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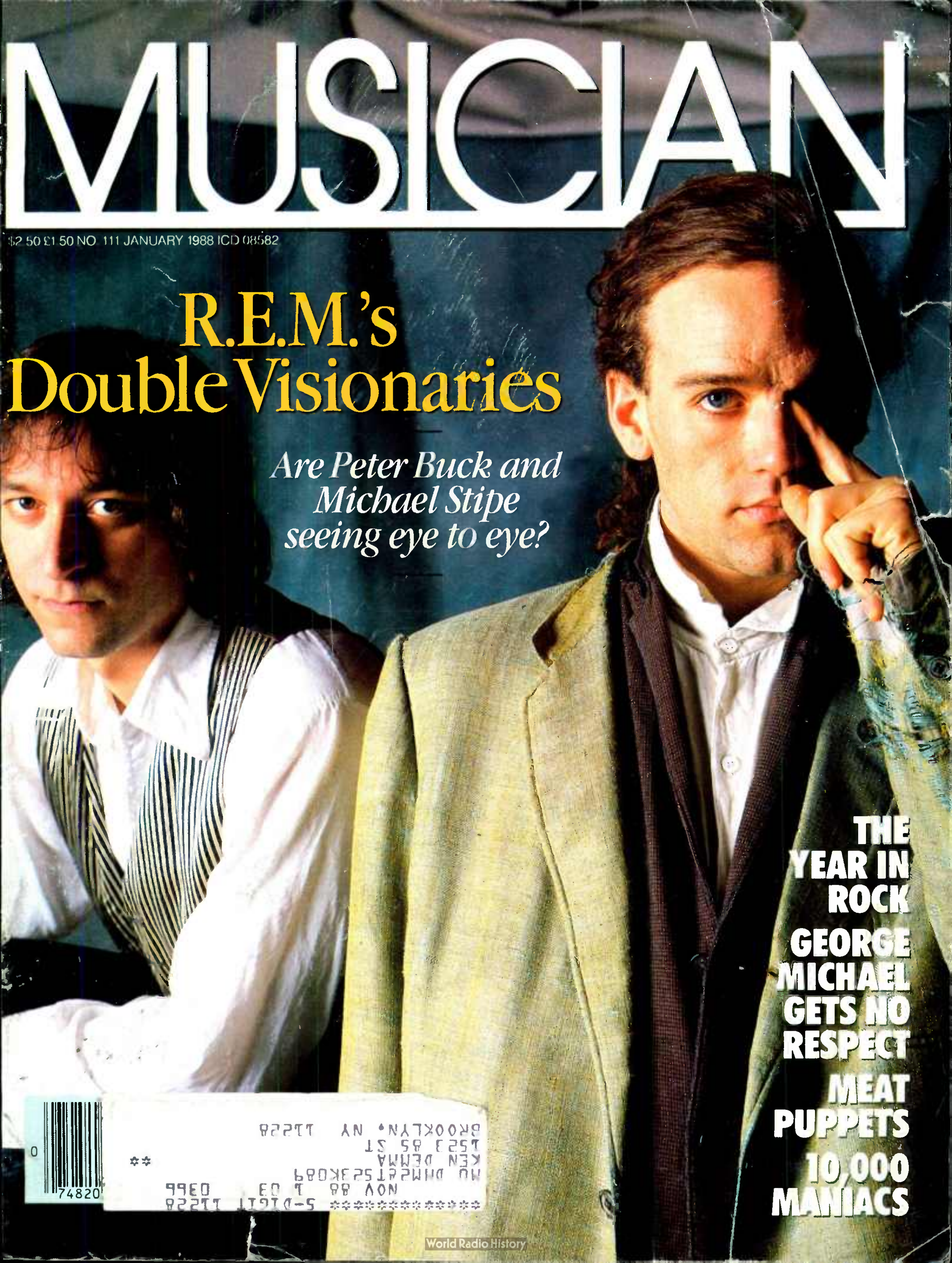

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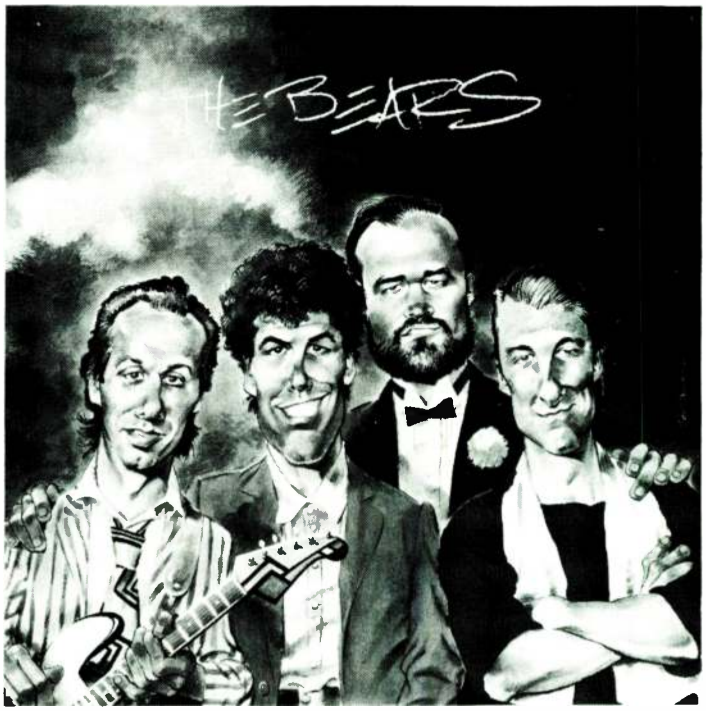

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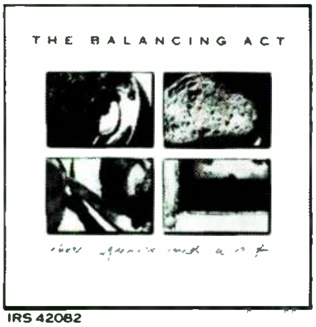
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1987

R.E.M.

They're the biggest cult group, the little band that could. After seven years and five albums, the famous Georgia export faces its most severe trial yet: success. **Michael Stipe** and 10,000 Maniacs' **Natalie Merchant** share secrets on the bus.

by Bill Flanagan

PAGE 56

THE YEAR IN ROCK

Happy new year! And lest we forget the old one, here's a refresher course on what happened, what didn't and what shouldn't have.

PAGE 76

GEORGE MICHAEL

Can you blame a guy for getting where he is through hard work—even when he rubs it in your face?

By Rob Tannenbaum

PAGE 28

JACKIE WILSON REMEMBERED

A singer, a talent, a friend.

By Dick Jacobs

PAGE 21

A BILLBOARD PUBLICATION
JANUARY 1988 NO. 111

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE MARSEL CONTENTS PAGE R.E.M. BY EBET ROBERTS MEAT PUPPETS BY MONICA DEE

GOAT
VILLA VERA

MEAT PUPPETS

They're the little band that's still trying—and getting increasing attention for it. After seven years and five albums, the almost-famous Arizona export won't kiss middle-American rump.

by Gina Arnold

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LETTERS

U2: 2 Much?

Since the release of *The Joshua Tree*, every U2 interview I've read has either failed to recognize or blatantly ignored that this is a great *band*, with four members. "Luminous Times" by John Hutchinson (Oct. '87) recognizes U2 for the band they are. To *Musician*, Hutchinson and U2, cheers and thank you.

Eli Koenig
Los Angeles, CA

LUMINOUS TIMES

A

Do you people *sleep* with U2 or what!? Two (count 'em, two) cover stories in six months, three in less than three years—is somebody trying for a job at *Rolling Stone*?

B. Bennett
K. Wooten
Raleigh, NC

I'm glad the guys' hard work has brought them some exposure and rewards, but I almost hope U2's next album is a *commercial* flop so they won't feel compelled to sell any more songs to TV shows for "teenager loses virginity poignantly" scenes (*A Year in the Life*, Sept. 23), and they won't be scrutinized and dissected after every sneeze and comment.

Suzy Fried
Freeport, ME

"Lack of self-consciousness"? Is Bono kidding? What about all that brooding and frowning that's in every picture ever taken of U2?

I sure am getting bored of the Biggest Band in the World. Most Overrated is more like it.

Michael Greenwald
Newark, NJ

Is the Edge the son of the late Emmett Kelly?

E. Shephard
New York, NY

No, that's his real nose. – Ed.

Worth the Waits

The best piece I've ever seen on Tom Waits (Oct. '87)—I have to say I never expected to find it in *Musician*. Waits' image is so strong it's rare someone digs into what he truly is: a great American composer who has somehow managed to merge and collide all the various forms of popular song from past to present and give it his own peculiar voice. Exciting, entertaining and inspiring piece...thanks.

George Leary
Los Angeles, CA

What do you mean, you "never expected to find it in Musician*"? – Ed.*

Squeeze's Trials

In regard to Bill Flanagan's article, *The Seven Trials of Squeeze* (Oct. '87): I'm one of those devoted fans who thinks *Cosi Fan Tutti Frutti* is Squeeze's very best album. Far from being "overthought," I find the songs to be the most honest, personal and moving they have ever written (and yes, clever!).

Maybe by taking a step backward, Squeeze will take a few forward on the charts, but being so ashamed of their finest album exhibits a total lack of respect toward the fans who have supported them through their "Seven Trials" and now face the eighth: the pandering and stagnant *Babylon and On*.

John McCarthy
Carbondale, Pa

Among Bill Flanagan's "Seven Deadly Trials of Rock 'n' Roll," he lists "the most dreaded of all—Input From the Wives."

The implication that "input from the wives" is more detrimental to a band than "lawsuits with managers" and "substance abuse" is not only a gross exaggeration but shows, once again, *Musician*'s lack of respect towards women in general.

Perhaps if more attention were given to printing stories *on* women, *by* women, and refusing to accept advertisements which *use* women to sell products, *Musician* would become the forerunner in reflecting a more positive image for women in music.

Candis Gillette
Boston, MA

Janet Jackson: No Fake

I always enjoy your magazine, but I feel your *Faces* article on Alexander O'Neal (Oct. '87) contained several unfair references to Janet Jackson's vocal abilities. While it is wonderful that O'Neal is receiving the recognition he deserves, highlighting his vocal virtuosity by demeaning Jackson's hardly seems appropriate.

Gil Friesen
A&M Records
Los Angeles, CA

Our Record Reviews

I found Kristine McKenna's review of 10,000 Maniacs' *In My Tribe* (Oct. '87) to be outrageously meanspirited, and essentially tasteless and ignorant. It's beyond me, with all the useless drivel passing for pop music these days, that you couldn't have found a more deserving target on which to vent your personal frustrations than this uniquely talented band.

Roy Henry
Pigeon Forge, TN

Satisfied Customer

I enjoy your publication each month and also find myself using your magazine as a resource tool.

I recently read a four-page advertisement for the Roland D-50 synthesizer. I do not consider myself an impulsive man; however, because of that very informative ad, I picked up the phone and ordered the synth, unseen and unheard. I am delighted with it and have already used it in music for WGBH *Ten O'Clock News*, a movie for the Union of Concerned Scientists, a Hollywood game show pilot, and a television spot.

What's most important is that I have come to rely on your magazine in order to keep abreast of new instruments.

Ward Dilmore
Hampton Falls, NH

...And Not So Satisfied

The Fabulous Thunderbirds are a good band, and certainly deserve their success. However, if you are going to run the kind of ad that appeared in the September issue, please change the name of your publication to *Male Musician* and save working women the heartbreak of seeing those ads.

Lisa Mednick
New Orleans, LA

Corrections

In November's Roy Eldridge article, the Gene Krupa recording printed as "The Walls Are Talkin'" is actually "The Walls Keep Talking." "After You've Gone" appears in *Drummin' Man*, a Columbia collection by Krupa.

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NEWS STORIES BY SCOTT ISLER

THE REIVERS

New Zeitgeist, Same Band

When the Austin, Texas band Zeitgeist was forced to change their name—a Minneapolis new-age choral group owned the rights—they chose to call themselves the Reivers, after the book by William Faulkner. And many Austin scenesters had a good laugh. One club advertised an appearance by the Reivers and under it, in parentheses, questioned "the Reivers????" Singer/guitarist **John Croslin** couldn't go out without people asking him "what's a reiver?" (Scottish for "ruffian") and why he chose that name ("I like the book"). Everyone loved that Croslin, a perfectionist whose pain-in-the-ass stories are legion, had made an irreversible mistake.

But when the band took the stage for the first time with the new handle, Croslin walked right up to the microphone and announced, "We're the Reivers, okay?" Then he quickly led the mixed-doubles group into "Baby." Within moments the scene aped the aura of a Zeitgeist gig, with wall-eyed liberal arts majors in baseball jerseys basking in sketchy lyrics colored with broad harmonies and tacked down by a black beat. The Reivers had made their point; Zeitgeist by any other name would sound as sweet.

Though the name change held up the release of *Saturday*, their major-label bow, and diminished their recognition factor, the Reivers are a tough bunch who know that the music-biz fandango goes two steps forward, one step back. After *Translate Slowly* found favor with critics and college radio DJs, Zeitgeist toured extensively to packed clubs along the eastern seaboard. Just as it appeared that they were on their way to Deli Platterville, singer/guitarist Kim Longacre got pregnant and dropped out. Her heavenly voice in tandem with Croslin's gruff murmur is such a big part of the band's sound that Longacre proved irreplaceable. After seven months of group setbacks, Longacre returned and Zeitgeist picked up as if she had just gone out for coffee.

They forged ahead on their second LP for the indie DB label, but also shopped the finished tape to the bigs. A Capitol A&R rep liked what he heard and worked out a deal to distribute the record. Before long producer Don Dixon was en route to Austin to guide the material once more through the boards.

The resulting album by the Reivers will not surprise Zeitgeist fans. The drums are fatter and the vocals cleaner than on *Translate Slowly*, but the overall sound is indelibly the work of Croslin, Longacre, Cindy Toth and Garrett Williams. They're the Reivers, okay?

– Michael Corcoran

Ubu Redux!

It came from Cleveland: Pere Ubu, that is, the raucous, daring band that skirted the far edge of new wave during the 1970s. This fall the group emerged from five years in the musical deep-freeze to tour the Midwest and Northeast.

According to singer David Thomas, "A couple of years ago, more and more of us noticed we were drifting together to play. Last year we started putting together a project. It became more and more obvious that if it walked like a duck and quacked like a duck, it was a duck."

The reunited Pere Ubu, Thomas adds, "is not a retrograde operation." They've recorded an album of new material which might even be released in their native country if record companies wake up. And let's hope the band sticks around.

"It's like a Chinese puzzle," Thomas says of Pere Ubu's personnel. "All the pieces are odd-shaped and don't seem to fit. But if you have a clue, they all snap together and you have a perfect sphere."

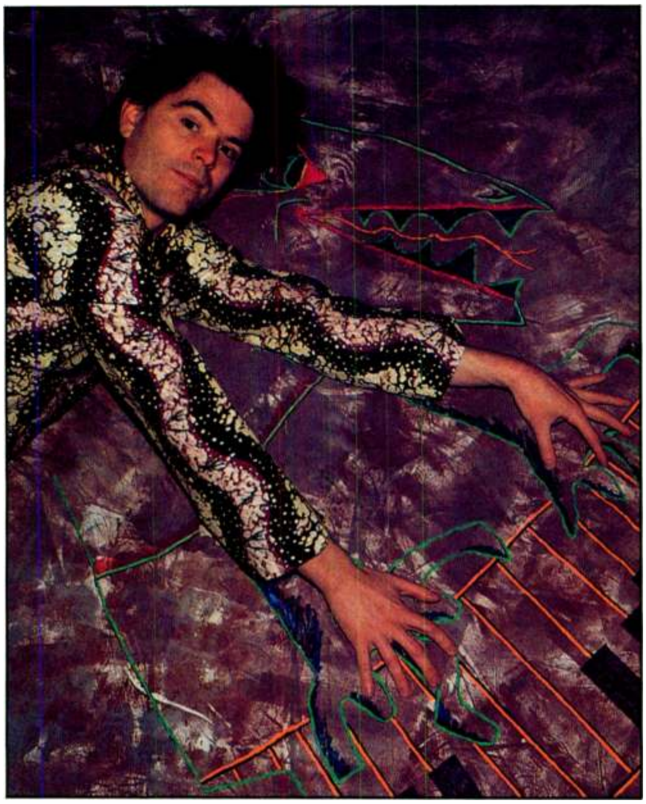
BC KAGAN

ROGER MILLER

A Different Kind of Piano Man

Had it with minimalism? Meet a maximalist: Roger Miller's the bastard son of John Cage and Jimi Hendrix. Using combs, alligator clips, woodblocks, guitar slides and fuzztones, echo and digital delay, Miller's become the first person to flog feedback—and other sonic turbulence—from an electric piano.

"Piano is always associated with pretty, moody music, and that's fine," Miller says. "I love to play Erik Satie, too, but I want to bring out another side of the instrument."



PAUL ROBICHEAU

His pursuit of keyboard clatter began in 1983 when tinnitus forced him to stop playing electric guitar and, consequently, break up Mission of Burma, the Boston art-punk trio he'd co-founded five years before. He found a quieter home in Birdsongs of the Mesozoic, a keyboard-based quartet that blends ambient classicism and pop culture, but quickly became frustrated with the band's spare playing schedule.

"I was looking for another outlet for musical ideas and a friend turned me on to this 16-second digital delay. I immediately started putting together these notions I'd had about looping rhythms and patterns, prepared piano and running the piano through devices, and I found I could do the exciting things one could do with an electric guitar on piano."

Taking a cue from the Who, Miller dubbed his one-man show "Maximum Electric Piano." He's since hit the road, jangling the innards of art houses and barrooms with his allusive lyrics and playful cacophony, and even opening a few dates for Hüsker Dü. This September he left Birdsongs and released his third record, *The Big Industry,* which sits defiantly at the crossroads of pop and the avant-garde.

"People are surprised that I can make a living off this," Miller reflects. "But to me what's sort of amazing about where I am is that no one's ever gone there before. Who knows why?"

– Ted Drozdowski

JOHN SOARES

LIME SPIDERS

Working the Night Shift

Australian band the Lime Spiders takes its name from a foamy green drink thought to be a hangover cure. The garage-rock quartet may know something about nursing a hangover, or at least nursing; singer **Mick Blood** (his given name, honest) is a registered nurse who still puts in the occasional shift.

He has a good reason for pursuing the slightly atypical dual career since he formed the Spiders in 1979: "I'm not really making a lot of money live. It's still hard to just live off the band. But as you can imagine, it's difficult combining shift work with a rock 'n' roll band. It's a real Jekyll-and-Hyde lifestyle."

The Jekyll-and-Hyde reference could apply to the Lime Spiders themselves, given all the splits and multiple lives. Over the years, they've shifted lineups so many times, with band members leaving and coming back, that the outfit practically needs a personnel director.

"It's really only been Richard Jakimyszyn, our original guitarist, who sort of kept on coming and going a lot," Blood maintains. "The nucleus of the band, the four-piece that stands at the moment—the band that recorded the album—we've really been together for the best part of three years."

That album, *The Cave Comes Alive!*, is a wonderfully solid Nugget of perky pop, sinewy psychedelia, blazing rawk and other low-frill/high-thrill elements filtered through '60s and '70s influences. It's a fine, feisty blend that Blood thinks *will* play in Peoria.

"We're not going to be too disappointed if we don't do that well," he says just before embarking on the band's maiden U.S. tour. "But I think we'll do pretty well. I think we have the sound for America."

– Duncan Strauss

RICHARD BARONE

The Sound of One Bongo

I'm trying to create an atmosphere that really hovers, where the music floats. It isn't anchored in a sort of heaviness."

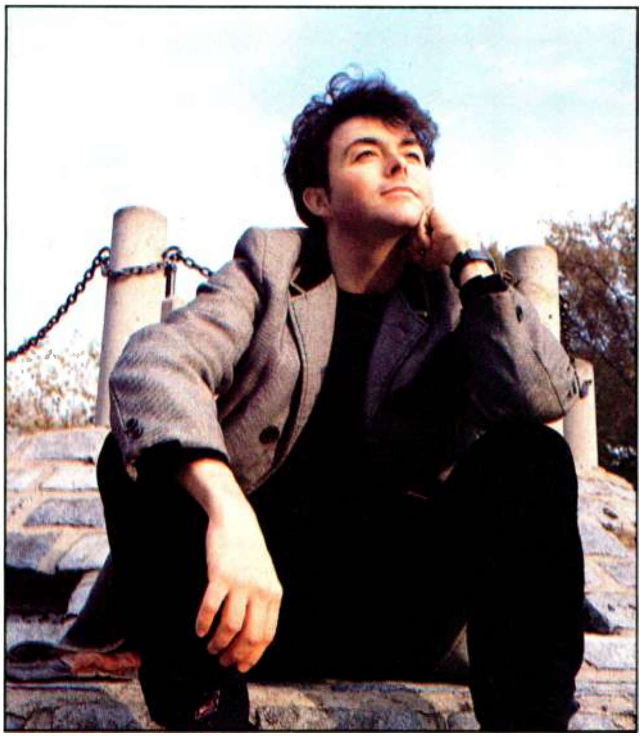
No, that isn't some bleary-eyed hippie speaking. It's Richard Barone of the New York-based Bongos, whose crisp, melodic rock seems more compatible with coffee achievers than space cadets. But then, he isn't talking about the band. Barone's describing his *Cool Blue Halo* solo album, which finds the peppy singer/guitarist backed by an unlikely trio comprised of a classical cellist (Jane Scarpantoni), jazz percussionist (Valerie Naranjo) and acoustic guitarist (Nick Celeste). Featuring a mix of new originals, Bongos standards like "The Bulrushes," and a few adroit covers (including David Bowie's "The Man Who Sold the World"), the LP aspires to a dreamy state not associated with conventional rock groups.

"The lyrics to a lot of my songs are pretty abstract," Barone explains, smiling, "and I wanted to make the music as abstract as the lyrics. I think this is a new sort of hybrid, kind of surreal, actually."

Cool Blue Halo doesn't mean Barone's lost interest in the Bongos, however. As he notes, "I still love to plug in the Rickenbacker and turn it up." Since 1985's *Beat Hotel* LP, the band has: happily parted ways with RCA; cut tracks in the Bahamas with producer Eric "E.T." Thorngren (Talking Heads, Squeeze *et al.*); bid farewell to longtime second guitarist James Mastro, replacing him with hot-shot Ivan Julian, formerly of Richard Hell's Voidoids; and self-produced other tracks while shopping for a major-label deal.

The perpetually upbeat Barone denies he's anxious for commercial success, something that's eluded the Bongos throughout the '80s. "I don't think about that. I'm more concerned with the song in my head right now," he insists, declaring his intention to make the upcoming Bongos LP "a real substantial album. I love extremes. I think the grungy stuff will get grungier and the light stuff will get lighter. That's gonna make a great record."

– Jon Young



ROYAL COURT OF CHINA

No Order, No Objections

Their songs are unexpected montages—American roots-rock that's one part East Indian, one part Byrds, sometimes R.E.M. spiked with psychedelia. Traditional English folk and Grand Funk crunch sidle up to each other here. The Royal Court of China are an eclectic bunch, but considering their backgrounds, that's not terribly surprising. Comprised of a painter, a poet, a fiddling champ's grandson and a rambunctious post-punk rocker, this Nashville-based quartet has enough influences to cause most bands an identity crisis.

Not so, says the group's bassist and part-time arranger **Robert Logue**; it's just a matter of building textures. "Music has gotten so glossy that it just lulls the public into indifference. People polish their albums now until you slip on them. That's why when something raw comes on, it shakes you up a little bit. If you have a song that's got three different guitar sounds played three different ways, that can blend together into something unusual. It can create a very strong mood."

Logue is fascinated by moods, particularly dark, wistful ones. So, logically, he's also enthralled with dark music. "Music that's melancholy and a little foreboding, with a bit of a mystique, captures some of the immenseness that's outside people's safe little worlds," he says, explaining that the Royal Court of China's self-titled debut—like their intentionally ambiguous name—is designed to spur the imagination. "It's very subtle," Logue says, "but it evokes a mood without evoking a definite train of thought. It's like a tapestry of stimuli to the senses."

– Robin J. Schwartz

A Cast of Characters

If you were disappointed by the film *Straight to Hell*, you should really check out *Eat the Rich*, a black comedy with punky sensibilities whose bite is as good as its bark. The familiar title comes from Motorhead, who provided six songs for the soundtrack and bassist Lemmy Kilmister for a supporting role. Making cameo appearances are the strangest assortment of British pop stars never to appear onstage together, including Bill Wyman, Jools Holland, Sandie Shaw, Hugh Cornwall and Paul McCartney—even Shane MacGowan, who also appeared in *Straight to Hell*. No, we won't tell you what it's about.

ELIZABETH McCOLLOUGH

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World Radio History

RICHARD DAVIS

BY JIM MACNIE

A BASS KINGPIN GETS THE ITCH TO RECLAIM HIS TURF

"I had success for 23 years. It was time to go to other places."

LONA FOOTE

Whoa, baby. Whoa, Mr. Tourist. Much more of that raucous clapping and your six-dollar salad might land smack on the floor. This guy's in the middle of New York's Sweet Basil club giving the bandleader a heavy-duty standing-O, and the tune isn't anywhere close to being finished. Meanwhile, more out-of-towners at the bar confess that they never miss this group. A woman up front leans over to her partner and asks who the bass player is. He doesn't know either, but agrees the guy is "happening." Which all suggests one thing: Richard Davis may have slipped away from the spotlight, but his playing doesn't take long to reestablish itself; you hear it, it grabs you. Once a bass kingpin, always a bass kingpin.

This recurrent flirtation with anonymity doesn't seem to bother Davis much; at 57 he's picked up his share of kudos. And deservedly so: During the '60s he was one of the players who helped establish the ground rules for what upright bass was capable of. A key participant in the late-period Blue Note sessions, Davis' intimate sound wasn't forged as much as sculpted. Lyrical, bold, slippery, his credits from that time range from improvisations with Eric Dolphy to such luminous pop art as Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks*. The classical crowd heard a great technician who knew how to inject emotion into a piece; fellow jazzmen respected his willingness to take musical risks; rock producers dialed his number because he's a pliable player who can amplify raw feeling.

As this resume is well out of the past, however, you might think Davis has been laying on the couch lately. He hasn't. He *has* been out of the jazz (read: lower Manhattan club) scene for a while, teaching college in Madison, Wisconsin, and raising horses in his spare time. But if the precision we're hearing from the stage is indicative of his current chops, in between it all he's been playing that bass. Low visibility or not, things are going just the way he wants.

"I like having the itch to play, but I don't want to overdo it, because then it loses its excitement," admits Davis. This week he must have the itch: Wrapping up his Basil's gig at 2:30 a.m., he's on the boards eight hours later at Carlos 1, backing a vocalist, and explaining himself: "I'd rather work sporadically than steady steady. You know, I put in my time here, years ago; it was a whirlwind, a lot of work and not enough time to enjoy the family life. New York can be like that if you're a successful musician. I had success for 23 years. I figured it was time to go to other places."

In those days, Davis was a spokesperson for the bass. His goal was to take it out of the background, and to do so meant participating in some of the more influential ensembles of the day. His early training in Chicago had included classical repertoire, and Davis wanted to impart some of its European pedigree to jazz. In other words, it was time to get his instrument some respect.

"As far as carrying the melody, the bass has been perceived as an underdog," he posits. "It's been looked upon as kind of dull and monotonous. All that's changing; each generation brings on its own technicians and its own conceptions of how to play, and lately the bass has shown a lot of potential in both roles—solo and accompaniment."

Davis cultivated those roles through a particularly fruitful relationship with Eric Dolphy. Even before Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians began tinkering with how nontraditional groupings (solos, duos) could fit into jazz, Dolphy and Davis were waxing romantic, alone together. On tunes like Duke Ellington's "Come Sunday" and Jaki Byard's "Ode to Charlie Parker," they pushed an old language into a new conversation. By placing bass on equal footing with horns, Davis upped the underdog's score a notch.

"In the '60s everyone was looking to get away from the expected ensembles, different combinations of instruments were appearing all the time. Bass and flute, bass and reed, bass alone! It was Alan Douglas who asked me to record those things; he said, 'What instruments do you want?' and I said, 'Me and Eric.' He put the two of us in the studio, just like that. Playing with Eric was a pleasure; I never thought of it as making history or anything innovative.

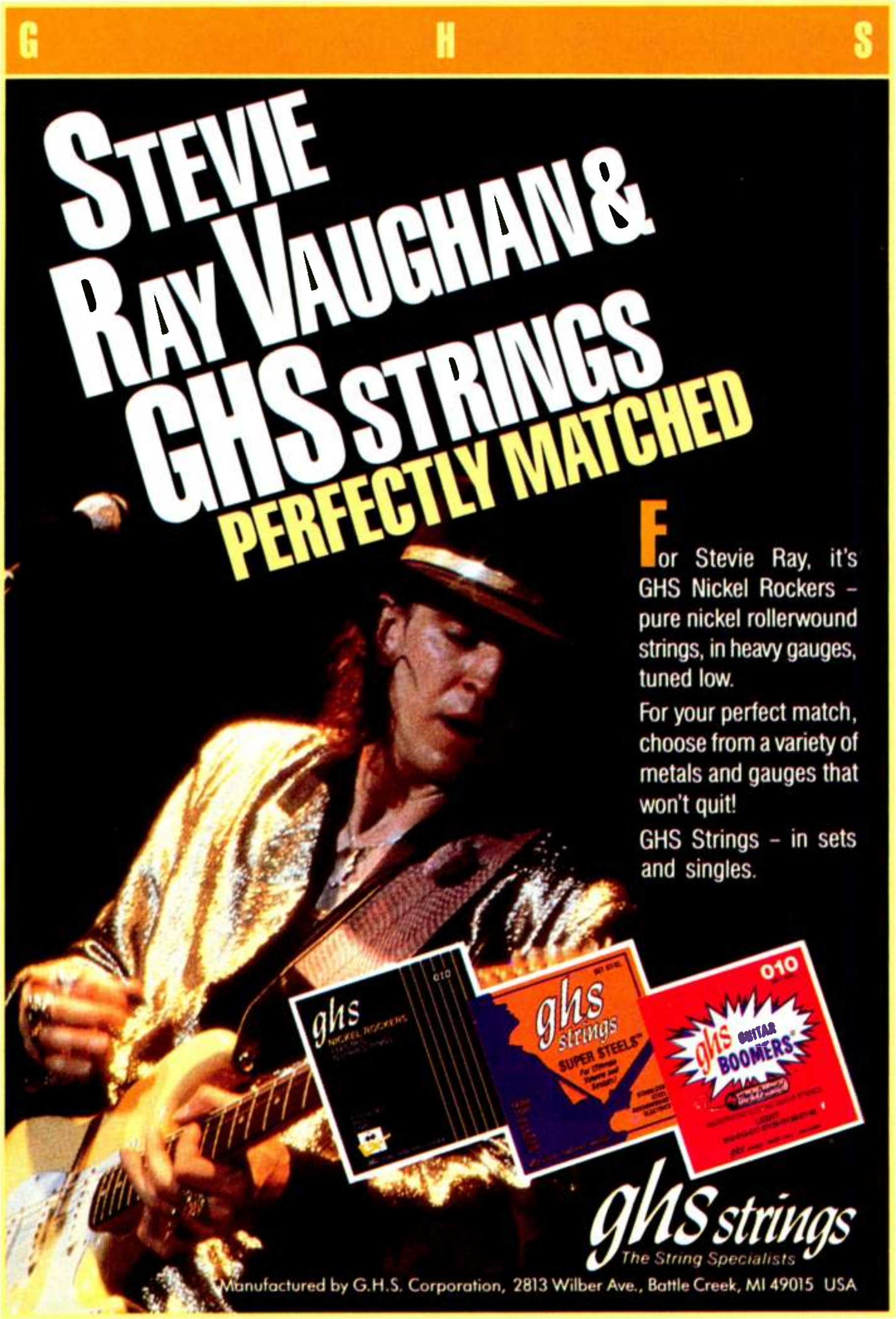
"I'd been working with Sarah Vaughan at the time and Dolphy's music opened up my head; I wanted to branch out, and with his support I felt I could. He was the kind of guy you called your friend the day you met him. Kind of angelic, very open, passionate, genuine. We got close right away. I wish we'd had a chance to play duets on the bandstand though. As much as we did together, it was a short-lived relationship."

Davis was also an essential cog on composer/pianist Andrew Hill's *Point of Departure, Black Fire* and *Judgement!* records, whose compositional structures are firmly delineated, yet bristling with the kinetic action that only "free" tunes were supposed to provide. More importantly, even as they broke new ground, they retained a strong groove.

One record that brought Davis' technique to the fore was Hill's *Smokestack.* Two basses—Davis and Eddie Kahn—darted around each other, embellishing the rhythm. Davis' bowing brought a provocative flow to the music. He got another chance to employ that approach on his own *The Philosophy of the Spiritual*, this time trading string lines with Bill Lee. Now full-bodied bowing has become a kind of Davis signature; his drones foster a feeling of mystery, but with tenderness as well.

"I like to bow melodies," he admits, "and that's where melodies go, in the foreground. I used to resent that, because I was bowing the bass, people would say, 'Oh, you're classically trained.' In the '50s one woman said to me, 'You're not a real Negro, are you?' She was referring to my association with universities and orchestras; thought she'd be listening to a primitive or something. But the bow was used ages ago in jazz. Listen to stuff from the '20s with the bass player bowing every note on the beat, using a pulse."

Davis sees himself as part of that continuum, from Ellington associate and bass patriarch Jimmy Blanton to modern players like Dave Holland, Brian Smith and Fred Hopkins. But none of this meant squat back in 1968, when Davis sat down in one part of a studio and Van Morrison sat down in the other. It was all frenetic strum and nimble pulse that day,



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and along with guitarist Jay Berliner and drummer Connie Kay, they produced one of the most highly touted "rock" LPs in history, *Astral Weeks*. Seldom has a vocal line swum through such a mesmerizing aural backdrop. Souls bared, mega-communion among musicians, spiritual—right?

"I don't think he said 'Hello' to us," recalls Davis. "He was in the corner somewhere. They all say it's a great record; I've got a copy. When I play it I remember there was the lead sheet, just chords and words on it. We just played; he didn't suggest a thing; we just grooved on the rhythm. To me, he's kind of a gospel singer, don't you think?"

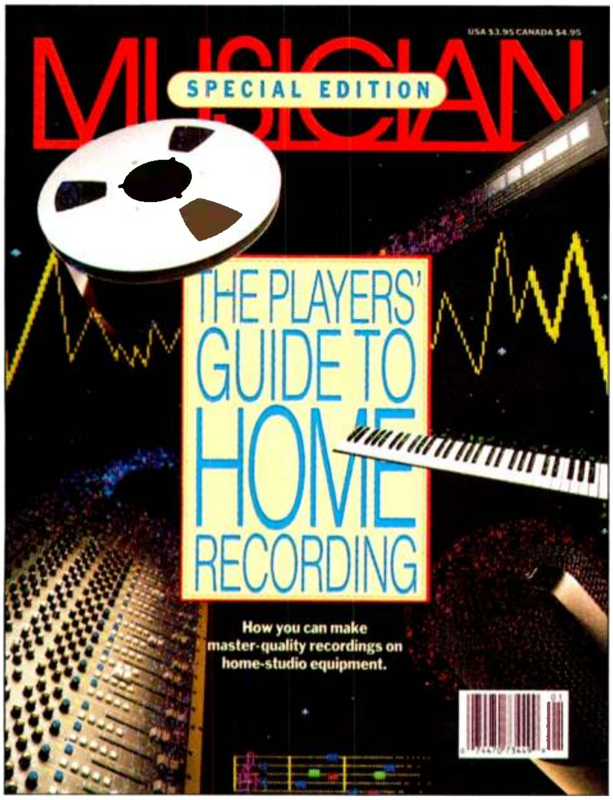
Davis has been in on a long list of top studio dates: sessions with artists as diverse as Mama Cass and Bruce Springsteen. Nor have his associations with jazz improvisers pushed him into a clique; his work includes duets with vibist Walt Dickerson, poet Jayne Cortez, and more recently, Wisconsin neighbor Ben Sidran. But his own ensemble—the one the tourists were applauding—hits New York twice a year, with the talents of Roland Hanna, Ricky Ford, Fredric Waits, Cecil Bridgewater and a book of reliable hard-bop tunes.

"You gotta remember," Davis cautions, "I started out just wanting to play boogie woogie; those lines were in my head. If you're playing any kind of jazz, you're somehow referring to bebop. Bird made an indentation. I like what a lot of young cats are doing—Arthur Blythe, David Murray—they relate to old forms, too. It's clichéd a bit, but you almost can't get away from it.

"And this is *the* group; they're the ones I want to be with. Roland writes beautiful tunes, the rest of the guys play 'em right. I just got back from Japan, Freddy and Hanna and I did a trio record for Disc Union called *Persia, My Dear*. There's also another one coming out with David Murray and Joe Chambers."

If this flood of activity seems at odds with the low profile mentioned above, chalk it up to the Davis mystique. You may have to put in extra effort to find his stuff in the stores. But that doesn't bug him either. "I'm shy about chasing down labels; what happens, happens. I just want to play."

So he does: No lie. Davis is a worker, and it looks as if the clarity of his pointedly romantic sound might be heard by more people soon. "Romantic?" he questions mockingly, "You think I'm a romantic? Well, maybe it comes from hugging the bass." M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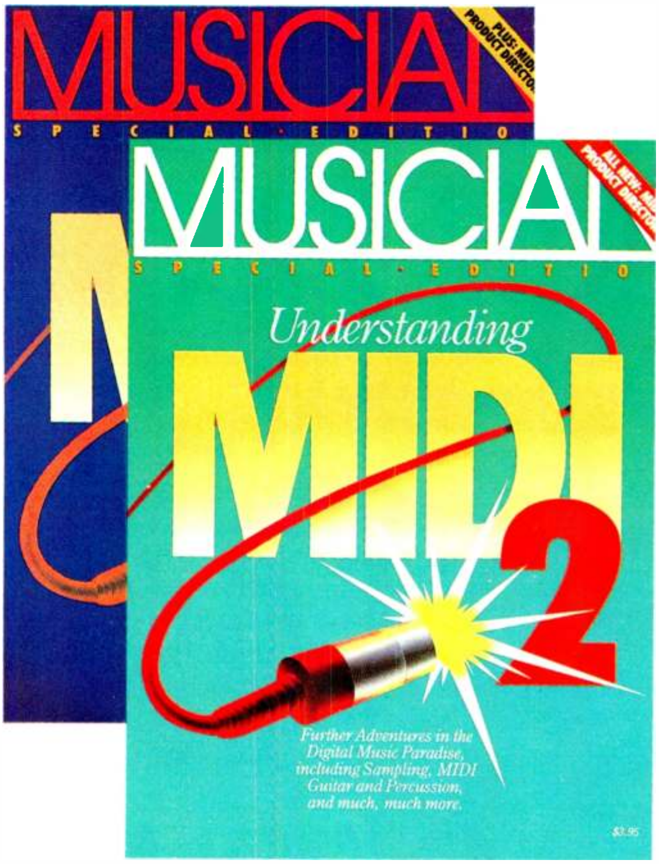
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Thirty years ago this November Jackie Wilson's first solo record, "Reet Petite," entered Billboard's Top 100 chart. Last January "Reet Petite" was number one in England. Wilson himself died, aged 49, in 1984, after eight years as a paralyzed brain-damaged heart attack victim. He suffered a seizure onstage—a sad climax to a career in which hit records (and there were many) were less predictable than Wilson's total devotion to his live performances.

But in 1957 Wilson was just starting out on his own. One of his earliest business acquaintances was Dick Jacobs, then the musical director of the Coral and Brunswick labels. Jacobs arranged and co-produced most of Wilson's records, and developed a personal as well as professional relationship with the dynamic singer. Following are Jacobs' reminiscences of his years with Wilson.

My association with Jackie Wilson was the result of a contractual accident. It began in the mind of Bob Thiele, then head of the Coral/Brunswick artists and repertoire department. Bob had an innovative A&R flair and was one of the most prescient guys I've ever known in the business. It was circa 1954 and Bob, a great believer in the future of black music in America, was desperate to sign the red-hot rhythm & blues chanteuse LaVern Baker to the label. LaVern was an incandescent presence on the soul charts and her contract was up for grabs.

Bob got in touch with LaVern's manager Al Green (not the superstar Reverend) to talk about the contract. Green told Thiele that Coral/Brunswick could have Baker at the end of her then-current contract, which had another year to run. The deal was contingent on one condition: that the label agree to a package deal and sign another young singer Green had under contract. His name was Jackie Wilson, a virtual unknown who'd been with Billy Ward & the Dominoes. Green wanted to launch the kid on a solo career and part of the package was that we record him immediately. Ironically, while we waited for LaVern Baker's contract to run out, Green died and we never got to record her. Instead, Jackie Wilson became one of the major figures in rock 'n' roll history.

We'd heard Jackie sing on his Billy Ward sides and knew he had some vocal chops. But those tracks had been recorded some time back and we weren't sure how Jackie would fly solo. One day Thiele called me in and said that Jackie was coming in for the first sessions. "Probably by freight train," he semi-joked. We'd have to cut Jackie fast since he didn't have the money to stay in New York for any extended period. Since time was tight, I was concerned about the songs we'd be recording. Jackie was bringing in a couple of tunes penned by one Berry Gordy, Jr. Not only was the singer an unknown, but who the hell ever heard of the songwriter?

When Jackie arrived, he was ushered into my office for an introduction—and goddamn if he didn't look like he *had* just come in on a freight train. He was wearing jeans and a sweat shirt, and seemed bedraggled and exhausted. In retrospect, this first meeting was entirely out of character for Jackie. I remember him being very fussy about his appearance. This was a guy who wouldn't appear on the street, or on a record date for that matter, unless every tonsorial detail were sculpted and perfect. He was the only guy I ever knew who could spend hours in shoe stores. Yet, on this first meeting, he looked like just another kid off the street.

I asked him if he had the lead sheets of the songs he intended to record; he said no, I'd have to write them down as he sang them to me. I'd been down this road before with other vocalists, and as I wrote out the music for Berry Gordy's "Reet Petite" I began to feel some respect for the unknown tunesmith. "Reet Petite" had an unusual melody and a strikingly inventive chord construction; even before recording it, it felt like a new kind of hit.

After I'd written down the music, Jackie and I sat down to figure out what keys to record in. I began playing piano chords in what I considered the usual male keys, but Jackie kept telling me to

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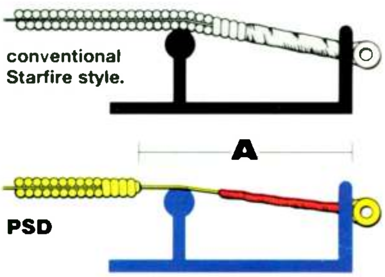

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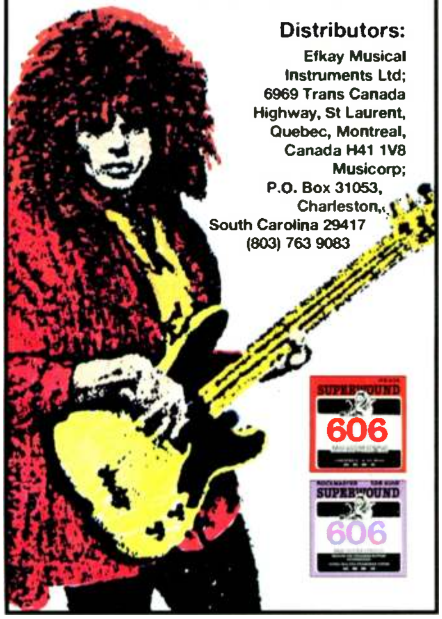


take it higher. I transposed the keys until they hit the female range, a full octave above where we'd started. Jackie explained that since he had laryngitis he couldn't sing along, but kept saying "take it higher" in a gravelly phlegm-filled voice. I had no idea what he'd sound like in these upper-register helium arrangements he insisted on.

The whole set-up was making me very nervous. I went into Thiele's office and told him that Jackie's keys seemed all off to me, he hadn't sung a note, and I really hoped we hadn't signed a lemon. Thiele—ever the philosopher—just said, "Oh, what the hell, we only signed him to get LaVern. Do the arrangements in any key he wants." Bob always had good gambler's instincts. We'd just do the session and see what happened.

Jackie and I discussed the instrumentation. We hired Panama Francis on drums, Lloyd Trotman on bass, Ernie Hayes on piano, Sam Taylor on saxophone and Eric Gale on guitar. I figured with all these seasoned pros in the studio, the session couldn't be *too* bad.

We held the session at the Pythian Temple on West 70th Street in Manhattan. I passed out the arrangement of "Reet Petite" to the band and ran over it a few times to do the necessary fine tuning. The band gelled and purred like a Mercedes. Jackie commented that he liked the arrangement very much. Now it was his turn. I got him behind the microphone and said a silent prayer that this aerial key he'd picked to sing in would be okay, and that this guy was a reasonable approximation of a singer.

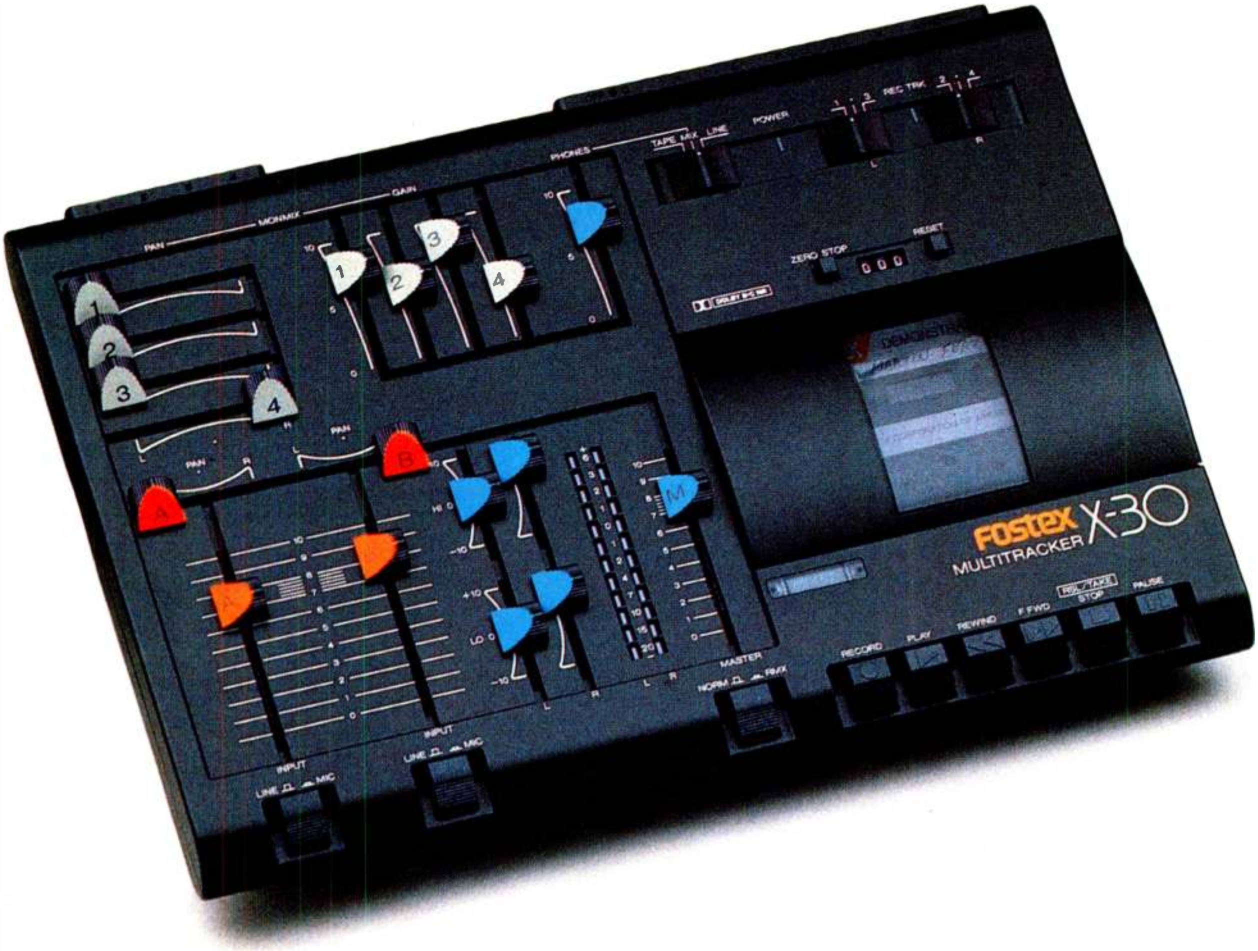
Jackie Wilson opened his mouth and out poured that sound like honey on moonbeams and it was like the whole room shifted on some weird axis. The musicians, these meat-and-potatoes pros, stared at each other slack-jawed and goggle-eyed in disbelief; it was as if the purpose of their musical training and woodshedding and lick-splitting had been to guide them into this big studio in the Pythian Temple to experience these pure shivering moments of magic. Bob Thiele and I looked at each other and just started laughing, half out of relief and half out of wonder. I never thought crow could taste so sweet. For years afterwards, Jackie and I often joked about my initial underestimation of his range. In fact, his vocal spread encompassed so many octaves that he could sing not only in female keys but an octave higher without a hint of a strained falsetto. "Reet Petite" came out and did very well, although nothing like the hits that would follow.

Shortly after the "Reet Petite" session, I became the conductor on the *Hit Parade* television show and was unable to do Jackie's second session. Instead, Milton De Lugg recorded Jackie's "To Be Loved" and enough other sides to make up an album.

Following the De Lugg sessions Al Green died; the question now was who would manage Jackie Wilson. Jackie's choice was Nat Tarnopol, who'd been working with Green. I had met Nat once very briefly while in Detroit on a disk jockey tour, when he'd showed me some songs that he'd published. In those days Nat worked as a tire salesman, but his heart was always in the record industry. Now, with the chance to oversee the burgeoning career of Jackie Wilson, Nat was in the game for real.

I'd finished my stint leading the *Hit Parade* orchestra and I was chomping at the bit to start arranging for Jackie again. Nat told me that in the future I would be Jackie's sole arranger, and that he and I would co-produce on the sessions. He handed me a lead sheet for another Berry Gordy composition, "Lonely Teardrops," and asked me to call Gordy in Detroit to discuss the arrangement. This would be the first of many phone calls over the years, but this time I had some questions. The chord progression of "Lonely Teardrops" struck me as being a little unusual, and I asked Gordy if it was correct. He assured me that it was and we went on to discuss the arrangement in highly technical terms. Not only was Gordy a budding populist genius in terms of knowing the teen market, he was a brilliant and knowledgeable music theorist. The phone conversation ended with me inviting Gordy to New York for the "Lonely Teardrops" session.

It was the flip side of "Lonely Teardrops" that really caused problems. Bob Thiele had left the company to become the head of A&R at Dot Records. The new head of A&R at Coral/Brunswick, Paul Cohen, came from the country department at Decca. To put it charitably, Cohen and Tarnopol hated each other with a passion. Cohen always wanted one of his, or one of his friends', songs on every session, and Tarnopol objected vehemently. Cohen won the battle, if not the war, by issuing Nat a simple ultimatum: Unless the flip of "Lonely Teardrops" was an old ballad called "In the Blue of Evening," there'd be no session. Nat was furious and came up with an ingenious sabotage scheme. He told me to deliberately write the arrangement in the wrong key for Jackie.



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That way, "In the Blue of Evening" would get so screwed up that we could pull one of Jackie's older sides for the flip.

The scheme would've worked had it not been for Jackie. I wrote the arrangement in what I thought was an impossible key. Jackie, unaware of the subterfuge, took the arrangement and—without breaking a quaver—turned out such a beautiful performance that we were forced to use "In the Blue of Evening." His rendition of this smoldering chestnut of a tune was the first clue we had to the incredible versatility of his singing.

"Lonely Teardrops" used a white vocal group for the background parts. I've been severely criticized for using white back-up singers on this and other Jackie Wilson records. This did not reflect a racial bias, nor was it an attempt to "clean up" Jackie's sound. The simple fact was that in the early-to-middle 1950s it was tremendously difficult to find black vocal groups who read music, and we simply didn't have the budget for the time to teach them the parts. When we could find black groups who could read charts, we used them on black and white sessions. In defense of the records, both Berry and Jackie liked the sounds of the backing vocals.

With "Lonely Teardrops" demolishing the charts, Jackie became a one-man hit factory with "That's Why (I Love You So)," "I'll Be Satisfied," "Talk That Talk," "A Woman, a Lover, a Friend," and on and on. But somewhere in his heart Jackie Wilson really wanted to be taken seriously as a ballad singer. Like Johnny Ace before him, Jackie wanted to be the Black Sinatra, a Mario Lanza of soul. And he sure had the pipes to deliver any kind of record he wanted to.

So Nat came up with a song called "Night," which was an adaptation of "My Heart at Thy Sweet Voice" from the Saint-Saëns opera *Samson and Delilah*. We got a big orchestra with lots of swelling strings and Hollywood heavenly white voices and I wrote this lush lavish arrangement which critics to this day claim was too powerful for Jackie's voice. What the critics don't realize is that it was impossible to overpower Jackie Wilson's voice; you couldn't do it with a chorus line of Sherman tanks. Besides, that wasn't the point. This was the sound Jackie wanted and this is the sound I gave him. But what the hell, the record went through the roof and into the hearts of Jackie's fans, which is where the sound really mattered.

By this time Jackie and I had become pretty close friends outside the studio. He was a frequent visitor at my home in Brooklyn. Whenever he'd play the Brooklyn Fox or the Brooklyn Paramount, he'd come over for dinner and listen to my son Mike play drums to all Jackie's records. One of Jackie's favorite forms of relaxation was to soak in a hot bubble bath for hours.

Then, one morning at about six a.m., the phone rang. On the other end was Coral/Brunswick vice-president Marty Salkin soberly informing me that Jackie Wilson had been shot and was in Roosevelt Hospital. That was all he knew. A scalding fear shot through my body and I blasted out of the house and drove like a crazed maniac to Roosevelt Hospital. Jackie was still in the emergency room. Salkin and I paced and chain-smoked, until finally we got the news: Jackie Wilson had been shot through the butt and it wasn't too serious. He'd been plugged in the tush by Juanita Jones, another link in Jackie's chain of spurned sweethearts. Juanita sure wasn't alone in her ardor for Jackie. Considering the numbers involved, hell hath no fury and all that, the most remarkable thing was that Jackie didn't have a whole lot more slugs in his rump.

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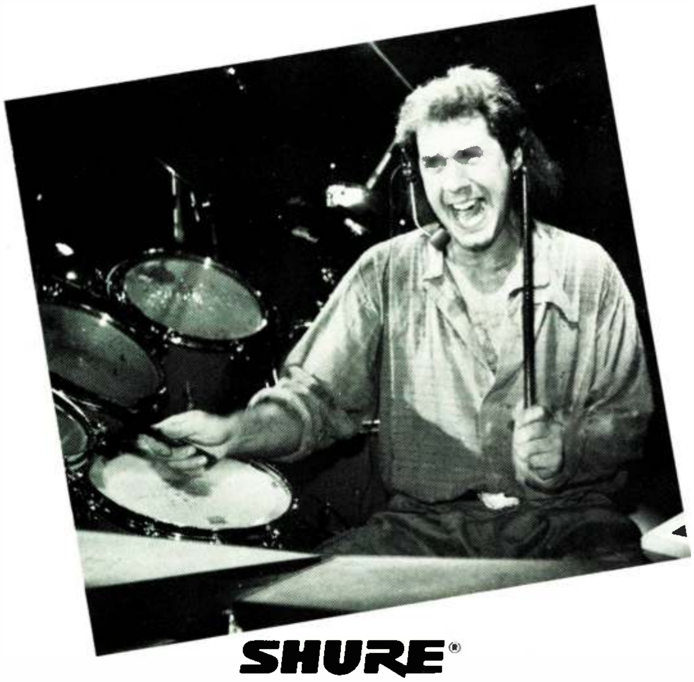

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World Radio History

hospital and seemed to take the whole thing in pretty good spirits, cracking jokes about having an extra asshole, etc. I set up a movie projector for him and he whiled away the time as he made a speedy recovery. And then it was back to show business as usual.

Jackie always had the ambition to transcend being a rock 'n' roll singer and, as he put it, "go on to bigger and better things." So Nat Tarnopol booked Jackie for an engagement at the Fountainbleu Hotel in Miami Beach, opening for the deadpan comedian Georgie Jessel.

The crowd at the Fountainbleu was mainly your basic Borscht Belt blue-hair-rinse set who didn't know Jackie Wilson from James Brown. However, there was a sprinkling of hardcore Jackie fans at the shows. Jackie knew that the crowd was there mainly for Jessel, so he included an amazing punch-line to his set: a knock-down drag-out version of "My Yiddishe Momme." And when this predominantly Jewish crowd got an eyeful of this black sylph gliding across the stage like there's no such thing as gravity and there's no bones in his body at all and he's crooning a mean, mournful and exuberant "My Yiddishe Momme" that would stop a bar mitzvah cold before sending everybody's heart right through the ceiling, this polite but skeptical crew of Jessel fans went berserk. As a kind of insurance policy, we threw a couple of other standards, like "California Here I Come," into the act and restricted the rock 'n' roll numbers to a long medley (to satisfy the real fans in the audience).

Jackie and Nat weren't through with the nightclub circuit just yet. Tarnopol managed to book a solid week of Jackie Wilson shows at the Copacabana in New York. It was perfect: The Copa was the hottest club in Manhattan (therefore the world) and Jackie Wilson was headlining. We even planned a live record, *Jackie At The Copa*. I had prior commitments, so Sy Oliver wrote the show and conducted the band. The Copa was packed for every show and Jackie surpassed everyone's expectations. The album came out and, unfortunately, was not one of Jackie's biggest sellers; it has become highly collectible.

The Copa marked the end of Jackie Wilson's nightclub career. He'd made his reputation as a rock 'n' roll star. A transition to sophisticated clubs was too much for the culture to contemplate; this was before the concept of "crossover" was assimilated into the popular bloodstream. So Jackie Wilson played the Apollo, where they had a saying that he generated the kind of excitement on his first number that other acts save for the encore. They also had a name for him: Mr. Excitement.

Jackie Wilson had been a Golden Gloves boxing champion before becoming a singer, and he brought a lot of the razzle-dazzle of the ring into his rock act. He knew how to hypnotize an audience with his weightless turns, twists and glides—a dervish with five octaves who never missed a note and never seemed to touch the floor. His rock aerodynamics have never been equalled.

Jackie was the consummate professional in the studio. He never asked to change anything on an arrangement and could get a track down in two to three takes max. One night, after the band had gone home, Nat Tarnopol, in a happy delirium over a playback, sat down on the control board, pressing down the record button and erasing eight bars of a master take. Fortunately, we were able to splice in a section from an out-take and save the recording. I'll leave it to you to figure out which Jackie Wilson tune has the hidden botch.

When we'd go over songs to select keys, etc. for the sessions, we'd sit

continued on page 97

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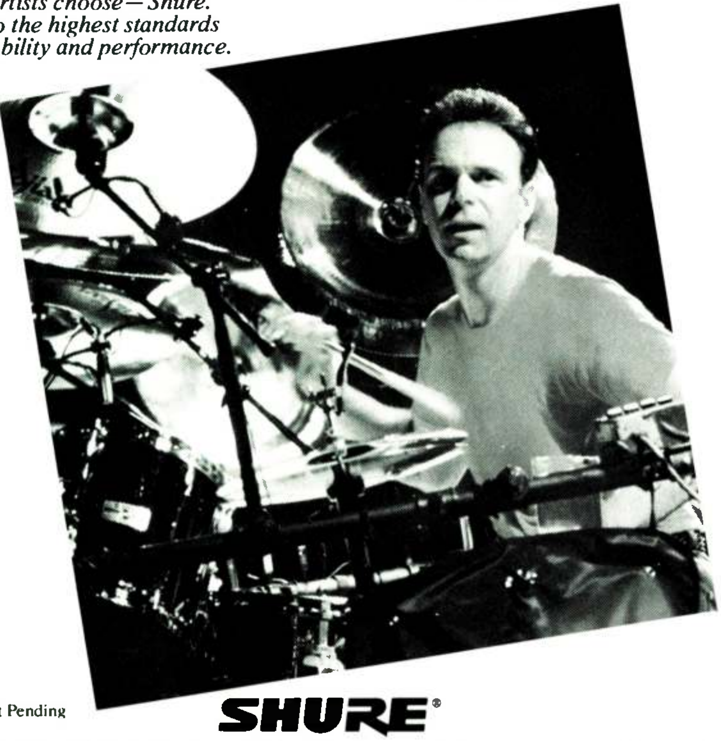

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GEORGE MICHAEL
ARTIST OR AIRHEAD?

IS IT TIME TO TAKE WHAM!'S ARCHITECT SERIOUSLY?

> *"The entertainment world, more than any other, is a place where you have to sell yourself by having faith in yourself."*
>
> – *From* ***Liberace: An Autobiography.***

George Michael has been called a lot of nasty things in a short period of time. A list of the published insults directed at the singer and his music includes: "a real bimbo," "an arrogant bastard," "tacky [and] tasteless," "dreadful, [with] no taste and less intelligence," "lacking in content and almost sinister in design," "sexist, fascist, stroppy, untalented, arrogant, mercenary, manipulative, elitist, despicably commercial and wholly egocentric," and, perhaps worst of all, "a young Barry Manilow."

It's not that George Michael is the most vilified figure in modern history—there's Roy Cohn, for example, and God. But at 24, George Michael may still have a chance of catching up to them. George-hatred can surmount age boundaries, too, uniting right-wing moralists and hip London trendies in a single cause. The former group accused him of encouraging the spread of AIDS with the lascivious "I Want Your Sex," while the latter have charged him with nearly everything but that.

George reads his press clips. "One month I'd be [depicted as] a fat, fascist homosexual with a huge Georgian house somewhere in Essex. The next I'd be a lean, virile left-winger," he observes. He knows he has an image problem. He even understands that you can't date Brooke Shields and expect to be taken seriously by critics. Nonetheless, he's defiantly proud of Wham!'s chart reign from 1982 through 1986. And George Michael believes that his image problem should start to change with the release of *Faith*, his first solo album. He talks confidently about a new "maturity" in his music, and the album's "strong lyrical overtone. It shows my age, really, and it shows what I've been through." And he eagerly adds that he produced and arranged the record himself, as well as writing and performing the tracks with little assistance.

There's one song in particular on *Faith* that shows a new side of George Michael. "Hand to Mouth," the first topical track he's ever recorded, examines England's increasing disregard for the poor, an attitude the singer attributes to Margaret Thatcher's "Americanization" of the U.K. "I don't want to say it in too heavy-handed a way, because I've heard too many political lyrics which sound like shit," Michael explains. "Another thing I liked about that lyric is that the imagery is quite soothing at first. And then if you think about it, it's

BY ROB TANNENBAUM

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS CUFFARO

not at all soothing."

But when advance tapes of *Faith* came back in early October, Michael noticed a misprint on the cassette sleeves. Instead of "Hand to Mouth," they said "*Hard* to Mouth."

"When I saw that yesterday, I was in hysterics," he says. "Can you imagine what people would be expecting, with 'I Want Your Sex' on one side and 'Hard to Mouth' on the other? Jesus Christ," he mutters, "that's *all* I need."

Sitting at the dining-room table of his plush Manhattan hotel suite, cloaked in layers of black down to the shiny metal tips on his needle-nose boots, George Michael is uncharacteristically hesitant as he searches for an appropriate euphemism. "There's no doubt in my mind that I would be taken far more seriously as a song-writer if I was not, let's say—it's very difficult to find the words here. If I was not particularly *presentable*, put it that way." The crease between his thick eyebrows, which gives him an almost permanently dour look, is smoothed by a smile.

"I'd definitely get more respect if I was a little uglier. It's a fact of life," he continues. "If you do have a physical advantage, people will ignore the fact that maybe you have other advantages in ability that put you where you are. My biggest problem in being accepted as a writer and performer is that I've made it look too easy. Because I look and present myself a certain way, there don't seem to be any cracks."

"I'D GET MORE RESPECT IF I WAS UGLIER. MY BIGGEST PROBLEM IS THAT I'VE MADE IT LOOK TOO EASY."

At the beginning of 1984, he predicted that Wham! would have four number one singles in England. The string began with "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go," a song so catchy and so annoying that critics started comparing Michael to Paul McCartney. Then the lush ballad "Careless Whisper" and the bouncy "Everything She Wants" rocketed to the top. The fourth single, "Freedom," was kept from the top position only by Band Aid's "Do They Know It's Christmas," in which Michael participated.

In the three years prior to this October evening, George Michael has had nine Top 10 hits—more than Lionel Richie, more than Bruce Springsteen, more than Whitney Houston or Janet Jackson or Prince or Michael Jackson. Only Madonna has had more chart success than Michael in the previous 36 months. Sales volume hasn't guaranteed him respect, but George Michael speaks with the self-assurance of a man who's sold 36 million records in his first four years.

He's a star because of his undeniable gift for melody and arrangement, and also because he understands the requirements of being a successful musician in the '80s. He directs his own videos, he helps plot his marketing and publicity campaigns, and—more so than any singer except maybe Michael Jackson—he realizes that multi-format songwriting can vanquish increasing audience fragmentation and establish him with different races and age groups.

His demeanor is more that of a businessman than of a pop star. "Okay, I have a certain amount of ability," he says, "but the rest is pure hard work. I work my ass off to make sure that once I've made the record, everything else is up to the same standards. I think I am very good at those things. I think I have an ability to take my music as far as it can go in this industry."

"His initial impression does not make you feel comfortable; in fact, it's quite nerve-wracking," notes former manager Simon Napier-Bell. "Unless he's turning on the professional charm. He's very adept at that, too." Like all British pop stars since Oscar Wilde, Michael recognizes the importance of headlines. The bluntness of his self-assurance guarantees good quotes, and is also ingratiating. Almost from the start, Michael has had a realistic, even cold-blooded approach to achieving stardom—when the press ravaged him and his record sales rose, he had the last laugh. "Whether they write good or bad about you, they are helping your career. Initially, it really hurts. When it first started, I was only 19 or 20. Now nothing ruffles me."

In his struggle to earn more respect, perhaps Michael should decorate his next album with a picture of himself at 14. "People have no comprehension of what I looked like as a kid. I was an ugly little bastard," he laughs.

The bronzed glow that often passes for a playboy tan reflects George's Mediterranean heritage: His real name is Giorgios Panayiotou. Michael's father was born in Cyprus, Greece, came to England "with 20 shillings," George says, and worked until he could send back to Cyprus for the rest of the family. "Nine of them lived in a North London flat," Michael explains. "All of them, with the exception of one, are comparatively wealthy now. It's a very typical hard-working immigrant story, simply because the English are very lazy, and immigrants come in and clean up." The Panayiotous had two daughters, and then a son. When George was 11, the family moved to Bushey in Hertfordshire, a suburb northwest of London.

Despite being overweight, ugly and having thick glasses, Michael says, "I never really lacked confidence as an individual. I was always quite popular. I had this cockiness about me that had no real bearing in any particular attributes." From an early age, music was his only interest. "I just wanted to be a musician, and I was convinced I would be a great one. I played the drums for about three years, starting when I was about 12. All the neighbors complained, by which time I was in combat with my dad about whether I was gonna be a pop star or a restaurateur."

Like many immigrants, George's father wanted his children to enter a profession. "I had a lot of problems with him when I was growing up, because he didn't think music was based in 'hard work.' In all the time we argued and screamed at each other, I was frustrated because I thought he was wrong. But I always knew he was worried for me. I remember him saying once, 'Son, *everybody* wants to be a pop star.' I said, 'Dad, everybody wants to be a pop star when they're 10. I'm *19*.'"

George Michael uses the phrase "pop star" frequently. He pops the two P's when he says it, and his eyes gleam, giving the term a noble air. He has not outgrown his love of pop music. As a kid, he saved up until he could afford new records. "I was obsessive about listening to records, and I think that's why arrangement comes so easily to me. I used to sit and listen to every single aspect of arrangement." He discovered that by plugging a mike into his dad's stereo amp he could tape himself singing over Elton John, Queen and Sweet. Eventually he wrecked his dad's amp. When his grades fell off, George was banned from listening to records. So he bought headphones, and began to notice more nuances in his favorite tunes.

When he was 11, George met Andrew Ridgely, a handsome schoolmate who shared a fondness for *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*. As they got older, they discovered dance music and started collaborating on songs. They went to local soul clubs and danced all night to *Saturday Night Fever*. The punk coup starting just a few miles away in London had no impact on them. "I never even used to go to London," says Michael. "I had no money to get into London, and no money to spend when I got there."

George's soul phase lasted until the ska boom of 1979. In honor of the Selecter, George and Andrew formed the Executive, Hertfordshire's premier ska ensemble. "We had these two hippies in the band because they had equipment," George recalls. He and Andrew wore second-hand suits and Hush Puppies. One hippie had long, ginger-colored hair, and the other played bass sitting cross-legged on the floor. "We were so bad. We were terrible, but everyone loved us."

At one point, George thought the band would be signed to Go Feet, the label founded by the English Beat. "Our manager went to Go Feet with a band rehearsal tape—in the heady days of post-punk, you were allowed to do things like that. He came back and told us we were gonna do this deal with Go Feet. We were 16 and on top of the world. He gave us all this bullshit, which we believed. We thought we'd be on *Top of the Pops* within eight weeks. Two weeks later, it fell through." Hours before a big show at Andrew's college, the hippies quit the band, taking their equipment with them.

"But one of the things on the tape was our version of the Andy Williams record 'Can't Get Used to Losing You,' which came out as an English Beat record about six months later. I remember walking up the road with my copy of *Record Mirror* and seeing this preview—I was absolutely furious, convinced my idea had been nicked, though they did it at a slow steady pace and we did a terrible 160-beats-per-minute version."

With the Executive's modest success, George became confident enough in his writing and singing to quit school. Inspired by the Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight," he wrote "Wham! Rap," a song which gave his and Andrew's new band its name. And, at 17, he composed "Careless Whisper," Wham!'s breakthrough ballad. "I was convinced it was a number one," he says. "I wrote 'Careless Whisper' and...well, I'll be fair. I wrote 'Careless Whisper' with Andrew. I remember saying to him, 'For Christ's sake, there's no way that no one is not gonna want to make money on this song.' We had no record contract, no publishing deal, nothing. And I told Andrew it was a number one song.

"I had a job as a cinema usher in the afternoons, tearing tickets for people all bloody day. Then I would get on the bus and go work as a DJ in a restaurant in the evening. And, clear as day, I remember where I was sitting on the bus when I wrote that sax line. I said, 'Jesus, this is really good.' That sax line is pretty much the most important thing in my career, just those four bars."

His future's so cool he's gotta wear gloves.

CHRIS CUFFARO VISAGES

At the same time, Andrew Ridgeley was spending a lot of time with Mark Dean, the young managing director of a new indie label dubbed Innervision. Wham!'s tumultuous relationship with Innervision constitutes a key chapter in Simon Garfield's *Money for Nothing*, a 1986 book chronicling "greed and exploitation in the music industry." The Innervision deal has had a lasting effect on Michael's career as well.

Dean, who'd worked with ABC and Soft Cell at Phonogram, arranged a distribution deal with CBS, and began looking for bands. Early in 1982, he heard the Wham! demos which major labels had rejected, and offered them a contract which—according to Simon Garfield's account—the group's lawyer considered "a poor deal." When Wham! tried to negotiate a fairer contract, Dean hinted that he might sign another band. To George, such a delay might have guaranteed his future in the restaurant business.

So Wham! signed a contract not too different from the one first offered them. It was, Garfield writes, "a deal that any solicitor with any knowledge of the industry would have laughed off his desk in an instant." The terms included a paltry £500 advance, substandard royalty rates for the group on sales of LPs and 45s, and no royalties on 12-inch singles.

"Wham! Rap" was released in the summer of '82. With its sharp, derivative funk arrangement and celebration of unemployed youth ("I choose to cruise.../ Take pleasure in leisure, I believe in joy"), the single compares favorably with such teen anthems as "My Generation" and the Sex Pistols' similarly pro-sloth "Seventeen." The BBC banned the record, and it went Top 10. *Fantastic*, the group's debut LP, included three other British smashes, "Young Guns," "Bad Boys" and

"Club Tropicana." (In the U.S., only "Bad Boys" charted, though the songs were dance club hits.) After their third single was released, Wham! began their first tour, "a thoroughly spectacular show" according to one reviewer, which included a 15-piece band and several costume changes. Along with Duran Duran and Spandau Ballet, Wham! found audiences tired of punk and thirsty for glamour.

George had co-produced *Fantastic* with Steve Brown, written and arranged most of the songs, and performed one of the tracks almost by himself. But by his estimation, he and Andrew earned only £100,000 from one of the year's biggest records. Desperate to get out of their contract with Innervision, Wham! hired Simon Napier-Bell, a former TV producer who earned notoriety managing Marc Bolan and the Yardbirds. His value to Wham!, Michael later admitted, was in his "reputation as a real asshole." At the end of 1983, Wham! took Innervision to court. After six months of what Simon Garfield calls "exhaustive litigation," the two parties settled out of court. Innervision's contract with Wham! was voided. And CBS was so anxious to keep the group on their roster that they offered them an unusually generous royalty.

The fiasco with Innervision helped make Michael an autocrat. "It taught me everything about what *not* to allow. Also, it helped me because they weren't particularly keen for me to have a manager, because they thought a manager would see through them more than I could. Therefore, for a whole year, we managed ourselves. The truth is, *I* managed Wham! It taught me so much; I had to make so many decisions myself that when it came to being managed, I knew what was going on. I was never in the dark about anything because I'd already done it myself."

"THE RECORD COMPANY DOESN'T QUESTION ME. THEY *KNOW* THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT."

"We want to be a massive band," George Michael told one of his first British interviewers. "Not just here, but right across the world. I want us to be huge." During Wham!'s second album, the bluntly titled *Make It Big*, George assumed control, producing and writing with minimal input from Andrew Ridgeley. "Andrew just quietly backed off and realized that if we were gonna take it as far as it was gonna go, it would have to be with my songs. His contributions would have diluted the strength of my musical ideas." Ironically, *Make It Big* became the first album with three number one singles since George's beloved *Saturday Night Fever*.

As a reaction to the negativity of punk, Michael says, Wham! offered "'60s escapism." Their videos and record sleeves showed two handsome young stars in tight tennis shorts, surrounded by busty babes in bikinis. "To a degree, we lost our sense of humor about it," George admits. "I can understand why people wanted to punch me out."

The music magazines that championed their debut recoiled. Even Pete Townshend denounced them: "When Wham! first began, their first 'Wham! Rap' record was in everybody's top five at the *New Musical Express* and they were considered to be quite subversive...street kids who weren't going to be part of the system. And now what are they? They're actually completely integrated into the machine..."

George didn't want integration; he wanted to build his own machine. The Wham! image, he says, "was totally divorced from me as a character—but I knew it was working. It meant that the music I wanted people to hear was getting into as many homes as possible." Having vowed to make Wham! the world's biggest pop group, he was willing to suffer whatever ignominy was involved: "I totally threw away my musical credibility for a year and a half in order to make sure my music got into so many people's homes," he said to one interviewer. "To be a huge success means that you cannot intrigue or provoke," he told another. "Because the public don't want it."

Nor was Michael unwilling to get his hands greasy by oiling the Wham! juggernaut himself. Little of the band's fate was entrusted to others. "It took me about two months to suss out that the business was full of assholes who didn't know what to do with me. And I knew better than they did in terms of what I should be doing. That's when I dug my heels in. I think I picked up on how the business worked really quickly.

"The way people in record companies respond when they see someone who genuinely and convincingly knows what they're doing is unbelievable; they never say no. It starts with what to do for videos, then it becomes what singles should be released, then what date they should be released. The record company just doesn't question me anymore. They haven't for years. Because they *know* they don't know what they're talking about. It always stuns me when other artists come up to me in clubs and say they're having a hard time with the record company. If you can make an impression early enough, you're there." Michael pauses. "As long as you *do* know what you're doing."

Throughout 1984, Britain's crop of young pop stars spent much of the year insulting one another in the press. Then, at the end of the year, they gathered together to record "Do They Know It's Christmas," the benefit record for Ethiopia. With 30 stars in one room, and at least twice that many grudges, it must have been a strange session. "Oh, it was, actually. It was *very* strange," Michael recalls. "The only person there who didn't seem to succumb to the charitable nature of the day was Mr. Paul Weller, who decided to attack me in front of everybody."

A few months earlier, Wham! had played a benefit for England's striking miners. After the show, Michael denounced the miners' leader, Arthur Scargill, which offended Weller, England's staunchest pop music socialist. "He was having a go at me because of the miners' benefit. 'Don't be a wanker all your life,' I said. 'Have a day off.'"

There was one instance, Michael admits, when his label was smarter than he. In 1986, at Wham!'s peak, he wrote a downbeat heartache ballad called "Different Corner." "I felt like shit. I went in and recorded exactly the way I felt, and that's the way it sounds. It was partly Wham! and partly the end of a relationship. It was the farthest I'd ever fallen, and in a very short period of time. I had to get rid of it somehow, I had to write about it. That's a really perverse side that I'm sure a lot of writers have—'I feel like shit, but maybe I'll get a good song out of it.'"

Because "Different Corner" didn't match Wham!'s carefully cultivated "escapist" aesthetic, Michael released it as his first solo single. CBS urged him to put "Different Corner" on the

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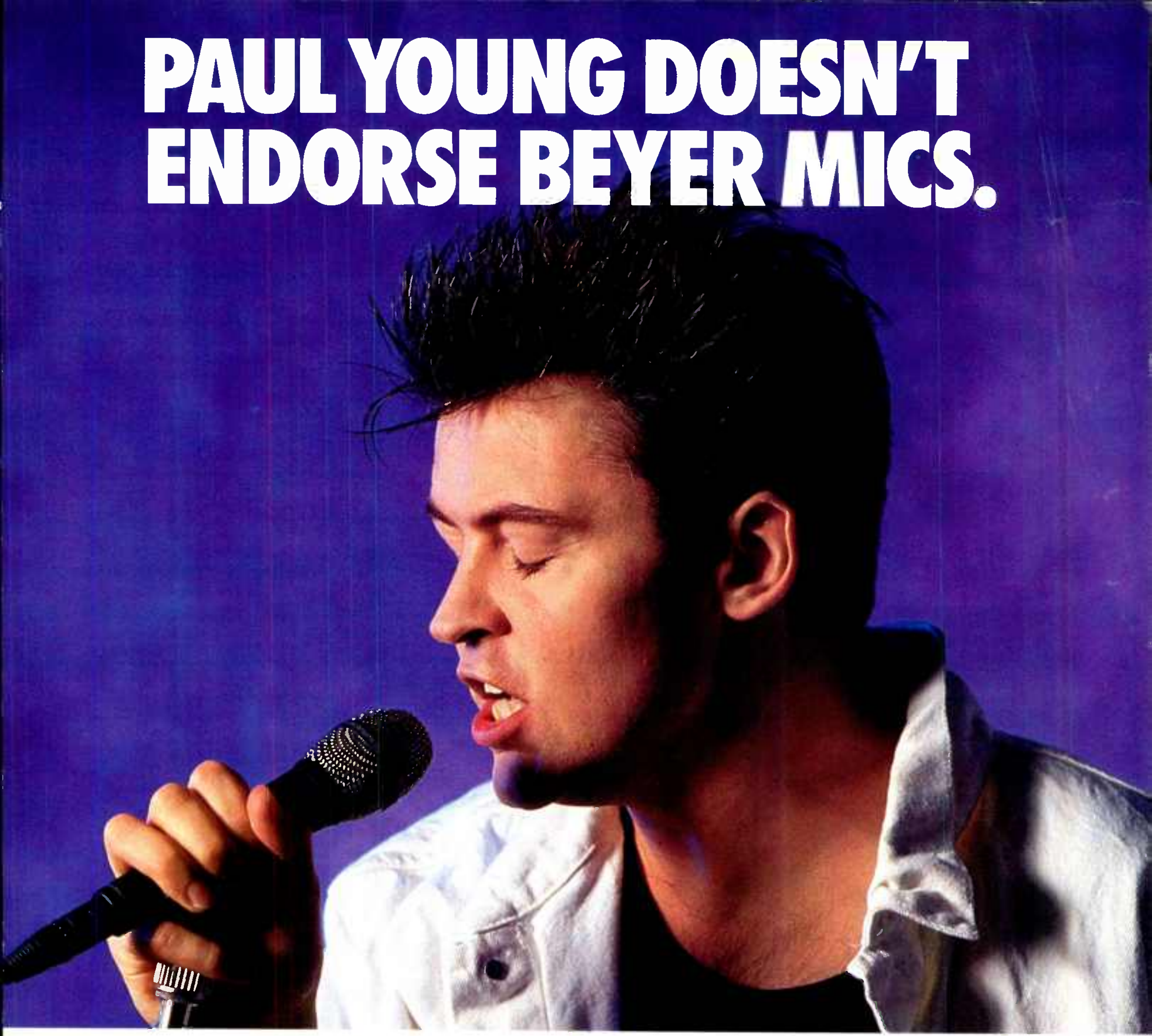

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soundtrack to *Top Gun*, but George refused. When the single made a disappointing showing—"a stunning number seven," George says sarcastically—he regretted the decision.

After a few more hits, Wham! broke up. Early in 1987, while Michael was working on *Faith*, he finished "I Want Your Sex" and decided to release it in advance of his solo album. So he contacted Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer, the producers of *Top Gun*, as well as *Beverly Hills Cop* and *Flashdance*, all of which have spawned number one soundtracks. They wanted "Sex" for *Beverly Hills Cop II*.

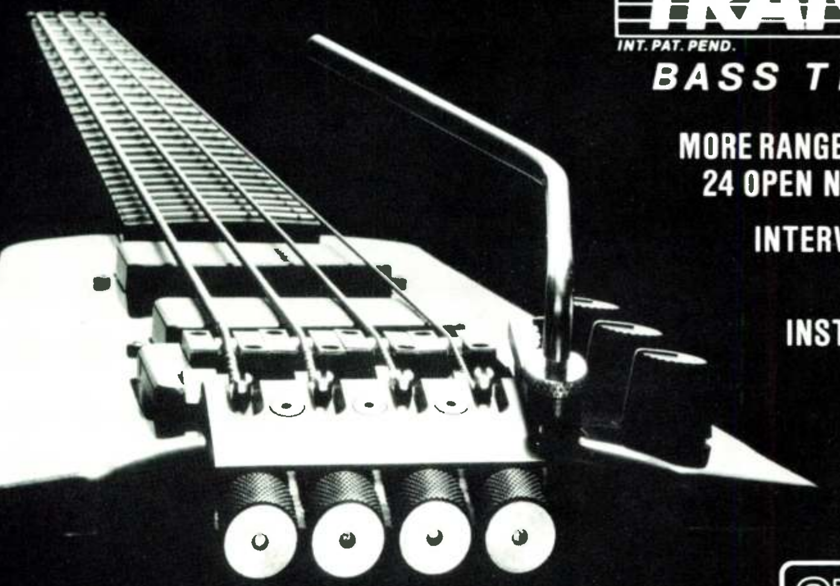
"I was nervous with 'I Want Your Sex' that I would be too far in front of the album and it would get lost again. If I'd had any real idea about the controversy that it caused, I would have realized I didn't need a fucking movie. And I do wish I hadn't done it because Simpson and Bruckheimer were assholes to deal with. They fucked us over. It was a compromise I didn't need to make, and it convinced me that I should not compromise with things when I don't want to."

During a year when pop songs began promoting sexual prudence, "I Want Your Sex" stood out like a hard-on in a monastery. The video displayed Michael's girlfriend, walking purposefully in half a pair of underwear. Mary Whitehouse, England's answer to Tipper Gore, claimed that "the tone of the lyrics is out of keeping with sexual trends activated because of AIDS." The BBC refused to play it, as did many American radio stations. MTV insisted the video be re-edited. *USA Today* wrote an editorial supporting Michael, who still maintains "Sex" promotes the joys of monogamy, and that "nothing in the lyrics advocates promiscuity."

What about this quatrain: "Sex is natural/ Sex is good/ Not everybody does it/ But everybody should"? "Everybody *should*," George retorts. "I don't know anybody who shouldn't have sex." Including teenaged girls? "'Everybody should.' I didn't say *when*. It's obvious there are certain guidelines." And, of course, "Sex is natural/ Sex is good/ Not everybody does it/ But everybody should, providing they're emotionally prepared and practice birth control" doesn't really flow. It's hard to find a rhyme for "condom." "The whole point was, I thought everyone was getting so serious, and I thought, 'Just say exactly what most people say, but use The Word and see what happens.'"

"Sex" was also Michael's biggest dance hit in a long time. One sharp-tongued black critic—who has charged Michael Jackson with wanting to be white—subsequently identified George as one of the few "old school funky" artists left. "The big shame about modern black music is that, to a degree, anybody can pick up a machine and make a funk record," Michael declares. "White people have always imitated black artists because black artists were doing something a lot of white musicians could only aspire to. And to have that reduced to a mechanical form of culture is really just a shame. A lot of white producers and white artists can make good dance records mechanically; the imitation is pretty much as good as the real thing.

"It's a shame *I* can do it," he says, laughing. "It's a shame I can make a record which I think actually stands up to a lot of black dance records. Being able to express real emotion is something that's always come a lot more naturally to black musicians than to white musicians. And to negate that difference by using machines just seems a shame."



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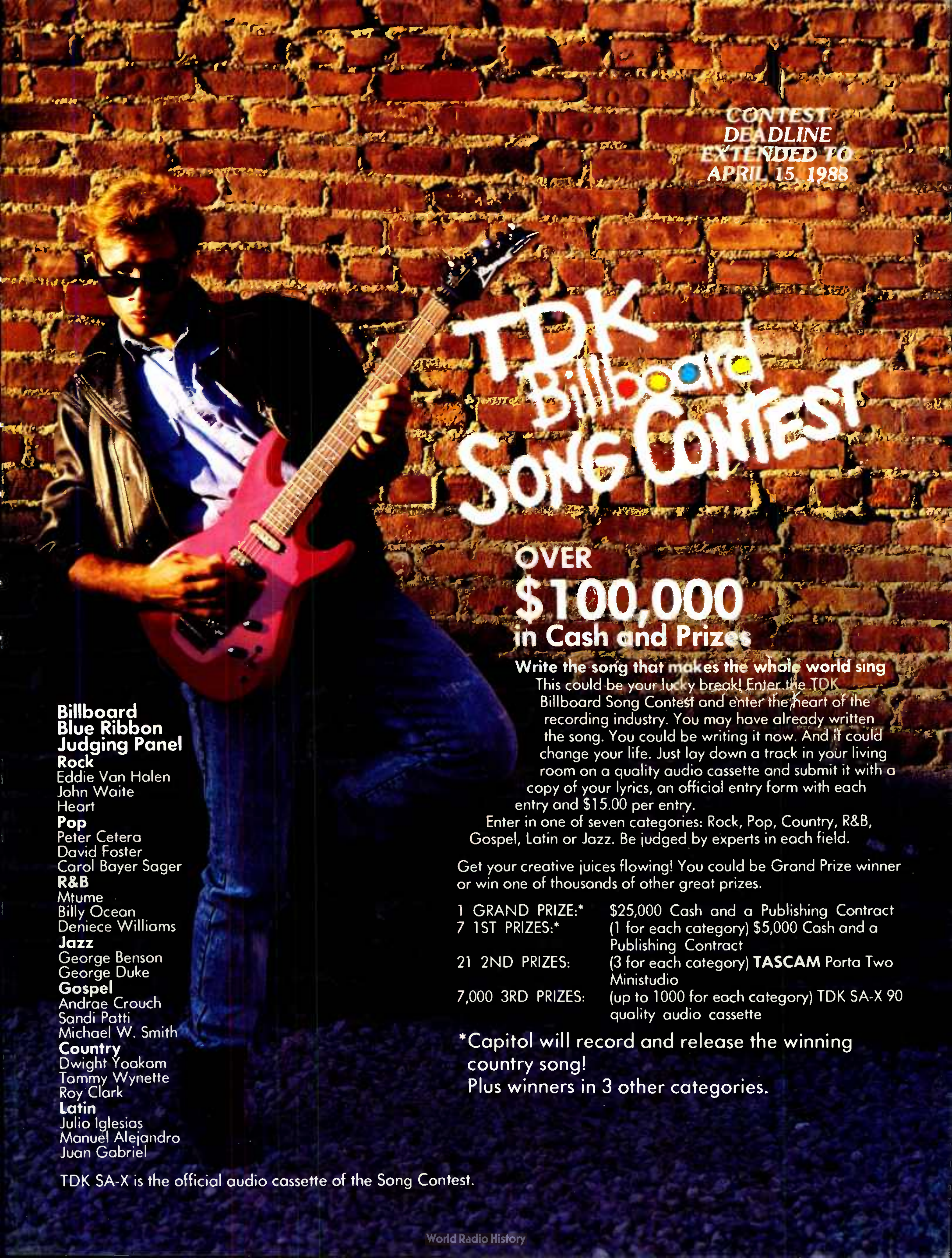

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TDK SA-X is the official audio cassette of the Song Contest.

For a long time, Michael has gotten respect from black audiences. He was even invited to participate in the reopening of Harlem's fabled Apollo Theater in May of '85. "That was stunning for me. I couldn't believe I was there." When he arrived at the Apollo, Patti LaBelle was rehearsing onstage. "It was before she made her comeback, so I wasn't sure who the fuck she was. But she was singing her ass off. I said to myself, 'Listen to this woman. I'm going home now.'"

Michael stayed, and sang two songs: "Careless Whisper" with Smokey Robinson, and "Love's in Need of Love Today" with Stevie Wonder. "The Smokey thing was a bit of a disappointment to me, simply because...Well, I wouldn't like to go into it. The Stevie thing was either going to make me scared shitless and I was going to sing like crap, or it would bring something out of me—and it did. I sang as well as I ever had, live."

Subsequently, Aretha Franklin invited George to duet with her on "I Knew You Were Waiting (For Me)," another number one. "There's not much to tell, really. She wasn't cold to me, she just seemed unimpressed by everything. She stuck around and did things again and again until they were right, where apparently, if things are not right, she usually just leaves. I think it went quite well, because my performance was reasonably restrained. But I find myself fairly detached from it—I normally produce things, and because there was a producer, and I was just the vocalist, it doesn't feel like part of me in the same way."

Michael feels acceptance from black listeners has at times been crucial: "In doing what I'd always wanted—writing the

continued on page 98

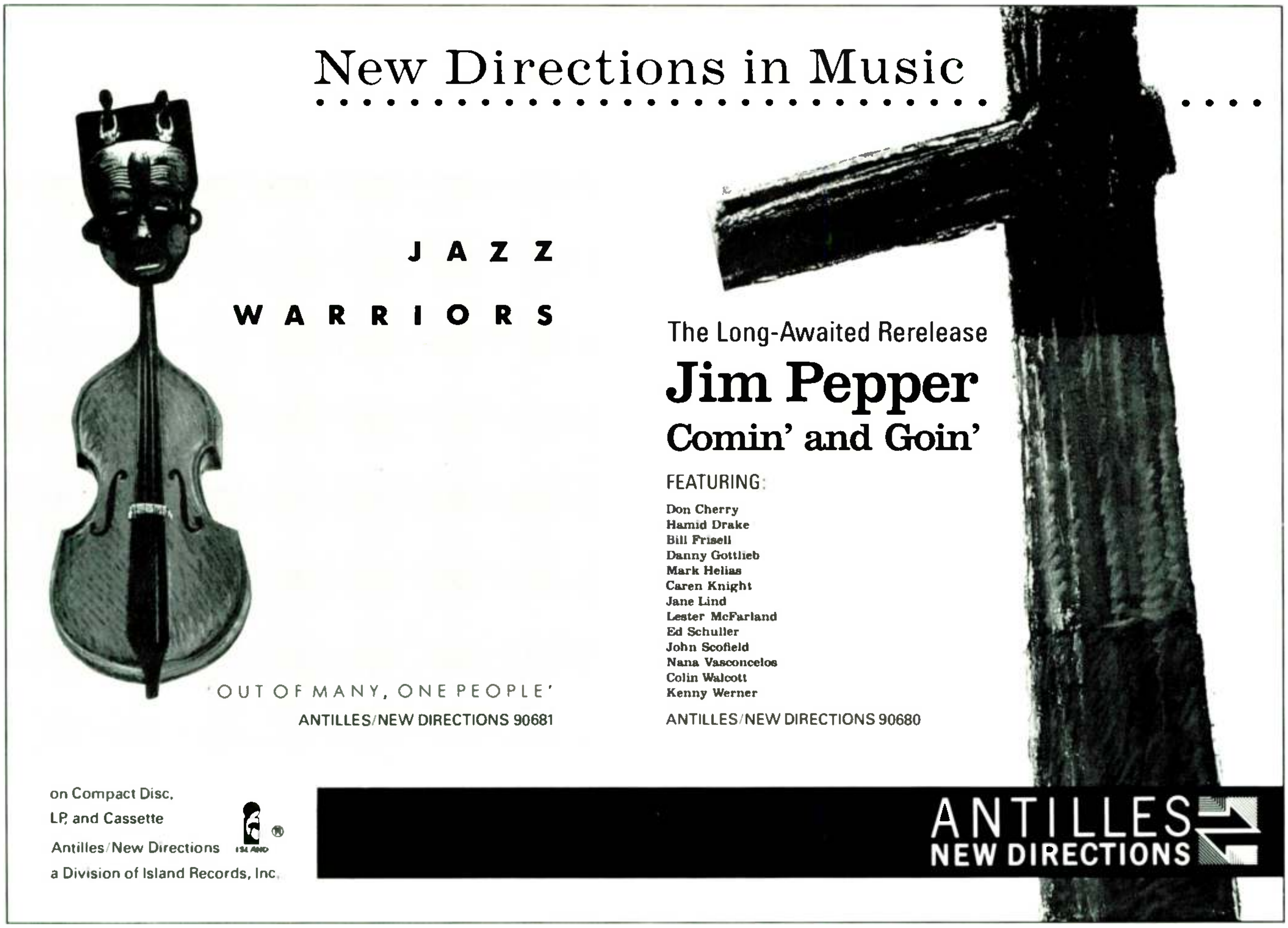
SEX TOYS

"In terms of musicians, the majority of the album is me. I've never really been interested in big-name session guys. When I have come across them, I've found them extremely non-creative. The ones who've been session musicians for a long time tend to be jaded, and a little more interested in their fee than in what they're playing. Also, I have a fair sense of loyalty to the people I started out working with."

George Michael played keyboards, bass and drums on *Faith.* When he needed help, he called on Dion Estes, a dynamic, underrated bassist who's played with Michael since the first Wham! single, keyboardist Chris Coleman, and guitarist Hugh Burns, who played in the Wham! band. Shirlie Lewis, an old friend and part of the duo Pepsi & Shirlie, sang backups on one track.

"The limitations of what I can play meant that I had to keep the structures and the arrangements really air-tight and interesting," Michael says. "They had to be something that wouldn't need a virtuoso performance. It gives more of my personality, really.

"My engineer [Chris Porter, who has worked with Michael since 'Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go'] knows what instruments I use as a rule, and depending on the studio we're working in, he'll get that stuff together. I'm pretty particular when it comes to equipment, especially about vocal sounds." On *Faith,* Michael used the Yamaha DX7, Roland S-50 and D-50, and Juno 106 keyboards. His bass is a Fender Precision. Drum parts were played on a Pearl drum kit and Linn 9000 and Roland TR808 drum machines, and a Roland Octapad. His vocals were recorded mostly through Neumann mikes, with an occasional Shure. The sessions were done at Puk Studio in Denmark and SARM West, Trevor Horn's London studio.



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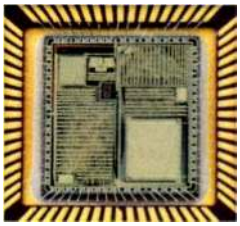

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THE ROYALTY RECOVERY PROJECT

HOW ROCK'S PIONEERS FINALLY GOT A PIECE OF THE ACTION **BY STAN SOOCHER**

DAVID COWLES

Here's a new twist on "The Twist," the dance craze that hit number one for Chubby Checker in 1960 and 1962: The song was also a million-plus seller for its composer, Hank Ballard, and his band the Midnighters. Yet Ballard says he's never received a penny in songwriting royalties for the tune.

So these days Ballard's doing another dance, the Legal Shuffle, and his partner is the Artists Rights Enforcement Corporation, a Manhattan firm that helps songwriters and recording artists pursue back royalty claims. Ballard's huddled with firm founder Chuck Rubin and New York City attorneys Alexander Peltz and Paul Walker, mapping strategy for retaining a major victory won several days before: the recapture of the copyright renewal term for "The Twist."

Under the federal copyright act that was in effect before January 1, 1978, all songs were protectible for two 28-year terms. The version of "The Twist" recorded by Ballard was first published by King Records of Cincinnati in 1959. Rubin discovered, however, that a version of the song with different lyrics had been recorded by Ballard in a high-school auditorium in Florida and registered for copyright in 1958. He quickly filed for renewal on behalf of Ballard.

Ballard is elated, but still must battle for his song on two fronts: one with veteran music publisher Fred Bienstock, who has controlled the composition's publishing rights, over the validity of the renewal registration; the other with industry mogul Morris Levy over the rights to songwriting royalties for "The Twist" and other Ballard compositions like "Finger Poppin' Time," which Levy claims the songwriter turned over to him in exchange for a personal loan.

Sadly, Ballard's tortuous tale is only one of hundreds of claims of unpaid recording and songwriting royalties that have affected many figures in rock music, from Chuck Berry to the Beatles. Most artists remained silent for years. Then, as rock fans entered their prime earning years, classic songs began to generate income from new sources, such as commercials, film and television soundtracks, and repackagings of the original hits.

At that point many artists started stepping forward to collect their money. Artists Rights has handled cases for more than 200 acts from the '50s and '60s, including the Coasters, the Del-Vikings and the Shirelles. During those years, Rubin says, "many artists felt they'd better behave, that it was a bad combination trying to force payment of royalties while trying to keep a career going. Besides, they believed they could have a couple of big hits on another label the next year."

"If you asked for publishing rights in the '50s, you didn't get a deal, you got kicked out the door," laments Ballard. "At one point I was told I had to write 20 songs just to join a performing rights society [for airplay and concert royalty collection], when in fact I only had to write one."

Attorney Peltz—who along with Walker is also handling royalty cases for '50s crooner Jimmy Rodgers and girl-group queens the Ronettes—notes that many of the top artists of the '50s and '60s were able to live on the fees they earned from concert appearances. "The artists were more interested in fame than money," he contends. "They were satisfied so long as they had the trappings of success. Record companies pampered them by providing limousines and other comforts on the one hand, while charging these expenses back to the artists' accounts on the other."

Still, many artists have been successful in recouping long-owed royalties. Suits filed have alleged fraud, conversion, breach of contract, trademark and copyright violations, and even violations of the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act.

But few royalty-collection cases ever proceed to trial. Most are settled once music companies are confronted with information obtained on artists' accounts. In addition to royalty statements, investigators working for artists must examine licensing, management, publishing and recording agreements. The chains of title of copyrights and master tapes must also be traced, often through several corporations which may have held them.

The paper trail traditionally begins when a songwriter signs a composition over to a publisher, who then is responsible for exploiting the work and splitting royalties earned with the songwriter. Under federal copyright law, once a song is recorded anyone can obtain a "compulsory license" to record it for release. A "synchronization license" is needed to use the song in connection with visuals in a movie or on television.

Hank Ballard (second from right) and the Esquires: Chuck Rubin, Paul Walker and Alexander Peltz.

MARIA BASTONE

A producer typically contacts the publisher, rather than the songwriter, to get synchronization permission. To obtain the right to use a master recording, a producer will go to a record company. The fact that artists are bypassed in the negotiating process is where many of the current royalty problems arise.

Chuck Rubin's first royalty action involved Wilbur Harrison, who hit number one on the pop charts in 1959 with the blues-rocker "Kansas City." Rubin had once managed Harrison's career. Then in the late '70s Harrison approached Rubin for help in retrieving back royalties for the song. Rubin found an attorney for Harrison, and by the time the legal work was completed, Harrison, who hadn't kept a copy of his recording agreement, not only won his back royalties, but discovered that he had owned the rights to the master recording of "Kansas City" all along. By 1981, Rubin had stopped working as a manager and booking agent to devote all his time to royalty disputes. He receives a percentage of royalties recovered by artists through his efforts.

"Artist royalty problems were caused in some cases by conflicts of interest of attorneys who did not want to compromise their relationships with the music companies," Rubin believes. Some may not have wanted to ruffle record and publishing company feathers to smooth the way for negotiations they would later conduct for other artists.

Take the case of Huey "Piano" Smith, the composer of the widely recorded "Rockin' Pneumonia" and "Sea Cruise." Smith's lawyer was the administrator of the songwriter's copyrights, collecting royalties while paying Smith only a few hundred dollars here and there on which to live.

Then, says Richard Linn, a Washington, D.C. lawyer who helped Smith enforce his royalty rights, "the attorney told Huey, 'Your songs aren't doing well right now. I've found someone willing to purchase your copyrights for a couple thousand dollars.' Huey signed over his interest in the songs without ever meeting the buyer. It turned out the buyer was the wife of the attorney, who used her maiden name on the purchase documents."

Smith was able to retrieve all rights and royalties to the songs in a settlement negotiated with the attorney's estate. More recently Linn has helped recoup recording royalties for the Diamonds on "Little Darlin'." He is also handling a legal action over the use of several classics, including the Del-Vikings' "Come Go With Me" and "Whispering Bells," in the film *Stand By Me.*

One month before Ballard came to Artists Rights Enforcement Corporation, Linn met there with the original members of the Silhouettes, who had just won back partial rights to their '50s hit "Get a Job" from a Philadelphia publishing company after 30 years. Following a rousing acapella rendition of the song, the four performers signed their settlement checks. Finally they launched into bitter attacks on both their own naïveté and past industry practices: "We signed everything put in front of us without reading the agreements," admitted group member Bill Horton. "We overlooked a lot, we were so thrilled just to get a deal."

"But the practices that deprived artists didn't start in the '50s," group leader Richard Lewis claimed. "They started when the music business began." Not surprisingly, Linn lays much of the blame for the problems black artists have faced on racially discriminatory industry practices in the '50s and early '60s:

"A black publisher often had to give up substantial rights and become affiliated with a white publisher in order to place a good song by a black writer. The black publisher then split the publishing rights 50/50 with the white publisher, who became the administrator of the copyright. Often neither the songwriter nor the black publisher would get all the royalty money owed. Today we'll contact the original publisher who'll refer us to the second publisher who'll tell us, 'Your client doesn't have legal privity with us because it was the original publisher, not the songwriter, who assigned us our rights.'

"Many of the early rock artists have passed away or can't be found," Linn continues. "Sometimes record company representatives and music publishers make one or two phone calls and, if they get no response, simply give up. Then who knows where the money goes?"

Chuck Rubin, on the other hand, notes that some companies, particularly larger ones like CBS, respond adequately to back royalty claims and willingly work towards a settlement.

Still, time can be another barrier, as some artists who have waited 10, 20 or even 30 years to pursue royalty claims have learned. The statute of limitations for copyright claims is three years from the last infringement, with damages calculated only during that three-year period. Royalty claims, however, usually involve contract issues that are governed by state statutes of limitations, which can range from three to six years. Attorneys representing artists often argue that the continuing violation rule of federal law should, by analogy, be applied to state contract claims so that the time for filing suit would be measured from the last broadcast or sale of the work at issue. And recording contracts often limit the statute of limitations for filing suit to less than two years from the time an artist obtains a royalty accounting statement.

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expensive process, rights that otherwise have existed are gone. But courts have generally upheld these contractual statutes of limitations," notes attorney Leonard Marks of New York's Gold, Farrell & Marks.

Marks' firm is representing the surviving Beatles and the estate of John Lennon in three royalty-related suits the group has filed against Capitol Records Inc./EMI Records Ltd. The first is an $80 million suit for back royalties originally filed in New York state court in 1979 over a contract the group's Apple Records signed with Capitol late in the '60s. To avoid statute of limitations problems, Marks is arguing Capitol "deliberately concealed and falsified records so that the group could not have brought a complaint within the time specified in its contract with the defendant."

In December 1986 a referee appointed by a New York trial judge granted the group the right to inspect documents on audits of artists' accounts done by Capitol dating back to 1969. Capitol then moved for reargument on the ground that the audits would cover privileged information used in settlement negotiations with other artists on their accounting claims. On review, the referee ruled that about half the documents were privileged from disclosure.

Last April the New York court dismissed six of nine counts in the suits, concluding, for example, that a claim for fraud should really be considered part of the breach of contract allegations, thus eliminating a claim for $50 million in punitive damages.

In July the former Beatles filed a $40 million suit against Capitol over the company's handling of the much-heralded Beatles compact discs. This included a claim for $20 million in punitive damages. The complaint, based on breaches of contract and fiduciary duty, alleges the record company charged the group too much for the CD packaging, created an artificially low "suggested" retail price and held back release of the CDs for two years to get the group to agree to an unfavorable settlement in the 1979 suit.

A third suit, also filed in July, charges, among other things, that Capitol withheld licensing fees it received for the unauthorized use of the recording of the song "Revolution" in a Nike sneakers commercial. One major underlying issue is to what extent a record company may control the licensing of its artists' master recordings.

All three suits ask for the return of Beatles master recordings to the group. Would judicial decisions in favor of the Beatles give artists powerful precedents to use in battles for royalty rights?

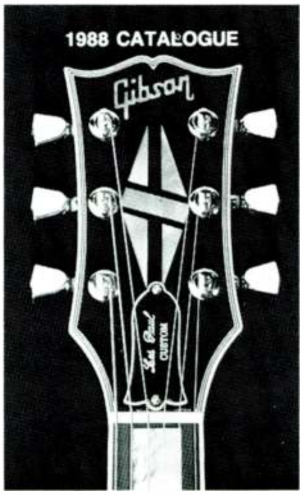
"I don't think the impact on contemporary artists will be that great because these suits are based on old contracts," says Daniel R. Murdock, a New York attorney for Capitol. According to Marks, artists will benefit in the long run only if changes are made in the way companies handle royalty accounts.

"Royalty statements provided by music companies provide sparse information that could only be understood by an independent accountant with access to company books," he says. "But obtaining access to these books is like pulling teeth. For example, record companies are extremely reluctant to give artists access to manufacturing records, which could show how many records were actually pressed and placed in the stream of inventory. This lack of access makes it easier to hide abuses of free goods and the amount of records actually returned."

Marks contends that record companies should be required to pay an artist's accounting and legal fees if an audit reveals a discrepancy of more than 10 percent between a royalty statement prepared by the company and the amount actually owed. But he acknowledges that music companies may have little motivation to give artists accurate accountings when the interest earned on the money withheld exceeds the cost of litigation over the royalties.

No Capitol executives have been named as defendants in the Beatles' suits. However, court actions brought against the Motown Records Corp. by the Marvelettes and the Vandellas not only seek past accountings and royalties, but charge company founder Berry Gordy with conflict of interest in his dealings with these girl groups. Gordy had signed these acts to management agreements before procuring their Motown contracts in the early '60s. The artists claim Gordy's interest in the record company outweighed his interest as manager in getting the best deal for his clients.

The two suits, now pending in a Detroit county court, allege unjust enrichment and fraud on the grounds that over the years the defendants told the plaintiffs there were no royalties due. The songs involved include "Don't Mess with Bill" and "Please Mr. Postman" by the Marvelettes, and "Heat Wave" and "Jimmy Mack" by the Vandellas. "The defendants knew or should



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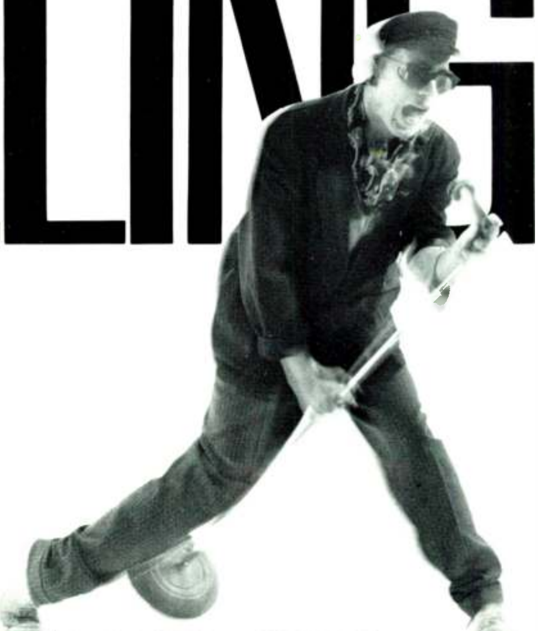

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have known at the time said statements were made that they were not true, or that they were made with reckless or negligent disregard for the truth," the complaints state.

Robert Meisner, an attorney from Birmingham, Michigan, who filed the suits, claims Motown "stalled in terms of reaching a resolution, which required us to commence legal proceedings."

Daniel Noveck, local counsel for Motown, argues the record company failed to pay past royalties because it did not have addresses for the artists, that it has made an offer to pay royalties which has been turned down by the plaintiffs.

To the conflict of interest charges, Noveck responds, "Gordy's management company lost money. He used it as a loss leader to develop acts and sell records. He paid the group's grooming and traveling expenses and took a percentage of their concert fees, but not a dime of royalties."

Gordy's management company has been inactive since the mid-'60s, which raises another common issue. The frequency with which businesses open and close in the music industry unfortunately presents artists with a major stumbling block to royalty collections. For example, an artist will often sign to a production company that negotiates a deal with a major label to distribute the artist's product. The production company may later file for bankruptcy, or just close its doors and disappear. Under most distribution deals, the label will have no obligation to pay royalties directly to the artist.

"To avoid this problem, an artist should try to sign a direction of payment letter with the label obligating it in advance to pay royalties to the artist regardless of what happens to the production company," advises New York music lawyer Joel Brooks. "Short of that, you could attempt to negotiate direct payment from the distribution company after the fact, though this usually won't work because the distribution company could then open itself up for a lawsuit should the production company re-emerge." Or an artist could seek a declaratory judgment from a court for equitable relief based on unjust enrichment by the label and for recision of the original contract between the artist and the production company.

Another danger is that artists who have incorporated may unnecessarily deny themselves royalties by letting their corporations become inactive once initial product sales and public attention have dwindled. The Soul Survivors hit big in 1967 with "Expressway to Your Heart." The five members incorporated the group, but later broke up. Then in 1987 Soul Survivors drummer Joe Forgione—today a Nissan salesman on Long Island—found out Walt Disney Home Video had used their recording of "Expressway" for a Pluto and Goofy cartoon.

"For that, for repackaging on compact disc and for all the airplay 'Expressway' has received over the years, there has been no organization that could receive royalties because our corporation was disbanded. That amounted to stupidity on our part," Forgione concedes. "In fact, I only know where one former member of the group is today."

Of course, yearly franchise fees and tax laws must be taken into account when deciding whether to keep a corporation alive. But that should not relieve music companies of the obligation to compile accounting statements and pay past royalties. In the Soul Survivors' case, Forgione is currently negotiating with Collectible Records Corp. of Narberth, Pennsylvania, a predecessor of Crimson Records of Philadelphia, for which "Expressway" was recorded.

Unlike recording artists, songwriters can rely on rights organizations such as the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) and Broadcast Music Inc. (BMI) to collect public performance royalties. Under copyright law, recording artists are not entitled to royalties from airplay, but songwriters can assign their rights to receive royalties for play, as they most always do with publishing rights. So it is not always clear just who may be entitled to royalty payments.

Hank Ballard signed two documents with Morris Levy through the latter's Roulette Records Inc. in 1975 in exchange for a $25,000 loan. One document stated that Levy would receive Ballard's performing rights royalties from BMI until $20,000 was repaid. The other document appeared to transfer Ballard's rights to most of his original compositions, including "The Twist," to Levy for $5,000 regardless of repayment. Levy then filed suit seeking a judicial declaration of his ownership of the songs.

"Though Levy characterizes the transaction as a sale, rather than a loan, the language in the documents is vague," says Ballard attorney Paul Walker. "I still don't think I understand what those documents mean. So how could Hank?" Walker has yet to take Levy's deposition, a prerequisite for trial. Meanwhile, BMI has been paying the songwriting

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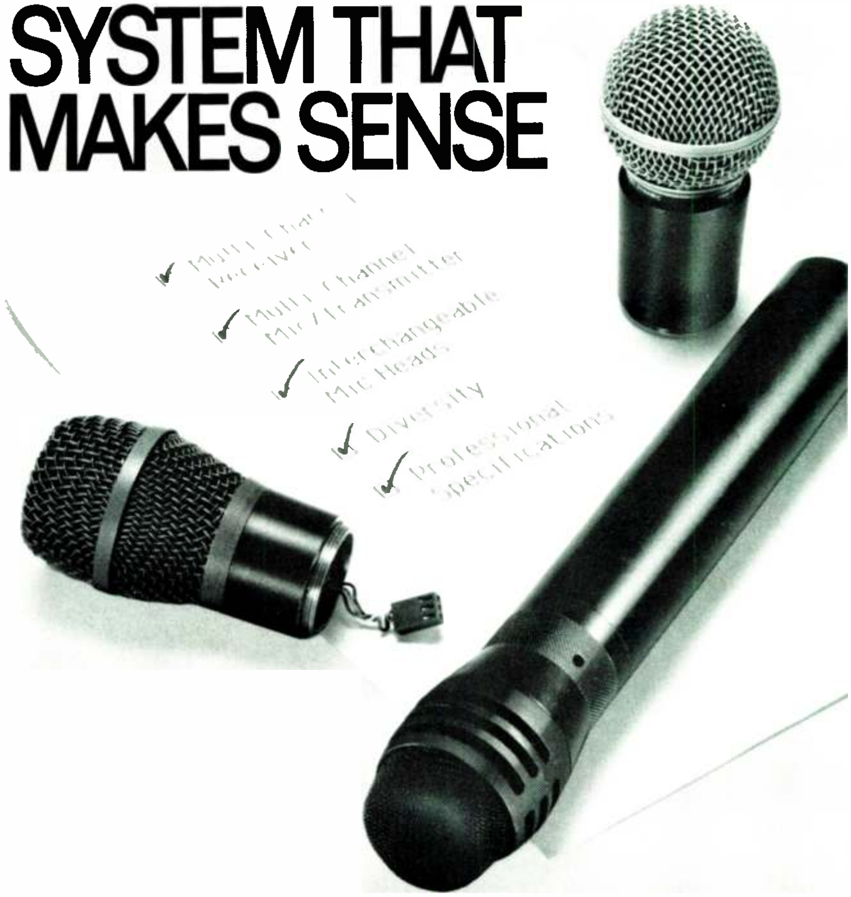
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royalties to Levy.

Levy originally filed the suit in response to a demand for arbitration against BMI by Walker on behalf of Ballard. Many songwriter agreements include a provision that calls for the arbitration of any disputes that may occur. Music companies often invoke this clause to stall royalty suits. However, arbitration can work in favor of an artist who can be easily outspent by a music company in a formal court of law. Among the advantages of arbitration are informal rules of evidence and the fact that the artist *and* the music company choose the individual who will preside over the proceedings.

Some cases may be too complex, though, to be handled through arbitration. For example, another case involving Levy has found its way into Manhattan surrogate court—which handles family law matters—for a determination of which of three women may be the rightful widow and heir to the estate of '50s teen genius Frankie Lymon. Lymon, who died in 1968, had entered into a contract in which he allegedly assigned the rights to the hit "Why Do Fools Fall in Love?" to Levy and his company for $1,500.

Emira Lymon, the original administratrix of the songwriter's estate, filed suit in a Manhattan federal court in 1984 seeking recision of the contract. Soon a second woman showed up claiming she was Lymon's widow. Then a third appeared. If Emira Lymon loses in surrogate court, Levy will be able to retain the rights to "Fools" because he has already signed contracts with the other two women allowing him to retain control of the song should either of them win the proceedings. Now, to confuse matters further, original members of Lymon's band the Teenagers have filed a federal suit against Emira Lymon, Morris Levy and BMI alleging that they co-authored the song with Lymon.

In the end, many attorneys representing artists in royalty suits see themselves as crusaders, since the amount of money recovered—often just a few thousand dollars—may not justify the dozens, or even hundreds, of hours a lawyer must put into this type of case.

Optimistic lawyers like Robert Meisner believe the more artists prevail in royalty actions, the more music companies will be forced "to self-police their public image." But Alexander Peltz, Walker's partner on the Ballard case, foresees "no real change. The public image of these companies is not that important. They've been making money all these years and they'll continue to sell records."

Chuck Rubin concludes that the problem is destined to remain one of the industry's long-term failings: "The type of artists who typically have royalty problems are those whose careers have cooled off. When the stars of the '80s become the oldies acts of 2010, you'll still have royalty disputes going on."

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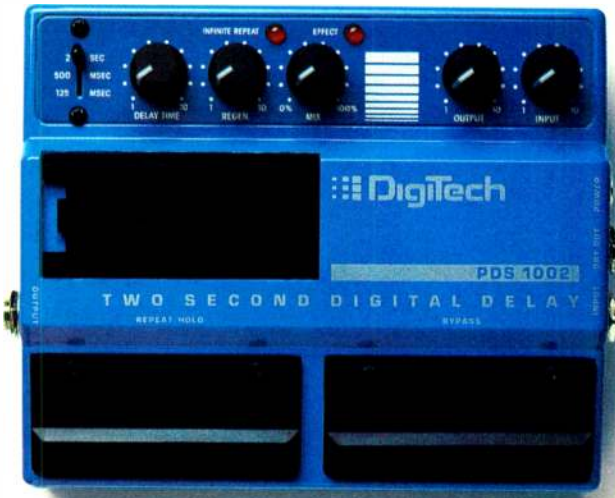
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SCOTT HENDERSON, AMBIVALENT SIDEMAN

HE GAVE UP JOBS WITH PONTY & COREA, BUT CAN HE REFUSE *THIS* GIG? **BY JOSEF WOODARD**

CHRIS CUFFARO VISAGES

Scott Henderson got an offer he couldn't refuse. Though he'd vowed never again, he was taking another gig as a sideman. For the Syndicate.

Guitarist Henderson had, of course, first burst into the public ear as a sideman-extraordinaire, Mr. Fusion Fingers For Hire. His supporting roles for the likes of Jean-Luc Ponty, Chick Corea and Jeff Berlin disclosed a searing tone and kamikaze energy fortified by a jazzer's sense of dynamic organization and naked swing. "I've been lucky to get some great gigs," Henderson acknowledges with noticeable ambivalence. Hmmm, problems in the territory that comes with being a hired gun?

"Not to say anything bad about Chick or Jean-Luc, but I've learned that just because you've looked up to someone for a long time doesn't mean you're necessarily going to fit in with what they're doing. I felt very unnatural with Chick. I wanted to do my own thing and just wasn't into what he was doing. I never thought I played well on that gig, playing over one chord. I was mad. I never told him that, actually. He probably wondered why I was such a terrible sideman. I didn't follow orders. I've never been good at masking my attitude. The whole gig was kind of a mistake."

And so it was that in 1986 Scott Henderson resolved to give up the permanent second fiddle chair and put out his own electronic shingle with his band Tribal Tech. He recently released his second album on Passport Records, *Dr. Hee*, less than a year after his agile debut, *Spears*. On *Dr. Hee*, Henderson's band navigates some of the most rewarding music to be released under the fusion banner in the last year. It is a *band* record, with special note going to bassist Gary Willis (a veteran of Wayne Shorter's first electric band and the pen behind the lustrous "Outskirts") and Brad Dutz, whose mallet work lends a distinctive edge.

One conceptual hallmark is Henderson's holistic approach to the music. "The emphasis within the group is definitely on composition and arranging," he explains. "Soloing is something we do for fun, but it's not a solo-oriented band. I love to solo as much as anybody. But I feel like there are a lot of records on which that's all there is to offer. I want to offer more than that and have the music really take you somewhere, not just the solo, but the music in general."

A tune such as "Dr. Hee," with its interlacing cyclical lines, suggests a minimalism-meets-King Crimson pact. But Henderson has another analogy in mind. "I always think of a groove, and sometimes the best way to establish a groove is to repeat a pattern, whether it be in the bass or in one of the upper instruments. I think that just comes from playing a lot of James Brown when I was coming up. My biggest influence in music is James Brown. He's my ultimate favorite musician."

Henderson's rewarding life as a leader was untimely shattered, however, not by a call from the Godfather of Soul, but from the Godfather of Fusion, Josef Zawinul, intent on forming his new Zawinul Syndicate. When the Syndicate calls, you answer. And so, much as Dr. Watson suspended general practice for another go at Professor Moriarity or Tonto rushed to the aid of his kemosabi, Scott Henderson has again donned the sideman's mantle. In fact, he's already finished recording the Zawinul Syndicate's LP, *The Immigrants*, and is now waxing enthusiastically on his newest boss: "I've always loved Joe's playing; he's incredible. It was really great to work with him."

Alongside fellow Syndicate hirees Abe Laboriel on bass and drummers Alex Acuna and Cornell Rochester, Henderson got a quick lesson in the Zawinul M.O. "Mainly what we did at the rehearsals was jam, and I never had more fun playing music in my whole life. The way I conceived it, I felt like 'this is what playing music is all about.' Everybody was listening to each other, changing keys intuitively and the music had direction. It was something that I *never* did with Chick or Jean-Luc Ponty.

"Joe would walk in with this cigar hanging out of his mouth, come up with this groove and then we'd take off. 'Here's a new tune,' he'd say and then turn on the tape recorder and jam,

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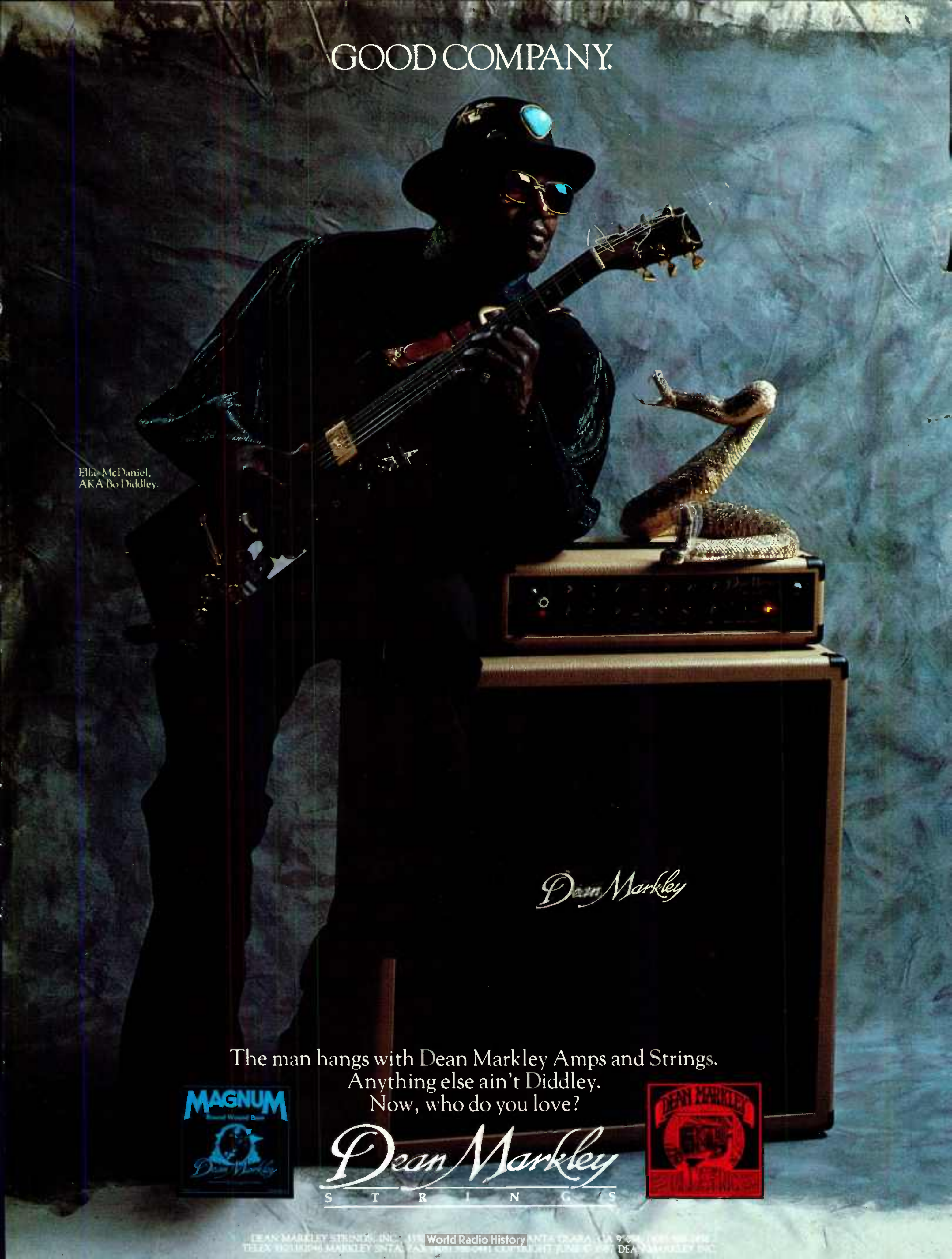
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almost creating a form for the tune in the studio. But all the grooves and jams are very live. It's really neat how the stuff comes out and it's so polished. It didn't really go down like that in the studio. Sometimes we'd play a tune for 15 minutes—take up the whole tape, and then that was edited down to four or five minutes."

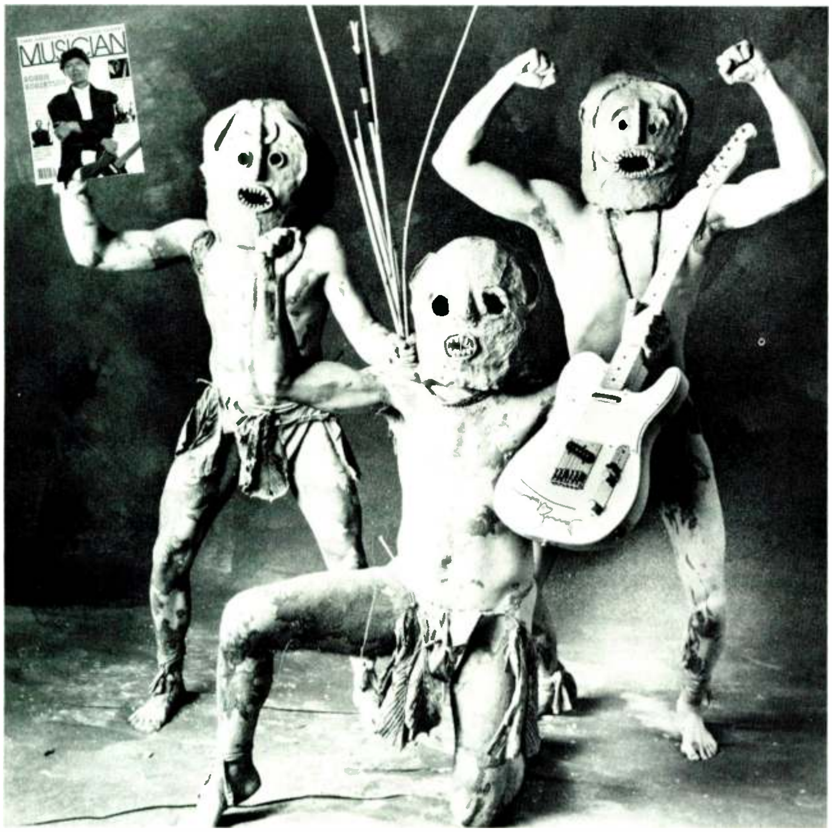
It would seem that the one electrically inclined fusion forefather Henderson has yet to work with is Miles Davis, although in a way he has. "He hired me and fired me in the same week," laughs Henderson. "He called me up and said, 'I love your record (*Spears*), could you bring some of these tunes so we could play them?' I said 'no problem.' I was really flattered. Then his management called me up a week later and said they hired somebody else. They wanted more of a rock guy. To tell you the truth, I wasn't really that disappointed because even though it's a cool thing, I've seen Miles play the last three or four times and I didn't enjoy it very much. I always loved his playing, but what the band was doing didn't do much for me. Even John Scofield—I really love *his* playing—seemed bored with it. They were doing Cyndi Lauper tunes. It was real pop. It just didn't grab me."

What first grabbed the young, impressionable Scott Henderson was rock 'n' roll. Growing up in Florida, he tinkered with his father's acoustic guitar before getting his own stringed instrument: "My mom and dad bought me a ukelele. I had this band called the Scorpions. The drummer used to play on Tupperware. We were doing all the hits of Ricky Nelson. We played for the neighborhood girls." Henderson graduated to playing a Kent electric and eventually started gorging on the sounds of Uriah Heep and Black Sabbath, then moving on to stouter stuff like Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple and Jeff Beck. ("I wanted to be a rock star.") After high school, an aborted fling with college led into his three-year job on the road and at home with a James Brown-fixated funk band, during which Henderson acquired some road smarts.

But, much as funk and rock fed his soul, he began to want more out of music. "When I got into jazz, it was fusion, for lack of a better word. It's got such a bad name right now. Later I got into mainstream jazz pretty heavy and now I'm really into it. I love Coltrane and all the old Miles Davis records and Joe Henderson. I listen to it a lot. I feel that it's been done and I really don't feel that I could ever do it better than they did. So I stick to what I do: I'm a fusion rock-jazz player." In that order.

Henderson cites Jaco Pastorius as a substantial influence, a fellow Floridian and a blower with a taste for modern big-band arrangements. "I love the way he wrote," Henderson says, "especially on the album *Word of Mouth*. I love big-band arranging. I don't do it now, but I did it a lot in school. It's too much work. I'll stick with small bands for now." What Henderson picked up scoring for horns at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton is now being distilled and condensed in the intricate arrangements of Tribal Tech. Check out his fervid chart writing on the title cut to *Spears* or the tutti section in "Mango Prom" for persuasive evidence of jazz breeding.

Henderson moved to Los Angeles in 1980, studying at GIT with the likes of Pat Martino and the unsung hero Joe Diorio, who had played in Florida quite a bit. By now, Henderson's permanent residence is established here, but one gets no image of palm-tree nirvana from his music—with his hard-edged approach to playing and often heady writing, Henderson sounds more like a product of points eastward—New York and Europe. Nor does he hide his disdain



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for the prevailingly pastel-hued L.A. pop fusion eating up the jazz charts. "To me, pop mixed with jazz is an awful combination. So most of the music coming out now is pop-jazz fusion instead of rock-jazz fusion. Those lame grocery-store things I hear really turn my stomach. It's the housewife effect and the guy coming home from work listening to [new-age radio format] 'the WAVE.' They need something to soothe them after a hard day. They won't be listening to my music, that's for sure," he snickers.

"To me, music was always an adventure. I like progressive, unpredictable music—at least to an extent. When I hear this formula jazz—a bunch of major seventh and sus chords and some cutesy melody over the top that some singer in a lounge should be singing..." he trails off, trying to watch his tongue.

After all, Henderson's main concern is the health and welfare of his creative progeny in Tribal Tech, not to mention his role in the Zawinul Syndicate. "I do a lot of things rather than doing one thing superbly," he assesses modestly. "I don't consider myself Mr. Hotshot Guitar Player. There are so many great guitar players who I look up to." That list would have to include Scofield, Allan Holdsworth, Pat Metheny, Mike Stern, Eric Johnson and Albert Collins.

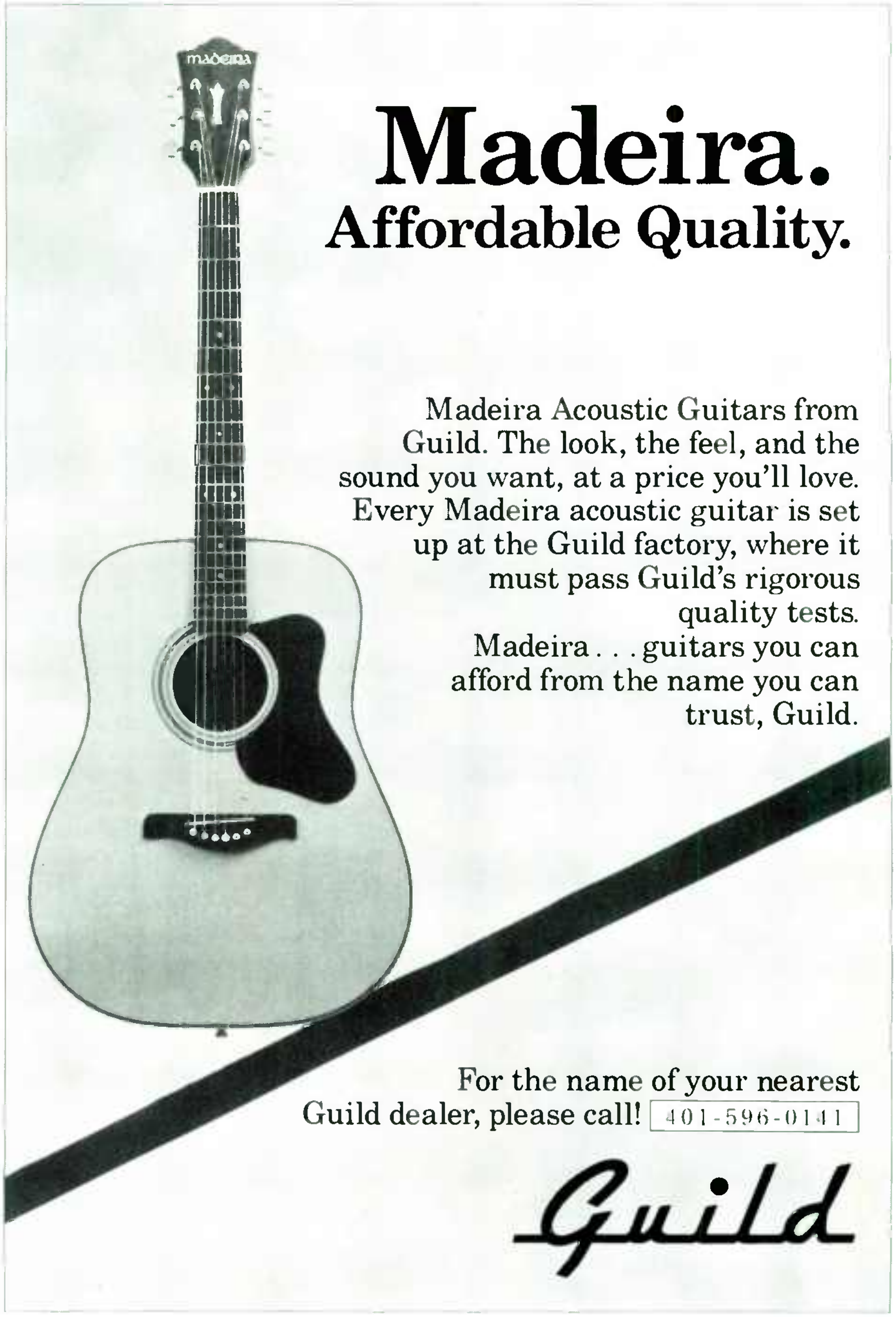
"I have a certain amount of pride in what I do overall, which is write and arrange and compose and play. It's all a package. It's a problem sometimes, because when I get involved in writing, I have to put the guitar aside as far as shedding and transcribing my Michael Brecker solos. And then I hear guys around town playing all the latest Michael Brecker licks and it makes me depressed when I think how much better a guitar player I could be if I didn't write music. If I didn't want to write, man, I could sit around all day and practice 'Oleo' and 'Giant Steps.' I'd be a really hot jazz player. I suppose it's a matter of choosing between 'this is what I am' and 'this is what I've done.'" ■

SONIC GOODS

While Henderson had been playing a Strat-style Charvel guitar, he recently got Ibanez into his act as an endorsee. His current Ibanez Pro Deluxe model is fairly stock, except for the Seymour Duncan pickup (Allan Holdsworth model 59). He also likes his Gibson Chet Atkins solid-body acoustic, and used it on "Twilight in Northridge" from *Dr. Hee*. "That was straight into the board with a little chorus on it."

In his sizable rack, Henderson has assembled a self-contained command center. Engineer Ross Skelton (who also does work for Zawinul) built Henderson a homemade power amp "which is, in essence, two Peavey Heritage tube sections mounted in a rack." A Peavey Special 130 pre-amp is fleshed out by an Ibanez graphic equalizer. For outboard effects, he uses an MXR Pitch Transposer with a Roland SDE 1000 delay hooked into the effects loop. "That's how I did the arpeggio effect on 'Island City Shuffle' and also the fast line on 'The Rain.'" Two Ibanez stereo reverbs are used as delays. Three SDR 1000s are in use—one for short delay, one for stereo echo and one for long chords. He also has a Roland SRV-2000 reverb and an ADA STD1 Stereo Chorus. Governing the rack is a Roland FC 100 MIDI foot controller.

Of late, Henderson has been blending real and synth sound courtesy of the Roland GM70 MIDI guitar converter routed to a Yamaha TX81Z synthesizer rack mount. "The beauty of this system is that I play the synthesizer through a third amp," he comments. "So my guitar system never changed one bit. All I did was add a synth pickup and another amp—a Peavey KB300 keyboard amp, with a 15" and a horn. I've got a mono synth amp with stereo guitar speakers on each side. It's so fat-sounding."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DEVELOPMENTS: ARE YOU READY FOR DIGITAL I/O?

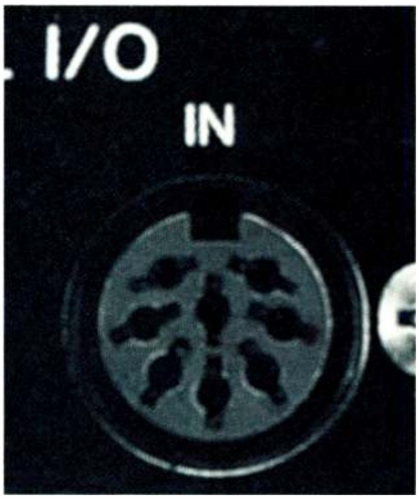
THE DIGITAL AUDIO CONNECTION COMES TO MUSICIANS **BY JOCK BAIRD**

For some time now, a die-hard group of visionaries has maintained that MIDI is only a rest stop on the highway to digital heaven, and that better formats for data exchange would be just around the corner. I never really gave much credence to that view, since a format in the hand is worth two on the drawing board, but after attending the fall convention of the Audio Engineering Society in New York, I'm going to have to admit that we've now got another format actually in hand. It's called the "Digital I/O AES/EBU format," and the plug and jack connection looks basically like a MIDI plug with two more pins at either side and one at the center. What exactly is Digital I/O and where can you find it?

At its most basic, Digital I/O is the digital encoding of analog sound. Think about it. Since every audio digital processor has a built-in analog-to-digital converter to turn sounds into data bytes, it seems redundant and destructive to turn that data back into sound, pipe it out to another processor, turn that signal back into digits and then back once again to audio. Why not simply keep the music digitally encoded until the final conversion back? In fact, why convert it back at all, since CD and DAT players have Digital I/O ports going in and coming out?

At A.E.S., I first noticed the Digital I/O port on the **Yamaha** DMP7 automated series mixing board, which converts incoming audio to digital in order to control and process it. Then I observed it on pro DAT recorders like the new one from **Fostex**. Then I found it on **Lexicon**'s new ultra-high-tech Opus digital workstation. But I also spied Digital I/O ports on three more affordable signal processors. One is, logically enough, a digital reverb, the **Roland** R-880. This is a high-end unit that includes other effects like chorus, delay, compression and three-band EQ. The processing is 28-bit, the bandwidth is 20 Hz to 20 kHz, the connections are all balanced, and it's fully MIDIfied.

The other two new I/O-smart boxes are MIDI equalizers. The **Roland** E-660 is a digital parametric equalizer, with either four bands in stereo or eight in mono. The highest and lowest bands on each side can be switched between peaking and shelving types of EQ, there's an independent predelay function for each band, and a 96x32-dot matrix display shows actual frequency curves. More ambitious is **Yamaha**'s DEQ7 MIDI equalizer, which can function as a graphic, a parametric, a straight tone control, band-pass and notch filters and a dynamic peak or sweeping EQ. The graphic section is selectable from 10-band to 27-band increments. The stereo DEQ7 also has the capability to delay each side by as much as 738 milliseconds so the DEQ7 can be used to time-align large speaker systems.



MIDI was not ready to be declared obsolete, though, as witnessed by a new interface system for the IBM-PC that multiplies the format by four: Instead of one instrument that could be sent to one of 16 channels, it merges four inputs and sends them to any one of—gasp—64 channels. Better still, it organizes its data into separate "systems" so that there'll be no MIDI bottleneck when too many messages come simultaneously slamming into the same sluiceway. So who's making this thing? Are you sitting down? **Mellotron**, now settled on Long Island. The interface itself is called the Muart 4 Port MIDI, and really does maintain four independent MIDI "busses," so one whole quartet could record live if needed. It would also be terrific for maintaining separate feeds for signal processing, automated mixing and synchronizing functions.

The hardware consists of a peripheral card, cable and junction box, with each of the four "systems" getting its own in, out and thru/out MIDI sockets. The Muart is sold with a software sequencer program—it's **Robert Keller**'s 48 Track PC II (reviewed last month), modified to handle the four different data streams and renamed Spirit. Hardware and software together will list for $700, certainly competitive with a conventional interface-plus-sequencer combo. Call (516) 944-6798 for more factoids.

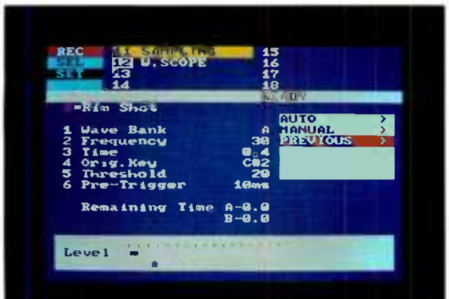
Of course, that's not the only way to get yourself 64 channels. **Hybrid Arts** has a hot new $300 box that will accomplish a lot of the same things as the Muart except it merges two streams instead of four. The Hybrid unit works in conjunction with their SMPTE-Track sequencer for Atari ST—other ST software companies are said to be writing for it.

MIDI automation continued apace at A.E.S., with a new Danish system called the **Twister** brought under the roof of **Soundcraft**. This is a rack-mount "snapshot" programmable mixer selling for around $1700 for an 8-channel master unit; to expand, you add slave racks of eight channels each. By patching the Twister into a board's individual channel paths, it controls volume levels and mutes both single channels and group assignments. A nice wrinkle is the use of two MIDI channels to make trial modifications of a mix without changing the original. The overall front-panel design has lots of function controls, so you won't have to use a lot of different modes on the same button. And idiots like me will approve of the memory lock function which guards against accidental erasure of programs.

Before *I* do an automated fade, I

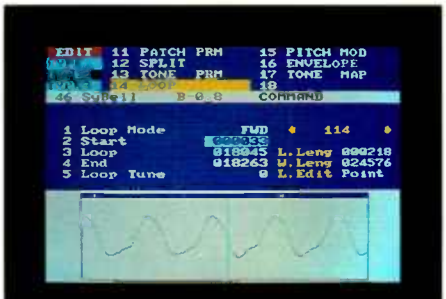
continued on page 98

SAMPLE THE POWER OF THE ROLAND S-50



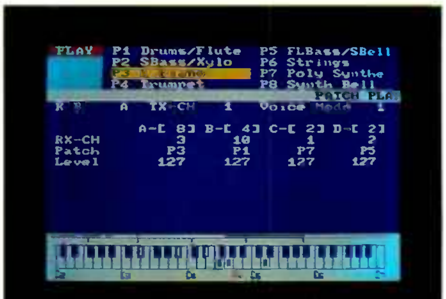
```
REC      11 SAMPLING          15
         12 W.SCOPE           16
SET      13                   17
         14                   18
                              READY
  =Rim Shot
                                  AUTO      >
  1 Wave Bank               A     MANUAL    >
  2 Frequency              30     PREVIOUS  >
  3 Time                  0.4
  4 Orig.Key              C#2
  5 Threshold              20
  6 Pre-Trigger          10ms

    Remaining Time A-0.0
                   B-0.0

  Level
```

PREPARE TO SAMPLE SCREEN



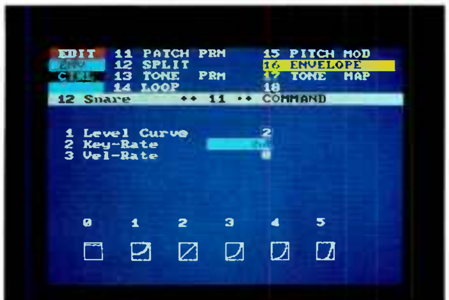
```
EDIT    11 PATCH PRM      15 PITCH MOD
        12 SPLIT          16 ENVELOPE
        13 TONE  PRM      17 TONE  MAP
        14 LOOP           18
 46 SyBell       B-0.8    COMMAND

  1 Loop Mode          FWD  ◆   114   ◆
  2 Start           000033
  3 Loop            018045 L.Leng 000218
  4 End             018263 W.Leng 024576
  5 Loop Tune            0 L.Edit Point
```

EDIT LOOP SCREEN



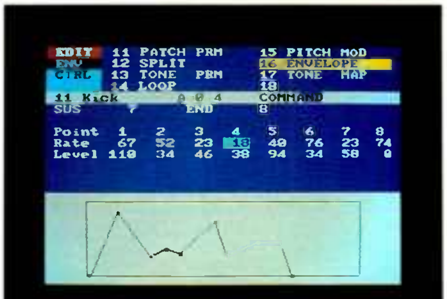
```
PLAY   P1 Drums/Flute       P5 FLBass/SBell
       P2 SBass/Xylo        P6 Strings
       P3                   P7 Poly Synthe
       P4 Trumpet           P8 Synth Bell
                                   PATCH PLAY
K B     A  TX-CH      1     Voice Mode    1

          A-[ 8] B-[ 4] C-[ 2] D-[ 2]
RX-CH          3     10      1      2
Patch         P3     P1     P7     P5
Level        127    127    127    127
```

MULTI-TIMBRAL PLAY SCREEN



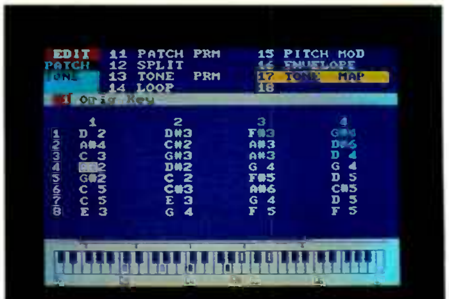
```
EDIT    11 PATCH PRM      15 PITCH MOD
ENV     12 SPLIT          16 ENVELOPE
CTRL    13 TONE  PRM      17 TONE  MAP
        14 LOOP           18
 12 Snare       •• 11 ••  COMMAND

  1 Level Curve             2
  2 Key-Rate
  3 Vel-Rate

     0     1     2     3     4     5
```

VELOCITY CURVE FOR ENVELOPE



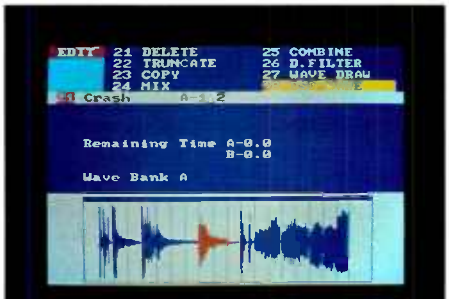
```
EDIT    11 PATCH PRM      15 PITCH MOD
ENV     12 SPLIT          16 ENVELOPE
CTRL    13 TONE  PRM      17 TONE  MAP
        14 LOOP           18
 11 Kick         A-0.4    COMMAND
 SUS       7       END    8

 Point   1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8
 Rate   67   52   23   18   40   76   23   74
 Level 110   34   46   38   94   34   58    0
```

EIGHT-STAGE ENVELOPE EDIT



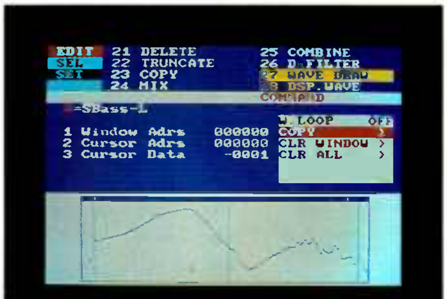
```
EDIT    11 PATCH PRM      15 PITCH MOD
PATCH   12 SPLIT          16 ENVELOPE
        13 TONE  PRM      17 TONE  MAP
        14 LOOP           18
 1 Orig.Key

        1          2          3          4
 1     D 2        D#3        F#3
 2     A#4        C#2        A#3
 3     C 3        G#3        A#3        D 4
 4       2        D#2        G 4        G 4
 5     G#2        C 2        F#5        D 5
 6     C 5        C#3        A#6        C#5
 7     C 5        E 3        G 4        D 5
 8     E 3        G 4        F 5        F 5
```

TONE MAP GROUP EDIT



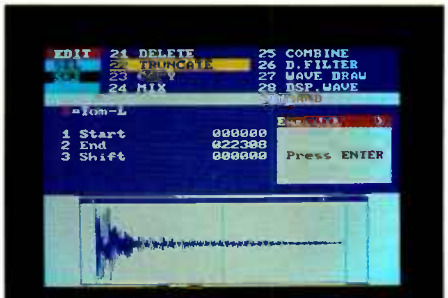
```
EDIT    21 DELETE         25 COMBINE
        22 TRUNCATE       26 D.FILTER
        23 COPY           27 WAVE DRAW
        24 MIX
  Crash        A-1.2

    Remaining Time A-0.0
                   B-0.0

    Wave Bank A
```

WAVE BANK DISPLAY



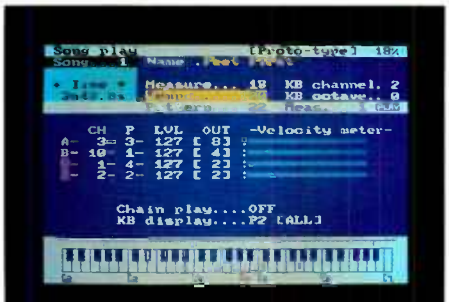
```
EDIT    21 DELETE         25 COMBINE
SEL     22 TRUNCATE       26 D.FILTER
SET     23 COPY           27 WAVE DRAW
        24 MIX            28 DSP.WAVE
                          COMMAND
  =SBass-L
                                 W.LOOP      OFF
  1 Window Adrs        000000    COPY         >
  2 Cursor Adrs        000000    CLR WINDOW   >
  3 Cursor Data         -0001    CLR ALL      >
```

WAVE DRAW SCREEN



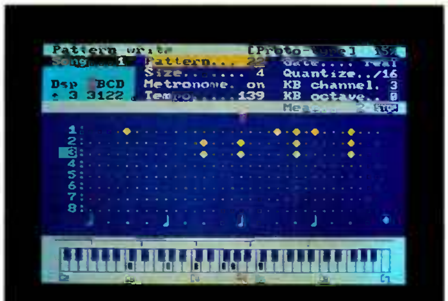
```
EDIT    21 DELETE         25 COMBINE
        22 TRUNCATE       26 D.FILTER
        23 COPY           27 WAVE DRAW
        24 MIX            28 DSP.WAVE
                          COMMAND
  =Tom-L
                                 E          >
  1 Start              000000
  2 End                022308
  3 Shift              000000    Press ENTER
```

TRUNCATE WAVE DATA



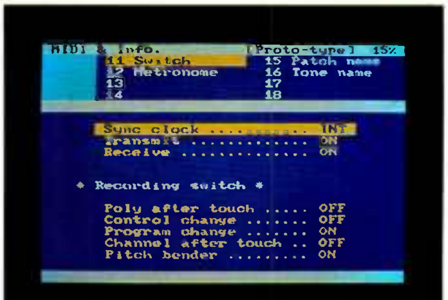
```
Song play                 [Proto-type]  18%
Song...1   Name .
           Measure...  18   KB channel. 2
                            KB octave.. 0
           Pattern...  22   Meas...

    CH   P   LVL   OUT   -Velocity meter-
A-   3-  3-  127  [ 8] :
B-  10-  1-  127  [ 4] :
     1-  4-  127  [ 2] :
     2-  2-  127  [ 2] :

       Chain play....OFF
       KB display....P2 [ALL]
```

SYS-503 SONG PLAY



```
Pattern write             [Proto-type]  15%
Song...1   Pattern...  22   Gate.... real
           Size.......  4   Quantize../16
Dsp  BCD   Metronome. on    KB channel. 3
↑ 3 3122   Tempo.....139    KB octave.. 0
                            Meas...  2

  1:
  2:
  3:
  4:
  5:
  6:
  7:
  8:
```

SYS-503 PATTERN WRITE



```
MIDI & Info.              [Proto-type]  15%
       11 Switch            15 Patch name
       12 Metronome         16 Tone name
       13                   17
       14                   18

     Sync clock ...............  INT
     Transmit .................  ON
     Receive ..................  ON

  * Recording switch *

     Poly after touch .....  OFF
     Control change .......  OFF
     Program change .......  ON
     Channel after touch ..  OFF
     Pitch bender .........  ON
```

SYS-503 MIDI AND INFO SCREEN

THE SAMPLER THAT DOES MORE TODAY

Roland S-50 DIGITAL SAMPLING KEYBOARD
Roland DT-100

THE SAMPLER THAT DOES MORE TOMORROW

The Benefits of Open Architecture

There's no question, digital sampling is one of the most rapidly developing technologies in music today. So when you buy a sampler today, you don't want it to be made obsolete by some new development tomorrow. That's why there's one line of samplers that not only provides top quality today, but allows for future developments tomorrow. Naturally, they're from Roland, the company who always has one eye on the future.

Roland samplers are based around a "clean computer" design of open architecture. This means that the main performance data of Roland samplers is resident in software—software that can be updated with new features and performance just by loading a new disk. Neat trick? That's exactly what our customers think. They've already benefitted from one software update, giving their samplers loads of new features. And more updates will follow.

Professional Performance Sampling

But before we get too far into the future, let's talk about today. The Roland S-50 Digital Sampling Keyboard and S-550 Digital Sampler Module deliver the professional-quality sound and extensive editing capabilities found only in instruments costing many times as much, all thanks to Roland's breakthroughs in proprietary VLSI Sampling technology. The S-50 offers a wave oscillator, amplifier, LFO, and an eight-stage envelope generator for each of its sixteen voices. Although the S-50's features list is far too extensive to be listed here, among its chief attributes are a 512k word of Wave Memory and 16-bit processing, sampling time up to 14.4 seconds at 30kHz, multi-timbral capabilities, and four polyphonic voice outputs.

The S-550 provides all of the S-50's performance with the addition of a 1.5M Byte memory (for up to 64 tone memories and 16 patch memory banks), and expands upon the S-50 by providing eight polyphonic voice outputs.

Quality Sound in the Roland Bank

But we think the best way to judge a sampler is with your ears. That's where the Roland Samplers really shine. Play any Roland Sampler and you'll hear a warm and full sound, with a better bandwidth and greater headroom that especially shows up in dynamic instrument samples. You'll experience an evenness of sound across the entire keyboard without the problems other samplers have of obvious split points. And you'll never run out of sounds, because the purchase of a Roland Sampler gives you access to the Roland Sound Bank—a continuously growing library of great sound samples. Plus, the S-50 is already enjoying one of the fastest-growing bases of third party software support.

Quality In Means Quality Out

When it comes to user interface, Roland Samplers are simply unrivalled. Both the S-50 and S-550 allow the connection of a video monitor to greatly facilitate sampling process and use such new features as Wave Draw. The S-550 even allows the flexibility of mouse-style input by connecting the new DT-100 Digitizing Tablet. This kind of interface makes the experience of sampling sounds as fun as it is productive.

Today's Updates

The new 2.0 Software Update (available to all owners for a small handling charge) can now add in loads of new features—including twice as many tones, Automatic Loop Search, combined Wave Data, Polyphonic Multi-timbral performance, and much more. Not just new sounds, entirely new performance. Another new software program—the SYS-503 Director-S—can turn the S-50 or S-550 into a sixteen-channel MIDI sequencer, playing its own sounds as well as those of other MIDI instruments.

Put all this together and you can see why Roland Samplers are the choice of so many top pros. And why shouldn't they be? Because if Roland Samplers do this much today, imagine what they'll do tomorrow.

RolandCorp US, 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90040 (213) 685-5141.

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On October 19 the members of R.E.M. were in a Rhode Island dressing room, fiddling with guitars. Support act 10,000 Maniacs were onstage doing their soundcheck. Peter Leak, who manages the Maniacs, asked if I'd heard the news.

"No," I said, "I've been traveling all day."

"The stock market crashed," Leak said. "Five hundred points, worse than 1929. *And* the U.S. has bombed Iran. *And* the Maniacs record has been added by WNEW."

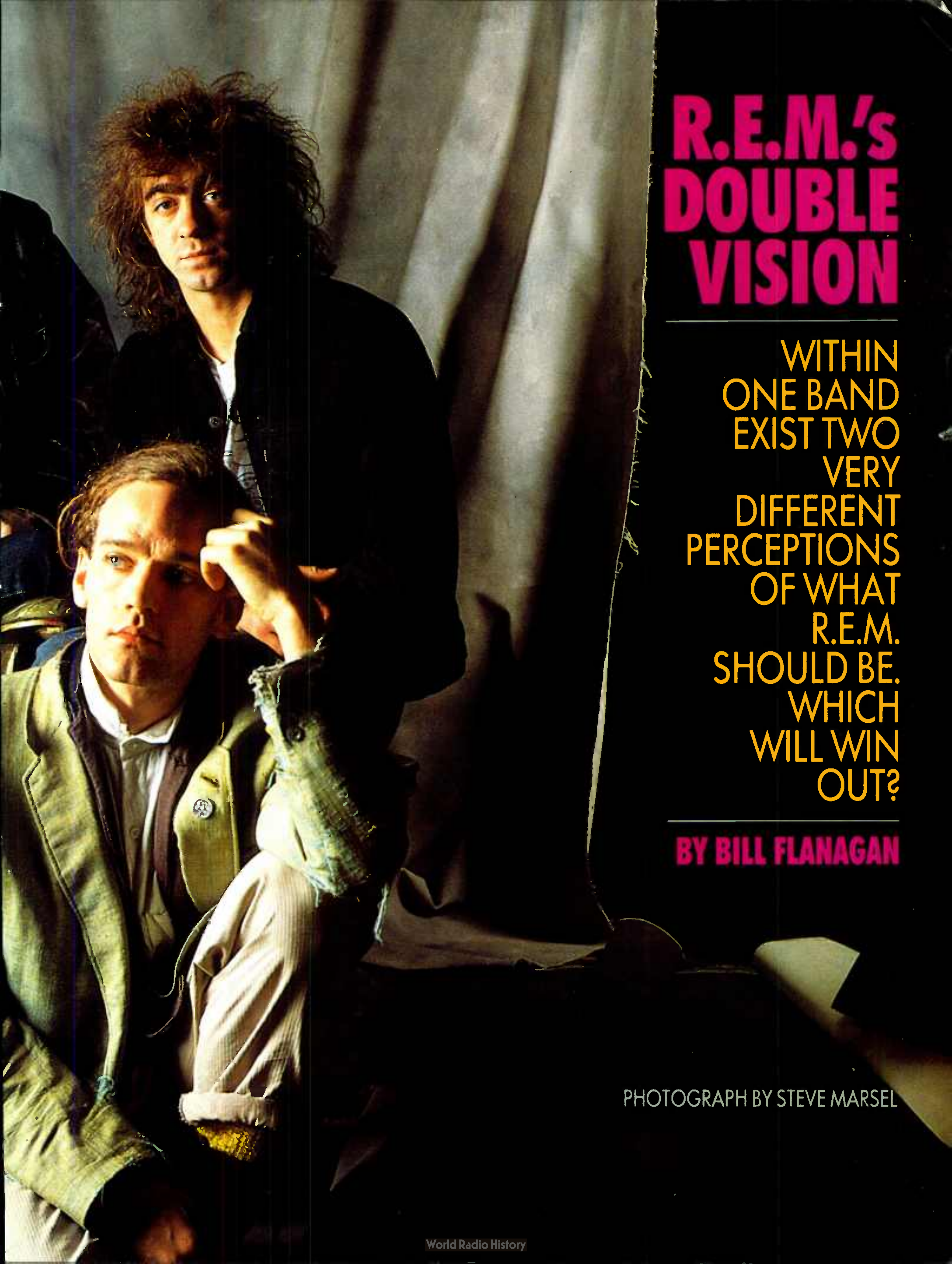
"So it's been a *mixture* of good and bad."

Five hours later R.E.M. had a rock 'n' roll epiphany. The audience was already going nuts over their rollicking, almost-out-of-control set, when Michael Stipe waved for silence, put his hand on his heart, and recited the Pledge of Allegiance. He then announced that, historically, a stock market crash precipitated a depression, which in 10 years was resolved by a war. "But with the Trickle Down Theory of the 1980s, the stock market crash and the war have been compressed into one day (cheers) that will become history (cheers) and *here we stand!*" *WAAANG!* The band careened into R.E.M.'s new song, "It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)" and the place went bats.

That was the one night it was possible to believe it really was the end of our old lives. Everyone in the audience heard bits of the news reports on their way to the show, everyone wondered what was going on, and Stipe seized that moment to articulate what the crowd was thinking, flip it upside down, and turn the fear into a wild celebration. The song's first line, "That's great, it starts with an earthquake," was already revealed prophecy. And R.E.M.'s new album was heading for the Top 10.

Are we discussing history or a flash in the pan? It's too soon to tell and a waste of time guessing. This is about R.E.M.'s moment of glory.

"It was scary," Stipe said of his power at that "End of the World." "I really go off on this thing, but I always think I have the control to pull myself back. Last year when we played Boston it was such a



R.E.M.'s DOUBLE VISION

WITHIN ONE BAND EXIST TWO VERY DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT R.E.M. SHOULD BE. WHICH WILL WIN OUT?

BY BILL FLANAGAN

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE MARSEL

STIPE: "I HAD BEEN A TROGLODYTE FOR ABOUT A YEAR. I JUST STAYED IN THIS TRAILER PARK AND DIDN'T TALK TO ANYBODY OR DO ANYTHING. THEN I MET PETER."

stellar evening, there was such a connection between myself and the audience. It was so quiet you could have clicked your finger and everyone in the hall would have heard it. I sang an acapella thing at the end. I realized then that I had so much power over this group of people, and they in turn had so much power over me, that I completely lost it. Right in the middle of the song, I suddenly understood how the Third Reich happened. It was horrifying and at the same time really beautiful."

After years of performing without moving from the microphone stand, or with his hair hiding his face, or with the stage lights so low he could hardly be seen, Stipe has come to grips with being the center of attention. Now he commands the stage, bouncing out in a baggy Charlie Chaplin suit and round-toed shoes, painted eyebrows and eye make-up, dancing, yelling and altogether fronting a rock band. What changed?

"I realized last year that people were paying $16.50 to see something," Stipe said. "There's some songs I can't sing unless I move. I literally can't hit the notes unless I'm moving. I always paint my eyebrows. I'm big on eyebrows. It's vaudeville, it's Dickensian, it's a comedy of errors," Stipe smiled. "It's entertainment."

Stipe once said that he wore layers of clothes on stage for protection (emotional, one supposes—not from the elements). Now he strips down, layer by layer by layer, until by the end of the concert he's singing in short pants and a T-shirt. This display, combined with music that draws the audience into an illusion of intimacy with the band, has the effect of taking an R.E.M. concert from very theatrical openings to an emotionally exposed climax. It's a hell of an improvement over the band's old anti-theater stance—which often made R.E.M. seem aloof to the fans they pretended not to notice. In 1987 Stipe's group figured out how to use theatricality to achieve greater communication. But, before they could do that, Stipe had to convince himself that the audience liked him. In the old days he wasn't sure.

"I was very shy," he explained. "That's something that had to be overcome. Sometimes people compensate for their shyness by being loud and extroverted, and I guess I've become an extension of that now. In '78 and '79, right before I got in the band, I had been a troglodyte for about a year. I just stayed in this trailer park and didn't talk to anybody or do anything for a long time. Then I met Peter and became friends with him. I went to the record store to buy records and he was always the clerk. He was my first friend after that phase."

Peter is Peter Buck, R.E.M.'s guitarist, conceptualist and usual spokesman. Buck was a big rock fan with ambitious ideas who saw something charismatic in this artsy young hermit. If we accept the theory that every great rock band has one guy who lives it and another guy who explains it, then in the great tradition of Brian Wilson looking at Dennis and Paul Westerberg looking at Tommy Stinson, Buck looked at Stipe and saw a new kind of rock star just waiting to be stuck out on the stage.

Of his unlikely evolution from recluse to performer, Stipe said, "Maybe that insecurity is something everyone carries within themselves and to see someone express it provides a kind of mirror. You're able to get past some of your insecurities and problems as a living, breathing human being by somehow channeling through this person,through what they do. I don't know if that's the case with me.

"It took years to get over that, though. It went from shyness as a child to this real loud, extreme, extroverted personality at the end of high school, which then flip-flopped back into extreme shyness. That was a particularly long and intense period that I was only brought out of around *Reckoning*."

Reckoning (1984) was R.E.M.'s second album (preceded by the 1982 EP *Chronic Town* and 1983's *Murmur*). And if that seems late in his public career for Stipe to have shaken his phobias, don't pronounce him cured yet: "The thing that's horrifying about being a performer, being myself, and looking at myself as objectively as I can, is that I would hate to be the freak, the court jester of my generation. I would hate to be the outsider that everyone can laugh at, acceptable onstage but if they saw me in a restaurant they would not look at me twice or consider having a conversation with me. They wouldn't give me directions on the street." The singer paused. "I don't think that's the case. There's a huge amount of people in our audience that really are thinking along the same lines I am. But for every one of them, there's one of those people who probably laughs *at* instead of *with* me."

I asked Michael about "Second Guessing," a song that I imagined could have been addressed to avid reader Peter Buck. "Why you trying to second guess me?" the song asks, and repeats, "Who will be your book this season?" In my imagination, Stipe wrote this lyric to protest Buck making Stipe a cog in Buck's conceptual rock machine.

Stipe listened to this theory with a trace of discomfort. "I would never direct something like that towards Peter. The only thing that might be about Peter is the line, 'Look who bought the myth.'"

Which strikes me as a biting comment, but Stipe says, "We're the most amiable, righteous people in the world with each other. If there's a problem it's immediately brought forward. As far as I know. I'm constantly terrified that they don't really agree with me and aren't telling me. There's real politics within the band, but we all know that."

It would be good if we minimized the gossip about tensions between Peter Buck and Michael Stipe. As bands get popular, backbiters always hint that the two main guys aren't getting along. I heard this a lot before I hooked up with R.E.M. The most frequently whispered scoop was, "You know—they're traveling in separate buses!" Which sounded at first like a crack opener for this story: *Michael Stipe, lead singer in America's most revered underground band, rides from show to show in his private coach, as he can no longer stand the company of his fellow R.E.M.s.* But sometimes truth interferes with good journalism, so I have to confess that Buck and Stipe seem to get along just fine. Maybe they wouldn't pick each other to share a pup tent with on a long fishing trip, but they appear as comfortable together as any two guys without a whole lot in common who work in the same office. I sure wish the shutterbug who took our cover picture had caught the look on Buck's face when, between poses, Stipe leaned over and

STEVE MARSEL

"Odd styles that for some reason plug in and work": Mike Mills, Bill Berry, Michael Stipe and Peter Buck

kissed him. The two musicians apparently know that they work together well, but don't mind having a little break from each other at the end of the day. Asked about having a separate dressing room and bus from his three fellow band members, Stipe said, "The thing about the different dressing rooms is that I have to *not* think about what I'm doing. Peter, on the other hand has to sit there for three hours and play guitar, put down a couple of beers and go pee 75 times. My way of dealing with going onstage is, I go out and do anything and completely forget about it until I have to get ready to go on. Then when I get ready I just keep putting on clothes so I don't have to think about the fact that I'm going out there. Then suddenly I'm there. Everything is forgiven onstage. If there was any tension, it's over with. And any explosion that might happen onstage works itself out before the set's over.

"And the bus thing—I have to have windows open. I can't breathe if I don't have fresh air. The bus that came for us was mistakenly a bus without windows. And we had a band meeting and decided that having two buses would be a real good idea. One would be loud and one would be quiet. So, no, there's no separation. There's enough of a separation as it is, just because they write the music and I write the words. I'm the odd man out. They're all football fans and I'm not."

R.E.M.'s last album, *Lifes Rich Pageant*, went gold. Their new one, *Document*, is doing much better. It's also a more experimental record than its almost-mainstream predecessor. Said bass player Mike Mills, "We were bound and determined that if this album was going to be successful it would be because it was a good record. We knew that it would be at least as

BUCK: "WE'RE A BIG CULT BAND, WHICH IS KIND OF LIKE BEING THE BIGGEST MIDGET IN THE WORLD." STIPE: "BUT WE *ARE* NUMBER 12 WITH A BULLET."

successful as *Pageant*, so we wanted to use some weird material. It gave us a great opportunity to experiment. If you're gonna buy the record anyway 'cause you bought the last one, well, here ya go. Broaden your mind a little bit."

Document is also R.E.M.'s most clearly leftist collection—probably because Stipe's lyrics are more understandable. Among *Document*'s concerns are the rise of the New Right and the war against the Sandinistas. As lyricist, does Stipe always feel he can speak for his three bandmates?

"In music, yeah. I know those guys would say something if they didn't agree with some statement I put forth. On this record Bill [Berry] asked me to change a line in 'Welcome to the Occupation.' I had said, 'Hang your freedom fighters,' and Bill objected. I meant hang them like a picture—study them. I liked the dichotomy of the phrase, though I knew this was an incredibly brutal line. Bill thought it was too much. So I changed it to 'hang your freedom higher' which as it turned out meant a lot more."

"I thought it was just a little too explicit," drummer Berry said later. "Believe me, I'm not pro-Contra, but that was just too blatant. We let Michael have pretty much free reign with the lyrics. We will make suggestions. That was the only lyric on this record I made any comment about. We are so close in political theory that Michael espouses the view of the whole band."

Although *Document* rings with the populist leftism of a '30s union rally, R.E.M. figures it's only a matter of inches from the subtle politics of old tunes like "Flowers of Guatemala" and "Green Grow the Rushes" to the oh-what-the-hell-let's-spell-it-out manifestos of the new "Welcome to the Occupation" and "Exhuming McCarthy." "I thought 'Green Grow the Rushes' was the most radical song ever put on vinyl," Stipe sighed. "And no one ever approached me about it. About two years later a complete stranger came up and said, 'That's the most intense song about foreign policy I ever heard,' and I hugged him. Now, 'Welcome to the Occupation' is like, 'Here it is.'"

Stipe may be a little unfair to his listeners. They can't read his mind. If you leave space in your imagery for people to fill in their own pictures, you can't blame those people for not seeing what you saw. A better example is "The One I Love," R.E.M.'s first big hit and the song that put *Document* over the top. Most people hear it as a love song. That drives Stipe crazy. "Last night I sang it and this couple two rows back looked at each other lovingly and held hands," he groaned. "I thought, oh my god! I've been announcing at the shows that I wrote it to myself, because it's such an incredibly violent song, perhaps the most violent song I've ever written. It's very very brutal. I almost didn't want to put it on the record. I thought it was too much. 'Harborcoat' and 'Laughing' were violent and brutal, but they're both so internal and folded in on themselves that no one would ever pick up on that except as a general gut feeling. 'The One I Love' is lyrically very straightforward. It's very clear that it's about using people over and over again. I think that's probably a sentiment everyone has felt at one time or another, so you can apply it to yourself. But it's not an attractive quality."

Berry said of "The One I Love"'s alleged cruelty, "It's not obvious except to Michael, 'cause that's what *he* was thinking." Imagine a future K-Tel collection: "The One I Love," "Every Breath You Take," "With or Without You," and other new wave ballads on *Nasty Love Songs of the 1980s*. By the way, the two syllables Stipe yells in the chorus are not, as some think, a woman's name. He's shouting, "Fire!"

"The whole album is about fire," Stipe said. "About everything you think about fire as being cleansing, something that destroys everything in its path. It's an element that's everywhere, the metaphorical and allegorical interpretations of 'Fire' are endless." A couple of weeks later, when forest fires enveloped the South and covered the East Coast with smoke, Stipe's prophet-of-doom rating went up yet again. So did "The One I Love"'s chart position.

"We all thought this would not be a popular record," Peter Buck said of *Document*. "We thought, 'Okay, the last one went gold, this one will sell 300,000. This isn't a pop record.' That was a decision we made; we were happy. And it *shipped* 500,000." Buck sounded almost disappointed with his band's commercial acceptance. "We consciously went out of our way to make a record that was not a follow-up to the last record. It was tougher, a little dissonant, didn't do what R.E.M. does—no jangly guitars and harmonies. We thought it wouldn't sell as well. Proves how much we know."

Stipe and Buck are very different characters. My impression is that Buck is friendlier but Stipe is nicer. Listen to this and judge for yourself: On different evenings I saw Buck and Stipe react very differently to being accosted by fans. Buck and I left the Providence theater and immediately bumped into Darren Hill, former bass player with the Red Rockers and a Buck pal. Hill said that he and Jim Reilly (ex-Stiff Little Fingers and another Buck buddy) were playing over at Lupo's Heartbreak Hotel with their new band, the Raindogs. Well, Buck said, I'll be right over. En route to the club, Buck was spotted by about two dozen R.E.M. fans, all anxious to talk, ask questions, take snapshots or get autographs. Buck had someplace to go, but he patiently stopped to talk to everybody, to give advice, to answer even silly questions.

"That wasn't trouble," Buck said after the fans were left behind. "When I started playing guitar—about eight years ago, just before the band started—I never thought I would be in a band that meant enough to people that anyone would want my autograph. It's no trouble whatsoever. Our fans are very good and usually really interesting people. Of course, in that situation, when 15 people want your autograph and you want to go somewhere, it's going to be a little less personal. But by and large the people who are fans of ours are people who—if I was sitting next to them in a bar or restaurant—I'd probably end up talking to. Each one deserves a lot more of my time and a whole lot more of me giving them the dignity they deserve."

Contrast this to Michael Stipe. The next night Stipe was invited to a rock club for a party but not warned that the club had publicized that he'd be there. As soon as Stipe put a foot in the door, he was the bullseye. He spotted a woman he knew, but their attempts to talk were interrupted until she gave up and left. Stipe headed to the shadows at the far wall, but hearty R.E.M.-heads pushed their way over to engage the star in exchanges like:

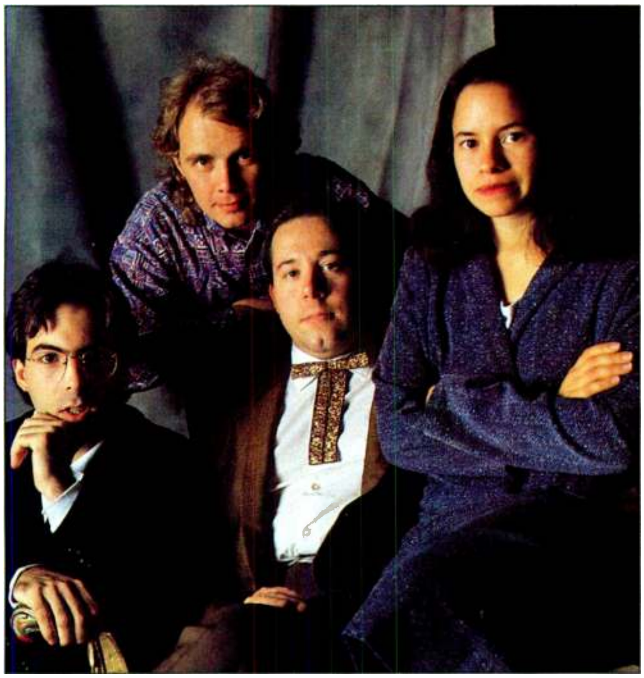
Kid: "Whaddya think of the World Series?"

Stipe: "I don't follow any sports."

Kid: "How about college football?"

A kid peppered Stipe with questions about how corrupt the music biz must be and how could he break in. Finally Stipe said, "Look, I'm just trying to have a beer, okay?" The kid said, "Oh sure, yeah, yeah, yeah. Great beer. I like beer." Stipe went to the bar to order another and the kid said to me, "What's his problem? How can he expect to just *have a beer*? He must know if he comes to a place like this people are gonna want to meet him! I don't think I'm being too pushy! Do you think I'm being too pushy?"

Stipe came back and the kid's annoyance switched back to obsequiousness, but another fan saw the opening and jumped in. This guy went into a very intense and not uninteresting monolog (it would have made a fine letter) about how he owed Stipe an apology because (I'm paraphrasing here) "when your new album came out I really resented that R.E.M. was getting so big. I loved you guys because you were like me—unpopular. I identified with you. Now everybody likes you and that made me feel abandoned. But the other day I broke down and listened to *Document* and I had to admit—I loved it. So it made me think, maybe instead of just accepting that I'm unpopular and feeling sorry for myself, I should try to make contact with more people, make more friends. And that way I'll still be able to feel close to R.E.M."



STEVE MARSEL

10,000 Maniacs Drew, Gustafson, Buck and Merchant

Not bad for small talk in a loud bar, huh? Stipe mentioned later that the guy was pretty interesting. However, as he delivered this rapid-fire apology the fellow kept pressing in closer and closer to Michael. He loomed over Stipe like Godzilla over Tokyo, backed the singer into the wall, and then bent forward over him, forcing Stipe to bend backwards, raise his arms in front of his chest, and finally interrupt him to say, "Would you *step back* a little, please?"

That the guy from R.E.M. was over in the corner talking to a group of fans caused more people to start crowding in. Eventually Stipe suggested we beat it. All the way to the door, hands reached out to grab his arm, and mouths loomed toward his ear. One guy pulled at him and yelled "Michael!" three times. Finally Stipe turned.

"You're my idol," the kid said. Stipe snickered.

"Really. I love everything you do."

"Well," Stipe said. "I shit, too, y'know." The kid laughed. So did Stipe. Then he bolted for my car. "I used to enjoy going to clubs like that," he sighed. "In the last few weeks I can't do it." In the past few weeks, Michael Stipe had gotten famous.

Now back to the topic: How come if Buck goes to so much trouble to be friendly to his fans and Stipe flees his fans, I get the impression that Stipe is, deep down, the nicer guy? Finally I settled on this: Peter Buck, in all his courtesy, has accepted a *noblesse oblige* attitude toward R.E.M.'s fans. He is the star, they are the little people, and he will grant them an audience. Stipe still thinks of himself as *one* of the little people; he won't accept that he can't hang out in a bar without being the center of attention. And when folks do insist on treating him like a celebrity, Stipe just thinks it's *stupid*. He won't play the game.

Buck, rather unrealistically, denied that the American public will ever go for artsy, underground R.E.M. in a big way. ("But," Stipe pointed out, "we *are* number 12 with a bullet.") This is in the face of a real hit single and big album.

"I know full well we'll never reach that U2/Bruce Springsteen stage," Buck said. "I like both those bands, but I don't think we're ever going to reach a point where it'll be a consensus opinion that we're good enough to sell that many records or tickets. We're a big cult band, which is kind of like being the biggest midget in the world. I can't imagine those eight million people who like U2 all buying our record. We have a lot more in common with Woody Allen or Neil Young." (Some of Buck's friends have pointed out that one other thing he shares with Neil Young is the riff to "The One I Love," which is a dreamier, slowed-down "Hey Hey, My My.")

Buck really seemed to resent the idea that the MTV teenybopper crowd could dig R.E.M. He is well aware of his band's status as kingfish of the underground. And maybe his protestations against popular success are partly grounded in a preference for being first among cult bands rather than last among superstars. "I think we have the potential to be as big as Neil Young has been, and as small as he's been too. I like Springsteen, I like U2, but they reach out and touch people outside their listening audience, in a way we deliberately don't. We're a little less easy to grasp. I don't want to be in U2, I don't want to be Bruce Springsteen. I want to be something else. I think we're *seen* as commercially viable more than we actually are commercially viable. I think we're all ready to go completely the other way with the next record, to go down the toilet as far as sales. It's important at this point for us to do something that makes us better as artists. I want to drag everybody to *our* place. And our place might be just a bit smaller.

"I back off from fulfilling people's expectations. All we want is to be a great band. I don't think we're a great band and I think that most people who are considered great today are not great either. But we're on the road to it, and we have to follow this path. We haven't turned out an *Astral Weeks* yet. I want to make an album as great as *Astral Weeks* or *Blonde on Blonde* or *Exile on Main Street*. You've got to aim against the best."

BUCK: "I THINK WE'RE ALL READY TO GO DOWN THE TOILET AS FAR AS SALES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO DO SOMETHING THAT MAKES US BETTER ARTISTS."

A mixed group of R.E.M.s and Maniacs followed Buck to Lupo's to see the Raindogs, who were great; they tore the place up. "God," Maniacs manager Leak said to R.E.M. manager Jefferson Holt, "you never just walk into a bar and hear a band like this!" The Raindogs invited Buck up to play. He climbed onstage to great applause from the hundred or so people in the room. After some discussion the band two-stepped through "Your Cheatin' Heart," a country version of Free's "All Right Now" and the Modern Lovers' "Roadrunner."

During the increasingly loony set, Maniacs Dennis Drew and Steven Gustafson were having a few drinks and a fine time. When the music ended, Buck headed to the Raindogs' dressing room to talk about producing a record for them, while the Maniacs rolled out to the road and got into a violent game of street hockey with a trashcan lid. Now the Maniacs and R.E.M. had been suffering from intense flu attacks for a week—Mills was barely mended and Maniacs drummer Jerry Augustyniak was too sick to make it to soundchecks (or pose for a *Musician* photo). So, looking back, it was silly of Drew to body-check Gustafson in front of Lupo's. But he did, and Steve went down to the street, landing on his right wrist. Alcohol had dulled their pain thresholds, so they shrugged off the *crack* when Steve hit the pavement.

Peter Buck joins the Raindogs onstage at Lupo's.

PAUL ROBICHEAU

In the bar's dressing room Buck asked the Raindogs' fiddler for tips. By three a.m. he had finished giving his friends compliments and advice and we headed back to the hotel. "When I go see a band," Buck said, "if I like them it's either for the songwriting or for the ability of the group to play together as a band. Sonic Youth don't write classic songs, but they are a great band because they play great together. The band we saw tonight, the Raindogs, write really good songs *and* play well together...I like to work with people who have not had the chance to go in the studio and be told what to do, who have not learned it by the books. My idea of what's cool and interesting to do in a studio is definitely not what you would do if you wanted a hit record. I can help these guys; I'll do it for free, it'll be interesting, they'll learn a little bit from me—they'll learn a lot of stuff that's *wrong*—and I'll learn stuff from them, too."

I told Buck his suspicion of all things commercial reminded me of something both Pete Townshend and Joni Mitchell have said: that when an artist gets used to spilling his guts for a small audience, and then achieves great commercial success, it makes him distrust the audience's love, makes the artist want to *test* the audience's devotion by giving them something they don't want to hear.

"For us," Buck answered, "the power we've gotten from having a hit record is to give people something that they don't expect. I can't imagine utilizing that power to say, 'Let's have another hit single.' But the idea of slipping people into something that they don't really know! Maybe all the people will buy the record for 'The One I Love' and then listen to 'Exhuming McCarthy' and say, 'What is that?' One of the prime pleasures in my life is that maybe we're going to slip them something melodically or lyrically that they didn't expect.

"The love of an audience is something that," he shrugged, "God, people get. Rudy Vallee had it, Dick Van Patten had it. I mean, if Dick Van Patten can be loved by the masses then it doesn't mean anything. All it means is that we have to follow our own little rabbit trail. We might go in completely the wrong direction and make shitty records. I welcome that. All I want to do is to make those records and not have to think about the people who listen to them. So we don't. I don't know who listens to the records anyway. I don't really *care* what they think. 'Cause I know what I think and I know that I'm right."

A few hours later the wake-up calls came. The day's schedule was a nine-hour drive from Providence to Rochester. Stipe and Maniacs singer Natalie Merchant left in Michael's tour bus, the other three R.E.M.s departed in *their* tour bus, and the other Maniacs in their van. Hockey star Gustafson had his wrist wrapped in a wet towel. The whole way to Rochester the wounded bassist said, "Y' know—I think it's broken," and then Dennis Drew said, "It's not broken. If it were broken, you'd be in terrible pain." When we finally got to Rochester, we told Steve we'd take him to the hospital as soon as we checked in and saw just a little of the World Series. Buck came by to watch the game, hang out and order room service. Finally, the Maniacs' road manager said he'd take Steve to the hospital, 24 hours after he fell on his wrist. Guess what? It was broken. Steve played the rest of the tour in a cast.

Gustafson claimed that having to concentrate so hard was good for his bass playing. Augustyniak, still "doing a Ginger Baker," as he called playing and puking, summoned similar will-

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MICHAEL & NATALIE

Before Musician *left R.E.M. and 10,000 Maniacs, we handed a blank cassette to Michael Stipe and Natalie Merchant and asked them to interview each other on the tour bus while they traveled. Natalie asked for a few topic questions, which we scribbled out. Ten days later the cassette arrived at our office. The two singer/lyricists gave us a revealing conversation, complete with descriptions of what they were driving past, inside jokes, and the steady hum of the bus in the background.*

MERCHANT: "Do fans who know your songs well, know you?"

STIPE: They know me as a songwriter, they know a lot of my ideas, they know a lot of the things that I consider important. But they don't know me as a person, and there's a very fine distinction—as you know—between yourself as an entertainer and songwriter and yourself as a person. I think that a lot of people who like me as a songwriter would probably find me despicable and worthy of crucifixion if they had to live with me day to day. We've agreed on that before. We both know that. What about you?

MERCHANT: I have sympathy for people who claim to understand me through the work that I do, because I've felt that connection with other performers, other writers. But I never would have had the courage to confront them.

STIPE: Certainly not to go to their backyard and sit and wait for them to come home.

MERCHANT: Not even to go backstage! I was even terrified to meet you. That's odd because I did feel a connection with you. I don't know if it was because of the lyrics you wrote, because they were pretty...

STIPE: Obtuse.

MERCHANT: Right. It was the way that you performed onstage, the way that when you walked onstage you seemed to abandon whatever restrictions your personality has in day-to-day life. That's the way I feel onstage. I feel more myself onstage than I am doing this interview, or when I'm at dinner with my parents. The only other time that I feel as comfortable as when I'm onstage is when I'm entirely alone.

STIPE: I feel like my onstage persona is an explosion of very minute parts of the real me. It's parts that I think people need and that I need.

MERCHANT: It's raw exposure. And because of the music that we write I think every few songs there's an opportunity for a different emotion to take over. I feel like a channel, a vessel.

STIPE: Sometimes it's really hard to go from a real happy song into sad.

MERCHANT: Sometimes I don't feel the capacity to express all of that in one night. But sometimes I have such strong mood swings anyway that I can convince myself of anything when I'm onstage. There's definitely someone in every audience who's experiencing one or more of the things that our songs are going to put them through. It's already there. Maybe that's what we pick up on. Which brings us to another question: "Do you feel an obligation to the audience?"

STIPE: I think we both feel an obligation to the audience: to not present ideas that are despicable. I feel the need to present a good example, one that thinks about things.

MERCHANT: How about when you sing "I See No Evil," take your pants off and start screaming and pounding your chest?

STIPE: I seriously feel like that's the biggest joke in the world, and if someone doesn't get it then they haven't gotten the whole concert. You can't just take the goodness, the upper cream, the thoughtful part, and say that's a full experience. It's not. You have to inject some humor into it.

MERCHANT: But I think sometimes there's some really honest aggression in what you're doing. When you do "It's the End of the World," we're not talking *goodness*. We're talking something that's very vital and important and that so many people have the need to express. You do it onstage.

STIPE: And I do it like a cartoon. In a way.

MERCHANT: I don't know. If it's all just performance, you're a master of deception. Because sometimes it looks so honest you look like you're about to collapse.

STIPE: I am, during the verses. Then you come to the chorus and it's this complete flip-flop of what the verses are saying. That whole thing is an absolute dichotomy.

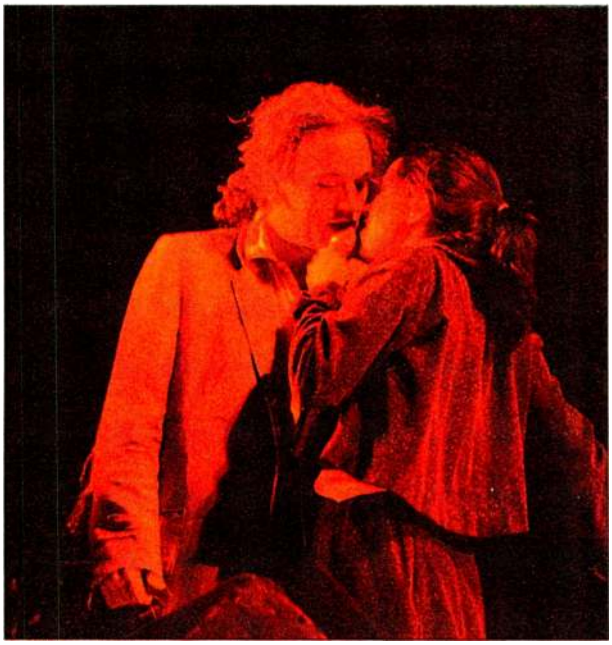
MERCHANT: How about a song like "Gravity"?

STIPE: There are times when I have to turn my back because my eyes are rolling back in my head when I sing that, and I don't want people to see that. There are times when I'm not even there. I'm where I was when I was inspired to write that song, and my hands move in the way that they were. It's automatic. My hands splay out when I sing that song.

MERCHANT: So I guess *honesty* is what we owe to our audiences. If I feel like crouching in the corner against the monitor cabinet and hiding from the audience, that's just as honest as if I feel like strutting across the stage, really proud of who I am and what I'm doing. There are times when I'm humiliated by who I am and what I'm doing.

STIPE: Exactly. I would feel absurd strutting all night. But crouching in a corner all night would be cheating those people who've come to see you and to try to experience what it is you're trying to give to them.

MERCHANT: Right. So it's a balance of the two. Have you ever given a performance that was completely selfish? Where you hid all night, or stood with your arms to your sides with your eyes closed and just sang—because it was your obligation to sing? It was your job?



BRUCE T MARTIN

"YOU CAN'T JUST TAKE THE GOODNESS, THE UPPER CREAM, THE THOUGHTFUL PART, AND SAY THAT'S A FULL EXPERIENCE. YOU HAVE TO INJECT SOME HUMOR INTO IT."

STIPE: Yeah, I've done that [*laughs*]. I did that for a year and a half. I used to stand perfectly still and not move at all.

MERCHANT: That would be really difficult. A lot of your material inspires such happiness and movement. Most of it is really kinetic music. But there's the line: Are you there to entertain these people or are you there to put them through what you're being put through? It feels like this last album of yours puts people through something you've been through. It seems like very *involved* music. The people who are listening have to become involved in it. It's hard to listen to it and just say, "Well, that's a nice record." Which is the way I like people to react to our music, too. Have a strong feeling for it: hate it or have affection for it.

STIPE: That whole gray area in the middle where people won't completely *slam* it, but they'll criticize really crucial points of it, really blindly. Like Miss Kristine McKenna...[*who knocked Natalie—and took a dig at Stipe—in* Musician, *Oct. '87*].

MERCHANT: She sounds like a beauty queen contestant.

STIPE: [*to tape recorder*] I'm going to tell you this right now, because I didn't to your face. My whole idea about the 10,000 Maniacs record review is that Kristine McKenna wore a peasant skirt in high school and still hasn't gotten over it.

MERCHANT: We're warming up here, start transcribing!

STIPE: I had to get a stab in there before I could really talk. Natalie, we talked in Europe about our position, our jobs, what we see and the way we see it compared to other people.

MERCHANT: We're provided with an opportunity through touring to see *glimpses* of other people's lives and the territories that they live in, but in so many ways we're removed from their day-to-day existence.

STIPE: Completely removed. Both of us have been through the desert a number of times and neither one of us could remember having gone out and laid in the sand.

MERCHANT: Or touched it. I don't know what the desert smells like. Or to feel the temperature drop at night. It's very unusual the way we see the world. We have a cinematic perspective because we're always looking through glass. It's very sterile.

STIPE: The bus or the van or the hotels with windows that don't open [*laughter*]. When they do, you get down on the wall-to-wall carpeting and bow to Mecca. One's inspired to carry one's own sheets around.

MERCHANT: Also, when we're on the road we're forced into this environment that neither of us is comfortable with. Like this truckstop.

STIPE: Truckstops I know how to deal with. But women in Hyatt gift shops who say, "Are you dressed for Halloween?"

MERCHANT: I don't have a wicker duck full of complimentary shampoo pouches at home. And I don't have two color televisions or a cellular phone in the bathroom.

STIPE: Let's get out and stretch. [*tape off*] Repeat what you just said.

MERCHANT: When my mother used to take me to the theater or symphony or ballet as a child, I would usually choose a performer that I felt some connection to. Man or woman, it didn't matter. In some way they exemplified a part of me that I either wanted to make stronger or maybe a part of me that didn't exist, something I really wished to attain. That person—just by virtue of being onstage and being watched by thousands of people—was intrinsically interesting. Just to have all that attention focused upon you. I'm sure there are plenty of writers who write music and lyrics equal to what you're doing. Do you agree?

STIPE: Yeah.

MERCHANT: And definitely equal to what I'm doing. I'm always seeing things in the press, in literature, in magazine articles; I'm so envious of the command that these people have over language! Or I'll see a girl dancing in the crowd and appreciate the way she's moving and wish that I had that kind of freedom. So I know they're out there. But I'm on the stage and they're in the audience. It's a peculiar feeling.

STIPE: It's the same as going to see a band in a little club right after you've performed for 11,000 people. You feel a little jealous! It's not envy—but you feel like they have something that you don't have. A freedom. I think a lot of that fascination with a person on the stage has to do with the human capacity to project onto other things what people need within themselves. That's what I think our music has a lot to do with. Whatever you need, you can put into whatever it is you're focusing in on. Whether it's conscious or subconscious. That's why television is such a popular medium, and moving film.

MERCHANT: Film just sucks me right in. There's always a character in a film I immediately can identify with. I sometimes identify really negative properties in myself in the character, and it's really frightening. But whatever it is, there's some action or dialog in the film that drags something out of me, which may be really unattractive or really beautiful. Maybe a successful performer can do that too. I think you do it.

STIPE: The question is, "Do people you know recognize themselves in your songs?" Often. But the real problem is when people you *don't* know recognize themselves in your songs. In a way that's good, because you're writing the songs to be taken by everyone and for them to project part of themselves into. But when it comes back to *them* projecting that onto *you*, it gets really hairy. You find yourself in these relationships that don't exist with people. They think they know you so well and they *don't*. It's very terrifying.

MERCHANT: Maybe it's because the lyrics are so personal. It's an open-letter policy.

STIPE: Yeah, but my lyrics are often so personal that they're completely incomprehensible. Which is fine with me. The language there is the sound and what's behind the sound. It has much less to do with the words.

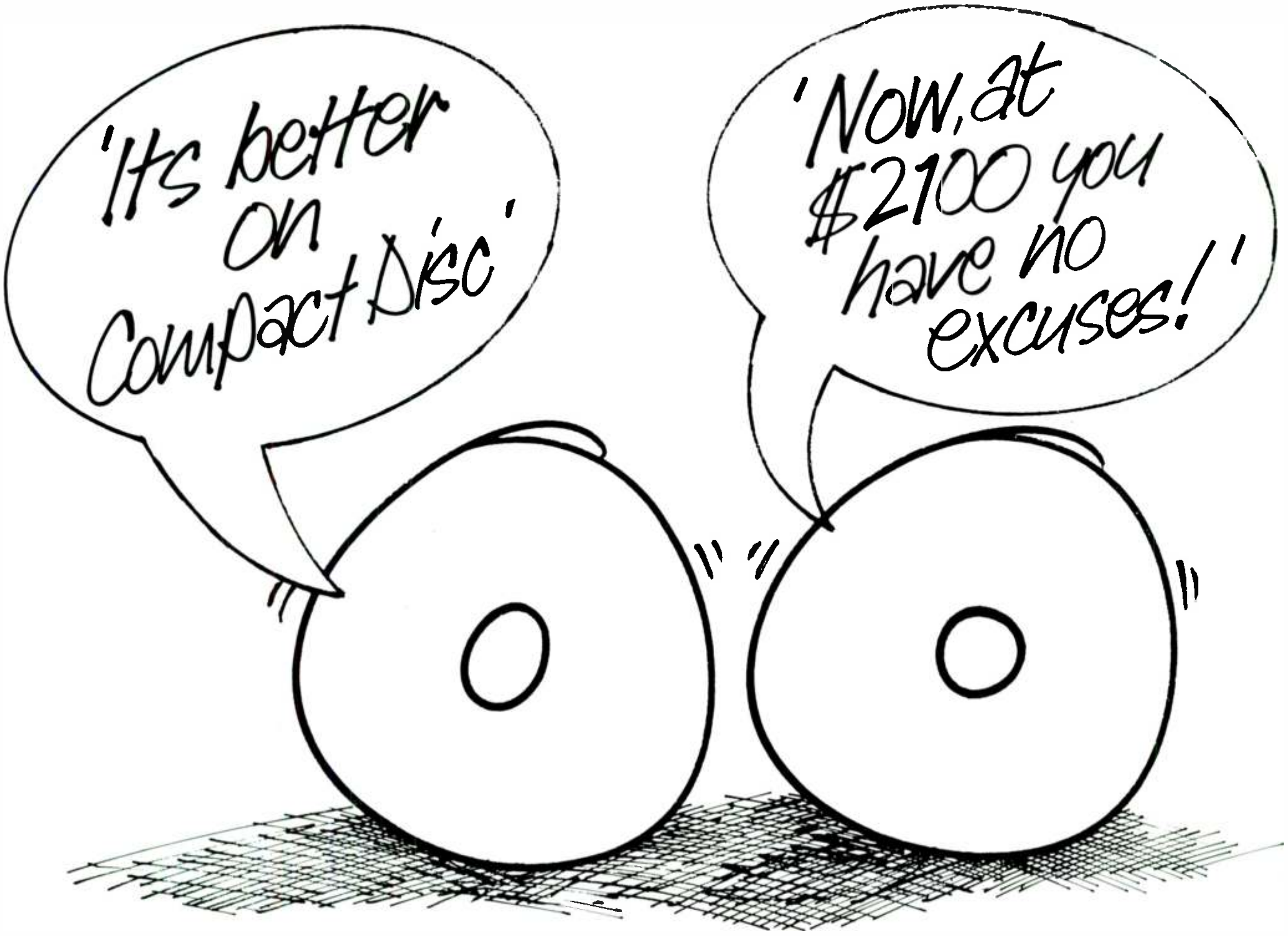
MERCHANT: But sometimes there's such an intimacy in your voice. In a song like "Perfect Circle."

STIPE: That was extraordinary. That and "Gravity" were perhaps my real gut-spillers.

MERCHANT: Well, you share those songs with hundreds of thousands of people. You may never meet them, encounter them in any way other than as a mass of flesh over the course of a tour...

STIPE: But I can feel that energy.

Have you heard ?



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power and the crippled 10,000 Maniacs sets went over great. It didn't hurt that halfway through each night's performance Natalie pulled Stipe out on stage to sing "Campfire Song," their duet from the Maniacs' new album. Pretty soon Peter Buck was learning a Maniacs song, too, and Augustyniak was playing congas with R.E.M. In Rochester, Natalie joined R.E.M. to sing on "Swan Swan Hummingbird." A week later Michael appeared during the Maniacs' set with a cake and got the audience to sing happy birthday to Natalie.

The fact that the two singer/lyricists were traveling together as well as dueting all over the place raised questions among the fans about the possibility that we finally had a James and Carly for the '80s. In a cover story on Natalie, *Melody Maker* called them "more than friends." To which I'd say, "Yeah, they're *good* friends." This isn't *Betty and Veronica.*

A few years ago I interviewed Natalie Merchant for this magazine and she asked if her songs reminded me of Michael Stipe's. I told her what Dennis Drew had said the day before: "People just think Michael and Natalie sound alike 'cause you can't understand what either of them are talking about." That went over like a lead balloon. That the singer/lyricists from both bands were traveling separately from the musicians said something about the reality of rock 'n' roll groups, about the jock-like fraternity of those who play and the poetic natures of those who sing and write words and get their pictures on the fronts of magazines. Drew put that in perspective: "The other night we were on a radio call-in show, and somebody asked if the guys in the band ever got jealous of Natalie. Which is a really good question that no one ever asked before. I just wish it hadn't been on live radio. All I could say was, 'No,' which isn't the real answer. The real answer is, 'Yes and no.' Yes, we do get jealous of Natalie, but not in the way people would expect. We get jealous of her like you get jealous of the coolest kid in high school. You really like him and want to hang around with him—but at the same time you say, 'Boy, I wish that *I* could be that cool."

R.E.M.'s music is written by Buck, Mills and Berry. Since the songs are credited to all four members, Peter Buck refuses as a matter of principle to say who wrote what. Berry and Mills are less strict. Mills admits he wrote most of "(Don't Go Back to) Rockville" and Berry says "Perfect Circle" is mostly his. Stipe writes the lyrics and arrives at most of the melodies by singing. Although he bangs a piano on the track "Fireplace" and strums a guitar on "Oddfellows Local" live, Stipe admitted, "I'm a bad, clichéd music writer. I write something on guitar and it's G-D-A. I can barely hit all six strings at one time. I don't limit myself, but I recognize that I'm a really wretched musician and my ideas are pretty limited."

Indeed, the success of R.E.M. in the face of Stipe and Buck's lack of technical skill is a tribute to their creativity and nerve. (Of course, it's also a tribute to Mills and Berry, who spent 11th grade playing Doobie Brothers songs in a band called Corn Cob Web.)

"I probably wanted this from the day I was six years old," Buck said of his life as a musician. "But I read all that stuff about how Lennon and Jagger were playing from the time they were 12, so I figured you had to know what you were doing. I thought I was going to be a writer. I thought I didn't have the calling, the *vocation* that I figured you needed to be a musician or a

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Catholic priest. So I didn't do it till I was 21. I was incredibly lucky. Then again, I *studied* it. For 15 years all I did was listen to records and work in a record store and go see bands. So when the band started I could only play four chords, but they were probably the *right* four chords.

"It didn't happen till about two years ago that I thought I was good at this. We had record contracts and everything, but I thought I was faking. It wasn't till the last couple of years that I actually started feeling I kind of maybe know what I'm doing."

As R.E.M. becomes more popular they have to face the inevitable skepticism of non-fans. When you're an underground band, only people who love you have an opinion about you, but once your band becomes successful and you start invading the car radio, cynics feel free to dump on you. R.E.M. seems doomed to an especially severe round of revisionism, because (a) they have been lauded to almost silly altitudes, and (b) as musicians, they do not have very hot chops—which guarantees resentment from teenagers who have just discovered technique and their older brothers on (Zappa's term) the disco/fusion/wet T-shirt circuit.

Close observation of R.E.M., however, does reveal a fascinating reconsideration of how a rock power trio can work. Their arrangements are all upside down. The bass only plays with the kick drum by occasional coincidence; the bassist is playing chords; the singer is doing deep drones that sometimes fill what would normally be the bass position, and which often meet the drummer and bass player's harmonies to form triads that sound more like instruments than voices. All this low chordal rumbling leaves the guitarist free to play around with lots of fills, scratches, feedback and other stuff that, in the studio, usually goes on the second rhythm guitar (or "sweetening") track. On at least half of R.E.M.'s live numbers, bass tech Buren Fowler picks up a guitar and puts in the actual rhythm chords. Then R.E.M. sounds more like a traditional rock group. But when Buren's not there—when

Which R.E.M. Song Would You Refuse to Play?

MICHAEL STIPE: "Catapult." Actually, I would do it as a joke.

BILL BERRY: "Harborcoat." Although we did it at soundcheck tonight, so I might renege on that. It's not that I dislike the song, it just sounds real thin live. Obviously we all have songs we don't like as much as others, but I figure I'm going to give in a little bit. I think everybody does that. If somebody really wants to do a song one particular night, okay. If Michael doesn't want to sing "Rockville," that's something we have to deal with. And if I say, "Look, Michael, I really want to do this tonight," that's something he has to deal with.

PETER BUCK: "Wendell Gee." I never liked that song. I have absolutely no interest in playing it. I'm not sure, but I think I didn't even play on that record. Mike played guitar. I think I walked out. No, wait. I played banjo on it. And the banjo saves it, right? That's one song I wasn't interested in when they wrote it. I was there and I didn't like it. I think Michael saved the song vocally, but it's not a song I'm interested in.

MIKE MILLS: "Hyena" is one I absolutely refuse to play. I really don't like to play "Time After Time." "Harborcoat"—I just got sick to death of it. I probably wouldn't want to play "Second Guessing." I never liked to do "Letter Never Sent."

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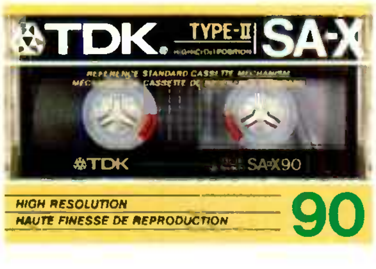

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the voices are playing the bass and the bass is playing the guitar and the guitar's making weird noises and the drums are doing whatever they like with no thought of synching with anybody—R.E.M. plays rock 'n' roll as if they never learned the rules. Which is a wonderful and appropriate thing to do.

"Peter does do a lot of low, open chord strumming," Mike Mills said. "The range of our instruments all overlap. Bill's got a low voice and Michael has a baritone that can go up real high. Peter uses real heavy strings and the low end of his range just about coincides with the high end of mine. So you do get a lot of overlapping and flowing together. I would be bored to tears playing a regular flat bass, like basses were until recently. I almost never play with the kick drum. We tried it once or twice and it sounded terrible: a lot of the rhythm went away."

"Mike and I have always argued about that," Bill Berry admitted. "I like a simple bass pattern. I like to hear that kick drum and bass drum lock in. But that wouldn't work for our group. And you know what? I don't think I'd like Pete as a guitarist in any other group. We all have these odd styles that for some reason plug in and work. There's no reason they should, but they do."

Luckily the vocals often cover for that rambling bass. "My voice is like a blanket," Stipe said. "It's like a big foghorn. It's low. I'm the mortar. Mike's the hardening agent—he and Bill keep the mortar from dripping all over the sidewalk. Often the background vocals completely carry the lead vocals. I have a friend who has a slight hearing impairment and she swears there's one tone she's incapable of hearing and it's where my voice is. We have to yell conversations at each other. She says the reason people are able to identify with my voice is because it's the general hum of the universe. She's a writer, she can take these liberties. She thinks it's the sound of everything around her." Stipe paused and we both listened. There was, indeed, a gentle hum in the quiet. The universal bass drone? No, it turned out the be the hotel refrigerator. Sighed Stipe, "I can't have refrigerators in my house because of the sound they make. It just drives me nuts that that thing operates without me turning it on and off. It just goes. I can't take that."

Then he gets back to business: "My whole vocal style evolved around the band. We were all just terrified to play live, especially Peter and me because we'd never done it before. So we played everything incredibly fast. We were the poppiest thrash band in the world. I think my voice was a reaction to that. I was really uncomfortable with what I was singing. I liked slower things, so my voice slowed everything down. It was like a syrup, a tar agent poured over the race cars. Although the songs were still the same speed, my voice made them sound slower, because I would hold notes out forever. Then finally the band slowed down."

I pointed out that most vocalists just jump aboard the rhythm guitar. "Well," Stipe said, "Peter doesn't play power chords. He's started to, because I really love 'em, but back then his guitar was always fluttering down. There was no way I could ever follow the guitar. So I follow the bass and caterwaul."*

"My band has a tendency to write the same song over and over again," Stipe said one night at about 3:00 a.m. "Friends tell me we have three songs and just keep writing them. Part of the beauty of the band is that we recognize our shortcomings and work around them. Pop music is a very constricting genre, maybe *the* most constricting except for opera and country. You have to work within these walls. In rock 'n' roll you have three minutes, verse/chorus. My idea had always been that you go ahead and build these walls, make sure the mortar's really strong and that it holds together, and then do your damnedest to bash away, blow those walls out, expand on it. That goes along with my idea that you don't have to move upwards. You can move on a horizontal parallel, you can move *out* rather than up. In rock 'n' roll, each album's supposed to be better than the one before until you supernova. I don't feel that way, I don't think that applies to us. I'd like to move out and get broader.

"The idea I had was that this album should just be complete bombast, that it should be huge. We were moving toward that with *Lifes Rich Pageant*, but it didn't come across as much. Even the quiet songs on *Document* are really loud. That's just what I wanted: no subtleties, everything right up front." He paused. We'd been running all day and were both pooped.

"I feel like I'm starting to ramble," Stipe apologized. "I just get real longwinded and kind of serious." We talked about R.E.M.'s relationship with the press: "It's infuriating. Peter, Bill, Mike and I read more reviews than anyone in the country. We get all the record reviews from every Podunk Valley in the country. Some of them are really right on, but some of them obviously don't have a clue what the band's about. The guy sat down and listened to the record once and said, 'It's cranky and loud and Stipe finally cleared his throat.' It's just hard, because you work on this thing so hard for so long.

"I don't mean to sound high and mighty, 'cause it's not a perfect album. It's flawed of course, as is every record that we've ever put out, as is everything I'll ever work on. I'll never achieve my idea of perfection. But who's to say that's an end in itself? Part of what we are and what we represent is that we're just doing what we do, and we split ourselves wide open for anyone and everyone to come grow with us or reject us. I would prefer people love us or hate us. It's the ones in between, the ones who can't make up their mind. Purgatory to me or anyone who makes something to give to other people would be to always have people be nonchalant about it: 'Well, it's okay....' I would like people to really react to it. That's why I'm doing it."

Sure, I said, but it's like meeting people. How many of the people that you meet in a day do you either love or hate? Most people are just okay. That's how we're bound to react to most art, which, after all, reflects artists, who, after all, are people. Things take time to sink in.

"I think that's what's kind of cool about becoming part of the pop culture," Stipe nodded. "We're entering that mainstream area where you don't have to really seek out the band. We're kind of *there* a little bit. It's not like Pepsi commercials, but it's there. I feel like what we're doing might eventually sink in to

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***Extra credit section:** Isn't it wild how power trios have developed in inverse relation to the chops of the guitar players? Take your basic proto-power trios: Jimi Hendrix Experience, Jeff Beck Group, Cream, Led Zep. They all had three distinct tiers—a hot guitar soloist, a tight rhythm section, a singing voice. The next phase was predicted by the Who and carried further by the Police and U2: a guitarist who was not so technically adept but played well-thought, chord-heavy parts with great originality and lots of foot pedals, leaving room for a bassist who sometimes played lead lines. The effect was of only two tiers—band and singer. Now R.E.M. have got it down to a single tier—the singer is part of the body of the sound, of the chords. It's all one jangling, swelling, rocking sonic lump. Whether this represents a progression or a corruption depends on whether you prefer communal unity and mutual support (socialism) or everyone-for-himself-may-the-best-man-win competition (capitalism). Progressives could make a good case for the moral superiority of the development from J.H.E. to R.E.M., though guitar students might counter that a descent from Hendrix to Beck to Clapton to Page to Townshend to Summers to Edge to Buck represents a strong argument for voting Republican.

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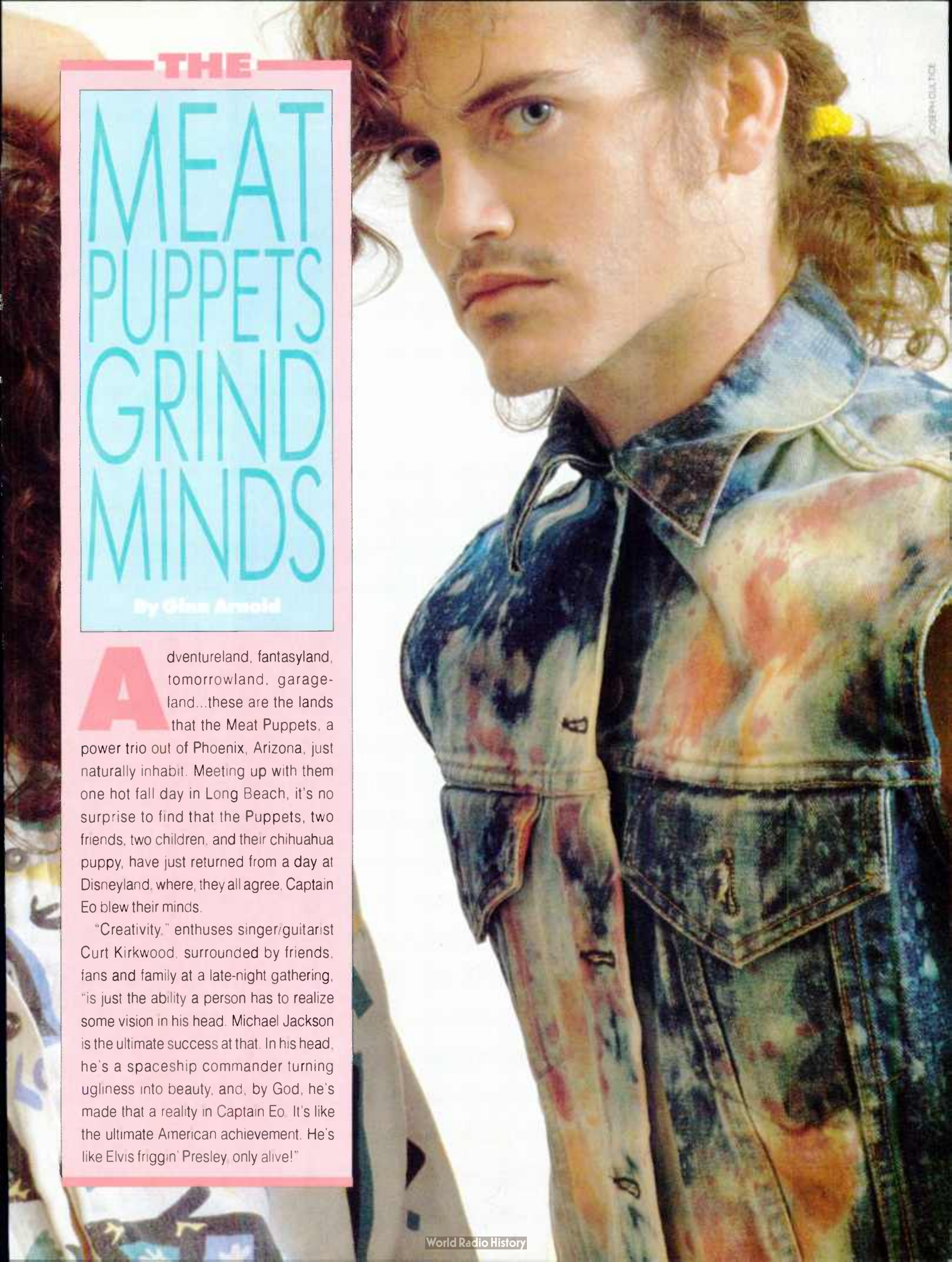
In their own possessed way, Phoenix's suburban stoners are transforming ugliness into beauty.

THE MEAT PUPPETS GRIND MINDS

By Gina Arnold

Adventureland, fantasyland, tomorrowland, garageland...these are the lands that the Meat Puppets, a power trio out of Phoenix, Arizona, just naturally inhabit. Meeting up with them one hot fall day in Long Beach, it's no surprise to find that the Puppets, two friends, two children, and their chihuahua puppy, have just returned from a day at Disneyland, where, they all agree, Captain Eo blew their minds.

"Creativity," enthuses singer/guitarist Curt Kirkwood, surrounded by friends, fans and family at a late-night gathering, "is just the ability a person has to realize some vision in his head. Michael Jackson is the ultimate success at that. In his head, he's a spaceship commander turning ugliness into beauty, and, by God, he's made that a reality in Captain Eo. It's like the ultimate American achievement. He's like Elvis friggin' Presley, only alive!"



JOSEPH CULTICE

Beauty is a subject that hangs heavily in the air whenever the Meat Puppets are in the room; it's something they know a lot about. The Meat Puppets see beauty everywhere: in Phoenix, in the desert around Phoenix, at Disneyland, in dark smoky clubs, and in loud, grungy rock 'n' roll. They often find ways of reading beauty into notes and lines and noises that are, objectively, ugly. It's their god-given talent to do so. So it's really no wonder that the Meat Puppets are fascinated by Captain Eo.

Kirkwood and Co.—brother Cris, who plays bass; drummer Derrick Bostrom; his girlfriend and four-year-old twins—have just driven up to L.A. for the day, an eight-hour, all-night journey, in order "to do something fun between tours." The Meat Puppets got back from eight weeks on the road on Friday; tomorrow, a Tuesday, they leave for their first tour of Europe. What better way to blank out the four-day interim than to drive all night to Disneyland? Kirkwood, whose furious guitar licks and mystical lyrics fuel the Meat Puppets' vision, claims that his biggest musical influences have been the Grateful Dead, Led Zeppelin, the Incredible Tiki Room at Disneyland and the sound of electric fans starting up in the still of a hot Arizona night. So perhaps the trip is partially for inspiration: All four of those influences are apparent in the Meat Puppets' liquid, hypnotic rock 'n' roll. "Everyone wants to believe in the romance of the Meat Puppets," says drummer Derrick Bostrom. "And they should believe it. We do. Our lives are more romantic than they'll ever know."

> "ROCK 'N' ROLL DOESN'T COME FROM A STORE... IT COMES FROM WITHIN."
>
> —
>
> CURT KIRKWOOD

That the romance's reality consists of constant touring, playing, driving, singing and sweating it out across the U.S. (and now Europe) doesn't seem to faze the Meat Puppets one whit. "We don't have a purpose or anything," Curt says. "We're just three guys who enjoy the way we sound together, and we have a flow that's unusual. We stick together because we're fans of our own music, and we recognize that like fans would. But also, we have it really good—we don't have any boss, we can completely say what we want to do, and people come to see us play. Oh, the romance is *heavily* there."

Kirkwood's description of himself as a fan first is key to the Meat Puppets' vision. "Blind fandom is what I'm into," he says. "I don't like my stuff being critically picked apart. And besides, I'm the same way. If I like an artist, I give him a huge break. Like R.E.M., I love R.E.M., so I give 'em a *huge* break. They're really sappy sometimes, but I love 'em anyway. Or Led Zeppelin, or ZZ Top—man, Billy Gibbons could not do anything to offend me. My career as a fan has been one long suspension of disbelief, and that's what I expect of people in regards to us. Not," he adds, "that there were ever shows like ours when I was growing up."

Not that there are shows like the Meat Puppets in Christendom, as a matter of fact. The Meat Puppets grind minds. "We play possessed," is how Curt puts it, and that's a conservative assessment. At a recent sold-out show at San Francisco's old Fillmore auditorium, the Meat Puppets charged through the entire *Mirage* LP double-time, added a ridiculously heavy "Lake of Fire" off *Meat Puppets II* ("Where do bad folks go when they die?/ They don't go to heaven where the angels fly/ ...They go down to the lake of fire and fry"), then laid into "Up On the Sun." Somewhere in the midst of the set, Curt's amp broke and, while he went behind stage to fiddle with it, Bostrom and bassist Cris Kirkwood held forth with the only 10-minute-plus rhythm section solo that's ever held my interest. When Curt came back, the band churned on harder, with a breakneck version of "Good Golly Miss Molly," an eerie "All I Have to Do Is Dream," and a 20-minute monster of an "I Just Want to Make Love to You." If the Grateful Dead (the Meat Puppets' avowed inspiration in gonzo improv) could play this hard, half their fans would run screaming into the woods and fields from whence they came.

But the Dead comparison is inappropriate, considering the Meat Puppets' age, stage and cultural antecedents: white suburbia, C&W, heavy metal, punk. "Phoenix is this huge cross-cut of America, made up of all different influences. It's a real uncultured city, which gives you the opportunity to make up your own culture," says Curt. "It's funny, 'cause you can't deny that people who've had really narrow scopes in music can be really fantastic—like Mississippi delta blues people. But in our case it's more of anything and everything.

"In playing guitar," Curt explains, "the only thing that really helps you out is learning to put your fingers on the right frets. After that, it's just a matter of imagination. It has to do with having a clear mental picture of what you want to do, and then—this is key—having an open enough mind to accept what actually comes out of the amps. That's what good guitar playing is all about. There should be no criteria for it at all."

So, despite the fact that this band can boogie, are they actually an art-rock outfit? "Mmm, we're a fairly arty proposition," Cris agrees, adding wryly, "but of course, being from Arizona, we're not allowed to talk about art."

Phoenix is a city whose biggest contribution to American culture consists of the works of Erma Bombeck and Bill "Family Circus" Keene, so there is some truth to Cris's crack. Although the Kirkwoods were born in Texas (Cris claims the distorted spelling of his first name comes from a West Texas Rexall sign and it's certainly a fact that all Texans are rock 'n' roll naturals), the band as a whole has risen up from the artistic ashes of Phoenician tract homes and shopping malls: the heavy-metal mindset of the mid-'70s that permeates these sprawling "shithole meccas," as Curt calls them. "We are the gentry here," Cris explains. "Most rock 'n' roll guys are. Rock 'n' roll guys necessarily have a lot of money, to give themselves a career with. They need the money for the equipment, for the place to play, for privacy, for the time to waste." Cris' words put the whole scene into perspective: The Meat Puppets and their fans are the incarnation of a generation of young Americans who, no longer needful of physical frontiers, are searching for them somewhere else. "Lost on the freeway again/ Looking for a means to end," sings Curt on "Lost," a song about growing up young, white, suburban and electric in the latter half of the 20th century.

"But," adds Curt, "the thing about the calling to play rock 'n' roll is, it doesn't come from a store...it comes from within."

That may sound pretty philosophical for a Meat Puppet, but all three Pups can wax philosophical if it suits their purpose. They can also, between wisecracks, burps, bathroom talk and numerous tokes on an ever-present joint, quote Plato if they wish ("a sober man needn't knock on the door of the muses"). It's clear that, despite their pose as suburban stoners, the Meat Puppets are three of the more thoughtful products of

Phoenix. The Kirkwoods attended Catholic schools because “the Phoenix public school system eats it,” according to Curt. Nevertheless, talking to the Meat Puppets about art is pretty futile. For one thing, they all talk at once, and none of them ever seem to agree. Like their music, their conversation tends to knock one flat. Sometimes they sound like two simultaneous solos in harmony with a single, hidden thought; other times, simply full of it. “Music is the one thing that's really hard for us to talk about,” says Bostrom. “That's why a piece on the Meat Puppets ought to be a kind of comedy piece.”

“Or a eulogy,” smirks Curt. “No, seriously, no one should ever try and talk to us. They should track down our talent and talk to it.”

Formed in 1980 without the usual inter-city spin-offs most rock bands undergo before solidifying, the Meat Puppets began, like so many of their generation, as your basic hardcore punk rock outfit. Over the years, however, they've developed every which way until Curt's flowing, flat-picking arpeggios and riffs, Cris and Derrick's manic bottom groove, and the ensemble's demonic combo of any number of American rock vernaculars now sounds at all times like everything *but* the Clash. Kirkwood's been known to add amped-up, spaced-out effects to his airy, psychobilly leads, but focusing on the mystical aspect of the Puppets' music would be following a red herring right out into the desert. “We're known for doing moody, trippy, weird shit,” Curt says, “but we're really more straightforward than that. We haven't actually targeted the deepest, darkest recesses of our minds to write about; we've targeted art and rock 'n' roll as a reflection of life in general.

A band and their toys:
Derrick Bostrom, Curt Kirkwood, Cris Kirkwood.

JOSEPH CULTICE

“Anyway,” he adds, “it's all still punk rock in the end.”

Cris narrates his idea of how an article on the Meat Puppets in *Musician* should read: “‘Punk rock, still? But I thought hating was out of vogue! “No, no,” Kirkwood replies, “hating is still in vogue, especially with those who are still out of vogue…”’”

In 1981 the Meat Puppets signed to SST Records, then a brand-new independent label co-owned by Black Flag guitarist Greg Ginn. It wasn't until 1983's *Meat Puppets II*, however, with its nods to country music and its slower, skewed sound on songs like “Magic Toy Missing” and “Climbing,” that the Meat Puppets began to break away from the pack of post-punk indies in America in word, if not in deed. By 1984 the band was a critical rave in alternative circles, and headlining underground clubs around the country.

Nineteen-eighty-five was a watershed year. *Up on the Sun* transformed their reputation, turning them into an underground success story and helping them straggle to the edge of the mainstream. *Up on the Sun* sold 30,000 copies, unprecedented for the Puppets, and it got sporadic airplay on AOR stations around the country. It also got press that, as Curt puts it, “you couldn't have hoped for in your wildest dreams.” In 1986 the band toured relentlessly, taking time out briefly to record an EP called *Out My Way*, probably still the closest thing on vinyl to what the band sounds like live. Nineteen-eighty-seven's output has been better still: two LPs released within five months. The colorful and delicate *Mirage* displayed melodious vocals and really lovely lyrics, while the new *Huevos* is a Mr. Toad's Wild Ride through the Meat Puppets' mysterious, ever-changing mindset.

Two records in five months is way above and beyond the call of duty, especially for a road-bound outfit like the Puppets. Why the supercharged output?

“Because we didn't see any reason not to,” says Curt. “We're just really impulsive, and we realized we could do it, so we did it.

“The thing is,” he continues, “with each album we do, as soon as it comes out we hear it a lot and we realize what we can do to make it better. So this time, instead of dicking around and trying to learn new stuff better or something first, we just figured, ‘Let's go in and get it over with and get *down*.’ If there's anything good in it, we'll only see it after it comes out anyway…”

“Not to mention that we don't sound much like *Mirage* live,” Bostrom adds. “There's a big contrast between *Huevos* and *Mirage* despite the four-month time lapse. ‘It's been a year of contrast for the Meat Puppets,’ as they say…”

“We play really hard live,” Curt agrees. “We always have, and yet we keep trying to make these kind of *Sgt. Pepper*-sy albums with all these overdubs. Live, we just play the tunes, and *Huevos* is supposed to reflect that more. *Mirage* took a long time to make [by Meat Puppets standards: a month and a half] and we don't like to work that way. It's hard and tedious. The vocals are what took so long, and I don't really like my singing on it too much. It's so pristine. Yeah, it's on key, but that's not really what I *do*.”

Huevos is, as Kirkwood suggests, a much messier LP than *Mirage*. It took three days to record and cost $5,000 (about the same as the last three Meat Puppets albums); the single, “Paradise,” may be remixed for radio airplay, and SST is thinking about putting an independent promoter on it to push the Meat Puppets' AOR potential. The Meat Puppets think that *Huevos* may be a more commercial item than the much cleaner *Mirage*, if only because, as Curt says, “it has the most confidence. People don't ever know what they want from you until they've heard it; we don't even know ourselves. On this LP, it was more like the hammer had struck in the center of the anvil on every cut. I'd really enjoy seeing 'Paradise' work as a single, just because we're playing so hot on it."

The Meat Puppets aren't, however, really much given to courting commercial success. The band is about as independently-minded as any in action today. They claim they were going to call the *Mirage* album *Eat My Total Shit* but decided to shelve that title for future use. The Meat Puppets say they are satisfied with the way their lives and their art are going, but they sometimes wonder, after watching peer groups like Hüsker Dü and the Replacements sign to majors, if the world is moving closer to a place where the Meat Puppets could be what they should be: stars. At the moment, they claim that they've never once been seriously approached by a major label. "Isn't that a joke?" Curt says. "We've got this huge packet of press, from every magazine you could ever hope for. All of it says we're so wonderful, and the people we're compared to are not the Velvet Underground, but are heavily commercial wonder-units like ZZ Top and Led Zeppelin and the Grateful Dead. And yet no one will come near us! They're scared of us!"

"Yeah, but look at the guys who do go major," Cris objects. "The thing is, the industry is so conformist, even though they're signing the Hüskers and people, we're *still* too nonconformist for them. It's all a question of how far you're willing to kiss the ass of the middle-American monster."

As Cris implies, the Meat Puppets couldn't kiss that beast if they wanted to. Meat Puppets songs aren't controversial or obscene or even political. "Love Your Children Forever" is the closest thing to a political statement the band's ever expressed. But, says Curt, "we're not exactly out to please the polyglot. Why should we? We're making money as it is, we've got it made, as long as lots of people keep coming to see us. We've been handed everything we've got totally on a platter. Every gig, every record contract, every interview...we never tried for any of them, they were handed to us, and I have no idea why."

"But," Cris breaks in, "what's been handed to us isn't really that much. I mean, we've been at it seven years."

"No, no, we do great," Curt insists. "We make good money!"

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PUPPET STRINGS

Oh, I don't want to say my instruments; it makes me feel too bourgeois," says Cris Kirkwood, quite seriously. "I do," brother Curt boasts. "I love my instruments. I'm almost sexually attracted to my Marshall amp and my Gibson Les Paul..." Bourgeois or not, here's the score:

Cris Kirkwood plays a '72 Fender Sunburst Precision reissue, an '84 Steinberger, and uses a Gallien-Krueger 800 RB bass amp.

Curt Kirkwood plays that Les Paul ('82 Sunburst) live, while on record he uses a '65 Telecaster. He also uses a quarter for a pick. "Sometimes I make an extremely wiggly sound using a strange silver pedal of clandestine make and origin for an effect," he adds. ("Trade secret," Cris snorts. "Ha! Anyone who wants to know can come up and ask us at a gig.")

Derrick Bostrom uses a Gretsch drum kit, Zildjian cymbals and Ludwig hardware.

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Fostex – 15431 Blackburn Ave., Norwalk, CA 90650 (213) 921-1112 ... **23**
Gan-tone – Carnegie Hall, Studio 1105, 881 7th Ave., New York, NY 10019 ... **93**
GHS Strings – 2813 Wilber Ave. Battle Creek, MI 49015 (616) 968-3351 ... **16**
Gibson Guitar Corp. – 641 Massman Drive, Nashville, TN 37210 (615) 366-2400 ... **42**
Gibson USA Accessories – 1725 Fleetwood Rd., Elgin, IL 60120 (312) 741-7315 ... **18**
Group Centre Innovations – 23950 Craftsman Rd., Calabasas, CA 91302 (818) 884-2717 ... **46**
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Musician Wear – P.O. Box 701, Gloucester, MA 01931-0701 (617) 281-3110 ... **47**
Nimbus Records – 200 W. 57th St., New York, NY 10019 (212) 262-5400 ... **65**
Pearl – 408 Harding Industrial Dr., Nashville, TN 37211 (615) 833-4477 ... **27**
Peavey – 711 A St., Meridian, MS 39301 (601) 483-5365 ... **4**
Rane – 6510 216th S.W., Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043 (206) 774-7309 ... **25**
Recording Workshop – 455A Massieville Road, Chillicothe, OH 45601 (800) 848-9900 ... **90**
Rickenbacker International Corp. – 3895 So. Main St., Santa Ana, CA 92707 (714) 545-5574 ... **44**
Roland – 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90040 (213) 685-5141 ... **53, 54, 55**
RotoSound – James How Industries Ltd., Unit One, Morewood Close, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 2HU, England (0732) 450838 ... **22**
Sam Ash – 124 Fulton Ave., Hempstead, NY 11550 ... **91**
Samson Music Products – 485-19 So. Broadway, Hicksville, NY 11801 (516) 932-3810 ... **13**
Shure Brothers Inc. – 222 Hartrey Ave., Evanston, IL 60202 (312) 866-2200 ... **24, 26**
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Tascam – 7733 Telegraph Rd., Montebello, CA 90640 (213) 726-0303 ... **14**
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Yamaha – 6600 Orangethorpe Ave., Buena Park, CA 90620 (714) 522-9011 ... **20, 100**

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1987

THE YEAR ROCK 'N' ROLL CAME BACK ...AND WOULDN'T LEAVE

Last year in this same space we whined (in a clever way) about how the preceding 12 months had been less than a boom time for rock. Well, we're now pleased to report an entirely different situation. Just a glance at the titles of 1987's hits—"Mony Mony," "I Think We're Alone Now," "You Keep Me Hangin' On," "Wipeout," "Lean on Me," "La Bamba"—is enough to remind anyone of what an innovative year it was for popular music.

All kidding aside, 1987 was a momentous year. While normal people celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the summer of love, whatever that was, and the centennial of the Grateful Dead, the recording industry recited the dual mantras of CD and DAT. The former is a blessing that guarantees great wealth and high profit margins to manufacturers and retailers; the latter is a curse that transforms rational record executives into suspicious anti-Japanese chauvinists. The threat of digital audio tape, with its near-perfect copying ability, is potent. It's hard not to feel sympathetic toward record companies: In 1987 their business plummeted to the greatest dollar volume in history, with projections (as of November) of matching or breaking the record for annual unit sales. Won't you give till it hurts?

But seriously, 1987 was a happening place. Bruce Springsteen rang in the year at the top of the album charts (with a five-LP concert box), and was likely to ring it out from the same position (with *Tunnel of Love*). Beatles CDs appeared, David Bowie CDs disappeared. Rap music made further inroads on the national charts. Moscow hosted a gen-yoo-wine rock concert on the Fourth of July. John Fogerty reconciled himself to his Creedence legacy. R.E.M. had a—hit single?? Wire and Earth, Wind and Fire reunited. Michael Jackson was his bad self. So was Mick Jagger.

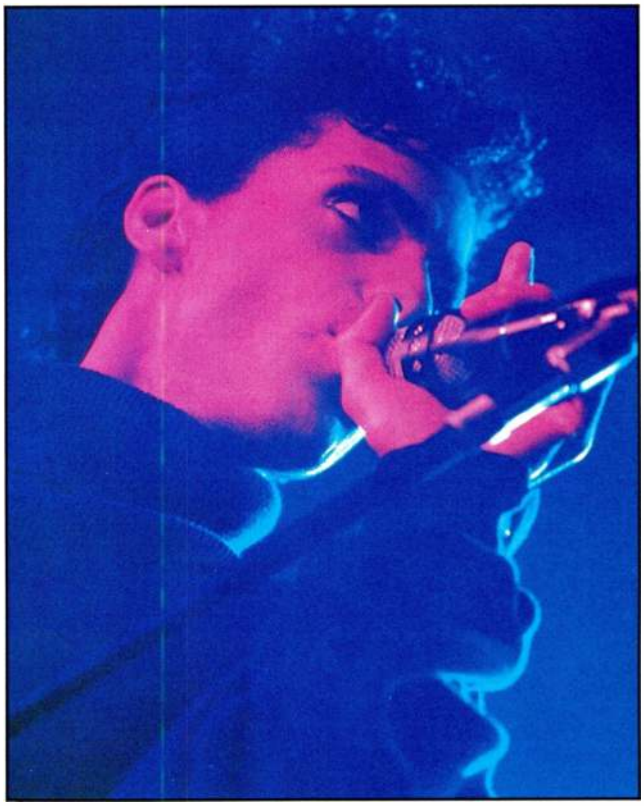
It all took place in 1987. And now you're going to read about it all over again.

ARTISTS OF THE YEAR

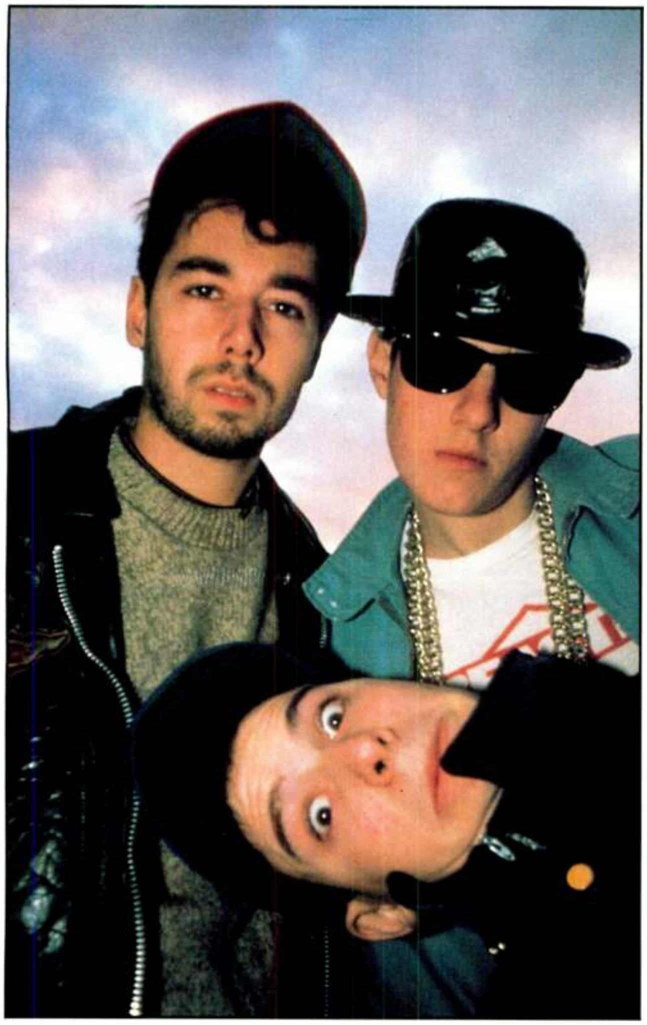
There are obvious reasons for calling **Prince** the top rock artist of 1987: He released *Sign o' the Times*, a terrific double album that combined the best experimental aspects of *Parade* and *Around the World in a Day* with the pop genius of *Dirty Mind* and *Purple Rain*. He tore up Europe (and made a few surprise appearances in the U.S.) with a live show even more exciting than his old roof-raisers. And he gave us one of the best concert films—hell, best rock movies—ever.

There are also some not-so-obvious reasons—like Prince being one male rock star who obviously likes and respects women. That may seem ludicrous to people appalled by his affection for buxom-babes-in-bikinis and sometimes "dirty" lyrics. But as adolescent as Prince's Amazon fetish appears, he never makes a division between the women and the men. *He's* as much a bikini-clad bimbo as any of his heart-throbs, and when Sheila E. goes wild on the drums (in high heels!) she's providing as good a role model for little girls as Keith Richards did for little boys. The triumph of Prince's sexual equality is not when he fantasizes about "If I Was Your Girlfriend"; it's when he sings about swooning in identification with Joni Mitchell and imagines falling in love with Dorothy Parker at her waitress job. It's also, in real life, when he collaborates with female musicians from Sheena Easton to Bonnie Raitt.

Finally, Prince exemplifies the pop artist doing continued, serious work while maintaining superstardom. Like Springsteen and U2, he concentrates on his music with pigheaded devotion and a holy disregard for the distractions of fame. Prince may never repeat the popular explosion he set off with *Purple Rain* in 1984, but he has not gotten lost trying to top himself. He even lives in the same town as the Replacements! Obviously Prince has it all. – *Bill Flanagan*



PATRICK QUIGLEY/RETNA LTD.



G E FRIEDMAN/LFI

There are innumerable ways to slice an "artist of the year": best chops, most records sold, ridiculous hairstyle, etc. etc. This particular choice emphasizes "of the year" at the expense of "artist"—for while this vocal trio's debut album is a brilliant piece of *musique concrète*, their producer perhaps should take the aesthetic credit. Also, "of the year" denotes a specific time frame; we're not dealing with posterity here. Indeed, these guys may never be heard from again—they've been pretty quiet for the last several months—and, if they are, they certainly won't have the impact of novelty value.

Nineteen-eighty-seven witnessed a lot of good popular music, especially compared with the drudge years earlier in the decade. Skeptics may complain that the year still lacked a buzz generated by true musical ferment, e.g. the new-wave revolution of the late '70s, the pop renaissance of the mid-'60s, or the rock 'n' roll breakthrough in the mid-'50s. But they're forgetting that in the first half of 1987—for at least one brief shining moment—one group upset people (outside their own audience, of course) as much as the Sex Pistols, Rolling Stones or Elvis Presley had before them. For making music dangerous, and therefore powerful, again, let's have a few seconds of noise, please, for: the **Beastie Boys**

– *Scott Isler*

A year when major stars routinely sell out their songs to corporate sponsors; when Whitney Houston's "Stepford Wife" performances and persona are heralded as a cultural ideal; when the wife of a serious Presidential candidate (a Democrat yet) makes political hay by raising the specter of "responsible" self-censorship as an acceptable antidote for the music of Prince and the Rolling Stones; is a year in which a musician's most valuable contributions may not be restricted to vinyl. Had it proved successful, the prosecution of **Jello Biafra** for distributing harmful material to minors (a poster by Academy Award-winning artist H.L. Giger included in the Dead Kennedys' album *Frankenchrist*) would have had clear and chilling consequences to musicians everywhere: Sing a song, go to jail. Because Biafra is a "fringe" artist (i.e., doesn't sell platinum) he received virtually no support from the major record companies who routinely trade on the integrity his stand represents. But Biafra won his case, in large part because he convinced a jury that, unlike his accusers', his actions stemmed from honest principle, and that one's vision should not be quashed simply for rankling the status quo. At considerable personal and financial cost, this angry, provocative, articulate artist helped keep our options a little more open, our lives a little more free. – *Mark Rowland*

Picking an artist of the year is a bit like the NFL football college draft. The object is to select the best athlete remaining on the board—but look at who's still left on *this* board. With U2, the Replacements and Robbie Robertson all unpicked, some serious selection is now required.

First of all, how can U2 *not* be picked? Despite relentless overexposure and staggering expectations, they made good on virtually all their promises and released what most would call the best rock album of 1987. If they played any live shows that were less than inspirational, no written record exists. Truly they are the Vinnie Testaverde of my draft day, and yet I hesitate....Could it be that all that moral baggage is weighing me down? Is it enough merely to dodge embarrassment, as Bruce Springsteen certainly did this year and Michael Jackson just as certainly did not? Or is it simply that any magazine that puts the same band on the cover two months in one year should leave well enough alone? To the gasps of millions, I'm leaving U2 on the board.

Great expectations are part of the underpinnings of the two other deserving artists as well. The Replacements' *Pleased to Meet Me* is without question the best rock 'n' roll LP of '87, and the necessity for someone, anyone, to blow some life into that much-abused medium should mandate an immediate selection for the band. But despite the lack of

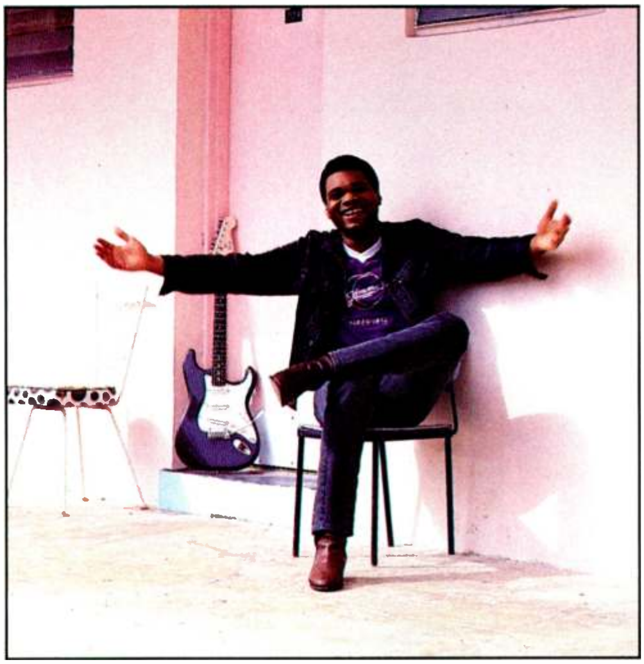
B C KAGAN

1987

mega-pop overkill, the weight of Paul Westerberg's previous mountain of great press keeps the Replacements from being genuine dark horses, and predictions of greatness have been fulfilled but not wildly surpassed. With more trepidation than with U2, I will also leave the Replacements on the board. And I'll lay off Robbie Robertson, too. Once I get more time to absorb *Robbie Robertson* I may regret that—is this a major work or an epochal one? So far it seems like the former. And, like U2, this may be a case of *Musician* having already said enough. So who's left? How about **Robert Cray**?

Now there are a couple of arguments I *won't* make in his defense. One is that his unexpected success is meaningful to that oft-battered American genre, the blues. Yes, Cray came out of the blues and hasn't renounced his roots, but the strength of his *Strong Persuader* is in its pop and R&B moves, not some archaeological search for purity. And you won't hear me advance Cray's guitar work as his core skill—sure, he plays well, but very much in the mold of Albert Collins and Buddy Guy. It's his vocal ability, the quality of his material and aura of musical legitimacy that mark him as a star. And if *Strong Persuader* is not as good an album as those of our other three potential draftees, "I Guess I Showed Her" is my pick for best song of '87, a gritty, supple celebration of cutting off your nose to spite your face.

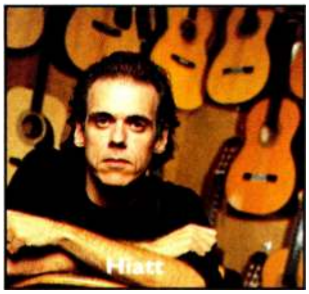
Perhaps most important in this year of smoky, heady expectation is that we can see Cray's talents in a clear light. The man is all business, Mr. Meat & Potatos, the quintessential team player. At starfests like the Grammies or the Chuck Berry movie concert, he's perfectly capable of taking his moment at the mike and then retiring to the background to help make the band cook. From Johnny Carson to *SNL* to opening for Huey Lewis, the Robert Cray Band has seized opportunities for exposure and made the third-down conversion with poise and modesty. And in this racially convoluted nation, Cray's nonsectarian tastes trampled across all established lines of white/black radio rigidity, a most encouraging trend in a year when adherence to format meant everything and nothing. With apologies to three very worthy runners-up, my 1987 draft pick is Robert Cray. – *Jock Baird*


STEVE MARSEL ONYX

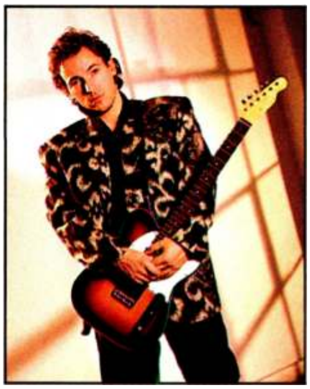
SUPERLATIVES

RECORDS

Ornette Coleman, *In All Languages*
John Hiatt, *Bring the Family*
Prince, *Sign o' the Times*
Replacements, *Pleased to Meet Me*
Bruce Springsteen, *Tunnel of Love*
U2, *The Joshua Tree*
Tom Waits, *Franks Wild Years*
XTC, *Skylarking*


Hiatt

CHRIS CUFFARO


AARON RAPOPORT/ONYX

REQUIRED READING

Chuck Berry, *The Autobiography*
Evan Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel*

ROCK MOVIES

Chuck Berry Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll
Sign o' the Times

WORST MOVIE SINCE *SHANGHAI SURPRISE*

Who's That Girl

RUMOR OF THE YEAR

Thwarted in his attempt to buy the remains of the Elephant Man, Michael Jackson approached Yoko Ono about purchasing the body of John Lennon. Tiny skin patches of the ex-Beatle would be included in a forthcoming deluxe boxed set of Lennon's solo work.

AWARDS: THE ENVELOPE, PLEASE

THE TIMOTHY LEARY "LOOK-BEFORE-YOU-LEAPER" (A SUGAR-COATED BITTER PILL)

to Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, for naming a flavor after diabetic Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead, *then* making a licensing agreement (to avoid a lawsuit) for the use of his name.

THE FCC "FCCIE" (A BRONZE HAND WITH ONE FINGER EXTENDED)

Big Black, *Songs About Fucking*
Leaving Trains, *Fuck*
Overkill, *Fuck You*

A GOLD-PLATED DUSTBIN OF HISTORY

to Capitol Records, who took a lot of heat for releasing the first four Beatles albums as four very brief, mono-only CDs. Perhaps to compensate, the company crammed 74 minutes of the historic *Judy Garland at Carnegie Hall* onto one CD. Unfortunately, the original Garland double-album ran over 90 minutes. (To its credit, Capitol also deleted "The Genetic Method," Garth Hudson's organ solo, to fit the Band's *Rock of Ages* on one CD.)

THE JIMI HENDRIX "LOVE OR CONFUSION" MEMORIAL SCROLL

to the Federal Communications Commission, for redefining what constitutes obscenity on the airwaves. We can see clearly now.

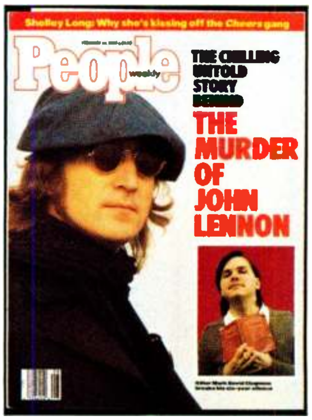
BRIAN DAVIS

A FAULTY STOPWATCH INSCRIBED "TIME IS MONEY"

to Sting, whose *...Nothing Like the Sun* is a $10.98 list, two-record set with under 55 minutes of music. Maybe he should talk to Def Leppard, whose *Hysteria* runs 63 minutes—on one record. Or is this where we get the word "stingy"?

THE DADDY WARBUCKS CITATION FOR EXEMPLARY PROFITEERING IN DEATH

to *People* magazine, for honoring John Lennon assassin Mark Chapman with a cover story.


Shelley Long: Why she's kissing off the Cheers gang
People weekly
THE CHILLING UNTOLD STORY BEHIND THE MURDER OF JOHN LENNON

A LUMP OF COAL IN A CHRISTMAS STOCKING

to Jon Lyons and M. Scott Sotebeer, suing A&M Records, Jimmy Iovine and Robert Shriver III, among others, for allegedly swiping their idea for a Special Olympics benefit LP.

TWO SLICES OF CAKE (ONE TO EAT, ONE TO KEEP)

to Rhino Records, who announced a "save the LP" campaign. Rhino president Richard Foos declared, "I think it would be a shame to lose contact with the traditional vinyl record." Meanwhile, Rhino issues some of the best-sounding releases—on compact disc—in the business.

A XEROX FOUNDATION GRANT TO FURTHER ORIGINALITY IN SONG TITLES

Bruce Hornsby & the Range, "Mandolin Rain"

1987, BELIEVE IT OR NOT

QUESTIONABLE PARTNERS

Neil Young and Martha Davis
Aretha Franklin and George Michael
Michael Jackson and anyone

SINGERS SHOULD BE HEARD, NOT READ

Joan Baez, Judy Collins and Eric Burdon published autobiographies—in Baez's case, her second (so far).

TIMOTHY WHITE/ONYX

GUARANTEED ONE-HIT WONDERS

Curiosity Killed the Cat, Living in a Box, T'Pau

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Boudleaux Bryant, Paul Butterfield, Lee Gaines, John Hammond, Yogi Horton, Liberace, Jaco Pastorius, Peter Tosh

PROOF THAT THE TWILIGHT ZONE EXISTS!

The New Monkees

BUY THE RECORD, SKIP THE MOVIE

The Big Easy, Made in Heaven

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

How *did* Julian Lennon get into *Chuck Berry Hail, Hail Rock 'n' Roll?*

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...?

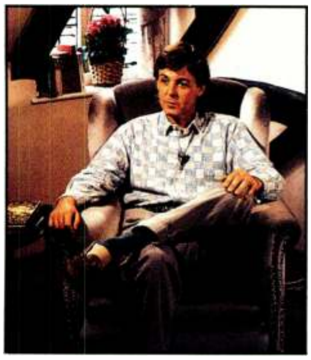
The Senate payola investigation
The Senate MTV probe
The Senate DAT bill
(Answer to all the above: Not much.)

QUOTES YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED

"We've yet to work out details of the ticket prices, but we are sure they won't exceed $85." – *David Chan, Yiu Wing Entertainment Group, on arranging Michael Jackson's shows in Hong Kong.*

"Album sales are stimulated by concert exposure, not radio."
– *Susan Baker, Parents Music Resource Center.*

"It's not our best album."
– *Paul McCartney on* Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.



"I am going to require that my jocks [DJs] make some mention advocating safe-sex practices when they play [George Michael's 'I Want Your Sex.']" – *Dene Hallam, program director, KCPW, Kansas City, MO.*

1987

E J CAMP/ONYX

DUBIOUS COMEBACKS

Boy George, Cher, Jethro Tull, Gary Numan, Carly Simon, Yes

CHILL FACTORS

MOMENTS THAT BROUGHT A LUMP TO THE THROAT

In *Chuck Berry Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll*, piano player **Johnny Johnson** finally got credit for the form he helped invent. God bless him and music producer Keith Richards.

Ronnie Lane, who may or may not be in remission from M.S., embarked on a brief club tour with a fine young Texas band called the Tremblers. Many people came just to pay respects to Lane, who could barely manage one song at 1983's A.R.M.S. shows, but Ronnie turned out to be a pro determined to deliver a real show. He leaned against a stool and fronted the band for over an hour, playing favorites from "The Poacher" to "April Fool" and covering "Tired of Waiting" (autobiographical) and "Shakin' All Over" (ironic).

We all appreciate big rock-star charity benefits, but there's something special about good deeds done quietly on a small scale. We were on a rotten street in New York's East Village one night last summer when a bunch of squatters threw a rent party to raise money for electric meters. **Eric Ambel** of the Del-Lords spread the word and recruited the Smithereens' **Pat DiNizio**, E-Streeter **Garry Tallent** and **Los Lobos** to perform. Los Lobos had the number-one record in the country—but they rocked the tenement until the cops shut them down.

EBET ROBERTS

Brushing past a New York beggar, then recognizing him as **Jaco Pastorius**.

1987

COVER VERSIONS YOU DIDN'T MISS

"Brown Sugar," Man Parrish
"Hotel California," Ritual Tension
"Love My Way," William Orbit
"NSU," Lime Spiders

THIS IS THE END

In a presumed tribute to Jim Morrison, Billy Idol pulled down his leather pants while singing "L.A. Woman" at a Massachusetts concert. Then he couldn't get them back up.

FOR TIME CAPSULES ONLY

Tammy Faye Bakker, "The Ballad of Jim & Tammy"

TOMORROW'S COLLECTIBLES TODAY!

Hot tip: Save your cardboard CD display boxes.

DAT is a RAW DEAL

Button distributed by the Recording Industry Association of America

IS IT LIVE, OR IS IT COPYCODE?

CBS lobbied for a "spoiler" system that would render recordings immune to taping by taking a thin wedge out of the sound spectrum. Music-lovers recoiled in horror at the idea, but producer George Martin claimed he could hear no difference. Meanwhile, Sony—with a vested interest in DAT—went about quietly engineering to buy CBS Records.

STEAL THIS VIDEO

Rising to the Challenge, co-produced by the ever-popular Parents Music Resource Center. Profits go toward the PMRC.

AND WE'RE STILL WAITING TO HEAR THE SINGLE

Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* celebrated 700 weeks on the *Billboard* charts.

MAYBE HE MEANT THE MOVIE

Terence Trent D'Arby claimed his debut LP is better than *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

END OF AN ERA

The last two original MTV VJs resigned their shifts.

ACTUALLY, IT'S ABOUT MASTURBATION

After radio stations threatened to pull George Michael's "I Want Your Sex," Michael claimed the song was intended to celebrate monogamy.

WHATTA GIMMICK!

As part of an agreement with the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Elektra Records asked radio stations *not* to play the Cure's "Killing an Arab" (an eight-year-old song inspired by Albert Camus).

STATIONS ON THE CROSS

In New York, adult-contemporary WYNY went country, and country-music WHN went all-sports. In Los Angeles, KMET—a first-generation progressive-rock station—turned into KTWV, "the Wave," playing snooze-age music without artist identification.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE PMRC

Singapore banned Simply Red's *Men and Women* because of "crude lyrics" in the song "The Right Thing," and John Fogerty's *Eye of the Zombie* because the anti-violence "Violence Is Golden" "glorified violence."

COME BACK, FABIAN, ALL IS FORGIVEN

Dan Aykroyd sang in *Dragnet*
Dennis Quaid sang
  in *The Big Easy*
Patrick Swayze sang
  in *Dirty Dancing*
Bruce Willis sang

OUR FORGETFUL ROCK STARS: BEN ORR AND HIS SOLO ALBUM

"Actually, Orr says, he 'never really thought about' a solo project until Elektra asked him to do one three years ago. 'I was presented with the idea of doing a solo album. Being the bright, intelligent person I am, I said sure.'"

– Musician, *March 1987*

"'I wanna do [a solo album] soon, I tell you. It's about time.'"

– Musician, *January 1982*

TEN REASONS TO BE AFRAID THAT THE '70S ARE COMING BACK

1. The Bee Gees are making records again.
2. Kiss is having hits again.
3. Pink Floyd is touring again.
4. Bob Dylan is making movies again.
5. ELP has a record deal again.
6. Disco is back again.
7. Alice Cooper is decapitating baby dolls again.
8. Peter Frampton is being taken seriously again.
9. Elton John is wearing those goofy glasses again.
10. Crosby, Stills & Nash are singing (more or less) in tune again.

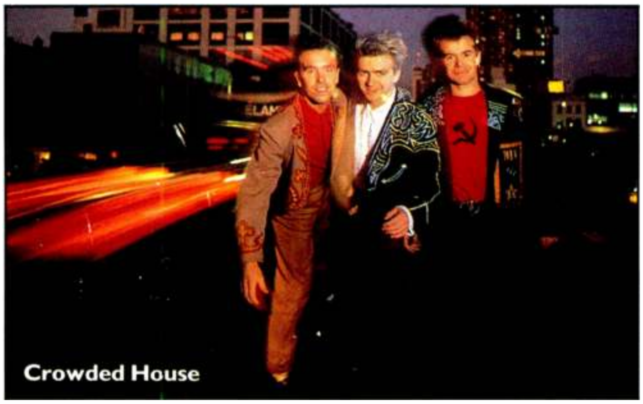
ONE REASON TO THINK THE '70s REVIVAL COULD BE WORSE

1. No Styx reunion yet.

PUBLIC HEALTH HAZARDS

"Young people know that rock has the beat of sexual intercourse. I suspect that the rock addiction, particularly in the absence of strong counterattractions, has an effect similar to that of drugs."

– *Allan Bloom*, The Closing of the American Mind



Crowded House

A STAR IS BORN

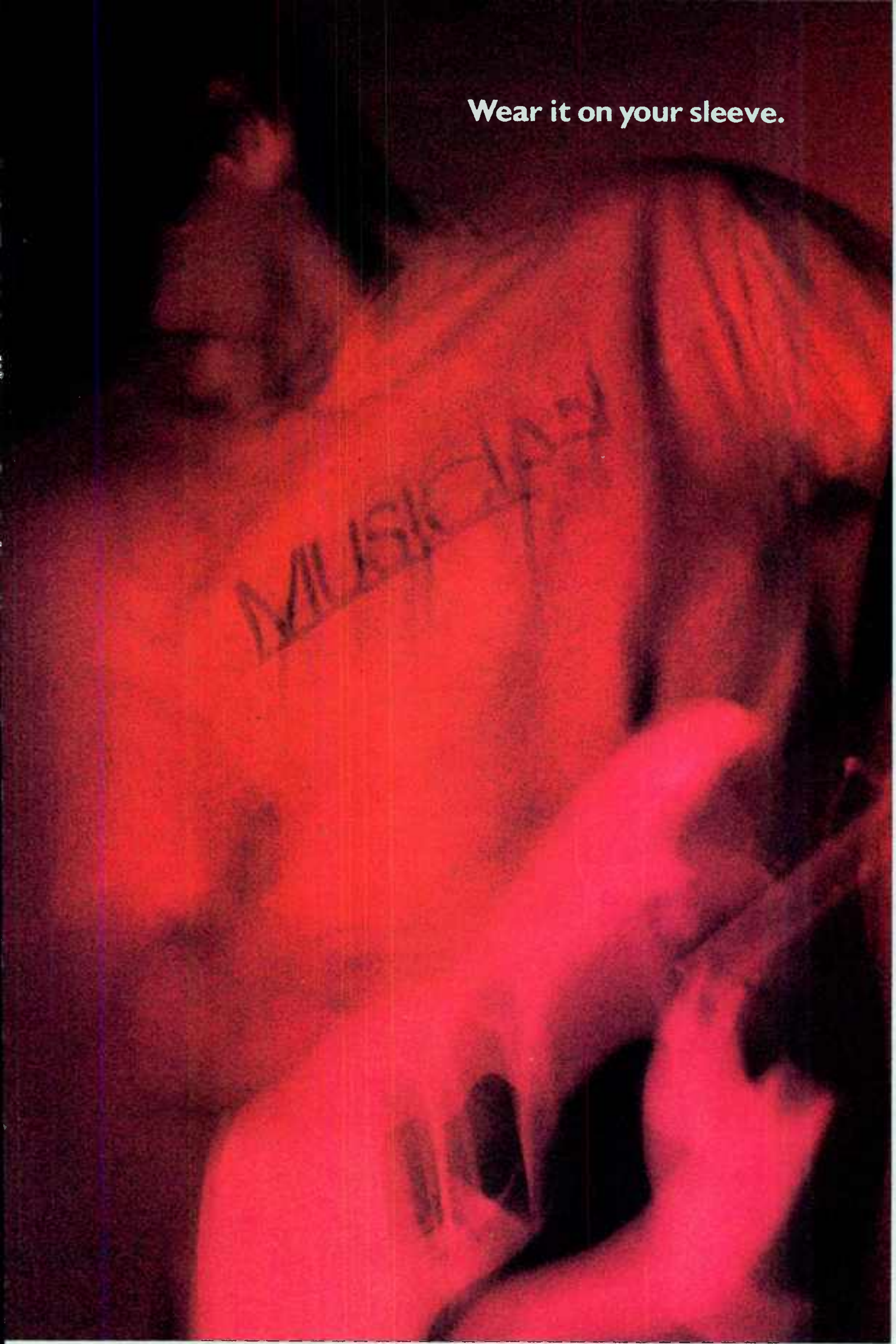
Robert Cray, Crowded House, World Party, Georgia Satellites

ALL THE WORLD'S A (SOUND)STAGE

POLITICAL FIGURES AND THEIR MUSICAL COUNTER PARTS

Joe Biden: George Harrison
George Bush: Boy George
Michael Dukakis: Tom Scholz
Pete du Pont: Sting
Alexander Haig Jr.: Ted Nugent
Gary Hart: Rick James
Oliver North: Jerry Lee Lewis
John Poindexter: LinnDrum
Ronald Reagan: Max Headroom
Pat Robertson: Cat Stevens
Pat Schroeder: Brenda Lee
Paul Simon: Art Garfunkel

GARY GERSHOFF RETNA   TIMOTHY WHITE/ONYX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1987

OUR SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS ROCK STARS

"I think alcohol is *far* worse than heroin....Alcohol is a killer. Not many people do actually die from heroin. You gotta go wrong, really go wrong. People die from alcohol."

– Eric Clapton, blues guitarist and Michelob spokesman, in Musician, *November, 1986*

JOHN BELLISSIMO/RETNA LTD

JOHN BELLISSIMO/RETNA LTD

WHATTA GIMMICK! (PART II)

CBS Records, citing a "temporary oversupply" of *Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band Live/1975-85*, placed a moratorium on sales and returns of the boxed set.

WE HOPE IN MUTUAL FUNDS

PMRC executive director Jennifer Norwood revealed that the controversial "Washington wives" group is partially funded by the Occidental Corporation and Merrill Lynch.

BOYS WILL BE BOYS

Independent record promoter Joe Isgro, let go by record companies in the wake of 1986's payola scare, responded with a lawsuit against a dozen major labels. In 1987 he settled with Capitol and Motown, and dropped charges against PolyGram.

YEAH, BUT MADONNA IS AN ACTRESS

Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson and Bruce Springsteen all released albums that debuted on the *Billboard* charts at #1.

DAWN OF THE DEAD II

Tiffany became a pop sensation when her manager arranged a tour of California shopping malls.

WHO'S BUGGIN' WHO?

Billy Joel toured the Soviet Union, using the historic occasion to throw a tantrum during one show and kick over a microphone.

SO IN THE END, JUSTICE WAS DONE

Los Lobos released a great album that was virtually ignored—then scored a number-one hit by covering "La Bamba."

B&R
CLOS
GENERAL ME
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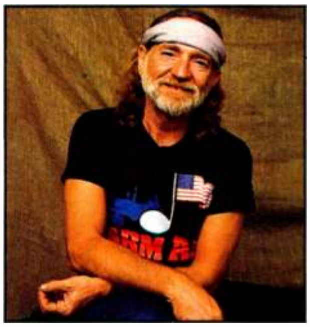
ALES

FEARLESS PREDICTIONS FOR 1988

- Ready for the World will have another hit, entitled "Oh Sheena."
- Tom Jones and Barbara Mandrell will record albums of jazz standards.



MICHAEL ABRAMSON/ONYX

- Willie Nelson will record a duet with Elton John: "To All the Hats I've Ever Loved."
- During the making of his new record, *Ode to an Italian Suit*, Wynton Marsalis will fire his band for sneaking out of rehearsal to attend a Prince concert.
- Madhouse will release an album titled *24*.
- No film biography of the Big Bopper.
- An Ohio Players revival.

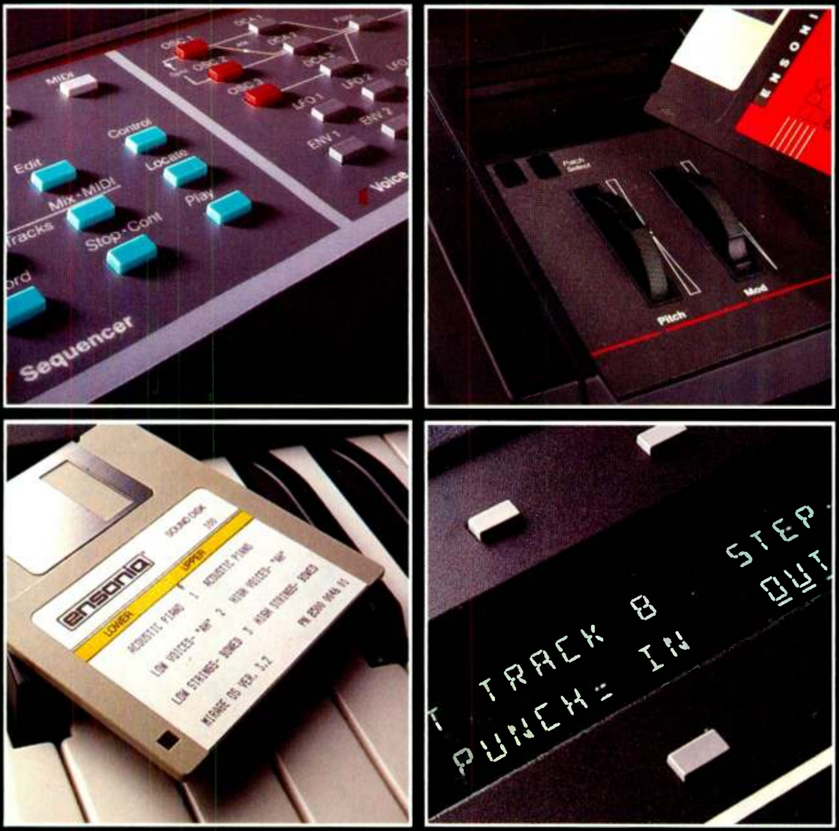
NEXT YEAR'S COVER HITS

Bananarama, "Me and You and a Dog Named Boo"
Beastie Boys, "They're Coming to Take Me Away"
Whitney Houston, "The Greatest Love of All"
Billy Joel, "Feelings"
Los Lobos, "Tequila"

POTENTIAL TOMMY JAMES SONGS FOR '80S STARS

"Crystal Blue Persuasion," the Bangles
"Sweet Cherry Wine," UB40
"Hanky Panky," Los Lobos
"Ball of Fire," Bryan Ferry
"Mirage," Madonna
"Draggin' the Line," Run-D.M.C.

AARON RAPOPORT/ONYX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OSC 2
OSC 3
LFO 1
LFO 2
ENV 1
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Pitch
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LOW STRINGS- BOWED 3 HIGH STRINGS- BOWED
MIRAGE OS VER. 3.2
TRACK 8
STEP
PUNCH= IN
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THE TECHNOLOGY THAT PERFORMS

The new Ensoniq EPS Performance Sampler—
The stage-friendly sampler has finally arrived

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EPS

The new Ensoniq EPS Performance Sampler asks that you put aside many of your ideas about sampling keyboards. The whole idea behind the EPS was to make the best sampler for live performance—a hostile environment for even the heartiest of samplers.

The waiting is over

Other samplers make you stand in front of a dead keyboard for up to a minute while the disk drive spins your sound into memory. The Ensoniq EPS is the only sampling keyboard with Performance Loading, a feature that lets you go on playing *while* your sounds load from diskette.

In fact, you can load up to eight complete instruments into the EPS and recall any one at the touch of a button.

Performance Loading—keep on playing *while* your sounds load from diskette.

The keys to expression

Pressure sensitivity, or aftertouch, lets you modify a sound by pressing harder on the keyboard. Unfortunately, the aftertouch found on other instruments has no way of knowing one note from another.

The Ensoniq Poly-Key pressure sensitive keyboard lets *each individual key* respond to how hard you strike it *and* how hard you hold it down. So you can make a single note in a chord play louder, brighter, with more vibrato or any of a dozen other effects.

The acoustic advantage

Acoustic musicians have always had an expressive edge over keyboardists. Sax players can add a growl or a squeak as the spirit moves them. Guitarists can mute a note or add a harmonic when the time is right. Until now, keyboard players could only wiggle a couple of wheels and hope for the best.

The EPS is the first keyboard to give you this acoustic advantage in an electronic instrument. The two "Patch Select" buttons give you instant access to four alternate sound patches of your choice. So now you can add that growl and squeal at the appropriate moment in your sax solo—as the spirit moves you.

Lots more performance goodies

These are only three of the new levels of freedom you can enjoy with an Ensoniq Performance Sampler. There's much more, like the multi-timbral versatility of 20 dynamically-assigned voices (stack all 20 on one key if you like), 8-track polyphonic sequencer, full support of all MIDI modes and programmable stereo panning.

If you're into sampling, you'll be interested to find sampling rates of up to 52KHz, "expert system" looping, 6-stage envelopes, 20Hz-20KHz bandwidth, 96db dynamic range and the ability to have 127 distinct samples in each of the 8 instruments on the keyboard at one time.

But by far the best way to experience the EPS is to get your own hands on one—at your Ensoniq dealer—today.

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ESQ-1 SEQUENCER EXPANDER CARTRIDGE
MIRAGE SOUND LIBRARY
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Enhance your performance with Ensoniq Accessories

The musicians who play Ensoniq keyboards are a hungry bunch. An almost insatiable demand for new sounds and performance accessories began a few weeks after the first Mirage was shipped and it hasn't stopped growing since.

Ensoniq and more than 50 other developers have introduced sounds, programming guides, expanders and editing and librarian programs by the dozens.

Innovation in performance technology

For the first instruments from a new American company to be chosen by the music industry as the Most Innovative Keyboards* two years running is quite an achievement—and no fluke.

At Ensoniq, innovation is a founding principle. The Ensoniq micro-chip development team spearheaded the development of America's most popular personal computer and it's an Ensoniq sound chip that provides the musical power for the Apple® IIGS.

Innovation in service

But technology isn't the only innovation from Ensoniq. Take customer service. You won't find the old "sell 'em and forget 'em" attitude at Ensoniq.

As an Ensoniq owner, you have access to a technical service network that's there to help you, wherever in the world you may be. If you can't find an answer in your owner's manual or at your dealer, you can call the Ensoniq Tech Hotline and talk to an experienced technician.

Plus, every Ensoniq instrument is backed by a one year parts and labor limited warranty. There are Authorized Ensoniq Repair Stations all over the globe that can handle anything from minor adjustments to major rebuilds.

The technology that performs ...for you.

When you buy any Ensoniq instrument you can be sure you've got a technologically-advanced instrument that's backed by a service-oriented worldwide support network.

For more information and the name of your nearest US or Canadian authorized Ensoniq dealer call toll free: 1-800-553-5151.

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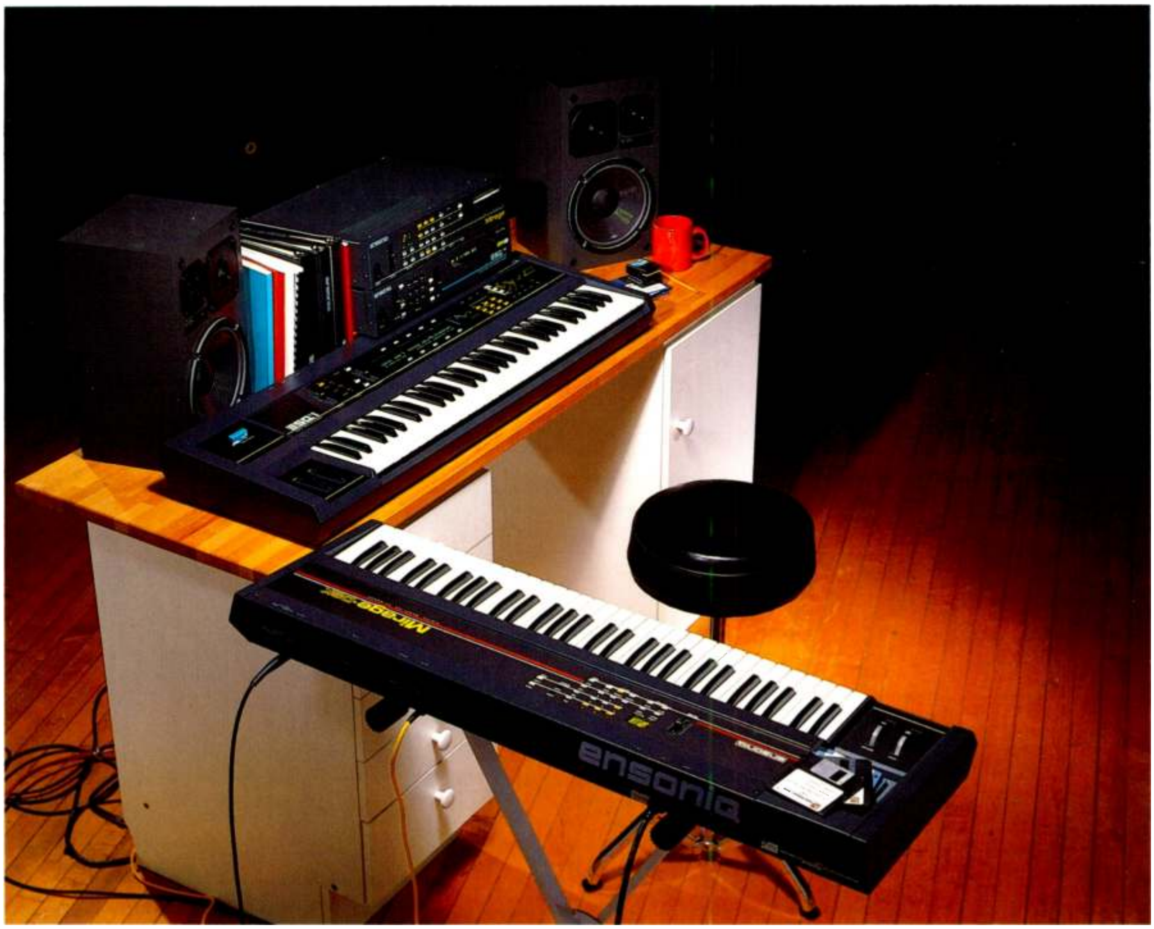

ESQ-1

The award-winning Ensoniq ESQ-1 Digital Wave Synthesizer

In 1987, the members of the music industry chose the ESQ-1 as the year's Most Innovative Keyboard. Quite an achievement for a young American company competing with seasoned international manufacturers. With its great sound and 8-track polyphonic sequencer, it's been the personal recording studio of choice for over 25,000 musicians.

Mirage DSK

The also-award-winning Mirage DSK Sampling Keyboard

In the 1986 industry poll, the Mirage walked off with the Most Innovative Keyboard honors. In the three years since its introduction it has become unquestionably the most popular professional sampler ever made. The Mirage has been heard on hundreds of records and there are literally thousands of great Mirage sounds available.

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EPS
SQ80

EPS

The new Ensoniq EPS Performance Sampler

Never has a sampler been such a standout in live performance. From its Poly-Key™ pressure sensitive keyboard and Instant Patch Select buttons, to its uncanny ability to continue playing while sounds are loading, the Ensoniq EPS Performance Sampler is the most advanced instrument of its kind for the performing musician.

SQ-80

The new Ensoniq SQ-80 Cross Wave Synthesizer

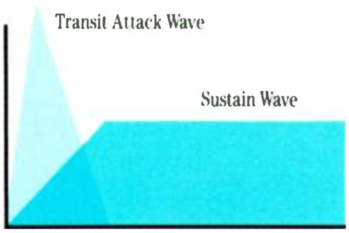
Combining the best features of an esoteric studio synthesizer and the most expressive performance synth, the SQ-80 takes both a step further. The wide-open voice architecture is matched by its ease of use. The unique way it combines sampled and synthesized waves is unmatched by any other synth in its class.

The new Ensoniq SQ-80 Cross Wave Synthesizer— Studio technology with the performance touch

SQ80
ensoniq

When you think of a studio-only synthesizer, you get an image of an instrument with a broad pallette of sounds and a wide range of features, but one that's complicated, temperamental and expensive.

Now think of a synth with the sound and features of a studio instrument, but simple to use, road-rugged and at a price that's affordable for most any working musician. You've just invented the new SQ-80 Cross Wave Synthesizer from Ensoniq.



Cross Wave Synthesis—crossfading attack waves and sustain waves for a completely new character in synthesized sound.

Standing at the Cross Wave

What would a bowed bell sound like? How about a plucked vocal? The SQ-80 can provide the answer to these and hundreds of other sonic questions with a technology called Cross Wave Synthesis.

The Cross Wave technique involves grafting the attack characteristics of acoustic instruments onto the very beginning of a synthesized sound. So you can recreate the sound of acoustic instruments with startling accuracy or invent new sounds with real character and personality.

The SQ-80 has 75 multi-sampled and synthesized waveforms on board. There are even 5 complete multi-sampled drum sets that can serve as the basis for an exciting array of synthesized percussion sounds.

Grace under pressure

Like the Ensoniq Performance Sampler, the SQ-80 features the new Ensoniq Poly-Key pressure sensitive keyboard. Poly-Key pressure adds new dimension to the idea of aftertouch. Each individual key can respond to how hard you hold it down with dozens of dazzling effects.

You can make individual notes leap out of a chord with pressure controlled brightness, loudness and vibrato. Key pressure can even control the crossfading of waveforms.

And your backup group— The Diskettes

The SQ-80 lets you really use the magic of MIDI in live performance. In addition to programs and sequences, the built-in 880K disk drive can save and load MIDI system exclusive data —sounds for voice expanders, patterns for drum machines, settings for signal processors and MIDI samples.

So you can plug in your MIDI cables, power up, slide a disk into the SQ-80 drive and be ready to play before the guitar player tunes up. Each disk can store up to 1728 different programs and 10 full sequencer banks or system exclusive blocks. So you can play 'til dawn and not cover the same ground twice.

Run the show right from your SQ-80. System exclusive data from all your MIDI gear can be loaded from the SQ-80 disk drive.

50-7 varieties

Because of its large selection of waveforms and wide-open voice architecture, the SQ-80 is the perfect replacement for any analog, FM or LA synth. In addition to its ability to create thousands of timbres, the SQ-80 has its own rich and distinct voice character.

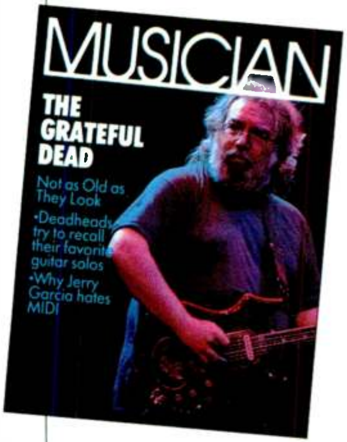
And, as a sonic bonus, the SQ-80 can mimic the best sounds of the D-50, DX7II and other popular synths with surprising ease. Visit your Ensoniq dealer and compare them all—side by side. The proof will be in the performance.

ESP AT WORK

1987

COVERS WE'RE GLAD WE DIDN'T DO:

MUSICIAN
SIMPLE MINDS
Visionaries or just weenies? A couple of questions about their new LP & then we ask about Chrissie
Tina Turner: She Still Hates Ike
Musician Forum: Julian Lennon, Ziggy Marley & Nancy Sinatra discuss MIDI


MUSICIAN
THE GRATEFUL DEAD
Not as Old as They Look
•Deadheads try to recall their favorite guitar solos
•Why Jerry Garcia hates MIDI

MUSICIAN
BAEZ TALKS!
Coping with sit-ins, walk-outs, Sing Out, murdering other people's songs, and wringing yet more mileage out of having once gone on a date with Dylan. From her hot new autobiography!
Also: Judy Collins on MIDI

AMY ETRA/ONYX TIMOTHY WHITE/ONYX CLAUDIA THOMPSON

E J CAMP/ONYX

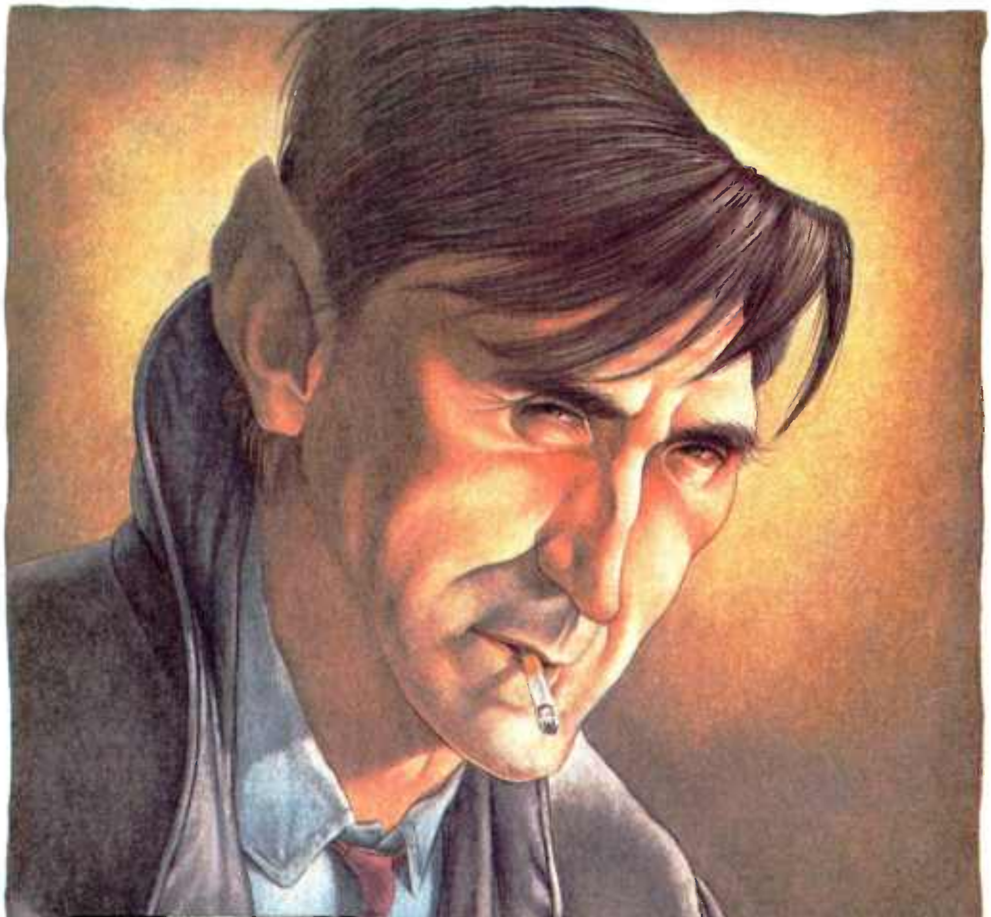
THE ENIGMA THAT IS BELINDA

According to all reports, Belinda Carlisle was the only Go-Go not interested in a career in music—so how cruel that while hard-working and serious Jane Wiedlin bombed out commercially, newly-svelte Belinda topped the charts and scored a lucrative shampoo deal. And how embarrassing for I.R.S. (we believe in artistic integrity) Records that Belinda became their only platinum artist. Still, that was nowhere near as strange as I.R.S. "accidentally" letting Belinda's contract expire last summer. The label's official explanation: They forgot to renew her option. This strained the credibility of an industry used to the fantastic. They forgot to re-sign their biggest artist? Does CBS forget to pick up Michael Jackson's option? Does Warner Bros. let Madonna's contract renewal slip their minds? On record biz barstools the theories flew fast and furious: I.R.S. thought the bubblegum bombshell was hurting their image; I.R.S. is an appropriately-named tax dodge that (shades of *The Producers*) was appalled to find one of their acts actually raking in the bucks. We're not saying we buy any of these rumors. We just like listening to them.

And how about Belinda's new avocation as beauty inspiration to the young women of America? If we got our *Entertainment Tonight* and *People* magazine straight, Belinda shed her pounds and got skinny when she got off cocaine. Say what? Who ever lost weight by quitting cocaine? Is this her plot to get in good with hubbie Morgan Mason's rich Reaganite "Just Say No" crowd? Come to think of it, it just might work. The beautiful people will never be scared off drugs by threats to their health or sanity. But tell them blow is fattening and they won't go near the stuff.

Well, maybe Belinda is part of a bigger plan than we'll ever know. And please, please ignore that stuff about I.R.S. being a tax dodge. It's just a joke. Especially now that I.R.S. has formed a new label, P.M.R.C., to handle acts not commercial enough to be on I.R.S. Say WHAT?

RECORDS



Bete Noire
FERRY

TIM GABOR

LOVE'S STILL THE DRUG HE'S THINKING OF

BRYAN FERRY

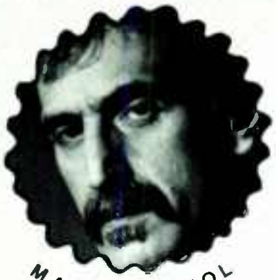
Bête Noire
(Reprise)

He is the phantasmal black beast, that nagging figure of fear, draining our passions, sapping our will. In homage to those private bugaboos the evening brings forth, Bryan Ferry has created *Bête Noire*, a work whose aural beauty sends shivers to the soul. As rock's Surreal Sinatra, the impeccable, all-seeing sentry poised on the outskirts of our good time, Ferry uncorks a night to remember—whether you want to or not.

While *Bête Noire* echoes ideas and atmospherics explored on Roxy Music's *Flesh & Blood* and *Avalon*, and Ferry's *Boys and Girls*, the new album is nothing less than the '80s masterstroke Ferry devotees have long forecast. The sighing guitars and percussive whines that open "Limbo" set the stage for a sensual ordeal of terrible clarity. You feel the song's physical throb, marvel at its textural depth, then get cold-cocked by the savage mood it constructs. The strangled siren wails woven into "Limbo," "The Right Stuff" and "Day for Night" ring out like guitar breaks or keyboard fills, each executed with grim carnal grace. Ranging from gutter laments to invocations of Yoruban voodoo deities, each dire chant is set to tempos which traverse Afro-pop grooves and European street-singing with a simple shift of the hips.

Contrary to popular miscomprehension, Bryan Ferry's music is rooted in inviolable values; not coincidentally, its craft transcends mere excellent taste. Seized by the pulse of "New Town" or "Seven Deadly Sins," you understand why so much disco music was a hollow bust. True glamour and sonic epicureanism hinge on the unfolding of *purposeful* celebration: If the rhythm has no heart, the display no depth of intention, it's just vulgar delusion. Now listen to Ferry's phrasing on "Deadly Sins" and the majestic "The Name of the Game"; to the way he bends the beat with an added breath, then cleanly halves it with a burst of phonic syncopations. This is crooning Bowie hasn't approximated in a decade, and it stands with that of the seductive masters, from Ol' Blue Eyes to Smokey.

The success of these bold explorations shows how far Ferry has come since his tentative 1978 solo effort, *The Bride Stripped Bare*. As its title indicated, that record was an attempt to lend rock 'n' roll the outlook of aesthetic enigmatist Marcel Duchamp. Proceeding from Duchamp's disturbing piece of the same name, Ferry pursued the French artist's post-war sense that the ordered universe of the nineteenth century was forever off its tracks. Trapped, then as now, in a protracted *fin de siècle*, the artist and his latter-day rock



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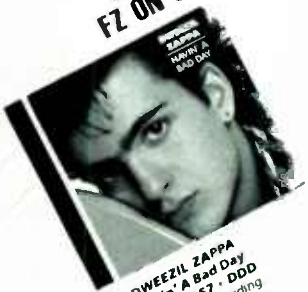
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pupil have focused on arbitrary and unconscious engagements of the psyche—the levels Duchamp dubbed the *inframince*. For Ferry, whose imagination was first inflamed by Charlie Parker and Bill Haley, the chic meters of rock and jazz became "monograms," i.e. an artist's momentary impression of an ideal of sensibility. To actually *make* new monograms, and thus new myths, from scraps of experience and offbeat pleasure is what Duchamp and then Ferry have set out to do.

Should this sound like a lot of high-minded hoodoo, listen to *Bête Noire*'s "Limbo." Check out the arrangement, sounding like a torrid jungleland of the libido, full of flickering electric guitar, gut-tugging congas, ambivalent cries and whispers. The cadence is an elemental presence, rumbling above the clouds and under the floorboards. If the song were a Yoruban myth, it'd probably be the tale of Shango, who toyed arrogantly with God's fire until he became lightning itself. Were it Duchampian, it'd be the continuous Cubist stir of *Nude Descending a Staircase*. But it's Bryan Ferry's own cautionary tale—of sex, soul-jazz, fine art and café society, shattered and then reassembled as a dance floor monogram, the motile specter invading your dreams like a *bête* descending a lightning bolt.

If only because any sequel is unimaginable, this consummate Bryan Ferry creation is one beautiful nightmare.

– **Timothy White**

LESTER BANGS

Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung

(Knopf)

JULIE BURCHILL & TONY PARSONS

The Boy Looked at Johnny

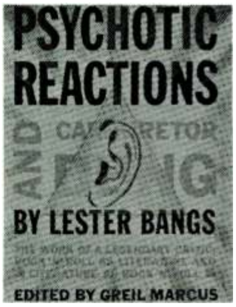
(Faber and Faber)

VARIOUS WRITERS

20 Years of Rolling Stone

(Friendly Press)

Like the bands he most admired, Lester Bangs made the most of his limitations. His greatest limitation was that he wrote about his reaction to the thing, not the thing itself. His greatest strength was that his reaction was often more interesting than the thing itself. Along with R. Meltzer, he was the first to convey the spirit of rock 'n' roll in printed words. Those words, anthologized in *Psychotic Reactions*, can still make you laugh or cry out loud. He was a brilliant reporter of his own mind, astonishing in his flights of fantasy, a mean hand with a metaphor and militantly vulnerable. He could make you listen with new ears. At the same time, he was not curious about what was there after he was done projecting on it. His writing about reggae and dub (not included here) could be spectacularly wrong. Even when he was out there reporting a story, the reader got about a thousand words of Lester, one line from the subject, and another thousand words of Lester. Most of it was entertaining, infusing the reader with Lester's enthusing—rock 'n' roll *ought* to be projected on—but he never ventured far from his own unique mind.



Editor Greil Marcus has made a thoughtful selection of Bangs' articles. Although it is necessarily incomplete due to Lester's phenomenal productivity, most of the stuff I wanted to see again is here, plus many unpublished gems. I must, however, register a complaint about the introduction. Marcus admits he did not know Bangs well and provides a biographical sketch that is uninformative and depressing. In a book that is intended to establish Bangs' place in literary history and introduce him to a wider audience, it is absurd to speculate on Lester's personality when the main witnesses are alive and listed in Marcus' own acknowledgements. Why not just ask them what he was like if you don't know? The guy's only been dead since 1982. Everyone who did know him has a batch of hilarious stories. Lester was, above all, funny. Maybe the *Voice* is planning a Lester Bangs oral history. And if they aren't, *Musician* should.

The Boy Looked at Johnny, an early essay on punk reissued on its tenth anniversary, is post-Bangs writing at its most annoying: moral outrage fueled by ignorance. Despite living in the midst of a social revolution, Burchill and Parsons did all their reporting out of the clip file and had none of Bangs' compensatory virtues of insight and deft language.

In the twentieth anniversary issue, Tom Wolfe praises *Rolling Stone* for "indulging" writers of the New Journalism. So what does *Rolling Stone* do for their twentieth anniversary book anthology? They chop all the articles by two-thirds, giving them a distinct *People* feel. Readers from the early days expecting to immerse in favorite pieces again will be disappointed, and rock 'n' roll fans will feel doubly slighted as many of the important music writers who built the magazine have been omitted: Chet Flippo, Cameron Crowe, Paul Nelson, Dave Marsh, Tim Cahill, Ben Fong-Torres and, of course, Lester Bangs. Timothy White, who wrote the most cover stories in the history of the magazine, appears only as compiler of the John Belushi oral history.

Finally, a word about "hip capitalism": The anthology contains 33 stories (one of mine among them) for which *Rolling Stone* paid $150 apiece to reprint. Although I have been unable to confirm the exact figure, I know that *Rolling Stone* received a book advance in the range of $200,000 from Friendly Press. Allowing $20,000 for photographs, $0 for editing which was done in-house, and $150 for the publisher's own story, this means the writers collected $4800 and Jann Wenner about $170,000 plus royalties. As Bob Dylan says in epigraph, "May you always know the truth." – **Charles M. Young**

Ry Cooder
Get Rhythm

RY COODER

Get Rhythm

(Warner Bros.)

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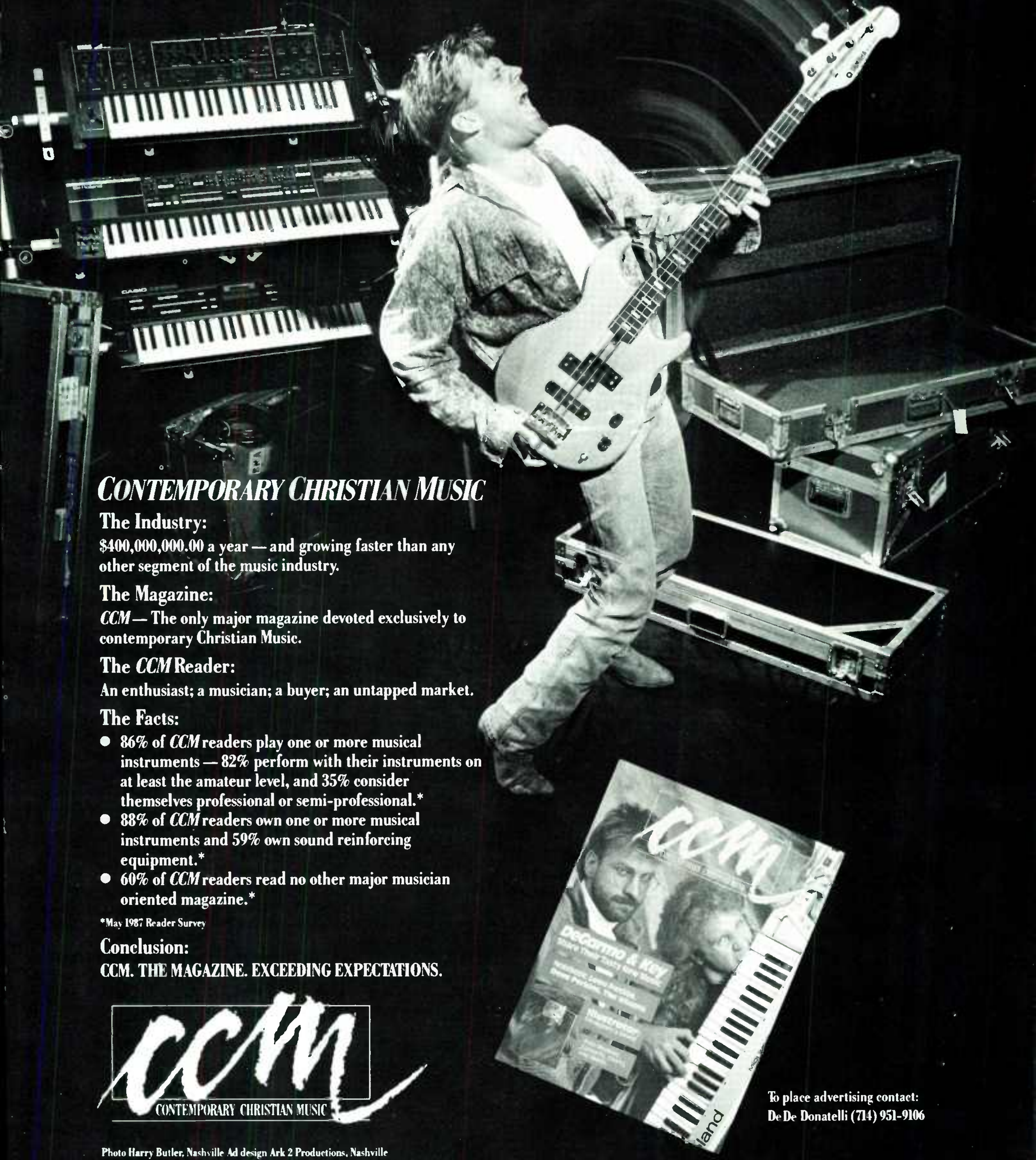

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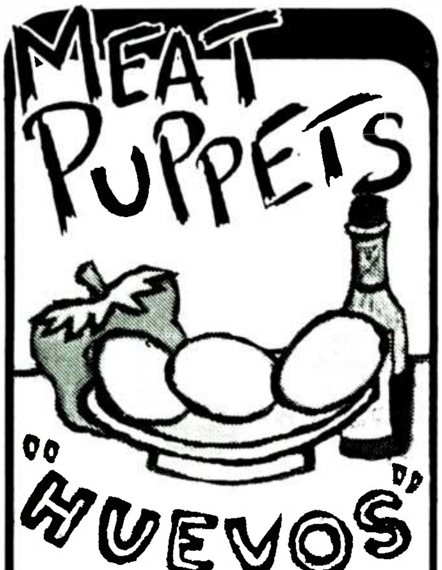

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Want a melting pot? Check out "I Can Tell by the Way You Smell," a stomping guitar bash featuring Ry's shrieking slide, Jim Keltner's very loud drums, Steve Douglas' honking sax and...Flaco Jimenez's accordion. These are Mutant Blues from Another Planet—where the Johnny Cash-penned title track and "All Shook Up" roar, wheeze and moan, where Harry Dean Stanton sits in to sing on Hiatt's "Across the Borderline," where Ry's guitar adds even niftier words to Chuck Berry's "13 Question Method." For the first time, Cooder has crafted an album that simply sounds like Cooder music and no one else's.

Somewhere in the bio that came with this album, Ry Cooder says, "I want to bring listeners to that place where things don't have to be too settled. To me, the search is everything." After 11 albums of search, he's absorbed its lessons; now it's payback time. – **Dave DiMartino**

WILLY DeVILLE
Miracle

WILLY DEVILLE

Miracle
(A&M)

M*iracle* opens with "(Due to) Gun Control," easily the greatest track in Willy DeVille's occasionally brilliant recording career. An ominous midtempo stroll punctuated by sullen beatbox percussion and skeletal backing, this six-minute epic offers a new take on the asphalt Romeo we've come to know over the last decade. Rather than play the comfortable Ben E. King-style crooner, Willy struts new ground, barking, huffing, purring and acting the master thespian as he lays out a defense of urban vigilantes. Despite the objectionable right-wing stance, it's a commanding, original performance. Instead of paying homage to Ben E., James Brown et al., DeVille dares to be their peer.

As for the rest of Willy's first official solo LP, it's good in the usual way. Like the Mink DeVille albums, *Miracle* paints a heartfelt portrait of the artist as streetwise romantic, a familiar dude who treats his "lady" with respect and doesn't hesitate to get in a scrap to defend her honor. This old-fashioned vision seems to play best on slow numbers, which is probably why the LP has a bunch of 'em. If the smoochy "Nightfalls" fails to stir your sentiment, "Heart and Soul," with a lovely contribution by Chet Atkins, probably will. And if that doesn't work, the ethereal "Storybook Love" proves amour is alive and well.

Folks drawn to *Miracle* because Mark Knopfler produced may feel short-changed. The Dire Straits honcho confines his guitar to a supporting role, although the trim licks that shape "Spanish Jack" and "Southern Politician," a couple of leisurely recitations, can't be faulted. Less immediately obvious, and more important, are Knopfler's smaller touches, like the freaky EQing of DeVille's voice on "Gun Control" and concise arrangements throughout. Keeping the music at a simmer, instead of bringing it to a full boil, makes sense with Willy, where enough can sometimes be too much.

Don't misunderstand—*Miracle* has its high points, including a passionate reading of Van Morrison's sublime "Could You Would You?" And DeVille's whole shtick, from the Latino affectations to the celebration of rogues, can be a hoot, provided you're in the mood. But after the thrilling dread of "Gun Control," the tried-and-true ain't necessarily where it's at anymore. Willy, my man, can you dig it? – **Jon Young**

CHRIS STAMEY

It's Alright
(A&M/Coyote)

With the warped perspective unique to New York, it's easy to believe that Chris Stamey has always been around—because, in a sense, he has. Yet *It's Alright* is only his second solo album. In the four years since *It's a Wonderful Life*, singer/guitarist Stamey has left the dB's (the band that brought

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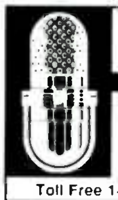

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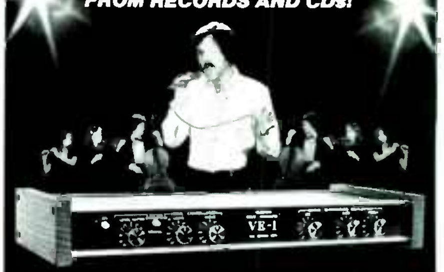

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him to national attention), cut a couple of eclectic EPs, and toured with the cream of the avant-pop crop in the Golden Palominos.

Perhaps as a result of the heady company he'd been keeping, Stamey turns back toward simple forms and forthright harmonies on *It's Alright*. Where *It's a Wonderful Life* stretched song borders musically and lyrically, *It's Alright* (what's with the reassuring album titles?) keeps its mostly unhappy love songs within a safe verse-chorus-bridge structure.

The results are fine, if hardly risky. The opening "Cara Lee" could have cribbed its title, perky feel and pleading tone right out of the Marshall Crenshaw Book of Pop—and darned if that isn't Crenshaw singing along in the background. Stamey's introspective themes revolve around solipsistic protagonists; these songs of trashed relationships, or even the few carefree ones, seem designed for listening "When We're Alone" and/or (to quote another title) "In the Dark."

CHRIS STAMEY
it's alright

Despite his stated fondness for simple rock, Stamey is more his own man when he wanders into less plowed territory. "The Seduction" is itself seductive, with its 6/8 meter, quiet arrangement (acoustic guitar/cello/tabla) and impressionist lyrics. The modified bossa nova of "27 Years in a Single Day" also stands out among the more stereotypical rhythms that dominate these 11 originals.

There are a number of "names" helping Stamey on *It's Alright*—Crenshaw, Alex Chilton, Anton Fier, Bernie Worrell and Richard Lloyd (under-utilized on journeyman rhythm guitar). Their well-developed egos don't steal the spotlight, but they do use up precious oxygen. Maybe they'll help acclimate those unfamiliar with Stamey's sing-song melodies, uncertain pitch and awkward breathiness. As well-crafted as this record is, however, it feels like Stamey is coasting. Not that the breeze isn't nice. – **Scott Isler**

STEVE
GOODMAN
Unfinished
Business

STEVE GOODMAN

Unfinished Business
(Red Pajamas)

Over the course of his career, Steve Goodman released 10 albums on major, minor and independent labels. But it's with *Unfinished Business*, a hodge-podge of spontaneous moments and uncompleted tracks, that the late singer/songwriter fully illuminates his artistry.

Having written such neo-classics as "City of New Orleans" and "You Never Even Called Me by My Name," Goodman established himself as one of America's true songcrafters. Yet his work on Asylum, floundering about in a treacly, pseudo-pop vein, undermined both his writing and his performance. Goodman came off more like a court jester for the singer/songwriter set than a writer who could be both poignant and wry. On his own Red Pajamas label, Goodman's work finally received the sympathetic treatment it deserved, low on production and long on acoustic sensibility. But even on those records, Goodman's vocals were more studied than spontaneous.

Unfinished Business makes good on all levels. Because most of these vocals were never "finished," they retain a lot of instinctive emotion; a song like "In Real Life" allows Goodman's ability as a vocalist to finally be captured on vinyl.

Although this is a posthumous album, it's a fairly joyous outing. "God Bless Our Mobile Home," an ode to a girl "with a portable past," is caught live, while "Millie Make Some Chili" and "Mind Over Matter" generate swing-like fervor. The sound is good overall and several cuts have been embellished by instrumentations allowing Goodman to shine and his fans to have one last, excellent piece of music to enjoy.

Like Goodman's three previous Red Pajamas releases, *Unfinished Business* is available for $10 postage-paid from the label, P.O. Box 36E77, Los Angeles, CA 90039. – **Holly Gleason**

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ROCK

SHORT TAKES

Original Motion Picture Soundtrack
Less Than Zero (Def Jam/Columbia)

You couldn't ask for a purer expression of '80s aesthetic than this Rick Rubin-produced soundtrack. Although the "modern" material is delightfully quirky, from Roy Orbison's cornily heroic "Life Fades Away" to L.L. Cool J's archly understated "Going Back to Cali," the radically revised oldies tell the tale. Whether as effortlessly commercial as the Bangles' muscular remake of "Hazy Shade of Winter" or as studiously indulgent as Slayer's thrashing "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida," these covers approach rock history as a sort of costume ball, one where accuracy doesn't count as much as overall effect. And almost every outfit is a prize-winner.

George Michael
Faith (Columbia)

Calling this Boy Michael's attempt at a Prince album may be both cynical and obvious, but it's not quite the put-down it seems. Both, after all, are sexually obsessed, monomaniacal and more interested in sound than sense. So what if *Faith* lacks the instrumental dazzle of Prince's best; its sinewy rhythms and insinuating melodies offer interest enough on their own. And, apart from the hopelessly hokey "Kissing a Fool," Michael's singing is every bit as sanctified and sure as Prince's best.

Billy Joel
KOHUEPT (Columbia)

Unless *glasnost* is Russian for "shameless self-aggrandizement," it's hard to see the point behind this 16-song ego-fest. Joel's singing is a nightmare of self-indulgence and mannerism; "Baby Grand" is more unkind to Ray Charles than Elvis Costello ever was, while "Big Man on Mulberry Street" suggests Vic Damone choking on an olive. And as far as the "political" intros go, Joel wields irony about as deftly as Sweeney Todd cut hair.

Yes
Big Generator (Atlantic)

Just say "no."

INXS
Kick (Atlantic)

Though by no means the commercial breakthrough that *Listen Like Thieves* seemed to presage, this is not much of a fall-back. Even though the melodies have been minimalized to an astonishing extreme—the vocal to "Need You Tonight" barely rises above a murmur—the net effect is to maximize the band's knife-edged grooves. And in spite of the band's refusal to heat things up beyond "simmer," that's enough to keep things cooking for most of the album.

Steve Arrington
Jam Packed (EMI Manhattan)

Quirky as Arrington's delivery is, his vocal mannerisms—the nasal melismas, falsetto pops and melodic asides—put him deeper into the pocket than any soul singer this side of Al Green. And when he comes up with a song as utterly intoxicating as "Stone Love," Arrington is just about untoppable.

Steve Reich & Musicians
Drumming (Elektra/Nonesuch)

First time through, this sounds like "Music for 18 Musicians" minus the melody. Listen carefully, and the levels of nuance within its seemingly monochromatic orchestration describe an entire world in shades of gray and beige. It takes some getting used to, but once the recording has refocused the listener's attention, slowly shifting patterns magically reveal its structure.

Martha Davis
Policy (Capitol)

Having checked out of the Motels and into a more amenable studio environment, Davis is finally able to live up to her potential, both as a singer and a songwriter. Gone is the frantic melodrama and vocal ostentation; instead, Davis relies on simple phrasing and telling details, making the most of little ironies and big hooks. Besides, who can resist an album that includes a line as divine as: "Chances are God lives in heaven/ Chances are I'll go to hell"?

The Woodentops
Hypno-Beat (Upside)

Fast, furious and giddily enjoyable, this 12-song live set trades the experimentalist, quirky pop of the band's studio output for an attack verging on ecstatic abandon. Granted, that isn't always a benefit—"Everyday Living," for instance, careens giddily over the edge at points—but it hits far more often than misses. (225 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012)

Don Dixon
Romeo at Juilliard (Enigma)

A smart-aleck title for a smart-aleck talent, and what's wrong with that? But as much as Dixon's sound celebrates studio-craft and ambition (c'mon, the guy actually covers "Cool" from *West Side Story*), he seldom lets either get in the way of his songs. Which is why, from the dark throb of "Heart in a Box" to the sweet harmonies of "February Ingenue," it's his heart and soul that make the difference, not his smarts.

Cabaret Voltaire
Code (EMI Manhattan)

Unlike Kraftwerk, whose elegant electronics are intended as an ironic commentary on their music's humanity, Cabaret Voltaire processes sound the way a mainframe crunches numbers. This is anything but machine music, though; cybernetic as the Cabs' sound may be, their sensibility is surprisingly pop, pulling appealing hooks from the microchip throb of "Here to Go" or "Sex, Money, Freaks."

Wall Matthews
Riding Horses (Clean Cuts)

On guitar, Matthews is a six-string wonder, combining Michael Hedges' technical audacity with Leo Kottke's melodic resolve; on piano, he's a gifted miniaturist, matching classical structure with a folkish sense of line. And on both, he shows how to make quiet instrumental music without turning it into aural wallpaper. (Box 16264, Roland Park Station, Baltimore, MD 21210)

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

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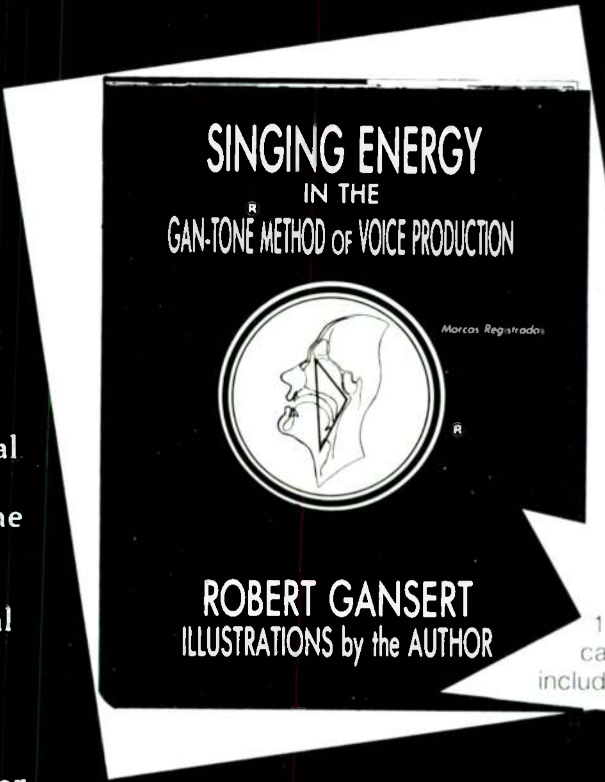
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Jazz

SHORT TAKES

Bosho
Chop Socky (Dossier)

Funky, this stuff: a downtown junkyard band. Three percussionists do mostly joyous, completely urban shuffles. The beat is carried on everything from electronic percussion to kitchenware. Over it all float guitar parts that'll remind you of Steve Cropper maybe, or Nile Rodgers. Hook heavy, condensed and powerful, these are dream versions of what makes pop tick. (N.M.D.S., 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10003)

Various Artists
The Pete Johnson/Earl Hines/Teddy Bunn Blue Note Sessions (Mosaic)

The record opens with the spitting-thunder left hand of Pete Johnson, the unfairly overlooked boogie pianist from Kansas City, the man for whom "Roll 'Em Pete" is named, and the repository of the Southwestern blues secret. His six cuts are a lesson in rhythm—what it means, what to do with it, how it can save lost souls. Johnson's hard to find on record, making these sides indispensable. The other seven tracks, two idiosyncratic, completely post-modern masterpiece solos by Earl Hines and five by the guitarist Teddy Bunn (including one which sounds like a C&W/rockabilly primer, recorded in 1940), aren't shabby either. (197 Strawberry Hill Ave., Stamford, CT 06902)

Fish & Roses
Fish & Roses (Twin/Tone)

Like much of the new, rockish music coming out of the Lower East Side, F&R keeps the scale small. Their production makes them sound next-doorish; their goals sound intentionally limited commercially, even though F&R is heavy on references from pop and jazz (actually, the jazz part's a lie, but I couldn't figure out any other way to put 'em in here). Bass ostinatos, sleazoid organs, odd harmonies, almost C&W vocals and a neurotic set of rhythms make for music that sounds fresh without the obviousness of experimentation.

Wayne Horvitz/Butch Morris/Robert Previte
nine below zero (Sound Aspects/PSI)

Built out of familiar fragments—a gospel riff here, a funk rhythm there—Horvitz's compositions sound freely improvised and yet have the harmonic and structural assuredness to prove they aren't. Part of it has to do with the players, who insinuate swing in rhythmically flexible contexts, and create chiming, fragile structures. Using a slew of instruments, the trio insinuates more by omission than most genre addicts get from obviousness. A delicate, masterful record.

Bass Desires
Second Sight (ECM)

There's something sacred about a two-guitar attack, a nostalgia for "Statesborough Blues" maybe, or maybe just an appreciation of power. Bill Frisell and John Scofield give off that power, and if this isn't as much of a tooth-rattler as Bass Desires' debut, it's keeping them up to date, bringing not only a gospelish song to the proceedings but a garage-band tune that echoes "La Bamba." It's the '80s: Technology meets kitsch, classical jazz usurps the rock vernacular.

Abdel Aziz El Mubarak
Abdel Aziz El Mubarak (Globestyle/Tower)

Amed, a Sudanese friend of mine, tells me that Mubarak is a star in the Sudan. I'm all for it, because the music he writes for accordion, guitar, violins, saxophone, bass and drums swings like your sister did last night. Sounds part Cajun, part Moroccan big band, and the melodies—ahh!!! They're just out-and-out beautiful. The whole thing's so hip, my guess is that David Byrne will use him on his next record/film/book. (1-800-648-4844)

Ike Quebec
The Complete Blue Note 45 Sessions of Ike Quebec (Mosaic)

It's hard not to think that, since the material on this three-record set was recorded for jukeboxes, the music is somehow inferior or compromised. One listen sinks that idea, and reminds us that only 25 years ago it was possible to record jazz and still have an audience beyond specialists. The music here is art, and as a reminder of jazz's fall from populist glory, remember that Blue Note, through the '60s, kept 100 or more singles in print for the profitable jukebox market. This isn't an argument in favor of organ kitsch, either (though I'm more than willing to argue in its favor). The tunes, many blues and nearly as many standards, are near-perfect examples of the swing/bop school. And relaxed—whew, they swing like a hammock. I guess I'm trying to say the tunes are as good as Quebec's album sessions, and if you've ever heard his masterpiece *Blue and Sentimental*, you'll know what that means.

Jean-Paul Bourelly
Jungle Cowboy (JMT/PSI)

It's about rawness, and though it doesn't have an abundance of structural sophistication, Bourelly's debut is easily identifiable, i.e., he's got a vision. *Cowboy*'s a bonecrusher with an unadorned rhythm section chugging away under Bourelly's vocals and distorted guitar, a mixture of Blood Ulmer and Bourelly's own idiosyncratic—but schooled—guitar style. You've never heard anything like it, an argument in itself, and it's steeped in functionalism—funk, blues—that makes the noise more than just an experiment.

BY PETER WATROUS

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SHORT TAKES

Coloured Stone
Black Rock from the Red Centre
(Rounder)

While the best white Australian bands provide inspired derivations on the art of headbanging, this guitar-based quartet of aborigine musicians has concocted a pop sound of unusual grace and soulfulness. Sounding at times like a cross between Los Lobos and a spaghetti western, their songs pack the charge of dance music—perhaps because the composer and singer, Buna Lawrie, is also the group's drummer—while exploring themes political ("Island of Greed"), social ("Black Boy"), spiritual ("Take Me Back to the Dreamtime") and just plain fun ("Dancing in the Moonlight" is a natural jukebox hit). Bruce Lawrie's lead guitar excursions are eerie, hypnotic, conjuring the transcendent spirit of the '60s sans psychedelic overkill. Perhaps because it's drawn from two albums, this is a very tight collection, which only heightens one's appreciation for the freshness and range of Coloured Stone's musical vision. A great record. (1 Camp Street, Cambridge, MA 02140 – *Mark Rowland*

Les Misérables Brass Band
Om-Pah (Global Village)

Having toured the U.S. playing David Byrne's music in "The Knee Plays," Les Misérables now expand their horizons on this sampler of brass-band music from five continents. They're a little stiff on "Black and Tan Fantasy"—we can't all be Duke Ellington's orchestra—but make up for it with an arrangement of "Me and Mrs. Jones" you won't hear at the Rose Bowl. And that leaves four other continents. Complaint: at 32 minutes, too short. (PO Box 2051, New York, NY 10025) – *Scott Isler*

Snooks Eaglin
Baby, You Can Get Your Gun!
(Black Top)

Eaglin, the legendary blind New Orleans guitarist, has more weird rhythms than Pee-wee Herman and Ronald Reagan combined. Unlike them, he's out of the Guitar Slim/Earl King school of playing, writing and singing. With a mostly New Orleanian back-up band, he cruises through near-folk interpretations of funk and some very real R&B. Eaglin's one of these undeservedly obscure great talents, and it's about time someone did him justice. (Available from Rounder)
– *Peter Watrous*

Various Artists
Island of Sanity: New Music from New York City (No Man's Land)

Not quite another *No New York*, but this two-disc set compiled by guitarist composer Elliott Sharp is a veritable who's who and who's new of lower Manhattan's new music/improvising scene. It pleases and teases, limiting 22 bands and performers to one cut apiece. The result: This anthology's satisfying for its eclecticism and for previously unreleased tracks by scene staples like Mofungo, Skeleton Crew and Carbon. Yet you'll want to hear more from the relative newcomers—especially David Fulton's sinewy guitarisms, Mark Dery's stream-of-consciousness psychobabbling and the Ordinaires' graceful pop reconstructions. (New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012) – *Ted Drozdowski*

Sexteto Habanero
Sexteto Habanero (Folklyric)

The second volume of this excellent "Roots of Salsa" series chronicles the career of the Sexteto Habanero, a legendary Cuban ensemble of the '20s and early '30s, and a crucial link between that music's folk origins and its more contemporary urban pulse. These surprisingly well-preserved recordings feature slyly sophisticated arrangements; the percussive interplay of claves, bongos, maracas and bass gently sucks you into a light tropical orbit, then the melodies swing you around with seemingly centrifugal force. A rich historical document, these songs are at times achingly beautiful, music that reaches across time like a cry from the heart. (10341 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA 94530) – *Mark Rowland*

Dissidenten
Life At The Pyramids (Shanachie)

Forget "Walk Like An Egyptian"—here's where you learn to *rock* like one. Dissidenten is a German group with an Arabic bent and a sound unlike anything else on the market. Take "Blue Nile," for example, which suggests Tangerine Dream slumming in Cairo, or "Mata Hari," an infectious dance track that could pass for Talking Heads jamming with Oum Koulsoum. In all, nine songs unlike anything else you're likely to hear this year. (Dalebrook Park, Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ 07423) – *J.D. Considine*

General Trees
Nuff Respect (Shanachie)

Anyone who thinks reggae music lacks hooks obviously hasn't checked out this delightful debut album. D.J. Trees has a flair for catchy vocal lines that put over his mostly humorous commentaries. He uses a slap-back echo Sam Phillips would admire, a backing band (the Riddim Kings) everyone should admire, and borrowed melodies you've got to admire—e.g. the oldie "Rockin' Robin" transformed into "Mi Teeth." The tradition lives on. – *Scott Isler*

Jeff Higgins
Reddog (Survival)

Singing guitarist Jeff Higgins, a.k.a. Reddog, is a Georgia-based blues-rocker whose trio splits the difference between spirited garage-band boogies and the classic '70s Capricorn sound. An unpretentious rarity among today's trendy "roots" stylists, this self-described "redneck rocker" comes highly recommended, imperfections and all. (Box 7032, Marietta, GA 30065)
– *Ben Sandmel*

WILSON

from page 26

around a piano and plan an outline for the arrangement. Jackie loved to hear sustained strings behind him, which meant that the strings just played a pad which gave him room to stroll with the melody. But Jackie would always say, "Dick, gimme them *substained* strings," which became a big gag; I could never figure out if Jackie couldn't pronounce "sustained" or if he simply refused to. Nat, on the other hand, had a big penchant for tympani; I had to wedge a tympani part into songs even when they made no sense in the arrangement. But even a tympani roll at the tail-end of an arrangement made him happy, so it was easy enough to do.

From the time he was old enough to listen to music, Jackie Wilson was a superfan of Al Jolson. Jolson had a profound influence on Jackie's singing which I found very apparent on his renditions of pop songs. When Jackie decided to do an album of all Jolson songs, we went ahead and did it. Since Jackie knew and loved the songs so well, we were able to cut the record in two sessions, recording six tunes per studio block. If there's one record in the Jackie Wilson catalog that demonstrates his amazing versatility, this is it. Like the live record, it didn't sell particularly well. The public couldn't accept the benign irony and great tenderness in Jackie's earnest tribute to the white minstrel boy, Al Jolson; it required a stretch of imagination that people weren't prepared to make.

Jackie's career ended in 1975 on a stage in New Jersey. In the middle of one of his adrenaline-pumping, cardiac-blasting performances, his heart exploded like it was too big for this world, and his brain filled with blood. He collapsed into a coma from which he never returned.

Since New Jersey has its theaters insured for these things, Jackie Wilson became a ward of the state and lived out his last blank years in a home near Cherry Hill. As if fulfilling a sacred pact she'd made with the serio-comic bullet to his bun years before, Juanita Jones went to Jackie's bedside to care for her mute soul man, his spirit freed too long before the body, in the long years of his greatest need. And that, I think, is real love.

I never did see Jackie in his bed near

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DATE OF FILING: October 1, 1987
TITLE OF PUBLICATION: Musician
FREQUENCY OF ISSUE: Monthly
NO. OF ISSUES PUBLISHED ANNUALLY: 12
ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: $21.00
MAILING ADDRESS OF KNOWN OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 33 Commercial St., Gloucester, MA 01931-0701
MAILING ADDRESS OF HEADQUARTERS OR GENERAL BUSINESS OFFICES OF THE PUBLISHERS: 1515 Broadway New York NY 10036
PUBLISHER: Gordon Baird 33 Commercial St Gloucester MA 01931-0701
EDITOR: Jonathan Baird 33 Commercial St Gloucester MA 01931-0701
MANAGING EDITOR: William Flanagan 1515 Broadway New York NY 10036
OWNER: Amordian Press 33 Commercial St Gloucester, MA 01931-0701 a 90% owned indirect subsidiary of Affiliated Publications Inc 135 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02107 The names and addresses of persons known to own 1% or more of the outstanding capital stock of Affiliated Publications Inc are Emily Taylor Andrews, c/o Wells Fargo Bank NA 420 Montgomery St., San Francisco, CA 94163, Baring American Asset Management Company Inc 77 Franklin St Boston MA 02110 BDG & CO c o State Street Bank & Trust Company P O Box 5109 Boston MA 02107 (for the account of Eunice T Vanderhoef) Boston Safe Deposit and Trust Company One Boston Place Boston MA 02108 (for the accounts of the Evans S Pillsbury Marital Trust Margaret Pillsbury Sorbello, the Madeleine Scully Trust and the Taylor Pillsbury Trust), CEDE & CO * Box 20 Bowling Green Station New York NY 10004, Jennison Associates Capital Corporation 466 Lexington Ave., New York NY KRAY & CO * One Financial Place, 440 South LaSalle St Chicago IL 60605 J P Morgan and Company Incorporated, 23 Wall St., New York, NY Multibank Financial Corporation, 1400 Hancock St., Quincy MA 02165 Little Children's Trust c o Barbara Van Ness Larson 753 Oakhill Road Aptos, CA 95003 Neuberger & Berman 522 Fifth Ave New York, NY 10022, Stein Roe & Farnham One South Wacker Drive Chicago IL 60606, Charles H Taylor William O Taylor Benjamin B Taylor Alexander B Hawes Jr and Davis Taylor Pillsbury as Trustees of the Taylor Voting Trust P O Box 366 Boston MA 02101, William D Taylor Robert A Lawrence and Roland D Grimm as trustees of the Jordan Voting Trust c/o Boston Safe Deposit & Trust Company One Boston Place Boston MA 02108, United States Trust Company of New York 770 Broadway New York NY 10035 Warburg, Pincus Counsellors Inc., 466 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10172, WATTERS & CO c o Rick Heard & Bigelow Inc 294 Washington St., Suite 210 Boston MA 02108 (for the account of Elizabeth T Fessenden)
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Paul Curran Vice President

Cherry Hill. They told me he didn't recognize anyone, and I didn't want to replace the vibrant image I had of him crooning in the studio, lighting up a stage, laughing at the dinner table at stupid jokes and Michael's drums. He was a great talent and a great friend. Goodbye, Jackie...I miss you. And I know that's real love, too.

MICHAEL from page 36

most upfront pop music I could—I lost an awful lot of musical credibility. But I also got a huge amount of respect in the black field in America, and that was my one real consolation, something to tide me through. It was like giving the finger to everybody else."

If you're an intelligent individual, and you get introduced to video and business and marketing as early as I did, there is no reason you won't pick up a lot of it by 24," Michael says. But among his youthful British contemporaries—Duran Duran, ABC, Spandau Ballet and Culture Club—only George is still prospering. "I think they didn't necessarily learn the things I learned. And what's more important than that, they weren't necessarily responsible for those other areas [production, videos, etc.]. If large elements of your success are down to other people, you're going to be vulnerable when those people stop being involved.

"Once you've done it yourself, it's very hard to delegate responsibility. Professionally, I'm very wary of people. You get stung a few times. A lot of the lessons I learned, I learned early." For example, after allowing CBS to design the cover of *Make It Big*—"Isn't that the worst album cover you've ever seen?" he groans—Michael now works with Peter Saville, the acclaimed graphic designer responsible for Joy Division, New Order and OMD sleeves.

He wishes he could entrust his records to a producer. "But I'll never find anyone. I have such a direct vision of what I want with each song now that I don't actually see the point in getting anyone else's input. I swear, if I could delegate, I would, because it would make life a lot easier. But having learned how to do it myself, it's very hard to turn it over to anyone."

When he's in England, George Michael still listens to the BBC's weekly countdown to check the progress of his latest single, and to gauge the charts. He doesn't hear many other people making good pop music. His displeasure with the competition only makes him more of a control freak.

"Absolutely. But it's very rewarding. When you do something and it's successful, it's successful totally on your own merits. It's also exhausting. I found the album really exhausting, as well as the videos and planning the tour. Then I think, 'Well, what would you like: that, or that you weren't sure how to make the best of your songs, and you let someone else fuck them up for you.' Obviously, I would never go for the latter."

PUPPETS from page 74

"What we've been handed," Cris continues, giving his brother a baleful stare, "is something unique, though. We stand in our own light essentially. See, there's things you can do to get bigger things handed to you faster, but we've never really put anything in front of ourselves that we didn't know we could achieve. We didn't have low expectations, we had *no* expectations." Bostrom nods vigorously.

"Oh, the whole thing is so confusing," Curt concludes. "I mean, why does anyone do anything? For themselves, of course. We love what we do, so nothing else matters. Basically, the things that I'd like to be heavily rewarded with for doing this haven't even been invented yet. So until they are..." he gestures at his brother, at Bostrom, lying sprawled on the living-room floor over cartons of dead pizza, half-opened paperback novels, crumpled napkins, at ugliness made beautiful by burning desire, "I'll just have to settle for this."

R.E.M. from page 68

people. How many of the people that you meet in a day do you either love or hate? Most people are just okay. That's how we're bound to react to most art, which after all, reflects artists, who after all, are people. Things take time to sink in.

"I think that's what's kind of cool about becoming part of the pop culture," Stipe nodded. "We're entering that mainstream area where you don't have to really seek out the band. We're kind of *there* a little bit. It's not like Pepsi commercials, but it's there. I feel like what we're doing might eventually sink in to people. The songs that I really loved last year were 'Sledgehammer' and 'Addicted to Love.' Those were the songs I heard on the radio that really moved me. So I understand that you can utilize this stuff and make it work for you without becoming a victim of it."

Which is surely a noble ambition. If R.E.M. could get across to millions of people, it would make for a healthier rock 'n' roll environment all around. And at the risk of forcing a contrast where none exists, Stipe's willingness to go for the glory may be a little more realistic than Buck's desire to keep his light under a basket. If they are split that way, Mike Mills is voting with Stipe. "I always like to think that there's something new in the future," Mills smiled. "To stop the process now would be to shut off a chance to experience. I don't think there's a part of me that wants to stop. There's a part of me that's nervous, that's anxious about what the next year might bring. But I wouldn't have it any other way."

Two weeks after I left R.E.M. their album had gone Top 10. I phoned them backstage at a show in the Midwest and asked a very tired Bill Berry which option—Stipe's mass appeal or Buck's cultdom—he'd vote for. "I'll tell you the truth," Berry said, "I agree with Peter. I didn't think there was any way we'd get this far. I don't think I want it to be any weirder than it is now. I have everything I want and I can still walk down the street. I would hate to be like Bono right now. If we're doing this for the pride and the fun, I'm already satisfied. From here it's just going to get to be more of a problem. I hope it doesn't get any worse than this."

He thought a second and added, "Not that this is bad."

DIGITAL from page 52

should correct some misapprehensions I had about two products mentioned recently in these pages. One is **Electro-Voice**'s BK1632 mixing board. Those three "auxiliary" circuits mentioned are actually independent busses, making this a better recording board than suggested. And each channel really does have its own solo button, not the "crude," indirect setup described. For maximum clarification, go find one and mess with it. And **Sonus** messed with *me* after I called their SMX-2000 SMPTE-to-MIDI box "dumb." Actually the SMX-2000 reads and writes MIDI Time Code, so besides being a lot smarter than I am, can locate to any point in a MIDI sequence. That'll teach me to fiddle with Alan di Perna's copy.

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The New Yamaha APX.
From Two Points Of View.

"When Yamaha asked me to try its new APX, I played it in rehearsals and I thought there was something exceptional about the guitar.

"I ended up recording with it on a Marc Jordan record. Everybody was so impressed, they wanted to buy it.

"But, what I loved about it was its sonic quality. It's just real musical. Real even. Real round. Very expressive. I plug it into a board and it sounds like a guitar.

"Another thing – the harmonics are great. Play the top, middle or bottom of the fret board, it's never too thin or too fat. Even just to play it by yourself in a room, it sounds great.

"I've already written stuff on it. There's no way I'm going to give it back."

Steve Farris
Mr. Mister

"When Yamaha asked me to try its new APX guitar, I was supposed to evaluate it then give it back. No way. It's a great guitar.

"What killed me about the guitar was its stereo feature.

"Not fake stereo. Real.

"Not done with delays. You play it and it goes left-side, right-side, left-side, right-side.

"I took it on the road and used it the whole tour. Even for a solo.

"I told them I'd buy it, but I want this guitar.

"I've had other acoustic guitars, but none that could do what this one can. The APX's are the only acoustics I'm going to use."

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