Jeff Porcaro had when he

cracked his snare in a room. But it was fun, because we did the album basically here and at Jeff's. The only thing we went out for was to mix.

MUSICIAN: *Home studios have a stigma: you're not supposed to be able to record a major album in one.*

MCDONALD: Yeah, but people have been doing it for quite a while—Gary Wright, a lot of people. The fact that I've done it is probably amazing. Technology's just not my bag. I've always approached it at arm's length, which was another reason I liked hearing real bass and real drums. It made the track sound more human. I don't care how well you deal with technology, after a whole album of it, you have to take it in that context and give up certain things I wasn't prepared to give up. I wanted things to have a little more emotion than machines could come across with.

MUSICIAN: *Your voice has always had a unique quality. It's deceiving in that, although actually fairly high in range, it has a weight or a huskiness that makes it sound unlike most tenors. Have you always sung that way, or has your voice changed over the years?*

MCDONALD: Yes and no. I don't have a real strong voice. Over the years, club singing has really changed my voice—the abuse. I've learned to protect it, to halfway stylize and halfway just get through the evening. I really admire

McDonald's Arsenal

McDonald's main axe of choice for the past few years has been the Yamaha DX7. In fact, as early as 1979, he was working out on the GS1, a prototype of the later Yamaha wonder synth. In working on the demos for *No Lookin' Back*, McDonald linked two DX7s via MIDI, and annexed an Emulator II and Roland Super Jupiter when seeking out the killer horn sound. On the ballad "Our Love," he chose to use the humble Yamaha Portasound. But his true affection is for the DX7: "It's really become a staple axe for everyone. It did to the music business what the Rhodes did when it came out—totally changed the sound of electronic keyboards along with being engineered well as an instrument unto itself."

In the process of assembling new song ideas, McDonald made use of a LinnDrum and a Yamaha QX1, which he calls "probably the best digital sequencer available." In the McDonald home studio/drawing board, we find an APF board, 3M tape decks, an Ampex 2-track and Yamaha cassette decks. As for outboard gear, he uses a Yamaha Rev 1 and Massenburg components, and dbx 160 compressor/limiters, but he has a special fondness for his Quantec Room Simulator: "Quantec is a big part of our sound. That's our whole drum sound—the big echo sound."

Last, and certainly not least in McDonald's case, the general purpose microphone is the AKG C-12.

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those people who sing full-voice all the time, but I just never had that ability without going hoarse. So I had to learn to rely on other areas of my voice and develop those. There have been times when my full voice is gone, but I can still sing in a head voice. That just came out of necessity. I guess I don't sing enough when I'm off. Knock wood [*he raps on the table*], I have a strong voice, but it's a voice I've had to develop.

MUSICIAN: *Let's back up in history. You were a St. Louis kid, right?*

MCDONALD: St. Louis, yeah. Great town. My father was a singer and I sang a lot with him. He had a real thing for singing piano players. He had a great voice, and everyone loved to hear him sing. He wasn't one of those guys you wanted to throw a shoe at or anything. He was in a lot of shows around town. They had a choral group, with a variety show they used to perform at charity functions around town, and I was in that playing the banjo as a young kid.

I grew into rock 'n' roll like most kids do: all of a sudden I made that classic separation into being a teenager, playing rock 'n' roll. My father was always very supportive. I always had an appreciation for the music I grew up on, stuff taught me by my parents. A lot of the old Tin Pan Alley tunes, standards. A lot of kids learn to play rock 'n' roll

and nothing before that stage, but in most cases, you can understand rock 'n' roll better when you've had another background. You can see where the abbreviation has come from, especially in American pop music; with a lot of swing, blues, country & western music all being predecessors to rock 'n' roll, you start seeing the similarities in stylization.

I remember being in rock 'n' roll bands on the road with shows. I met some great players. When I was a kid, we backed up Chuck Berry a lot in a band I worked with—that was about as rock 'n' roll as you can get. The energy we were trying to create as opposed to the energy people create today and call rock 'n' roll seems like a real dichotomy. This music that was made to make anyone within hearing range feel good is now all of a sudden meant to intimidate.

MUSICIAN: *Was there one period you can remember when your R&B fanaticism took hold?*

MCDONALD: I was a Beatlemaniac—a little bit of everything—but, for some reason, after the Beatles, I didn't listen to a lot of top forty radio. I wasn't really nuts about the San Francisco music—I shouldn't say that. That wasn't my cup of tea, the real acid era, the Grateful Dead and that stuff. The music I was listening to and playing the most was R&B groups—big groups with horns.

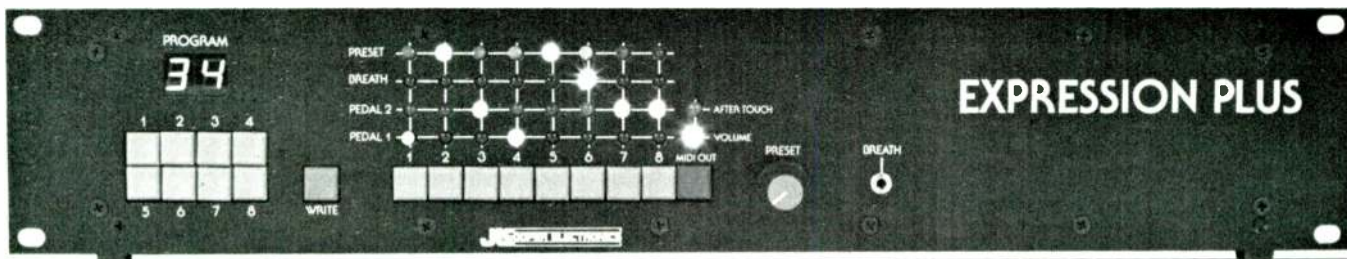
We played Stax/Volt stuff, Ray Charles, Ike & Tina Turner. We were one of a thousand white groups in St. Louis who emulated famous black groups—Sam & Dave, the Temptations.

We dressed in tuxedos, did steps, had a girl singer—it was like a show group. I got lost in that music for a long time, to where a whole era sort of passed me by. I was like an athlete—I couldn't have long hair [*laughs*]. Most of the guys I had grown up with in high school were in groups that were pretty radical, swinging microphones over their heads. It was like a kid missing out on his childhood, you know. I always felt less hip than my friends; it was not hip to walk around in short hair and a paisley-embossed tuxedo and patent leather shoes. I tended to live the life, in my teenage years, of an alien.

MUSICIAN: *You have such a strong Ray Charles influence—did you spend time conscientiously studying him?*

MCDONALD: Yeah, him and Floyd Cramer. I feel foolish saying I studied any one person—if I had, I'd play much better. I would have striven to be a better piano player. It was always just a means for me to write songs, never much more than that. I often feel inadequate in the process of making a record because I wish I was an arranging keyboard playing wiz. But I know a

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lot of people as talented and more talented than me who do less in a musical way. A lot of producers who make incredible records, who have great instinct to making records, don't play anything. You'll discuss music with them in depth and trust their judgment. A lot of times, all they can do is sit there and say, "No, don't do that, that's bullshit." And it probably *is* bullshit.

It's a weird thing, but I've always been able to put good bands together. I know guys who play incredibly well that have never really played with good bands. I'm not saying that every band I put together will be great, but I've been lucky, to have some knowledge of how to do that. I could put a band together, go out and play a gig and pretty much land on my feet. But I would hate to go and play a piano bar, because I'm not capable of sitting down and improvising.

MUSICIAN: Can you put your finger on what you gleaned from playing with Steely Dan?

MCDONALD: I learned to write for the first time. Everything I had done prior to that was from one perspective in my brain. After I worked with Steely Dan, I had a whole 'nother perspective on what it was like to write your own music, just by having played their music and being introduced to a lot of different styles of playing. Those guys encom-

passed so much. For the most part, it was far beyond the palate of the people who really loved them. They had that strange cross-section; you could enjoy them on any level, from the dance floor to the most intellectual level. They had this incredible acuteness.

MUSICIAN: Did the experience influence your taste in chords and harmonies?

MCDONALD: Oh yeah, very much so. I learned a lot from them in terms of voicings and things that I'd never heard in pop music, period. Chords were such a literal thing to me before that. They had to have pretty much parallel harmony. The modal approach to chords was a whole new thing to me. If I did it

before that, I usually did it by accident, and said, "Hey, I like that," but I didn't know what chord it was, because it wasn't a triad. I'd call it an A something, because there was an A in the bass. Basing the whole feeling of a song on very open chords was more of a jazz trait than what you heard on rock records. I feel that, in terms of people who changed the face of music, Steely Dan was the earmark of the 70s.

MUSICIAN: They have this perfectionist infamy in the studio. Did that rub off on your later studio attitude?

MCDONALD: It never seemed to have affected them adversely, not that maybe they didn't go too far at times
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GETTING THE BUGS OUT OF THE SYSTEM

The Perils and Pleasures of Living on the High-Tech Frontier

By J.D. Considine

David Frank, the keyboardist and resident electronics expert with the System, is sitting in a record company office, describing his band's first live gig. "We got out there to play," he recalls, and they said, 'Here's the System!' I pushed the button; 'one, two, three, four' and...nothing happened."

Singer Mic Murphy, sitting at the other end of the table, breaks up. "Well, something happened," continues Frank. "Everything went out of sync immediately. After like one beat, all of a sudden the drum machine was starting over again and the sequencers went nuts. It was unbelievable."

It was also especially ironic for a band so seemingly high-tech. By taking a name like the System, Frank and Murphy emphasize the synthesizers, sequencers and drum machines that contribute to their sound. Not that the band comes across as dance-floor automations the way Kraftwerk sometimes does; indeed, the percolating bass patterns and sinuous synth lines Frank pulls from his gear give the System a decidedly human sound.

Nor has that humanizing touch gone unnoticed, for although the System has placed its name on only three albums, *Sweat*, *X-periment* and the recent *The Pleasure Seekers*, their sound has graced a host of outside projects. Starting with Robert Palmer's version of "You Are In My System," the System has contributed to such singles as Chaka Khan's "It's My Night," Scritti Politti's "Wood Beez" and Phil Collins' "Sussudio," and done production for artists ranging from soul crooner Howard Johnson to former Bow-Wow-Wow singer Annabella Lwin.

In fact, the two spend so much time in the studio, they seem almost to cherish their tales of trouble on tour. That, too, has its ironies, given that Frank and Murphy first teamed up while on the road with Kleer. But, as Murphy puts it, "One of the reasons we started producing records is that we're not a traditional soul act, and not being one, it's very difficult to accept dates doing



For Mic Murphy & David Frank, the song outweighs techno-idolatry.

soul tours. So our gig has been to do records in the studio."

Sometimes it's an album, sometimes just odd jobs. Consider the case of "Sussudio." According to Frank, Phil Collins gave him the demo tape just to see what he could do with it. "The song wasn't going to be on the album at all, as a matter of fact," Frank says. "He just asked me to do something that would make him more interested in it."

"Everybody had reacted to the song by saying it sounded too much like '1999.' I'm not sure whether I made it sound any *less* like '1999,' but the bass line was not on the demo at all. The whole thing was very different. The whole song was an eighth-note feel, and I made it a sixteenth-note feel. I just decided that maybe that's what he wanted."

In other words, call up the System and get yourself an instant hit? Not even Frank and Murphy will go that far (although they will allow as how "the only record that has our sound and has been a top record is Phil Collins' 'Sussudio'"). But it does provide a perspective on a key System function, to wit: How to use

technology to refine a demo idea.

"Sometimes," says Frank of their songwriting, "we'll start off with more of a skeletal thing. Mic'll do the melody, and we'll discuss it, make sure we have everything right. Then we'll sit down and decide we want to make a high-hat change in the bridge; instead of it being a two-measure sequence, we'll change it to a four-measure sequence, so it will be a little different right at the end."

"See," adds Murphy, "that's one of the things we do. We get together, and then we start dissecting it. 'Well, maybe this melody in the bridge could be better if we changed this line. Okay, let's change the foot pattern to give it a little more push in the chorus. Let's change the bassline.' You know what I mean? Once we have the basic skeleton..."

Listen to a System song, and it's not hard to hear how all that editing adds up. The high-hat patterns, for instance, chatter melodically, following the lead line in a way no drummer ever would. The synth-bass parts, by contrast, are often fantastically busy, providing the excitement of a guitar solo but without detracting from the basic melody.

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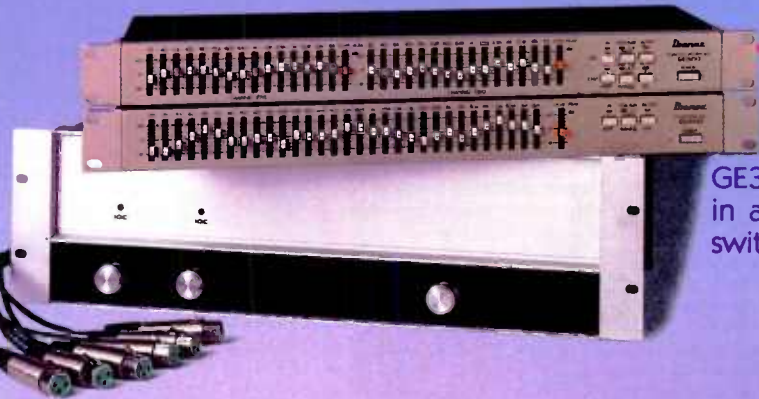
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In part, it's a reflection of the duo's musical personalities—when asked how they come up with some of these parts, Murphy answers, "We do a lot of humming"—but an equal amount has to do with using the musical machinery as a means instead of a method.

"One of the by-products of having all these electronic instruments," comments Frank, "is that there have been many changes in musical style based on how easy it is to just turn the drum machine on and let it go. All of a sudden, people start to hear that a lot, they get used to hearing that, and therefore you don't want to change things too much because they're used to hearing the high-hat play sixteenths through the whole song."

"Having the programmability," adds Murphy, "you can change certain parts of it. You can say, okay, let's change bar four. It's like having a puzzle; you have the frame, and it's like you're filling in the pieces. It's really a unique way of doing it; you can actually put all different possibilities in the sequencer and shift back and forth. You can truncate parts, and say, 'Let's use the chorus and half of the bridge.'"

As a result, the band is able to work off of fairly minimal musical ideas. "When Dave gives me a track," says Murphy, explaining how he writes the

vocal lines, "I like to just sit there and see what comes out after listening to it ten or eleven times.

"With 'You Are In My System' Dave said, 'Well, I have this little bassline. I don't know; it's not that good, but just listen to it.' I already had a concept. I saw this old movie once, and it had the standard Aunt Jemima maid, right? She said to this woman, 'You just got him in your system! You can't shake that boy loose.' I thought, wow—you're in my system. And then I thought of the name of the band, and at first it was like, *this is too corny*. But then I thought, yeah: 'You Are In My System.' And from there, we built the chorus and built the verse."

Homework also plays a big part in the way the two record. "We might spend three days at home programming a song," says Frank. "We certainly wouldn't want to have done that in the studio without running the tape. At home, we don't run the tape; we're just sitting there, thinking, 'Is this a nice combination of sounds?' It saves a lot of time in the studio, and it makes us feel a lot better about going in there.

"Many times, Mic and I will sequence the whole song. On 'My Radio Rocks,' we used the PPG Wave Term sequencer, and two DSXs. Sequenced the entire song, did the drums, then came into the studio, plugged in about 59,000 out-

puts, and put it down all at once.

"A lot of people don't like the DSX because it doesn't do step sequencing. Personally, I couldn't care less about that, because I *play* everything. The MSQ for me seems to be more of a sequencer that's good for doing a single part in the studio; you put that down, then you do another single part, and that sort of thing. For us, we like to orchestrate the song before we go in."

That's not to say that each song is a fait accompli before the tape rolls. "On the one hand, we want to feel like we're going into the studio and are going to have some sort of adventure and be creative; on the other hand, we don't want to go in there with too little information, and then come out of there with nothing. So, we try to keep a balance between what we've already done and what we have to do."

Furthermore, both Frank and Murphy cast a jaundiced eye upon the notion of more synths making better music. "I have my doubts if it's the number of synthesizers you have MIDI'd together that makes it sound better," gripes Murphy. "Sometimes if you just have one or two synthesizers MIDI'd together, you get a much harder sound than you would if you had six or seven. We tried one time to use the Yamaha rack, where you have eight DX7s." He turns to Frank.

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World Radio History

"Was it successful at all?"

"It sounded ridiculous," his partner answers. "We never ended up using all the modules, because the sounds were totally overbearing. We'll find ourselves with too many synthesizers MIDI'd together, and all of a sudden, every sound has a little bit of bell, a little bit of analog, a little bit of digital. Pretty soon, all the parts have the same dimension.

"It's a danger that people get into. They get all this gear, and they use all of it. The thing is, the most important thing is whether the melody, the chords and the feel of the song work together well, whether the little twists somewhere in the song work just right. After that,

you just have to be more particular."

"And you know what?" adds Murphy. "The average knucklehead doesn't know the difference."

That simplicity is practical and more musical than technological idolatry seems obvious enough. But what do you do to prevent such embarrassments as onstage equipment run amok, as in the System's debut?

Frank and Murphy laugh. Explaining that it was a power spike, an unpredictable surge in the current that scrambled the micro-processors, they had no trouble seeking a solution. "After that," says Frank, "we got an industrial storage battery that you plug into a wall,

and after that you've got like an hour, an hour and a half of 110."

"Except when the road crew forgets to charge it," laughs Murphy.

Still, what could be worse than having a power spike turn your circuits topsyturvy?

Frank doesn't have to think too long to answer that one. "Once we had the DSX crash, lose its memory," he says. "That was a pretty unique experience for Mic, because it was a big crowd—we were opening for Marvin Gaye—there were 10,000 people out there.

"The drums were working fine, but I used to have to change from one DSX to another, because I didn't have enough available memory space. So I look over, and the DSX isn't moving. It says 'OUT OF MEMORY.'

"Ohmigod.

"Meanwhile, Mic is going, 'Alright, everybody, put your hands together!' They're clapping on two and four, but I unplugged the cord, because I thought something might be stuck. All of a sudden, the drums turn around, and the crowd is clapping on one and three. And Mic's going, 'Switch it around! Switch it around!'"

They laugh, and Murphy admits that this is one of the biggest problems with technology. "Yeah, I'm always the guy who runs offstage going, *sorreee!*"

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What's in their System

The system this System likes best is the Oberheim OBX-a, DSX sequencer, X-pander and DMX drum machine. "We have this new box that J.L. Cooper's made that will turn the DSX into a MIDI'd sequencer," says David Frank, who, remembering that memory crash, adds that they're also considering a Cooper-built floppy-disc memory/retrieval system for live dates with the DSX. For *The Pleasure Seekers*, the System took advantage of the numerous synths at Unique Recording studios, especially the PPG Wave 3.2 and Wave Terminal. "We've used that for a lot of drum sounds," Frank says, although the percussion sounds on the intro to "Love Won't Wait For Loving" were done on an Emulator II. The only other non-DMX drum sounds they used were from a Simmons module. "We'll use the DMX and then trigger Simmons toms with the DMX and mix them in with the DMX toms," says Frank. "Gives it more beef." Mic Murphy has a Yamaha RX-11 at home, but they never use it in the studio. For the bottom line, Frank's famous bass lines, "We usually use a Mini-Moog. Often, we'll combine it with a DX7 and possibly a sample from the Wave or the Emulator." But, Frank continues, "We're in the process of acquiring an Oscar, a MIDI instrument made by the Oxford Synthesizer company. It's a digital synthesizer that has the fatness of a Mini-Moog. We did some post-production for the Go West single, 'Eye To Eye'; when you hear that, you're hearing an Oscar and a DX7."

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GREEN ON RED'S DANNY STUART

On the Green with a Songwriter Who Got a Little Older and Wiser.

By Roy Trakin

Hey, you're a hacker, just like us," exults Green on Red's pudgy, twenty-four-year-old leader, Dan Stuart. My drive off the tee has just hooked into the Los Angeles River as my golf partners, Stuart and the band's bassist Jack Waterson, good-naturedly tease me. Lest you think I've gone totally California, let me add there are no caddies, electric carts or even bags for our clubs. We are playing a less-than-manicured pitch-and-putt course near Griffith Park, each of us lugging around a 7-iron, a 9-iron and a putter. It's a casual round of golf, best symbolized by Dan Stuart's worn baseball cap and bare feet. What better setting to talk about the fine points of post-punk, roots-rock songwriting.

Green on Red has long exhibited a strong, if casual respect for more traditional things than golf. On their first self-titled EP, their cheesy roller-rink organ and Stuart's doom-laden vocals led to comparisons with the Doors. For *Gravity Talks*, their first full-length album on Slash, the touchstones were the Velvets and Elliott Murphy by way of Television. The more recent *Gas, Food, Lodging* has elicited parallels to Dylan with the Band and Neil Young fronting Crazy Horse. The upcoming seven-song mini-LP, *No Free Lunch*, finds the group mining Van Morrison circa "Brown Eyed Girl" and *T.B. Sheets*. Dan Stuart claims the boys can't help it.

"You don't criticize John Doe or Dave Alvin for having 50s influences in their music because that's what they grew up on," says Stuart, an enthusiastic sort whose words come tumbling out in waves. "I was eight years old in 1969. I was brought up on the Seeds, Lovin' Spoonful and the Doors, aside from my mother bringing home *Sgt. Pepper* and Creedence Clearwater. That's why you have bands like the Long Ryders, Rain Parade, Dream Syndicate and the Bangles. We're all from the same generation. My two biggest songwriting influences are Hank Williams and Woody Guthrie, but is it any wonder we sound like the Band? Still, fuck 1967; we got

into music because of what was happening in 1977."

*We never went to Viet-Nam
But we'd see the odds that did
The Carcasses lined the streets
In our homeland, what a quiz
For the fourth grade pupils
That are being told,
"You're not as smart
as you once were!"*

so-called punk acts at the time. The Serfers opened for every such group that came through from L.A., including Fear, the Weirdos, the Plugz and X. "It was pretty violent," recalls Dan. "The cowboys kept calling the punks faggots."

What set the Serfers apart from their contemporaries was their original material. Dan Stuart might have started out writing hardcore thrash, but he soon graduated to more mature concerns.

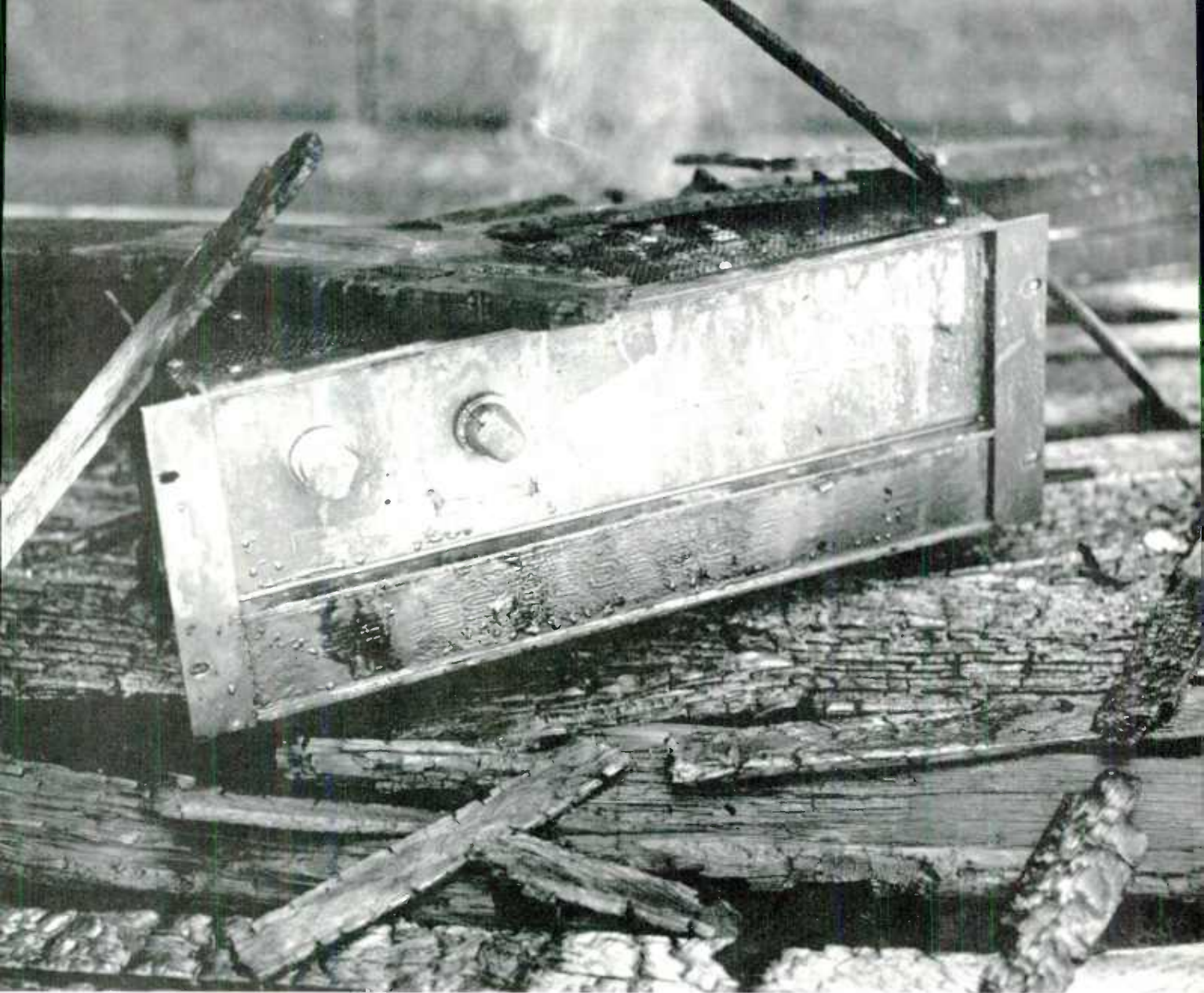


Dan Stuart tipping his hat to tradition.

The son of a neurophysiologist professor father, Dan Stuart grew up in Tucson, Arizona, where he attended the University of Arizona for a couple of semesters, majoring in Mandarin. He dropped out of college to form a band called the Serfers with Jack Waterson and long-time buddy, drummer Van Christian (now in Naked Prey). The trio added keyboardist Chris Cacavas and formed the house band for a run-down bar in Tucson named Pearl's Hurricane Club, the only venue which would book

"There's a difference when you're eighteen and when you're twenty," he admits. "You're not mad at Mommy and Daddy anymore. You begin to realize you control your own fuckin' destiny. You have to be honest. You get a little older, you get a little wiser. You start telling stories."

Growing frustrated with the Tucson scene, Danny moved to L.A. in September of 1980. Waterson and Cacavas followed shortly thereafter, to be joined by local drummer Alex MacNicol, who



In the early morning hours of November 15, 1984 tragedy struck the Bethany Lutheran Church of Cherry Hills, Colorado. A faulty electric organ was blamed for a multiple alarm fire that claimed much of the structure. Thankfully no one was injured in the blaze that caused over one million dollars in damage.

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was playing with Lydia Lunch's 13.13 at the time. By the following summer, the newly named Green on Red was gigging regularly on the club circuit. "Everybody was having a great time and no one seemed to mind we were only making twenty dollars a night," reminisces Stuart. "We'd show up anywhere and play for a six pack."

The group soon became part of a scene loosely termed the "Paisley Underground," a tag they've since tried to shed. "We really hated it," admits Dan, "which is why we won't play with those bands anymore. I mean, Michael Quercio from Three O'Clock is a sweet little kid, but I could kill him for coining that

phrase. I like him, but I never could get into his band's music. But, bless their hearts, they'd show up in these all-paisley outfits and pointy shoes. At least now there's all these bands out there who are much more like that than we are, so we don't get thrown in with them that much. You gotta understand. We were never into that whole thing. We like Little Feat, Television, stuff like that...Great bands. But, once an image gets started, it's impossible to erase."

Green on Red released their first EP on Dan Stuart's best buddy Steve [Dream Syndicate] Wynn's own Down There label. The song subjects were suitably dark and depressing, with titles

like "Death And Angels," "Black Night," "Illustrated Crawling" and "Lost World." A year later, the band recorded their debut album, *Gravity Talks*, produced by the Flesheaters' Chris D., on hip underground Slash Records. Stuart ruefully recalls learning the hard way that what's cool doesn't necessarily mean good business.

"When we signed to Slash, we thought we were on top of the world; and then I saw every intensely corrupt thing that could happen happen," he says slowly, lining up a tough putt. "They tried to sell us like we were the Monkees. *Gravity Talks* was the worst selling record in WEA history, right behind Richard Thompson's 1972 solo album. And we're pretty proud of that. To this day, we've never even seen a royalty statement for that record."

The band followed up the release of the album with back-to-back East Coast tours, accompanied by the Long Ryders, then Rain Parade. When they returned, the group clashed with Slash on the choice of producers for the next album. "They wanted us to use Mitchell Froom and I wanted to use Mitch Easter," says Stuart. "They didn't know who Mitch Easter was and I didn't know who Mitchell Froom was. We were just so naive. They kept shooting down our ideas, so we finally bought our way out of the contract."

Stuart and cohorts decided to check out another local indie label, Enigma. The resulting *Gas, Food, Lodging* came out earlier this year. "We were pleasantly surprised at our dealings with Enigma, says Stuart. "[Enigma prexy] Bill Hein will put out anything he thinks can sell 3,000 copies. He's a populist, like William Jennings Bryan, man. You can do business artistically, but business ain't art, so don't confuse it."

Gas, Food, Lodging is Green on Red's most fully realized work yet, with a rich guitar texture augmented by new band member Chuck "The Kid" Prophet IV. And for a guy who started out hurling punk epithets at drunk cowboys in a Tucson bar, Dan Stuart has begun to expand his field of vision. *Gas, Food, Lodging* expresses this maturity in the neo-classicism of "That's What Dreams," "Fading Away"—and even the traditional "We Shall Overcome." No, Dan Stuart is not too hip to sing around the campfire and roast marshmallows.

"When you start out writing songs, you write about yourself, which is why I don't care for *Gravity Talks* anymore," he explains, hooking a long drive into the rough. "It's all about how the world is so terrible, I'm gonna hang myself. It's very neurotic. When you get more proficient, you write about somebody else. You relate one man's problems to



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"The music generally comes first for me and that suggests a theme. Just from how it sounds. Then, when the rest of the band comes in, and you're thinking about what to sing, you remember lines which bring you closer to the truth. Songwriting tries to convey a simple verity, like will the circle be unbroken? What I like to do in my work is to bring sad things to light and maybe get some joy out of them. Life is trials and tribulations, ain't it?"

"I'm tired of this whole fuckin' youth thing. I hate adolescence. I hate juvenilia. I wanna be an old man. I wanna get my gut a little bigger and wear a guitar like Hoyt Axton. Why is everyone basing their lives around what fifteen-year-old kids are into? Today's young people want safety in numbers. They don't question their reality any more. I call it the New Fascism."

A European tour after the release of *Gas, Food, Lodging* led directly to Green on Red securing a recording deal with Phonogram U.K. A seven-song mini-LP, *No Free Lunch*, is slated

for release on Mercury here in the States sometime soon. And last winter, Stuart collaborated with his pal Steve Wynn of the Dream Syndicate on an album full of drunken revels called *The Lost Weekend*, which also featured members of The Long Ryders. The entire LP was recorded during a booze-soaked 72-hour marathon, with song lyrics scrawled on cocktail napkins and the studio tab riding on a bet placed over the outcome of a Laker basketball game. The result was a rowdy, new wave basement tapes, complete with a rollicking version of Bobby D.'s "Knockin' On Heaven's Door." "It's just this kind of good-natured camaraderie which informs the music played by bands like Green on Red, Dream Syndicate and the Long Ryders. "I wouldn't make music with anybody I didn't love," insists Danny, flush from a surprise birdie on the eighth hole.

"It's funny. I was watching *The Last Waltz* the other night and Richard Manuel was telling this story about how they'd have to go into supermarkets with these long coats and steal bologna for sandwiches. The music meant enough for them to stick together through all sorts of adversity that would make any sane person crack up. Life's about not having to give up your

dreams. To be honest, our dream is simply to make a living at what we're doing and right now, for the first time, we're starting to do that. Our goal is to become self-sufficient. What I think is wrong about popular culture in general is, everybody wants to be famous, but nobody wants to do good work. We want to be famous a hundred years from now. We want our records to sound good even when we're old."

continued on page 97

In The Green On Red Bag

Like their no-frills golf game, Green On Red eschew high-technology for the basics. **Dan Stuart** usually writes songs while strumming on the Bruno Conqueror acoustic guitar Steve Wynn has owned since he was eight years old. Onstage, Dan prefers his Gretsch Chet Atkins Tennesseean, a hollow-bodied electric guitar, played through a Fender amp. "I like fat old guitars. It takes a man to play one."

Keyboardist **Chris Cacavas** plays a Wuritzer electric piano or a Yamaha electric "when he can get one." He also favors a Korg organ. **Chuck "The Kid" Prophet IV**, who idolizes guitarist Steve Cropper, plays a Telecaster through a Fender or Music Man amp. **Alex MacNicol** has gone through a number of drum sets, but prefers an old Sonor kit. **Jack Waterson** goes with the old stand-by Fender bass, played through a Fender amp.

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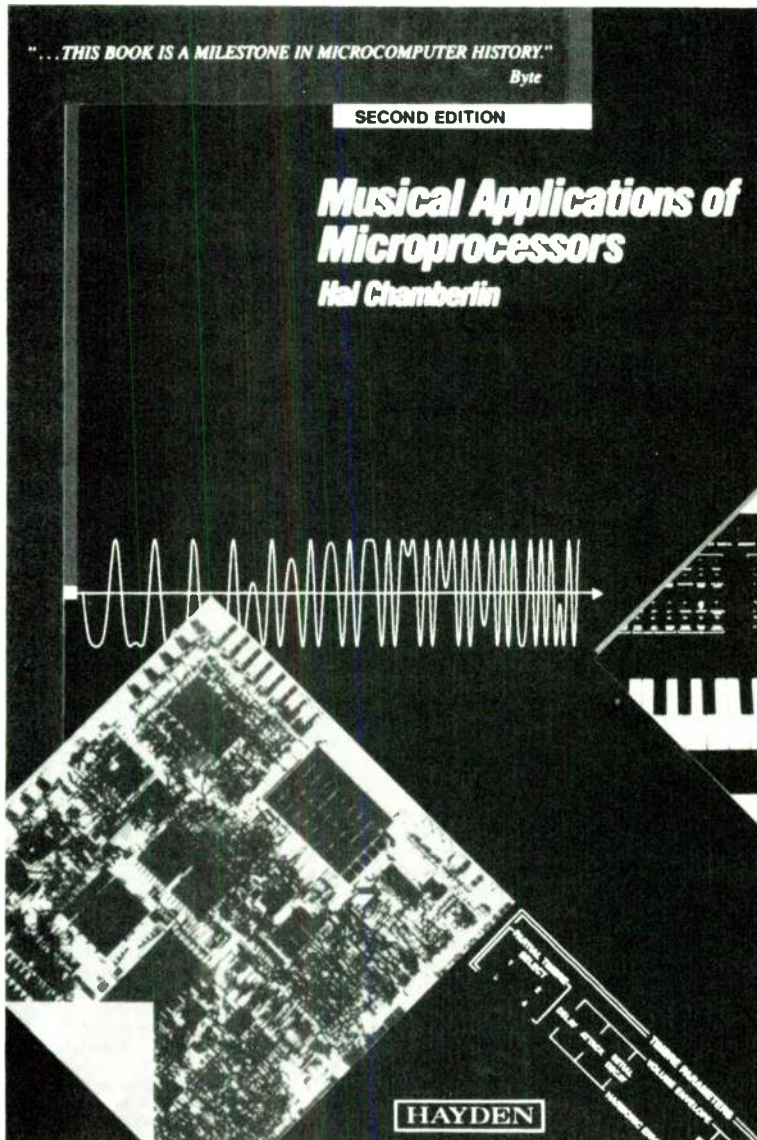
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DEVELOPMENTS

By Jock Baird

Hold on to your wallets and grab the marshmallows, kids. The sampling price war is heating up in earnest. Just out from **Sequential Circuits** is a \$2,500 sampling keyboard called the Prophet 2000. The 2000 uses 12-bit sampling for first-rate fidelity on its eight voices, then offers a 4-pole low-

If you hunger for a 3½-inch disk drive for your own MIDI setup—after all, disk is a mucho faster and more reliable storage medium than tape—then **J.L. Cooper Electronics** has what you need. It's his \$900 MIDI Disk, which can interface with any MIDI synth, sequencer or drum machine that can perform a MIDI data dump through its MIDI cables. The Cooper unit has personalized disks for

J.L. Cooper's MIDI disk drive

loads, arranges and plays up to twenty-eight songs from the Studio I program, ideal for live gigging situations (price, \$179). Then there's the \$150 DX/TX Master voice/librarian program for C-64, its cooler cousin, the \$400 DX/TX EZ Voice for IBM-PC, a couple of handy MIDI thru-boxes, RAM cartridges for DXs and RXs.... Say, this little company is doing a lot of interesting stuff. Contact Syntech Corp., 23958 Craftsman Rd., Calabasas, CA 93102, (818) 704-8509.

It's About Time Dept.: Ever wished someone made a simple inexpensive practice headphone/amp that lets you mix your instruments with a record or tape signal without repatching half your stereo? Now for a lip-smacking \$80, **Krauel Enterprises** has done just that. Krauel Monitors use a 4-channel output system: left and right halves of the stereo program and two dual mono outputs. This helps you distinguish the part you're playing live from the rest of the recorded program. The 4-output system also gives more flexibility—you can switch off any combination, or disable the whole internal amp section to use pre-amped instrument inputs. Krauel Monitors use two 8-foot input cords and the whole headset weighs only 14 ounces. Definitely recommended for those delicate roommate/spouse/neighbor volume situations. From Krauel, 3622 Youree Dr., Shreveport, LA 71105; (800) 457-0042.

Lots of guitar action this month. The two most radical guitar designs of the last year, the **Bond** and the **Gittler** both made news, the scallop-fretted Bond by closing down their Scotland manufacturing plant and casting about for a new home in the U.S. or Far East, the fish-skeleton Gittler by getting a strong **Nils Lofgren** endorsement. The most



Sequential's Prophet 2000 sampler

pass VCF, a VCA and velocity-controlled 4-stage envelopes to further sculpt your sound. You assign up to sixteen different samples on the 5-octave keyboard, as well as layering and stacking two or more samples together—you can even cross-fade them. The keyboard itself is velocity sensitive with weighted action.

Other eye-opening features on the 2000 include more complex editing abilities like reverse, mixing and truncating of samples; automatic looping

each different type of equipment you're using—if you want to dump from a Yamaha DX7, you just insert the DX7 disk. Already available are disks for Yamaha DX7, QX7, TX7 and RX11, Sequential Drum-Traks and (natch) the JL Cooper Soundchest II. **Jim Cooper**, whose month isn't complete unless he brings out a new MIDI product, also introduced the Expression Plus, a rack-mounted unit that puts volume levels for eight different instruments under MIDI control and MIDIizes volume pedals, breath controller, aftertouch or velocity. There's also Cooper's 16-input, 20-output MIDI Switch Box (MSB 16/20 for super-setups. Call (213) 473-8771 for more tales of the future.

A young software company, **Syntech**, has been garnering a pretty good buzz from the MIDI community lately. A big draw is their 8-track Music Digital Studio I/II/III sequencer program—the roman numerals are for C-64, Apple IIe/II+ and IBM-PC respectively. The Syntech Studio records sixteen different sequences, has very flexible cut-and-paste features, packs auto and live punch, excellent auto-correction, a digital delay effect, transposition, time code reading and generating capability

and a lot more for \$225. You'll also need to buy one of their hardware interfaces, which work for a number of other top software programs, too; that adds about \$200 if you want tape sync (and you do):

Syntech also has a program called the Songplayer (so far just for C-64) that



Krauel Monitors

functions such as computer-assisted zero cross-over and zero-slope selection to find the perfect loop points; and a set of digital oscillator wavetables in ROM to build more traditional synth sounds you can mix and match with your samples. Then there's enhanced arpeggiation, with programmable up, down, assign, extend, auto-latch and transpose modes and, best of all, a 3½-inch on-board disk drive for program storage (Sequential also has a disk library of prerecorded samples). For more info, contact SCI, 3051 N. First St., San Jose, CA 95134 (408) 946-5240.



John Nady's wireless Lightning

prestigious new guitar is from **John Nady**, pioneer of wireless. Nady worked



extensively as a guitarist/songwriter/bandleader in the 70s—he made his 1971 group the first wireless electric band ever—so it's not a total surprise to see him finally bring out a classy \$1,500 hand-made model with a built-in wireless unit. Called the Lightning, it has an alder neo-Strat body with a through-the-body maple neck and ebony fretboard. Check out the flashy mother-of-pearl lightning bolts for inlays. The finish is black with satin black fittings and controls. The transmitter section includes a battery bay with a magnetic door so you can charge without using tools—nice touch—and the receiver is the VHF high-band Nady 501, the wireless that Won the West. Nady himself is planning to use this guitar in making his first album at the **Nady Systems**' in-house 16-track studio at 1145 65th St., Oakland, CA 94608.

Did you know you could get a **Martin** acoustic guitar—with a gorgeous figured Oriental Chestnut back and sides—for only \$300? No, I didn't either. It's the Martin Sigma DT-3. Martin has also updated their acoustic guitar pick-up, the **ThinLine** 332, a small piezoelectric strip that's easily installed under the saddle. Other acoustic happenings include new raves for **D'Addario's** nylon **Pro-Arts** strings from the classical guitarist community, specifically the **Noacek Bissiri Duo** and **Myrna Sislen**.

Ernie Ball has a new ultra rugged Stereo/Pan Bi-level volume pedal that can do things like pan between two amps, switch channels in one amp, or set up lead-rhythm volume patches. Ernie Ball is also sending endorsee **Steve Morse** out on a series of East Coast seminar/clinics this fall. Call 800-543-2255 for schedules. And let's not forget **Peavey's** latest amplifier for hollow-body jazz players, the Jazz Classic, a 210-watt, 15-inch-speaker-loaded portable specialist that uses Peavey's house DDT circuitry for more cleanliness and wider frequency response.

The rumor mill brings word of **Ensoniq** coming out with just the sampling section of their Mirage for around \$1200, ongoing reports of guitar synthesis and sampling doings at **Yamaha**, and a new \$800 6-voice synth from **Akai**, who is also about to unleash new MIDI-based echo, dynamics and arpeggiator units.

Stuart from page 94

"Can you tell me anything in this great Nancy Reagan New Wave kind of world that's new and not a rehash of twenty different styles?" raves Dan, his voice rising across the putting green. "Did you think punk was about everyone having the same haircut? Punk was about individualism. Everybody has a poem. Everybody has a song. As soon as the word new wave was invented, every-

thing began to get standardized.


"The problem in England now is that nobody knows how to bend a note," he laughs. "All those English guitarists base what they do on Keith Levene or the Edge. What made guys like Clapton, Page and Beck so great is they grew up on the blues. They know how to express themselves fluently on the instrument. There's no soul in what kids are listening to, stuff like AC/DC.

"I'm into balls, Hell's Angels, intense Latinos and bad-ass black dudes that don't like white people," Stuart claims. "I also believe violence is the only way you can effect social change." On the other hand, he reads the Bible and regards himself as "just as much Islamic

as Catholic as Jewish," despite having been raised without religion.

"What keeps you alive is knowing there's a place where someone holds you special that you can always come back to," Father Dan says earnestly. If you don't have that, you can't go out on the road. We're banking on the future, buddy, and we all know our lives ain't gonna last that long."

"Fore!!"

The foursome in back of us is patiently waiting patiently to hit to the green as Dan, Jack and I sink our putts on the final hole. Well, perhaps golf is a bit like rock 'n' roll, with the torch—or the seven iron—passing from one generation to the next. 

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Stevie Wonder stays plugged in to his peculiarly powerful muse.



STEVIE WONDER

In Square Circle
(Tamla)

If you wished to choose one modern Stevie Wonder album (meaning from 1972's *Music Of My Mind* onward) to tutor the uninitiated, this would be it. All his time-honored bases are covered here, from the quirky title, recondite cover art and ambitiously in-elegant packaging to the eerie-brilliant ethereality of Wonder's vocal passion and his muscular compositional acumen. Naturally, the message is love in all its forms and applications, along with Stevie's belief in its peerless metaphysical might and eternal potency. He resoundingly reconfirms that there is no more open, guileless heart and purity of purpose in all of popular music than his own.

It isn't a diminishment of *In Square Circle*'s grandeur to call it generic Stevie. The LP does lack the explosive force of a "Sir Duke" or the exhilarating elasticity of a "Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing," but while there are no lofty peaks, there is also nothing remotely resembling a valley. "Part-Time Lover" is as sweet-natured and upbeat a song about cheating and being cheated on as one will find, and its sheer spirit makes it Wonder's most listenable



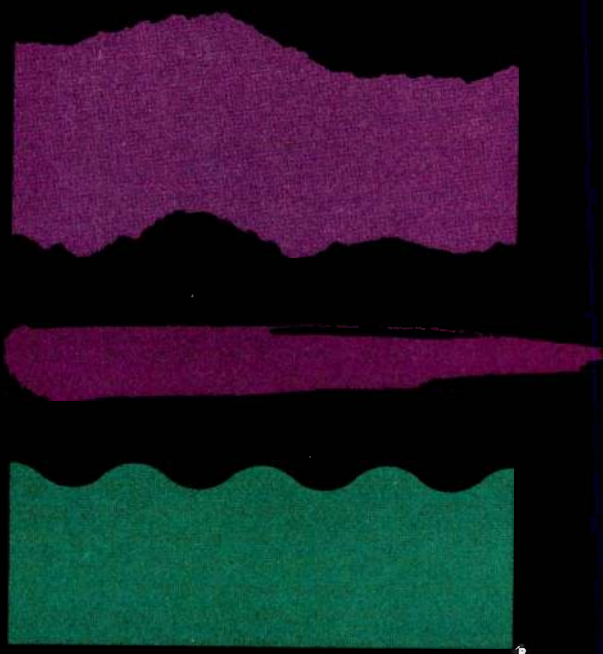
single in years. "Whereabouts" is so convincing in its longings that the emotion seems part of the instrumentation.

These tracks and "Spiritual Walkers" offer a keenly wrought catalog of the man's vocal skills. Rich growls, tingling squeaks and golden croonings merge effortlessly with his iridescent synthesizer palette, particularly those tensile electronic keyboards that resemble the reverberant plunks of a huge kalimba. There's also plenty of inspired arranging; punchy background singing is voiced like horns, while ultra-pretty piano figures and accordion/harmonica filigrees are mixed in subtly and seductively on the touching "Stranger On The Shore Of Love," and "Land Of Lala." The two most absorbing tracks, however, are the penetrating ballads "Never

In Your Sun" and "Overjoyed," the former boasting one of the finest metaphors for unfulfilled love ever, the latter distilling the sensation of virtuous uplift with ineffable delicacy.

In Square Circle closes with "It's Wrong (Apartheid)," whose power lies in the gradual way the theme emerges from proud rhythms. Wonder declaims with crisp clarity that when you place a chain around the neck of a man, the other end wraps itself around your throat. So free your neighbors with love, he counsels, and you will know no greater personal freedom or rapture.

We may never be able to join Stevie Wonder at the uncanny source of his gifts, but their dimension alone remains one of contemporary music's life-affirming mysteries. — Timothy White



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HÜSKER DÜ

Flip Your Wig
(SST)

MISSION OF BURMA

The Horrible Truth About Burma
(Ace of Hearts)

If sincerity equalled sales, Hüsker Dü and Mission of Burma would be perched at the top of the charts. Of course, it doesn't, and the Hüskers continue to toil in the ranks of the indies, while Burma have departed the mortal coil entirely. Anyway, *Flip Your Wig* and *The Horrible Truth About Burma* are crackling, big-noise spectacles that underscore the slick, safe quality of most major label releases, good and bad. What sets these rascals apart is a burning desire to say *something*—even if they're not sure what.

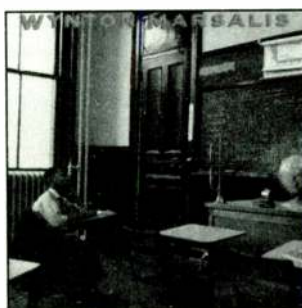
Flip Your Wig finds Minnesota's prolific Hüsker Dü on the verge of either wonderful commercial breakthrough or a shameful sellout, depending on your perspective. Compared to the bratty hardcore of their early days, the sprawling psychedelia of *Zen Arcade*, and the sometimes slapdash *New Day Rising*, this dandy LP is practically mainstream. (Note the laminated cover.) Although the straight-ahead rockers, powered by Bob Mould's beefy guitar chords, may still be too raucous for polite society, the Hüskers add plenty of harmless sweeteners to lure fellow travelers. The giddy title cut rolls and tumbles cheerfully, with Mould's spiralling solo approaching Chuck Berry territory, while the perky "Makes No Sense At All" brims with "nice" vocal harmonies, also heard on plenty of other cuts. Most shocking, drummer Grant Hart's "Green Eyes" is a cornball love song, despite the disguise of a few grating notes.

Fueling suspicions of a 60s revival, Hüsker Dü often echo that era's luminaries, from Quicksilver Messenger Service ("Every Everything") to early Grand Funk Railroad ("Find Me") to the good ol' Monkees ("Hate Paper Doll"). Next time, who knows? Even more exciting than *Flip Your Wig* is that the Hüskers continue to evolve in unexpected directions.

Being defunct, Boston's Mission of

Burma have ceased to evolve, but this absorbing live disc is a worthy testament to a provocative band that never settled into a comfortable rut. A mood of extreme agitation, bordering on violence, dominates the proceedings, though Burma seem more likely to injure themselves than anyone else. The strongest tracks occur when the guys settle down long enough to burrow into the guts of a song; on "Tremelo" [sic] tape manipulator Martin Swope turns Roger Miller's guitar into sheets of bracing noise, while Pere Ubu's "Heart of Darkness" mines a sorrowful Joy Division-type groove. Otherwise, it's a festival of frayed nerves, highlighted by a chaotic reading of "1970" even more wild-eyed than the Stooges' original. Mission of Burma's exaggerated gestures would be annoying, except for one thing: They mean every tortured note.

— Jon Young



WYNTON MARSALIS

Black Codes (From The Underground)
(Columbia)

Far and away Marsalis' finest album, and not just more of the same done better but a different animal altogether. It's always startling to see real inner growth take place, and yet so conventional to talk about artists "finding their own voices" that when a bit of it actually happens on an essential level you're not left with much to say. All of this album's quantifiable advances over previous efforts yield an unquantifiable freshness and I'm left with the charm and excitement of *that* after listening. But let me count the ways.

For one thing, Marsalis' writing has begun to bear significant fruit. He has tended not to write tunes, but quirky motific assemblages that provide a variable basis for improvisation. In the past they've sometimes sounded inorganic and preconceived, but now you can see what he's been driving at; his little thematic nuggets give the soloists what they need without unduly hemming them in. The quintet has begun to speak its own language. For all its youth, this has always seemed a potentially great

band, and at the time of this recording—January '85—they had gotten right up to the verge of it.

As a soloist, Marsalis has checked his tendency to blow the top of your head off with pyrotechnics, and gone instead for continuity, sustained notes, gorgeous tone production, and long, coherent structures, as on the opening title tune. Oddly enough, his characteristic aura of high drama is undimmed. Branford Marsalis is marvelously fluent on soprano saxophone, but seems caught on tenor midway between the protective obliquities of his earlier Shorterisms and an evoking narrative gift reminiscent of Hank Mobley at his best, and which needs even longer solos than he gets here. On "Chambers of Tain," the album's one uptempo burner, he seems just to be hitting his stride at solo's end. Kenny Kirkland is so consistently good he damn near steals the album, Charnett Moffett's fine, and drummer Jeff Watts powers the band masterfully. In sum, a band and album of the first excellence, and not incidentally one of the best-recorded jazz albums ever.

There's a bonus. Not listed on the jacket is the album's closer, a blues played by only the leader and his bassist and quite a demonstration; in the literal, medieval sense of the words a master piece, a commingling of grandstanding and understanding, intelligence and passion, unfakable feeling and its ironic counterpart, good personality and bad: Will all critics be silenced please. It rates a standing ovation in any nightclub or nervous system.

— Rafi Zabor



JANE WIEDLIN

Modern Romance
(I.R.S.)

As the Go-Go's best songwriter, Jane Wiedlin didn't get much respect, but when she finally quit because her bandmates wouldn't let her sing, the group promptly collapsed. On first listen to Wiedlin's solo debut, it's easy to understand what the other Go-Go's were worried about: Jane's voice is to Belinda

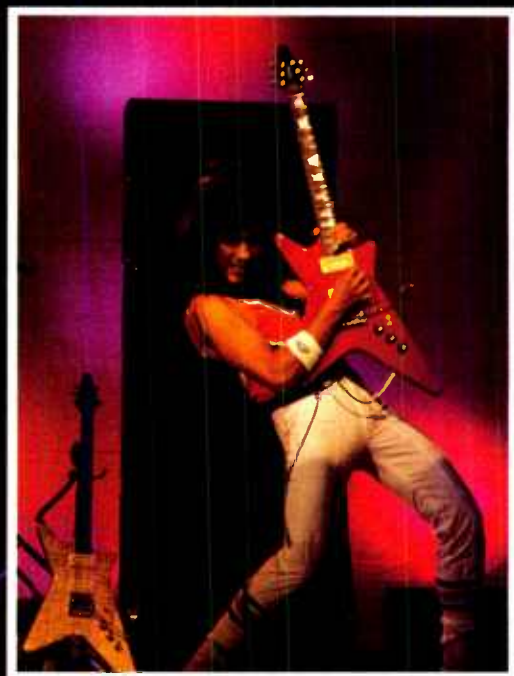
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Carlisle's as Yoko Ono's was to John Lennon's. But also like Yoko, a taste for Jane's soprano *can* be acquired, and there's more than enough good stuff on this record to make that worth your while.

Like her best songs on the under-rated *Talk Show* ("Forget That Day," "Capture The Light") Wiedlin's bouncy rhythms and confectionary melodies conceal a view of romance that's at once artfully poignant and drily sophisticated. On "Blue Kiss," a deserving single, she wonders rhetorically why a sad love affair means more to her than a new one; on the title track Weidlin excoriates New Age encounters ("what's so neat about fooling around taking a heart and running it into the ground"), all the while sounding like a cross between Melanie and Petula Clark. She's occasionally betrayed by overreaching ambition—"Goodbye Cruel World," her take on "Imagine," sounds more peppy than eloquent—of its lack. "Sometimes You Really Get On My Nerves" could be the theme for a dumb sitcom. But a compelling narrative and Roxyish textures imbue "One Hundred Years Of Solitude" with an eerie atmosphere of unrequited longing, while "East Meets West," with its crosscut, oddball images of Japanese and American cultures, recalls the wit and zest of "Cool Places With You." It also features a chorus sung in two languages (maybe she's looking for a crossover hit). Overall, *Modern Romance* is too uneven to herald Wiedlin's arrival as a major pop songwriter. But there's enough fine songs and inspired sonic and lyrical touches throughout to suggest she'll become one.

— Mark Rowland



TOM WAITS

Rain Dogs
(Island)

Rain Dogs is as stylistically diverse as any album since *The Beatles*. Its instrumentation ranges from a brass-and-reeds choir to string bass and percussion while its idioms encompass rural blues, hard rock and skewed cabaret. On first

sten, this brazen eclecticism may seem like gimmickry, or else a camouflage for lack of original ideas. But Tom Waits isn't imitating anybody; he's just found more ways to be Tom Waits.

Waits' transition from seedy, sentimental hipster to a more expansive musical personality was first signalled in his last LP, *Swordfishtrombones*, and *Rain Dogs*, while equally eccentric, is considerably more effective. "Union Square," one of several tracks featuring guitarist Keith Richards, exudes more Stones-like raunch than the Stones themselves have mustered on their last few albums; "Blind Love," a crying-in-y-beer ballad (that also features Richards) certainly suggests the spirit of Hank Williams better than the country confessions currently rolling off the Nashville assembly line. There are a few songs that can be classified as vintage Waits, and a few that can't be classified at all: "Cemetery Polka," for example, which combines a jaunty minor-key melody with a lyric describing a remarkably unpleasant collection of relatives.

Tying these disparate strains together are Waits' whiskey-soaked voice, grown huskier (and more moving) over the years, and of course his lyrics, which have grown even wilder. Some of his metaphors are so dense they're impenetrable, but when he's denouncing the lifestyles of the poor and desperate, Waits simply has no peer.

Once it was possible to dismiss Tom Waits as just another character in a Tom Waits song, a scruffy loser who simply sat down at his piano (which had been drinking) and free-associated. *Rain Dogs* leaves no doubt that he's an artist. — Peter Keepnews



TANGERINE DREAM

Le Parc
(Relativity)

Psychologists and music therapists call it music imagery; Tangerine Dream calls it their first domestically issued studio album in five years. The theme here is marks, and the group's impressionistic portraits are striking and vivid enough for someone to film a document-

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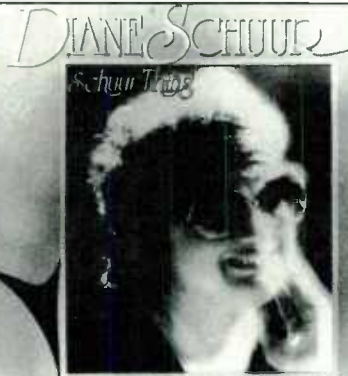
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—STAN GETZ



DIANE SCHUUR

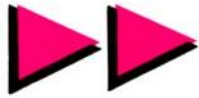
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Pop/Jazz critics and audiences are at no loss of words to describe the phenomenon that is singer/pianist Diane Schuur. Since the release of last year's *"Deadles"* Diane has been making all the right stops (The White House, Hollywood Bowl, Monterey, and nationally televised "Great Performances")

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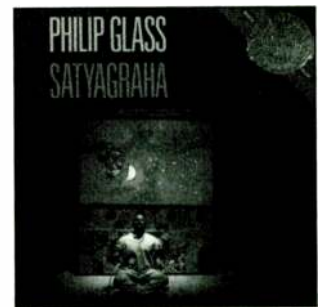
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tary around them. By now the composers of such soundtracks as *Risky Business*, *Firestarter* and *Thief* have become relative adepts at programmatic music; layer upon layer of drum tracks, synthesized strings, bamboo flutes and whispering winds help conjure the distinct flavors and moods of such celebrated parks as Central, Bois de Boulogne, Hyde, Yellowstone and the Zen Garden of Ryoanji Temple, Kyoto. (How cosmopolitan these Europeans are.) And after a twenty-year commitment to electronic creativity as well as technique, Messrs. Froese, Franke and Schmoelling sculpt intricate, highly-crafted designs. They're a rock group that doesn't think that a synthesizer is just a monster organ (no pun intended).

But *Le Parc* still relies too much on nifty images without communicating much emotion. TD's music projects awe and grandeur, but not much that feels human. Ultimately, *Le Parc* sounds too much like a soundtrack that's desperately seeking cinema. — **Cliff Tinder**



PHILIP GLASS

Satyagraha
(CBS Masterworks Digital)

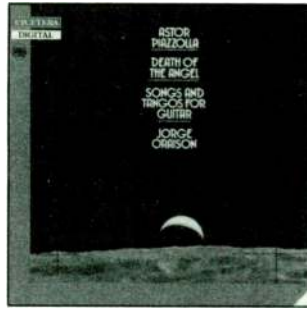
Mishima
(Nonesuch Digital)

Philip Glass has been labeled a "minimalist" due to the similarity between his music's lean lines and basic harmonic units with the stripped-down aesthetic of minimalist artists. But just as Impressionism, another term borrowed from the art world, demeans the achievements of Debussy and Ravel by reducing them to the rank of harmonic colorists, so too does minimalism oversimplify Glass' output. And Glass' compositions, as these two recordings indicate, are deceptively complex.

Satyagraha, Glass' operatic treatment of Mohandas Gandhi's struggles against racial discrimination in South Africa, is a surprisingly difficult work, though it doesn't seem that way at first. With most of the score built around harmonic triads stretched out in insistently repetitive duple or triple patterns, it

sounds at first like every other Glass score on vinyl. Listen carefully, though, and those simple, seemingly diffuse units slowly reveal a magnificently structured whole. In a way, this opera's musical development exemplifies the literal process of *satyagraha* (a term combining the Sanskrit words *satya*, for "truth" or "love," and *graha* for "firmness" or "force"), which Gandhi formulated as a means for non-violent protest against governmental oppression. The key is to listen for rhythmic development instead of simply expecting melodic embellishment to carry the piece along; once the opera's structural flow is grasped, the teasingly unfurled harmonic motives begin to make dramatic sense. It's hard work, but worth it.

Mishima, Glass' score to Paul Schrader's film biography of Japanese writer Yukio Mishima, is much more approachable, in part because its structure is episodic. But *Mishima* also features some of Glass' most vivid scoring, which heightens the drama. And there's more going on here than mere textural variations; "Mishima/Opening" presents an inspired fusion of rhythmic and harmonic ideas, while "Kyoko's House" displays rare wit (rare for Glass, anyway). *Mishima* is a treat for any listener, and an impressive addition to the Glass menagerie. — J.D. Considine



GINO D'AURI

Passion Play
(Sonic Atmo Spheres)

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA

Songs And Tangos For Guitar
(Etcetera Digital)

Though centuries and continents apart, Argentine tango and Andalusian flamenco each mirror the repressed anger and depressed sexuality of their respective underground subcultures, a spirit epitomized by the music of the Spanish guitar. But while the *tipo tanguero* implodes his passion, the gypsy explodes—a dichotomy delineated by these two recent albums for solo acoustic guitar.

Composer Astor Piazzolla is the leading exemplar of "neo-tango," a controversial Buenos Aires-based movement which has attempted since the late 60s to "elevate" traditional tango into art music. The selections here (mostly transcribed by guitarist Jorge Oracion) avoid the bombastic ballroomisms of Nonesuch's Tango Project, but to a fault. Instead they offer intellectualized abstractions of an already stylized persona—the solitary black-clad gallant drowning his broken dreams in the back of a neighborhood cafe. The result is a tango that's neither passionate nor particularly poignant. Unusual chromatic spicings and novel rhythmic twists more frequently suggest a creative mind at work, but stripped of machismo, Oracion's performance suggests a gaucho of the demi-world dressed to a T with nowhere to go.

By contrast, *Passion Play* is the kind of record you wish would flip itself over on your turntable. Spatially enhanced through deep digital reverb, these four improvisations on Andalusian themes will leave your body feeling strummed in the back of a dark Sevillian cathedral. Guitarist Gino D'Auri is Italian, but stints with Vittorio Gassman, Garcia Lorca, and Jose Greco have perfected his mastery of the controlled Latin burn. On *continued on page 109*

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McDonald from page 83

[laughs]. I don't know. I wasn't around for a lot of the recording. On the things that I did—on the singing—they beat you up pretty good. It was not a relaxed situation. Not that it wasn't a lot of fun, either. It's kinda like going on the David Letterman show or something; you had to go in there with the attitude of a rubber ball. If you didn't mind getting bounced around a little bit, you usually did okay.

MUSICIAN: You wrote what Rolling Stone called an "anthem of the 70s"—"What A Fool Believes." Did you sense that it was more than just another ditty?

MCDONALD: Yeah, only in the sense that I really liked the song. I remember when we first finished the thing, I said to Keith (Knudsen, a Doobie drummer) that it reminded me of a Four Seasons track, a pop, New York, early-60s kind of thing. If there was anything we were going for, it was that kind of track—a straight-ahead kind of thing. In a way, it wasn't exactly what we were going for, but it was good for what it was.

I wrote the lyrics and most of the music with Kenny (Loggins). We sat down with the initial idea and in three days wrote the tune. I feel that a lot of the stuff I've written with Kenny is among the best I've written. I think there's a real competition with us to re-

ally make the thing good, whereas a lot of times with co-writing, it's a lopsided effort one way or the other. One person will initiate, the other person will facilitate. But with Kenny and I, it's pretty head-to-head. We tend to finish songs faster. There's an anxiety level to get it done and make it good—the stuff we do together has more of an edge than some of the other things I write.

MUSICIAN: That tune, and a lot of your others, say real things using broad sentiments—rather than just filling in the syllable counts like a pop craftsman.

MCDONALD: I've always had problems being too outside with my ideas. I tend to take a pretty straight-ahead approach with melody and lyrics. Not so much with chords or even arrangements all the time, but just the notes and the words. I think maybe that's where that anthemic thing might come from. Lyrically, I've never been able to get too outside without sounding pretentious, so until I develop that ability to do that well, I just shy away from it.

MUSICIAN: It seems to approach a modern pop-gospel style.

MCDONALD: That's a nice thought. If I have a favorite music, that's it. For me, I have to go a long way to find music much more exciting than gospel and its basic nature. Of all the rock 'n' roll I've played, I've never been as roused by

that music as I have been by American gospel music, especially the music you hear in black churches. I draw on that when I'm looking to create a little excitement, because the bash-boom-bash is not where I look for excitement, although I can appreciate it when other people do it well. When I'm writing, that's just not what I go for naturally.

MUSICIAN: There's a current resurgence of music similar to, or drawing from, what you're doing, thanks in large part to the cluster of English bands offering their own takes on anglo soul. Is the style pendulum swinging your way?

MCDONALD: I've noticed it on the radio, a departure from a very simplistic approach to grooves. All of a sudden, people's appetites are whetted for a little more sophisticated rhythmic quality to a record, overall. I don't care if I'm Prince or anything. Fifteen years from now, I'd like to think that I've grown as a player and that it's the caliber of what I should be doing at that time, given the time I've had to learn. Huge success is a lot of different things; it's not always based on what the artist himself has control over. All you can deal with is that which you do have control over. The rest of it is fate. From where I sit, I just want to be in there in ten years, still be lucid, not burned up, frazzled and unable to really function. ☐

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The Robert Cray Band
False Accusations (Hightone)

Unlike a lot of younger bluesmen, Cray respects tradition but refuses to lean on it. True, that gives his band room for synthesizers, but it also frees them from formal strictures, and in the process, finds him furthering the blues instead of merely playing caretaker. The best songs here—"Porch Light," "Playin' In The Dirt," "The Last Time"—hit home with an emotional immediacy only the classics could match, yet speak with a directness that's utterly contemporary. Not to be missed. (P.O. Box 8064, Emeryville CA 94662).

Maurice White
Maurice White (Columbia)

Given his status as Earth, Wind & Fire's shining star, it comes as no surprise that White's first solo project sounds a lot like classic EW&F: tight, focused and punchy. But while White remembers to sink a hook into every verse and chorus, the emphasis here is on subtlety and sophistication as he works his way through R&B basics—from the drum mechanics in "Switch On Your Radio" to the modified doo-wop of "Stand By Me"—with a sense of craft that makes slickness irrelevant.

Roger Daltrey
Under A Raging Moon (Atlantic)

Instead of putting Daltrey's past behind him, this album celebrates it. Even with a well-tailored Townshend tune and the "Fooled Again" outline of the title track, he never sounds like a contestant on "Whose Who?" Credit his sense of purpose, for when Daltrey sings of the title's "raging" Moon, you can feel the heat that fired *Who's Next*, and be glad that he's finally comfortable being Roger Daltrey, and not just another band singer out on his own.

Prefab Sprout
Two Wheels Good (Epic)

Bright kids, these Sprouts, whose shrewdly observed lyrics and cool melodies combine country classicism with electronic elegance. A lot of the latter springs from producer Thomas Dolby, whose studio smarts clearly shepherded the arrangements. But no amount of Dolby-ization could create such vivid writing, as Paddy McAloon proves it's possible to be as word-conscious as Roddy Frame and still rock.

Kate Bush
Hounds Of Love (EMI/America)

Bush surely knows her way around the studio, and has a real genius for molding sounds—whether from her voice or her band—into detailed soundscapes. What makes it something to be endured rather than enjoyed is her insistence on playing Ophelia to her own Hamlet.

Bobby Womack
So Many Rivers (MCA)

Womack's move to the majors finds him slicking up his sound, to the point that the title track doesn't so much flow as cascade from the speakers. Still, his voice is as expressive as ever, and "I Wish He Didn't Trust Me So Much" may well be best soul ballad of the season. Not bad for a guy who does three albums a year....

James Brown *Live At The Apollo, Volume II (pts. 1 & 2)* (Rhino)

Granted, the first *Live At The Apollo* was a milestone, but this is Brown's masterpiece. Not only does it display the Hardest Working Man in Show Business in almost every mode—from the tender croon of "That's Life" to the drop-dead cool of "Cold Sweat"—but "There Was A Time" and "I Feel All Right" give a better picture of Brown's rapport with an audience than you'll ever hear on record. (1201 Olympic Blvd., Santa Monica CA 90404.)

B-Side
Cairo Nights (Celluloid)

Rapping in French is like eating bacon with a fork; there are people who do it, but who can take them seriously? Yet B-Side (a.k.a. Ann Boyle) raps *en Français* with an aplomb Debbie Harry hardly achieved in English, lending "Change The Beat" considerable hip-hop credibility. The best rap here, though, is "What I Like," which celebrates its pleasures in plain English and

deep funk. Not for dancers only. (155 W. 29th St., New York, NY 10001)

Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble
Soul To Soul (Epic)

Vaughan wears his guitar-hero mantle so casually that it's easy to overlook how well he plays here. With keyboardist Reese Wynans rounding out the sound now, Vaughan moves more easily between jazz ("Gone Home"), blues ("Look At Little Sister") and down-home funk ("Come On"), and sounds like an ace every time. That low-key cool makes this the guitarist's best effort yet, because by not trying to impress the listener, Vaughan knocks 'em dead.

The Roches
Another World (Warner Bros.)

That this album has been junked up with synthesizers and slick rhythm isn't half so galling as the lack of hits. If you're selling out, at least try to turn a profit.

The Staple Singers
The Staple Singers (Private I)

Following the formula of *Turning Point*, there's another Talking Heads tune ("Life During Wartime") and a continued emphasis on high-tech rhythm. But there's also "Are You Ready?" a genuine gospel number packing more punch than most dance hits, and boasting Mavis Staples' sanctified shout to boot. Maybe the Lord's ways aren't so mysterious, after all.

Todd Rundgren
A Cappella (Warner Bros.)

This "voice only" recording would be more impressive if Rundgren hadn't cheated and plugged in the drum machine, but that's really not the point. As much as these songs show off the singer's craft, they also demonstrate his limitations; it's one thing to manage all the harmonies on "Mighty Love," quite another to top them with such a lame Phillippe Wynne impression.

Tina Harris
I Must Not Be Kinky (Shanachie)

This may be a one-sided EP, but Harris herself is fairly multifaceted. Part of her approach is straight sex siren, yet it's never served up as kittenish camp. Instead, she comes on strong but from left field, just like the jazzy avant-funk she uses for backing vamps, and that gives her songs a giddy energy that's intoxicating. And only slightly kinky. (Dalebrook Pk., HoHoKus, NJ 07423)

Record Review from page 105

"Moorish Fantasy" D'Auri expertly stalks his rhythmic toques, locks horns with impossible syncopations, then retreats with stunning tenderness. On "Rodeñas" he shoots a melodic stream over torturous arpeggios without spilling a drop. But the LP's finest moment is an unexpected and thoroughly raw outburst of the cantero on the final cut; three short vocal riffs which reverberate as if from a distant rooftop. A flamenco concept at once primitive and futuristic, *Passion Play* is a must for dance aficionados, *Carmen* buffs, and anyone else who needs a night of ravishing.

— Pamela Bloom



BREAD

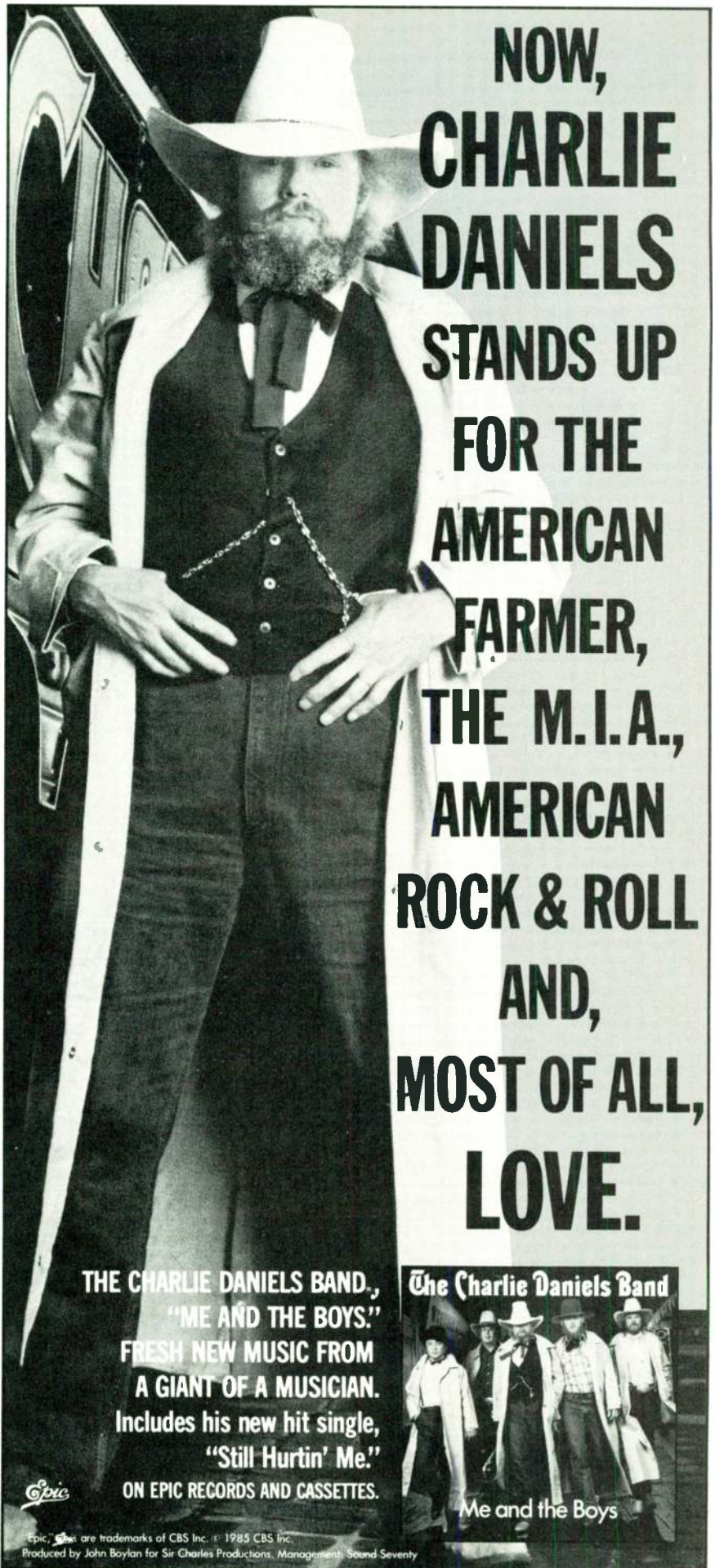
Anthology Of Bread
(Elektra)

The Bread anthology reminds anyone despairing of 80s pop how much worse things have been in the past. Madonna and Duran Duran may not be high art, but they are luminous next to these hitmakers of the Watergate era. The Bread album includes twenty tracks on one LP, and if groove cramming has diminished the sonic quality, who will ever know? Old timers will enjoy being reminded of how funny "I found your diary underneath the tree" sounded when sung by a guy who pronounced diary "dairy." Dyslexia.

Italians always said "Baby I'm-A Want You" reminded them of the old country, and although the liner notes refer to the "double-entendre of 'Make It With You,'" it's hard to think of more than one way that tune could be taken. Not that the LP is all chartbusters; it also includes lesser known Bread shticks with titles like "Dismal Day." The liner notes reveal that head Bread David Gates also wrote "For All We Know" for the Carpenters. (Kind of like Prince and Vanity 6.)


Those liner notes can't quite seem to keep a straight face either. There are references to the group being "kneaded in the bakery of the Hollywood studios." Best simile: "All three joined together in a group...which rose yeast-like into the first Bread album."

— Jann Guccione



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Blue Mitchell
The Thing To Do (Blue Note)

The latest batch of Blue Note reissues boasts classics—Eric Dolphy's *Out To Lunch*, Horace Silver's *Blowin' The Blues Away*, Freddie Hubbard's *Hub Tones*—and if you don't get some of them, your patriotism is in question. On Blue Mitchell's obscure hard bop gem, the solos are more than good, and the arrangements—perfectly accentuating the pieces—justify the broad tune selection. But it's the small twists—Corea's odd note choices, Junior Cook's left-field phrasing, unclichéd background riffs—that make this record far more than just another blowing session.

Earl Bostic
Earl Bostic Blows A Fuse (Charly)

So Earl Bostic had this stainless steel alto sound to cut diamonds, the range and control of Oliver Lake, and, wayback in 1948, was playing two lines simultaneously. The jump bands he led included John Coltrane, Jaki Byard, the brothers Turrentine, Don Byas, and Benny Golson & Benny Carter, (and more), and they swung hard enough to induce night fever mid-day. R&B doesn't get much wilder than this. (Available from Down Home Records, El Cerrito, CA 94530, or Rounder Records, Cambridge, MA.)

Count Basie & Joe Williams
Count Basie Swings Joe Williams Sings (PolyGram)

Count Basie swings, Joe Williams sings, and everybody has fun. A reissue of a classic record.

Christian Marclay
Record Without A Cover
(New Music Distribution Service)

Marclay uses a bunch of turntables to set up sound collages. This record

opens with the sound of skipping, dirty recordings of silence. Slowly he layers on music—everything from "Caravan" to military bugle noise, to twentieth-century classical—as if changing genre was the same as changing key. So it can accumulate its own individual, random set of noises, his album comes without a cover. Overall, it's a good idea that *sounds* great. All glory be to Cage. (NMDS, 500 Broadway, NYC 10012)

Idrees Sulieman Quintet
Bird's Grass (Steeplechase)

Howard McGhee Quintet
Just Be There (Steeplechase)

Maybe it's the you-don't-miss-your-water-till-your-well-runs-dry syndrome, but Kenny Clarke, now walking in the Land of Other, never sounds less than wonderful on both these records, his ride cymbal making honest men of all involved. Recorded in 1976, both dates feature expatriates Horace Parlan, Clarke, and Danish saxophonist Per Goldschmidt. The leaders aren't perfect technicians, but they know from emotions, and that counts for plenty.

McCoy Tyner & Jackie McLean
It's About Time (Blue Note)

A stupid and demeaning record. Asking McCoy Tyner and Jackie McLean to play funk, or even letting them, and then mixing the acoustic cuts so brightly that they sound like fuck-me-please fusion tracks, is like making a brain surgeon work in a slaughterhouse. If *this* album ever gets reissued, I'll eat my review.

The Billy Bang Sextet
The Fire From Within (Soul Note)

A beautifully sensuous, occasionally funky and always swinging record. Bang has a couple of different groups he puts through the hoops, and this one, featuring marimba, guitar, trumpet and rhythm section, deserves fame and success. Or at least steady work.

Rex Stewart
Rex Stewart & the Ellingtonians
(Fantasy)

Jack Teagarden & Pee Wee Russell
Jack Teagarden's Big Eight
And Pee Wee Russell's Rhythmmakers
(Fantasy)

Fantasy is digging into their older stuff for these limited edition OJC reissues, and Rex Stewart, the Ellington cornetist who could make his horn sound like a cat breaking wind if he wanted to, is a good place to start. His dates feature

platter-perfect, 40s small group swing: "Solid Rock," a duet between Stewart and drummer Dave Tough, is about as sublime as music gets.

The Teagarden/Russell album (each gets a side) has Stewart splitting solos with tough-guy Ben Webster, Teagarden, Barney Bigard and an effusive Billy Kyle. The Russell side has clarinetist Russell, one of the most profoundly eccentric players ever. And a profoundly affecting one too.

Muddy Waters
The Chess Box (Down Home Records)

You gotta love those Japanese. This twelve-record box of Chess material has most of Muddy's Chess sides from 1947 to 1967, up to *Muddy Waters Sings Bill Broonzy*. Pressed on great vinyl and remastered, the tracks sound crystal clear. Waters was meticulous with his arrangements, so each tune stands out as a separate triumph. Not only is this stuff important, it stomps butt, and after forty years still carries a subversive edge.

Misha Mengelberg, Steve Lacy, George Lewis, Harjen Gorter, Han Bennink
Change Of Season (Soul Note)

The playing on this tribute to Herbie Nichols is as good as it was on 1983's tribute to Monk and Nichols, *Rejuvenation*. Nichols, an acerbic and pungent jazz pianist, ground up the melodies of his tunes for his improvisations, making for deeply moving, exploratory music. Good as it is, I don't hear that on *Season*.

Jim Staley with John Zorn
OTB (NMDS)

Trombonist Staley's duets with Zorn work well enough, with lots of interplay and a share of predictable unpredictability. It's the solo stuff that's special though; Staley coaxes lots of different sounds out of his instrument, and combined with his affinity for swing, makes experimental music that really moves.

Punch Miller & Mutt Carey
Jazz New Orleans Vol. 1 (Savoy)

Everyone's heard of New Orleans polyphony, right? Well, here it is, played by a cast of authentic all-stars, and it sure is fun. Recorded in the mid-40s, the album includes ragtime and standards, interpreted without the shortness of breath that sometimes plagues recordings by New Orleans old-timers.



THE RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

Freaky Styley
(EMI America/Enigma)

A white punk/funk rap combo: sounds like a joke, right? Well it was, and to a certain extent still is, and that's a big part of the Red Hot Chili Peppers' charm, if you want to call it that.

Freaky Styley is their second album, and its problems are more frustrating than with the usual sophomore jinx. (When it comes to wit, the Peppers are perpetual sophs anyway.) Their debut was produced by ex-Gang of Fourster Andy Gill, who encouraged then-Peppers' axeman Jack Sherman to add metallic gristle to already meaty licks. On *Freaky Styley*, Sherman's replaced by ex-What Is This guitarist Hillel Slovak (also an original Pepper—for such a young band, they have a confusing history), who replaces Sherman's explosiveness with stiff chunka-chunka riffing augmented by a wah-wah pedal. Yuck.

Current producer George Clinton, seemingly the perfect choice to coordinate the band's oft-obnoxious hijinks, brings out the worst in singer/"rapper" Anthony Kiedis. Clinton's always appreciated the racial goof, but egging on Kiedis to expand his repertoire of minstrel show affectations while indulging his sexual braggadocio is just plain dumb. Clinton can't deal with the band's stylistic dichotomy, either—the funk numbers sound just like funk numbers and the hardcore like hardcore. Part of this band's point was to make the twain meet, but on *Freaky Styley* it doesn't.

All that said—are you ready?—*Freaky Styley* isn't too bad. Bassist Flea and drummer Cliff Martinez (he played on Beefheart's *Ice Cream For Crow*, so you know he's good) are a powerful, flexible rhythm section more than capable of handling the tricky Meters cover included here ("Hollywood (Africa)"). And some of the jokes are funny. This is far from the killer record the band might have made, but there's reason for hope. Flea and Martinez have enough real stuff to make the Chili Peppers more than a funk burlesque.

— Glenn Kenny

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Date of Filing: October 1 1985
Title of Publication: Musician
Frequency of Issue: Monthly
Annual subscription price: \$20.00
a. No. of issues published annually: 12
Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 31 Commercial St., Gloucester MA 01930
Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of the Publishers: 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036
Publisher: Gordon Baird, 31 Commercial St., Gloucester, MA 01930
Editor: Jonathan Baird, 31 Commercial St., Gloucester, MA 01930
Managing Editor: William Flanagan, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036
Owner: Billboard Publications, Inc., 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036
Acquisitions Inc. c/o Charles Hall & Stewart, Exchange Place, 53 State St., Boston, MA 02109
Known bondholders, mortgages, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of bonds, mortgages or other securities: Boston Ventures Limited Partnership, 45 Milk St., Boston, MA 02109 First National Bank of Boston 100 Federal St., Boston, MA 02110

Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average Number of Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual Number of Copies Per Issue Published Nearest Filing Date
Total Number of Copies Printed (net press run)	164,468	165,400
Paid Circulation (dealers, carriers, vendors, counters)	50,935	52,159
Mail Subscription	56,071	55,020
Total Paid Circulation	107,006	107,179
Free Distribution (libraries, comps, etc.)	2,995	2,730
Total Distribution	109,961	109,909
Copies Not Distributed (Office use, leftover, spoiled, unaccounted)	1,574	1,638
Return From News Agencies	52,933	53,853
Total	164,468	165,400

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BURNING LOVE

BY T-BONE BURNETT

There was an item of some interest in the newspaper the other day concerning a new cartoon series starring Elvis Presley. On January 8th of this year Elvis Presley would have been fifty, were it not for the demands of that remorseless pawnbroker renown, and the caprice of that saucy minx, fate. Tragically, he is dead...and his condition has stabilized. Stabilized, that is, to the degree a sleeping dog is ever let lie, or spilt milk not cried over.

The same day in another newspaper there was an interview with a man who had, at a stopover in Fort Worth, stolen aboard a train Elvis was taking to Hollywood in 1958. That's how famous fame can get. The man had actually spoken with him. It was a long interview, too.

At any rate, the fellow who was making this cartoon (this is all rather vague as the whole episode gradually took on a dreamlike aspect) made the staggering claim that he intended to make Elvis "bigger than Mickey Mouse."

Whether or not Elvis Presley will be able to make the precarious transition from the King of Rock 'n' Roll to an Imaginary Being like the Griffin, Pegasus, or Mickey Mouse is frankly out of my depth. These transitions are best left up to the Executive Producers.

I would, however, like to submit for their consideration a brief Saturday morning scenario which, although a little sketchy, should prove a boffo, sure-fire smash, cross over into every demographic, and provide a sweep on Oscar night. We can discuss the cable rights later.

The cartoon opens in a basketball arena, the floor covered with a tarpaulin and a stage at one end. Members of the Crew are energetically setting up equipment. Colonel Tom Parker (played by Foghorn Leghorn) is upset. The truck carrying the Elvis Lipsticks ("Always keep me on your lips, girls") to the concert has been stolen by the Blue Meanies (played by the Smurfs). He is having a heated conversation beside the stage with Elvis' bodyguard, Red West (played by Yosemite Sam).

Colonel Tom: [Heatedly] Listen, you ignernt hillbilly, if we don't have that truck back here in one hour it's gonna cost me \$7,000. You know how long it'd take you to make \$7,000 picking cotton?

Red: [Combing his fingers through his hair] But Colonel Parker, I think...

Colonel Tom: I don't pay you to think, suh...[a crashing sound is heard offstage] Listen! What was that?

Red: [Brightening] Aw, that's probly jus El pracin his bullfichtin' again. [A slight historical license is taken here.]

Colonel Tom: Jesus Horatio Christ!

They rush through the curtains to the backstage area. Priscilla Presley (played by Minnie Mouse, only bigger) is holding her pointing fingers at her head, making "bullhorns," and shuffling her feet toward Elvis Presley [the cartoon Elvis better be good], who is expertly handling a red cape and gracefully dodging her charges. Several teenage girl onlookers scream and faint at every pass.

Colonel Tom: [Clearing his throat] Excuse me, Elvis. Don't you think you ought to be getting ready for the show?

Elvis: [Wriggling his shoulders as if to get his coat to fit right] Uh...yeah. Anything you say, Colonel Parker. Okay, girls. I'll see you later.

As Red West escorts Priscilla and Elvis through the onlookers and autograph seekers, he leans down and kisses a few on the cheek. They fall over backwards.

Red: [Out of breath] Hey, El, I can't stay with you. I got to go get that truck...

Elvis: [Somewhat defensively] Truck?

What truck, man?

Red: Aw, jus' the lipstick truck. The Blue Meanies got it. Colonel Parker's all worked up about it.

Elvis: [Incredulous] Well, why didn't you just say something?

Elvis snaps his fingers, and the Blue Thunder helicopter appears hovering above them as if by magic. They climb the rope ladder, jump in, and put on headsets.

Elvis: [Determined] Take us over to NBC. I think they're taping now. [Then, snarling] Uh...there's something wrong with my lip. [He smiles slyly.]

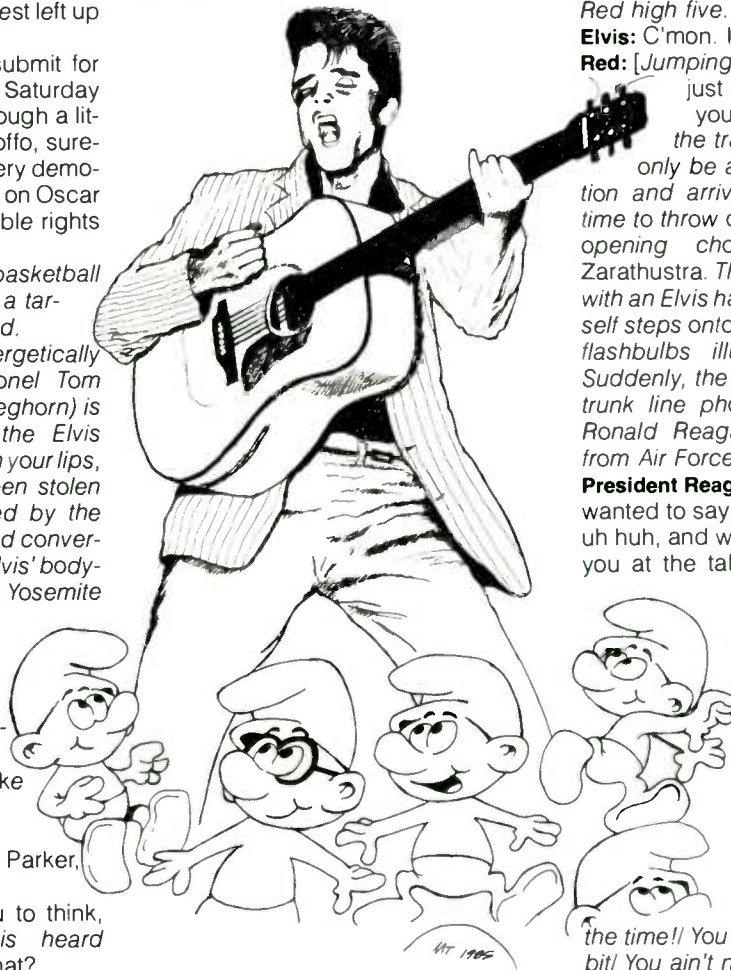
They jet across the city and pull up over NBC. Sure enough, the truck is parked by the loading dock. The helicopter lowers them to the ground, and they are immediately surrounded and attacked by Smurfs. But Elvis (thanks to his bullfighting practice) eludes them so artfully that they all run into each other and knock themselves unconscious. [Here, although the scene is calculated to draw uproarious laughter, a poignant parallel may still be drawn with the unconscious fans back at the arena.] The crowd that has gathered is shouting "Olé!" Elvis and Red high five.

Elvis: C'mon. I'll drive.

Red: [Jumping into the truck] Man...I just wish I knew what makes you tick. Elvis tears through the traffic at a speed that can only be achieved through animation and arrives at the arena just in time to throw on his cape and hear the opening chords of Also Sprach Zarathustra. The Colonel mops his brow with an Elvis handkerchief, as Elvis himself steps onto the stage. Thousands of flashbulbs illuminate the audience. Suddenly, the show is interrupted by a trunk line phone call from President Ronald Reagan [played by himself] from Air Force One.

President Reagan: Well, uh, Elvis, I, just wanted to say you've, uh, done it again uh huh, and we sure would like to have you at the table the next time we sit down with those Russians. [He laughs.]

Elvis: [Smiling] Well, uh, thank you, Mr. President, sir. Spotlights glaring, flashbulbs popping, band burning...Elvis swivels his hips, buys Cadillacs for everybody, and blasts electrifyingly into: You ain't nothing but a hound dog! Cryin' all the time!! You ain't never caught a rabbit! You ain't no friend of mine.



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