

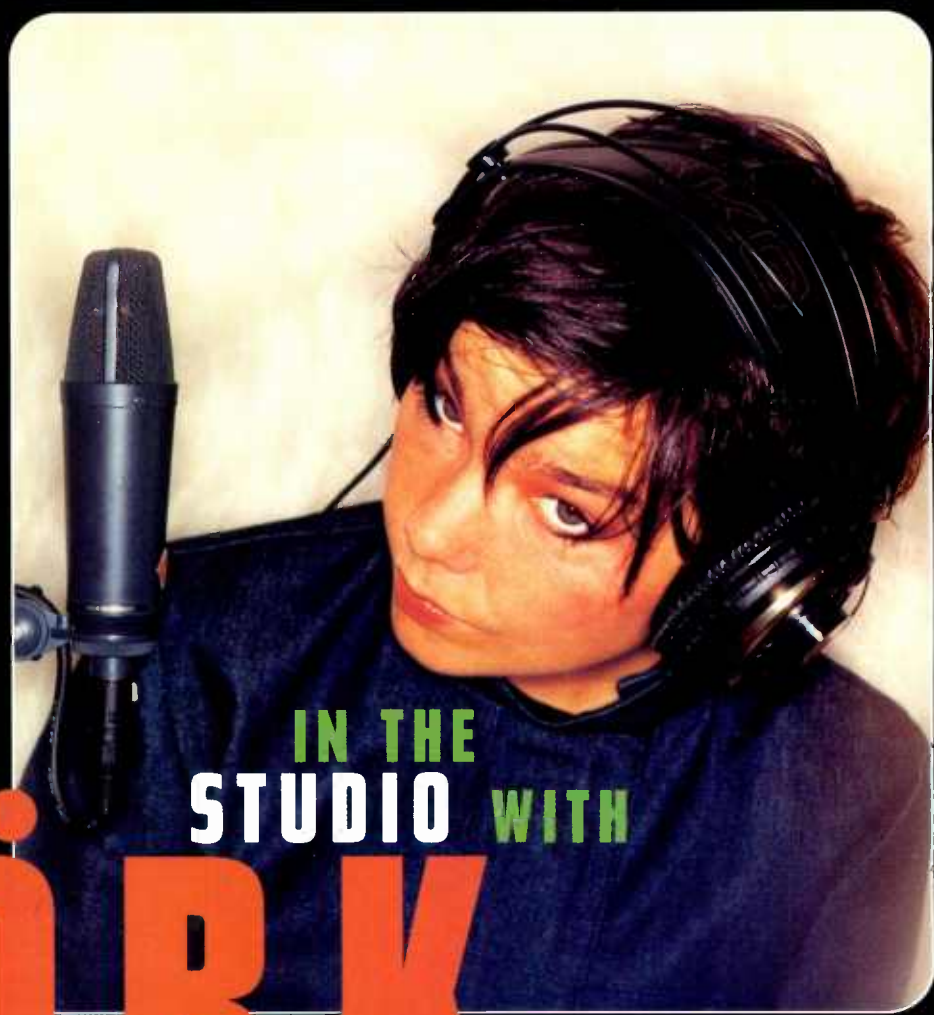
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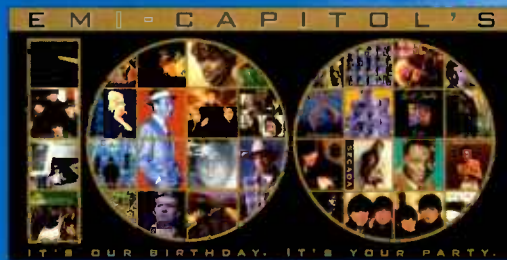
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World Radio History

beaucoup de blues

Your special issue on blues in the Nineties (Oct. '97) has put a smile on my face. The scope and breadth of this issue rings true. But most of all Paul Tingen's moving piece on the redoubtable Peter Green brings it all together. The richness and feeling of Green's voice and playing in the Sixties will last forever. The fact that he has survived and is playing again means so much. When my daughter asks me to renew her subscription, I will only need to look at this cover to answer her question. You have truly hit the note.

**jeffrey paul
natick, MA**

When I saw the words "British Blues Legend Peter Green" on your Oct. '97 cover, I couldn't get to the story fast enough. But as I gobbled up Paul Tingen's words and focused on Jill Furmanovsky's photos, my excitement turned to disbelief, disappointment, and sorrow. It was finally clear that the Peter Green I once idolized is gone forever. Peter always sang and played like Hell hounds were nipping at his heel. Your article sadly confirms that these demon canines have probably caught up with him at last.

**mark plotnick
Mepblues@aol.com**

Odd that you would highlight David Maxwell's statement "There's a temptation to play many notes, but that ignores what the blues is all about" in your Oct. '97 Sideman piece while putting a player on the cover whose entire style goes against minimalist expression and the spirit of the blues. John Popper's chops are one thing—but masturbation is something that should be done at home.

**john van houten
grand rapids, MI**

where's the money?

Although I've been an active musician for over twenty years, with three records and airplay, I have never made any significant money out of my craft. So I read your article on "Where's the Money?" (Sept. '97) with great interest. One of my bands was offered a \$500k deal with a major label. By the time all was said and done, the six musicians in my band would have each ended up with approximately \$6k; the producer, the A&R person, and the lawyer would have all made significant money on the deal.

The sidebar, "One for You, Nineteen for Me," was very telling. Reading the two pieces together, one could conclude that if Oasis had been an American band, they'd be struggling to pay their

mortgages. But since they come from England, they end up as the second highest earners in that country's music world.

It's sad that America's music business is structured so that musicians can't make a reasonable living. It's also sad that musicians do not rebel against the status quo.

**bucky berg
echonyc.com**

Thanks to Roy Trakin for having the foresight—and the balls—to lay "Where's the Money?" on the table. But one issue that the article slightly grazed over involves "ownership" of the work. At the end of the day, after the artist has paid back all the advance money to make the recordings, the record company still owns their work. This equals borrowing money from a bank to buy a home, and when you're through paying off the loan, the bank still owns your house! I'm happy to say that my involvement with Discipline Records moves in absolute contrary motion to this fact of life. All the artists with Discipline own their own work, flat out, with no strings attached. I challenge any major or indie company in the industry to follow Discipline's lead.

**trey gunn
treg@aol.com**

It's both pathetic and surreal that musicians create the product and weasels who can't play a note or distinguish a Stratocaster from a Les Paul suck us dry and live in castles while we sit outside the gates and beg for crumbs. It's about time for some of the multi-millionaire rock stars who will never have to work again for the rest of their lives to chip in and form a record company that's huge, monstrous, powerful, and run by and for musicians. Then let's all sit back and laugh as the accountants, managers, executives, and other suit-and-tie vampires put together a band and try to get signed.

**c. w. vrtacek
forever einstein
georgecostanza@juno.com**

air oughta

Our description of the Kurzweil K2000VP in the September *Fast Forward* was slightly erroneous; the sampling capabilities and 64MB of RAM and PRAM are available options, but they don't come standard with the synth.

Send letters to: *Musician*, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036. Email us at: editors@musicianmag.com

Allow me a moment to crow: About a month ago I chaired a panel discussion co-sponsored by *Musician* and ASCAP. The subject was touring, and I was asked to help put together a group that could tackle that topic from a variety of perspectives. We wound up with a great combination of people, who spent two hours at ASCAP headquarters on Broadway fielding questions on how to get the show on the road: What do club owners look for? What kind of van should a band invest in? And so on.

What impressed me most that night was the energy and the passion of the people who showed up for the event. The ASCAP room was full to overflowing with musicians of all styles and ages, whose common bond was the need to play. This wasn't about being stars or chasing the mirage of fame; it was about finding ways to express ourselves as we must.

The question that affected me most came from one of the oldest attendees, a distinguished gentleman who politely identified himself as a librarian by trade and a freelance jazz critic on the side, who wanted to record his own

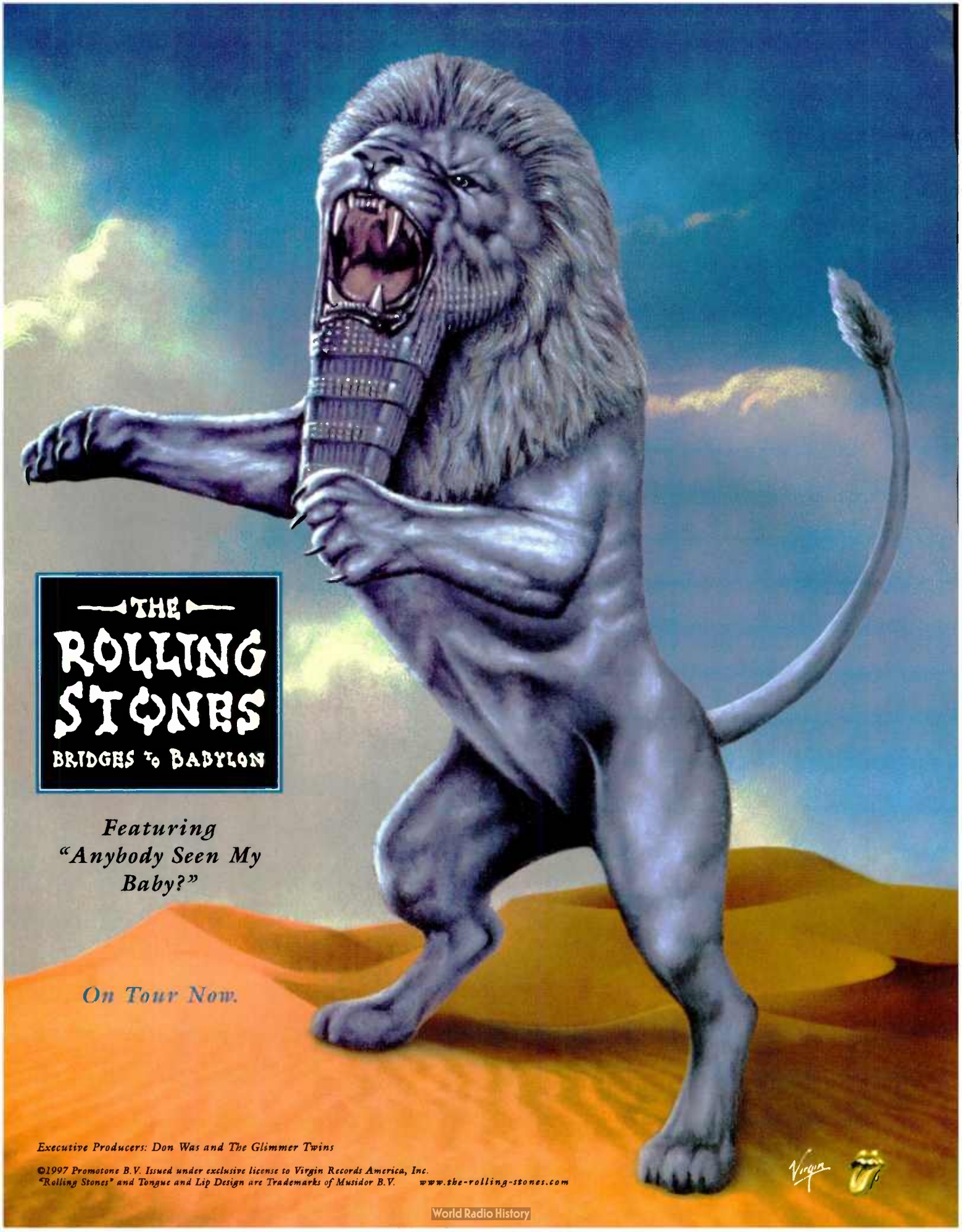
music with the small resources he was able to muster. I asked him to wait until after the event had ended, then I pushed toward the back of the room, where he was waiting. As we talked over his options, a woman who had heard his question joined us, followed by a couple of younger guys. After maybe ten minutes these new colleagues of his had come up with some useful ideas and contacts. It was as simple—and affirming—as that.

That's how I see *Musician*. We can't always meet face-to-face and talk directly, but we can still bring the tribe together each month to trade insights and maybe a bit of encouragement. From the Working Musician section to our full-length Musician Interview, Business piece, and news-driven Headline feature, and all points between, we're here for you. (And if you're wondering about that van question, don't miss this month's Backside—even the funny stuff can be useful sometimes.)

—Robert L. Doerschuk, editor



**From
the
Editor**



— THE —
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whirlwind

You've been doing master classes at colleges. What insights about the music industry can you bring to students?

I don't really know. Remember, when I was signed by a record company it was in '72. Everything was different. But I do know that this isn't a business of saints. There's rape and there's pillage, there's a great deal of acrimony. And record companies are scrambling to sign guys who can't write, can't sing, and can't play.

Are you saying that record labels are deliberately avoiding quality?

It has nothing to do with quality. It has to do with radio formats, which are narrow-casted now and only separate us from each other. You either like heavy metal or soft rock, and suddenly I'm one of those soft rock guys, which to me sounds like soft cock. Well, I'm sorry, I'm not a soft cock guy. Half of the music I make is raucous, but it's difficult for them to program. The hard rock stations don't want to program Billy Joel because it's difficult for their audiences to accept him. Well, fuck you! I'm pissed off at radio. They're a bunch of goddamn wimps. If they never play my records again, I don't give a rat's ass.

Are radio stations the only culprits?

It's the record companies too. It's like, "Why should we push Billy Joel's good stuff? Why don't we push Billy Joel's soft stuff?" Everybody's expecting "the new Billy Joel ballad." I don't write ballads! I write an album's worth of material at a time. I don't want it all to be *bang, bang, bang, bang!* When you think of Beethoven, what do you think of? Soft or hard?

He covered the entire spectrum.

Exactly. The greatest musicians did that. If the Beatles had been typecast by radio after "Yesterday," would we have ever been able to hear "Helter Skelter"? I'm sick of these fuckin' rabbis and priests. Fuck 'em! Fuck 'em all.

Do you mean radio programmers?

No, the critics who say that unless you're this kind of a rock & roll guy, you're not an authentic artist. I read an article in *The New York Times* where Pierre Boulez is quoted as saying, "Unless you understand the need for serialism, you're useless." Fuck you, man! Where does that leave the rest of us? Music belongs to every human being in the world. Damn you for denying the ability to hear music.

Well, you haven't had much trouble getting your music heard by lots of people.

Hey, excuse me! I'm sorry!

I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that ...

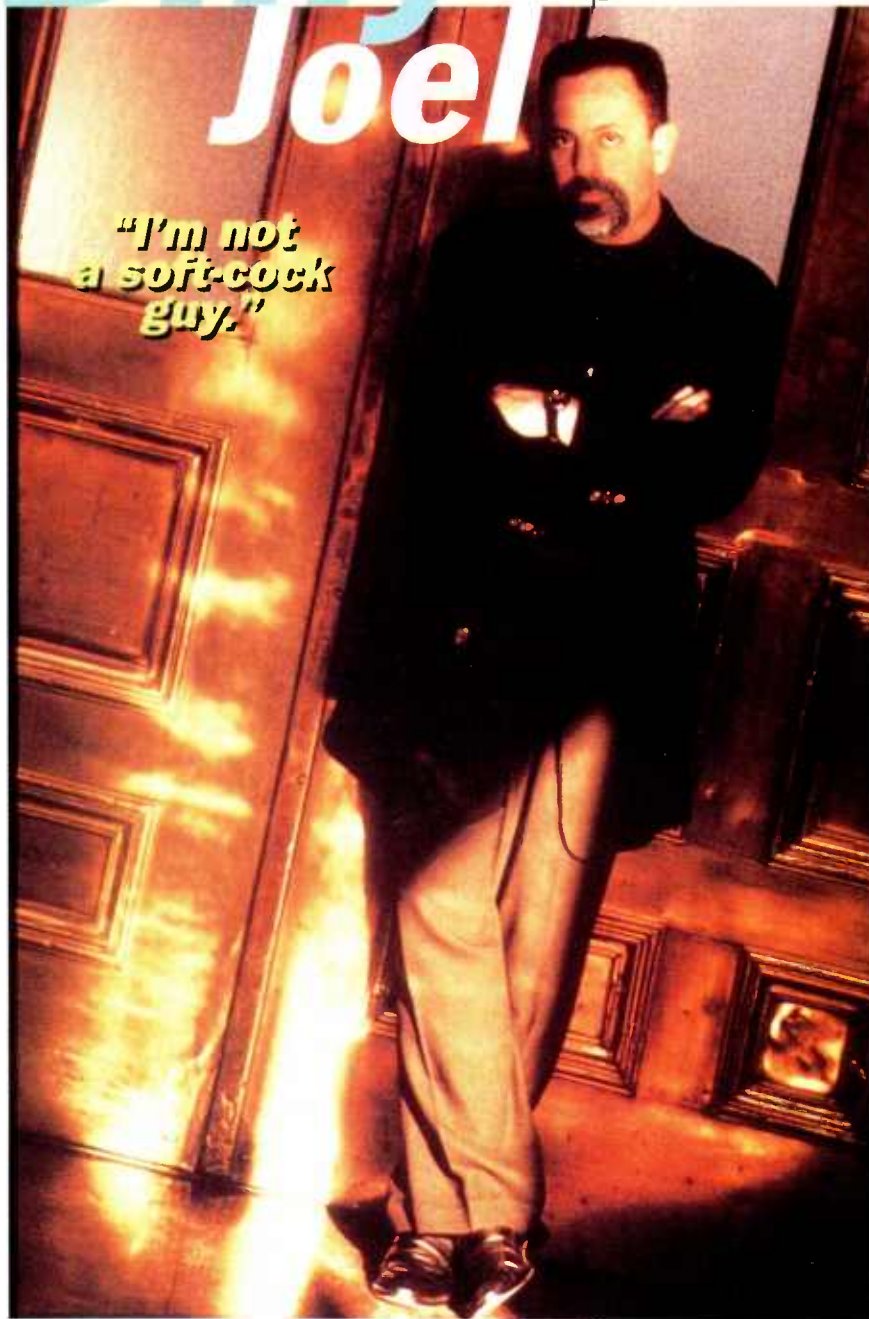
People just don't hear music without words. It's like, "Did you write that for Christie when you were breaking up?" "Fuck you! I don't want to tell you! [Sings opening notes to Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*.] Do you know what that was about?" I want to write music that's just music. What's wrong with that? Fuck lyrics! I'm sick of the tyranny of the lyric.

What do you mean?

I write the music first. Then I write lyrics. So I'm translating the music so people can understand what I did. Then I've got to translate it into a video so the dumbos can get an idea of what it's all about. I'm a pissed-off musician. I'll always be a pissed-off musician. I'm fuckin' sick of being a goddamn clown. "I am the entertainer"? Well, fuck you! I don't want to be an entertainer. Not anymore.—**Robert L. Doerschuk**

Billy Joel

"I'm not a soft-cock guy."



Lenn Irish

résumé

Minutemen
FIREHOSE
Porno for Pyros
Juliana Hatfield
Cicione Youth

Although you've really been the leader on most of your band projects since the Minutemen, playing bass almost connotes the term "sideman."

I've got the luckiest instrument in the band, the one with the most mystery. People aren't sure what you should be, so you get to invent. But it's also glue: kind of a kick drum, kind of a guitar. I'm an ensemble guy; you can't win on bass by becoming a guitar. You're never gonna be the rudder, but you're the charts, the sails. That way you get people's imagination and enthusiasm. With this Buddy Rich thing of telling dudes what to do, you just become a boss.

Was that why you were initially attracted to the bass?

Growing up, I didn't know what a bass was. I saw that every record had "bass" on it, but from looking at the pictures I thought they were guitars with four strings and skinnier necks. Later on, a guy who I'd told that I played bass saw me looking at guitars in a music store. He said, "Hey, the basses are over there." It blew my mind. We didn't even know we were supposed to match A to A, you know? We just figured if it sounded okay, you were in tune. So when punk came along, we were ready for it.

Did that affect how you played in the Minutemen?

Oh, yeah. I didn't think I was supposed to play backup at all, and neither did d. boon. He played really trebly and let me have all the midrange and low end. When people ask me what kind of a bass player I am, I say I'm d. boon's bass player, because he had such an impact on me. But even the guys I did listen to, like Jack Bruce in Cream, weren't that supportive either. Listen to

"Crossroads" on *Wheels of Fire*: He runs right over Clapton! But part of punk was that bass wasn't just the lame guy. And d. boon was very effacing anyway; he wouldn't even play barre chords.

The Minutemen were often seen as the "jazz" wing of punk.

Boon wanted to deconstruct rock into nothing. We never heard jazz until punk came along, but when we did it sounded more like punk than rock to us. He was like, "Fuck the old paradigms. We should come up with our own thing, whatever that is." But after the Minutemen, I froze the paradigm. I only knew one way to play,

But I cannot reinvent the Minutemen, which was my problem in FIREHOSE. So these different projects are ways of finding out what my own way is. You can't learn everything as a boss. When I became a sideman for Perry Farrell, I wore his pajamas!

On your new album, *Contemplating the Engine Room*, you seem to be coming to grips with a lot of your past, not only in the Minutemen but by drawing parallels between your career and your father's life in the Navy.

Yeah, a punk opera [laughs]. I saw a lot of parallels between his life and me and d. boon getting in a van and touring. They're both a rite of passage. Sometimes I wonder if people understand what I'm singing about; it's so internalized, living here in San Pedro. But, hey, I am what I am—like Popeye.—Mark Rowland

Mike Watt

"When I became a sideman for Perry Farrell, I wore his pajamas!"



sideman

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ALESIS

Eder Rodriguez



Photo Oops

As the nature of pop music changes, so too does the role of the publicity photo. In the late Eighties, for example, hair metal ruled, and so did the highly stylized, leather-clad, tresses run amok, reach-out-for-the-camera-with-a-clawfist publicity shot. But today, it's different.

"Never put yourself out there to be stereotyped," says Mark McGrath of the sartorially adventurous **Sugar Ray**. "Be a chameleon. Don't just show long hair and tattoos, because that's who you'll be forever." Sugar Ray learned their lessons about publicity photos the hard way: "We did this one photo shoot where we got all made up and had stylists and wacky shit and we despised the way the pictures turned out." Unfortunately, those photos ended up as the band's international 8x10 and followed them everywhere. "Every venue we played, that one photo session kept biting us in the ass."

One band who breaks a rule or two in this department is L.A.'s **Plexi**, a raucous three-piece with a nightmarish visual image. "I never wanted to look like the guy next door," says Plexi's Michael Angelos. No worry in that. Plexi's carefully crafted look screams with individuality. "It's important that you're communicating your personality with what you wear," says Angelos. "If you're wearing a one-piece rubber suit, you're communicating a sexual undertone." As for Plexi's penchant for ghoulish make-up, Angelos says it's all about confidence. "If you're gonna wear make-up, especially in a press photo, I've learned that you'd better look like you can fuck and fight." —**Bob Gulla**



God Street Wine

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The lure of the road is built into the American psyche, and life as an unsigned act out on the road has become as much a rite of passage as it is a prerequisite to secure a record deal. But as any road veteran can attest, Route 66 isn't paved with gold or good intentions, and naive bands out on the road for the first time are prime targets for unscrupulous promoters and shady nightclub owners. That's why you need signed contracts to make sure you don't get screwed.

"When we started out we were booking our own shows and didn't know we were supposed to have contracts," says guitarist Mac McCaughan of **Superchunk**. "Luckily, we never got burned badly, but we did get paid \$11 once. When they told us that we'd have to play for the door, we didn't have much of a choice." That's why having a signed contract before going out on tour is so important, he says. "The contract is there to protect you, and you have to have someone in the band who will use it to deal with some intimidating, burly club dude at the



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end of the night. You can't just hope that they'll take care of that because you've got a contract—if you want to make money or break even on tour, you've got to stay on top of it." Contracts for gigs should be simple, he says, listing the time you show up for load-in, soundcheck, and to play, and the amount of money you'll get paid. "We also have a standard rider, and we ask for more than we need because we tend to get less." Still, it's important to get what you're promised, he says. "I think what's key is if they're doing stuff that's blowing you off in a way, act more professional than them," says McCaughan. "They have the impression that most bands are a bunch of fuckups, but if you present the situation to them like you're doing your job the right way, demand that they do it the right way, too."

"Always have a signed contract or you have no legal ground to stand on," says Dan Pifer, guitarist for **God Street Wine**. "If you book a gig and the promoter gets burned or the club doesn't make enough money at the door or bar, someone might come up and tell you they can only give you half of what was promised, but you can't let them do that. You can't get a reputation for settling—it will weaken your hand the next time you come around."

—Michael Gelfand

Singing 101

Contrary to popular theory, there is no shame in taking vocal lessons. Sure, if you're so artistically deluded that you think there's nothing a trained expert can show you, you're probably better off without 'em. (Besides, you probably couldn't bear to tear yourself away from the mirror.) But for most of us non-prima donna types, singing lessons represent a relatively inexpensive and ultimately rewarding opportunity to improve our singing—and potentially our entire musical performance.

"Are vocal lessons a good thing? I think they definitely are," says Joshua Medaris, guitarist/vocalist for harmony-rich band **Citizens' Utilities**. "If anything, the main goal in vocal lessons should be to get comfortable with your own voice: A lot of people want to sound a certain way but they don't really know how *they* sound." A good vocal teacher can really bring that awareness out, says Medaris. "The goal is comfort. The more comfortable you are being yourself, the more comfortable you'll be hearing yourself, and the more honesty you'll have in what you're doing."

Medaris has only taken a few vocal lessons, but they had a major impact on his career. "I went through a period where I was really nervous about my voice because it wasn't consistent," he says. "I would sing really well one night and hopelessly bad on the next, and I wanted to see if there was something I was doing wrong. The key thing that I learned in taking the lesson is that singing is ninety percent relaxation, and once you're relaxed, you have the ability to do what comes naturally. It's not necessarily about ability."

"Vocal lessons are beneficial for anybody."

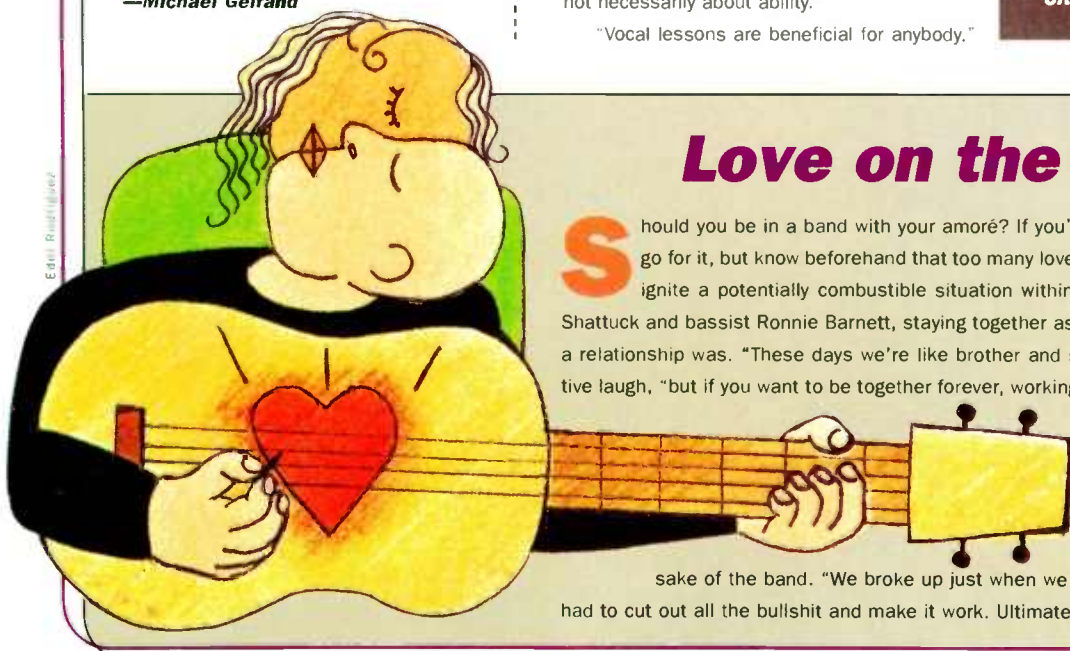


Citizens' Utilities

Love on the Rocks

Should you be in a band with your amoré? If you're the type who enjoys playing with fire, go for it, but know beforehand that too many lover's quarrels with your special friend may ignite a potentially combustible situation within your band. For the **Muffs'** singer Kim Shattuck and bassist Ronnie Barnett, staying together as a band was never in question. Being in a relationship was. "These days we're like brother and sister," Shattuck says with a retrospective laugh, "but if you want to be together forever, working so closely isn't a good idea. Take a tip from Ricky and Lucy."

Shattuck and Barnett were a couple when the Muffs formed, but when the romance started to fade they made a pact to stay friends for the sake of the band. "We broke up just when we got a record deal," Ronnie recalls. "We had to cut out all the bullshit and make it work. Ultimately it saved our friendship. True, our first



Edel Rustigiller

says Katie Agresta, a New York-based vocal coach who's worked with Annie Lennox, Roger Daltrey, Steven Tyler, and Henry Rollins, among others. "What people get confused about is, is it singing or professional singing? People can sing in choirs, but when you're talking about a professional with professional demands, you're talking about a whole different game. Professionals need training. Most have it—whether they admit it or not is another thing, but almost every professional I know takes them. The more successful they get, the more difficult it gets.

"It's a gift you give yourself, an extra edge," she adds. "Most of the really successful people in this biz take lessons. Why leave a stone unturned? Why not get the best you can get? Actually, maybe you don't need them, but wouldn't it be nice to know?" —**Michael Gelfand**

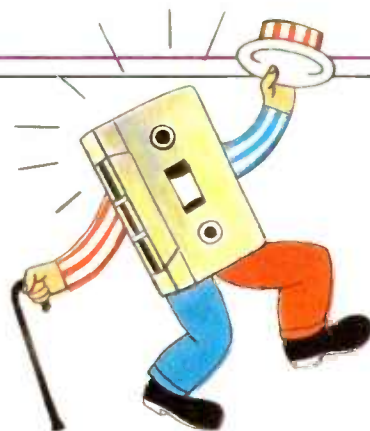


LEGG

album was like our *Rumours* [Fleetwood Mac]—a lot of songs were about me and when I heard them I thought, 'That's quite mean,' but I never really let it bother me. What she sang about seemed kind of universal. Only people who knew us knew they were about me."

But are all intra-band romances ill-fated? Not necessarily, says Georgia Hubley of *Yo La Tengo*. Hubley's relationship with guitarist/husband Ira Kaplan predates the inception of their ten-year-old band. So what's the secret to their harmonious longevity? "In our case, we've committed to each other and to the band," says Hubley. "The more you invest in something, the more you look for ways to make it work." When it comes to the creative process, she suggests keeping things professional. "If you're having problems, don't start mixing them up with something personal. You'll drive yourself crazy."

Michael Eisenstein and Kay Hanley of *Letters To Cleo* became bandmates before they made the decision to act on their mutual attraction; they plan to be married in January. "Everyone told us, 'Don't do it,'" says Eisenstein. "They were all sure that it would be only a few months until we'd break up—and so would the band. I decided early on that the relationship was more important. I could always find another band," he says. "The band has been on the edge of breaking up several times, but we've never come close." —**Kris Nicholson**



Edell Rodriguez

EXORCISING YOUR DEMO'S Demons

According to Greg Hammer, an A&R rep at Universal Records, there are rules that determine which demos get listened to first. Spelling the A&R rep's name correctly is key, says Hammer, "and if you send a cassette, include no more than four songs. If you send a CD, suggest particular songs. Also include a letter with the name and phone number of the band contact. While glossy photos are helpful, they're not critical, so if your demo budget is tight, Hammer recommends skipping the 8x10s and making a follow-up phone call instead.

While a thoughtful demo presentation can take you far, too much creative thinking *can* be bad, says Steve Greenberg, senior VP and the head of A&R at Mercury. Greenberg recalls one event years ago that helped shape his opinion. "A man in an ape suit carrying balloons, a cake, and a boombox walked into the office. The people at the desk assumed it was my birthday, so they let him through and followed behind him. So the whole company was there in my office as this man in an ape suit handed me a cake with a card on it. It said, 'Listen to this tape.' At that moment, the ape pressed play, and this horrible dance tune came on. He started dancing around my office, so I was forced to have him escorted out."

The moral: "Anybody who's really good doesn't need a shtick," says Greenberg. "Fancy packaging and stuff like that don't get anybody serious interested." —**Michael Gelfand**

I'm not a very good bass player," Peter Hook confesses. "I don't practice at home. I don't even know what I'm playing most of the time. Sometimes I'll come up with a riff and then forget what it was, and

someone else'll have to show it to me, because I'm tone-deaf and the fretboard's a mystery to me. In fact, I get a bit paranoid sometimes—I keep thinking someone's going to come along and say, 'Right, your

time's up, you've got away with this for too fuckin' long.'"

Unschooling he may be, but that hasn't stopped Hook from developing an utterly distinctive style. From his earliest recordings with Manchester post-punk legends Joy Division through the band's later incarnation as New Order to his current work with Monaco, the approach has always been instantly recognizable: aggressively picked single-note lines, usually located high on the neck and paying only minimal attention to the song's chord structure. In Hook's hands, the bass is still part of the rhythm section, but it doesn't hold down the low end that often. Instead, it acts as another melodic instrument, a counterweight to the main vocal line.

Like so many other musical innovations, the Peter Hook bass style was originally born of necessity—in this case, the necessity to be heard despite the owning of crappy equipment. "When we started, I had a Sound City 120 head with a 1x15 home-made cab that cost about 30 bucks," he recalls, "and it sounded absolutely awful. The only time you could hear anything was when you played high. And then I remember while we were practicing, Ian [Joy Division's late singer Ian Curtis] would say, 'Hang on, that bit sounded good when you played high and Barney [guitarist Bernard Sumner] played low, let's do that.' It became a style, more by accident than design."

You can hear that style leaping fully formed from the speakers on "Disorder," the opening cut of Joy Division's 1979 debut album, *Unknown Pleasures*, from which Ex. 1 is taken. Underneath Sumner's skeletal guitar part (which centers on Bb

**New Order's
bassist holds down
the not-so-low end**



Peter Hook

by mac randall

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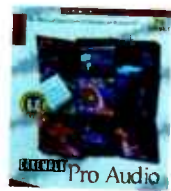


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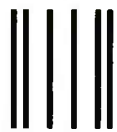
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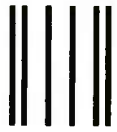


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and employs no more than two notes at a time), Hook explores the fretboard. His forays on G, Eb and D imply a more complicated chord structure under the basic guitar drone. Note the effect created when Hook briefly plummets downward for that low E; it alters the song's whole complexion, partly because of the frequency change and partly because of the note he ends up on—a flatted fifth—bears only a distant harmonic relation to the rest of the song. Such a move should sound ugly, but here the quick turn into dissonance adds punch to the music. (Contributing to that punchy tone is a vintage Electro-Harmonix Clone Theory chorus pedal, an essential part of the Hook sound.)

Though Hook would soon acquire better equipment, he didn't alter his way of playing. "I suppose it's ego," he says. "Playing low on the neck doesn't appeal to me. I find it irksome. I've hardly ever used the low E string. But even if you don't go below the A

or D, you can still drive the song, especially if you've got a good melody."

Twenty years after Joy Division's first recordings, Hooky's still up to the same old tricks, as Monaco's *Music For Pleasure* (Polydor) demonstrates. The chord progression during the chorus of "What Do You Want From Me" is Dm-F-C-G, but Hook plays A-C-D-G, all in the bass' middle octave. On "Tender," he sticks a B and an A over a Cmaj7. And on "Shine" (see Ex. 2), his high-range melody line interacts with the chords in intriguingly off-kilter ways, emphasizing thirds, fifths and sixths.

There's nothing technically difficult about the bass playing on any of these songs. The rhythm doesn't stray far from straight eighth-notes, and there are no big challenges for either the picking or fretting hand. What's worth focusing on here is not chops but something that's a little harder to acquire: namely, a highly original sense of

note choice. As you might expect, Hook has some firm opinions on this subject. "Whenever someone asks me to play the root note of a chord," he says, "I'll immediately want to go the other way. It's like, 'Fuck you, I'm doing something else.'"

Obviously, this kind of approach won't fit every song in existence; it works best in an arrangement with a synth-heavy background that fills in the frequency gaps and/or a guitar part that doesn't rely on full chords, both of which have been New Order hallmarks. But even without these elements, a Hookish bassline can be an original way to liven up a track, if applied judiciously. As Hook himself puts it, "The trick is to come up with something that's not the root note but that sounds right. And I can't explain what that is. I've played around in the studio for ages trying to come up with something that works. It's trial and error—a lot of error."

Ex. 1 N.C.

Ex. 1 shows the bass line for "Disorder" in 4/4 time, key of Bb. The melody is written on a single staff, and the bass line is written on a two-staff system (treble and bass clefs). Fingering numbers are provided for both hands.

Ex. 2 D 8va Em7

Ex. 2 shows the bass line for "Shine" in 4/4 time, key of D. The melody is written on a single staff, and the bass line is written on a two-staff system (treble and bass clefs). Fingering numbers are provided for both hands.

Ex. 1: "Disorder" by Ian Curtis, Peter Hook, Stephen Morris, and Bernard Sumner © 1979 Zomba Enterprises Inc. (ASCAP)
Ex. 2: "Shine" by Peter Hook and David Potts, © 1997 Warner-Chappell Music Ltd. (PRS), admin. by WB Music Corp. (ASCAP)

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Siberry. "Eccentric is a compliment to me," she says.

From the moment she surfed in on her buoyant first single, "Mimi On The Beach," right through to the documentary self-portraiture of *A Day in the Life*, Siberry has always been an intriguing songwriter and a lovable kook.

Her recent disc, *Teenager* (Sheeba), delivers new recordings of some of her early compositions, performed in beautiful, bare-bones arrangements. Listening to songs such as "Viking Heart," "The Long Pirouette," and "The Squirrel Crossed the Road," it's clear that, even as a beginner, Siberry had already mastered her trick of packing too many syllables into a lyrical phrase yet making it sound somehow elegant. And handed traditional ABAB-style song structure, she was adding those E, F, G, and H sections that are neither verse nor chorus but still make

songwriting

perfect musical sense.

Her newest project is a trilogy of live double-CDs, culled from the much-acclaimed series of "theme" shows she did at the Bottom Line this past fall. Siberry, a recent New York transplant, says she feels "a lot tougher" since coming to the city. "I have a new mode that I can access here to stick up for myself and it's very valuable," she laughs.

When it comes to songwriting, Siberry's mode is to let the world flow through her pen like notes flow through the bell of a jazzman's sax. Channeling nursery rhymes, poetry, voices of souls lost and found, and a distinct interest in all things carnal, she improvises songs in an offbeat language that's hers alone.

While we were talking she even used the word "blowing," a jazz cat's term that you don't often hear applied to songwriting. "Words come out and I'm not really thinking about anything," Siberry says. "The songs tell me what to do. The less my brain is involved the more I trust my music."

On *Teenager* you've recorded songs you wrote twenty years ago. Did that give you any insights into your current songwriting process?

Yes, just that there seemed to be an underlying aesthetic that was there from the beginning—like a lot of the chord changes were still interesting to me. It was also interesting to see how my songwriting was similar in a way. It's probably that story of how

The Muses Are Heard

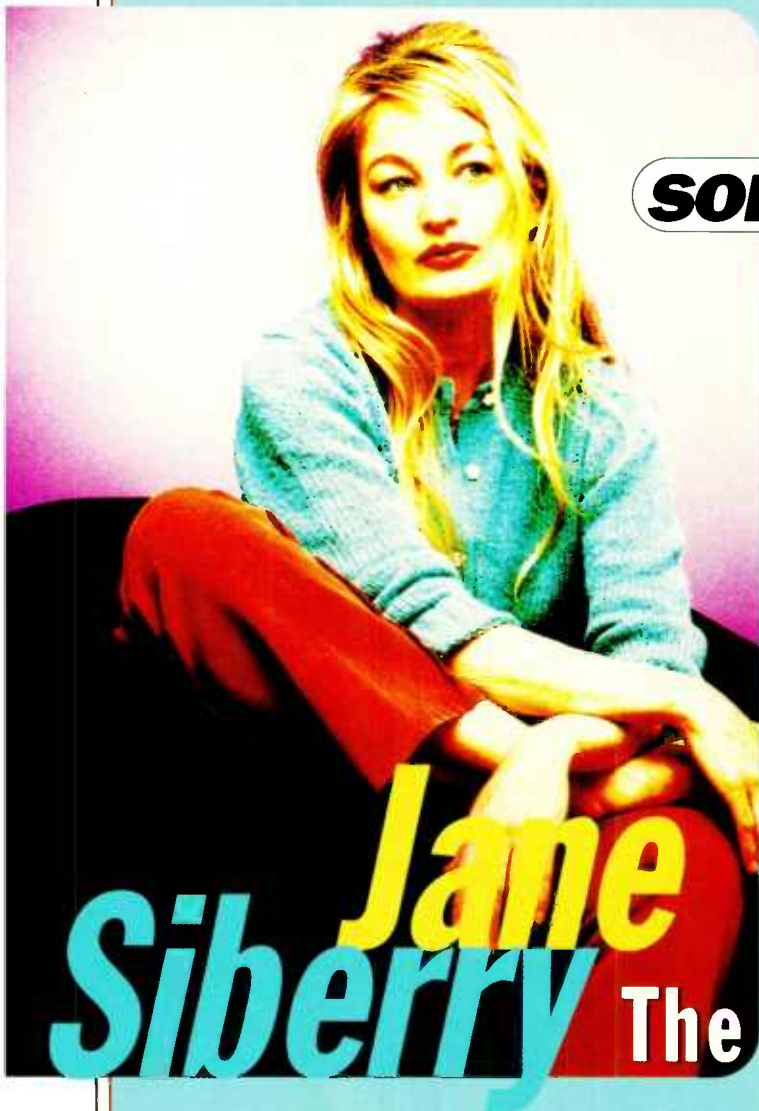
you paint the same painting until you die, you just try to paint it better. There's a template there.

When you sit down to write songs, do you still feel like a beginner sometimes?

Yes, especially when I have to write a song. As soon as my brain kicks in I feel like a beginner, because I don't know how to do it. If I write naturally, it just comes to me and I sort of take dictation. Right now I'm working on a song that k.d. lang wants for her record and I can't really remember how to write a song. I'm fuddling around and wasting time because it's not really in my heart to write it. So I do feel like a beginner when I'm coming from that part of me.

How does writing usually begin for you?

You see something or hear something and it activates a drive in you to capture it, and it usually has an emotional charge to it. You're moved by something. If I have enough time, the song just gathers like a magnet. I rarely sit down to write.



by Bill DeMain

Eccentric. It's a word that's often applied to those female singer-songwriters who blend styles with Hamilton Beach vigor and pour their quirky hearts out in sounds that defy categorization. Kate Bush, Laurie Anderson and Rickie Lee Jones are all charter members of the club. Björk and Tori Amos too. But no one waves her freak flag with more pride and panache than Jane

I just do dishes and stack towels. Songwriters are often an antenna without even knowing what they're attracted to. Most people don't know why they're writing about things or why they use either muted colors or bright reds in their songs at different times in their writing career. That's why I think I trust in myself—the writing that I do that is not brain-driven. I'm not forcing myself on to it. It comes from the gut, or what I see in my

head, and I'll just write it down.

What's the most difficult thing for you as a songwriter now?

The hounds of self-doubt are always at your elbow when you write. That's always been a struggle, probably with most people. It's much easier now than it was before. Mostly I just listen, so if things get in my way it's because something's stopping me from listening, some kind of distortion—like how

you see yourself won't allow the voice of the muse to come through, so you control things and you end up with stuff that sort of smells like a rat. Then you feel it and the listeners feel it. That's part of it. You can't shoot a hundred every time, but I think that's the goal.

You've always impressed me as a writer who has a clear channel to her muses. Are there things that you find helpful to keep that connection strong?

One is just seeing the quality change when I don't trust the muses. When I allow my brain to interfere, the quality goes down. It takes on a sort of self-consciousness or preciousness or something that I really don't like. I hear that in my music and I know exactly when I was afraid or changed it. It's just seeing that difference in quality. And you have to be where you're supposed to be. I know that when I went to Peter Gabriel's collaboration week at Real World a few years ago, my writing changed. The vibration in the valley was so powerful and spiritual. It was too much for me. My lyrics became a bit too highfalutin, like they had messages. I was so uncomfortable with that. It wasn't natural to the state of wisdom that I'm in right now. So I could see clearly that it's not for me to write that way. Maybe other people. The best stuff I do is just who I am, you know? But coming from a sort of intuitive level.

Something else about songwriters that I want to say: I have this thing about what's happening today where there's not much structure. People are sort of having to find their own religions, you know? Sort of lose them and find them. You can't just count on being brought up in a Catholic household, being satisfied and dying a Catholic, or a Jew, or a Hindu. Nothing quite fits our times. Everyone's sort of having to form their own philosophy of what a good life should be.

It's really more important than ever to write about what you know. Not to have answers, not to teach, not to have a mission, but to say how you're finding it is to be alive. That's how we learn and that's the most valuable thing that I read or hear or see in film. How that person is finding being alive, and how to learn from each other. For me songwriting is about that. That's one of the most valuable things someone has to offer as a songwriter. Just to say what you're experiencing.

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by dev sherlock
photographs by melanie weiner

With Luna, things change so radically by the time we record them, I almost never demo a song in any kind of finished form with lyrics and everything," admits band frontman Dean Wareham. "Most of the songs come together in the studio, but we do seem to be taking longer each time to get them perfect," he adds, sounding somewhat perplexed.

Still, when ideas come, Wareham's quick to bound into the ridiculously tiny studio he's set up in a corner of his spacious loft in downtown Manhattan, just a stone's throw from CBGB. Despite its size, the studio has produced a considerable amount: the Cagney and Lacey *Six Feet of Chain* CD (on No. 6 Records, it features a handful of fun, lo-fi covers by Dean and his wife), some independent movie scores, and a few sounds that crept onto the latest Luna album, *Pup Tent* (Elektra).

For example, the track "Whiskers" features one of Wareham's favorite toys, a **Suzuki Omnichord** ① given to him by producer Pat McCarthy. "It's kind of like an autoharp," he says. "They're really easy to write songs on; you could do a whole movie score on one of them. Brian Eno uses them a lot."

Another fave is the **Hasbro Playskool PS 468** toy robot ② that allows him to alter his voice in a number of different, robotic-sounding ways. One of these voices appears on *Pup Tent*'s title track. "We actually went back subsequently and tried to do a straight vocal on it," he reveals. "But it just seemed like the entire mood of the take was created by this really lo-fi, distorted vocal. It was kinda ruined by trying to put a real vocal over it." During the same Toys 'R Us trip, he also purchased a Fisher-Price toy megaphone stocked with "some really cool sounds like orangutans and the passing car sound in 'Tracy, I Love You.'" Alas, the megaphone was lost following a New Year's Eve gig at NYC's Mercury Lounge.

The center of Wareham's studio is an **Alesis ADAT** ③. When asked what motivated the addition of an ADAT to his lo-fi setup, Wareham answers, "Good question." He bought it when they first came out,

at their most expensive. "But I've used it for soundtrack work, and I made the Cagney and Lacey record on it, so it's kinda paid for itself, I guess. Besides, the eight-track I had before just kept breaking." His board is a **Mackie CR 1604** ④, "which everybody uses, it seems. But it's great—easy to use, with diagrams. I don't consider myself much of an engineer. I had a graphic EQ, but I got rid of it because it was too complicated—30 different little things that you had to push up and down! I was like, 'Screw this.'"

His main guitar for stage and studio is a 1958 reissue **Gibson Les Paul Standard** ⑤. He also plays a '52 reissue Fender Telecaster ("I asked Robert Quine, 'What guitar should I buy?' and he told me to buy that"), and a **Silvertone** six-string bass ⑥. "It's from the Sixties—I don't know if there's a method for dating Silvertones. They're cheap, but it gives a really cool Glen Campbell, twangy kinda sound. I found it at Guitar Maniacs in Tacoma, WA."

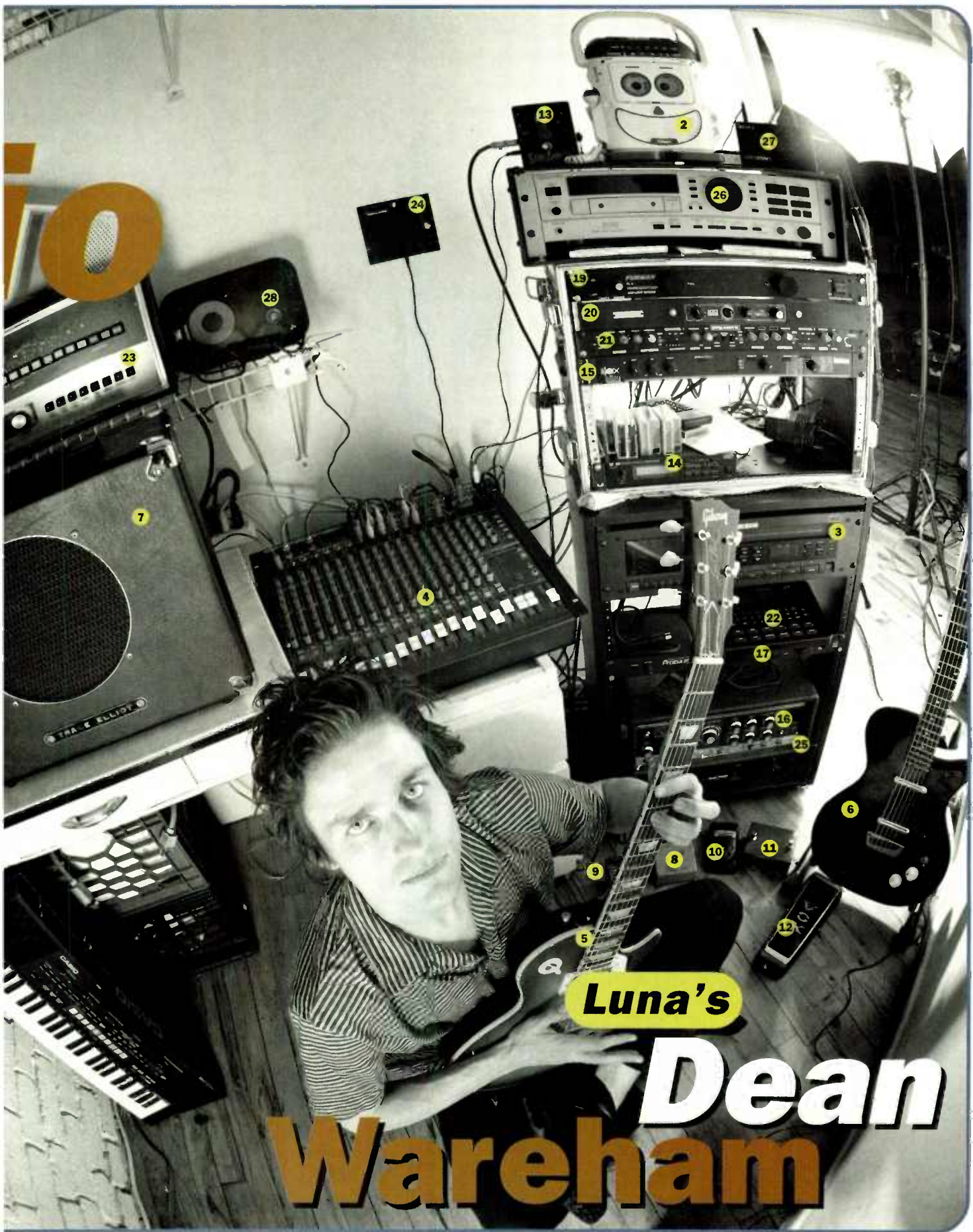
He keeps a 15-watt **Trace Elliot Velocette** amplifier ⑦, for guitar tracks. "They're great," he insists. "Amazing sound and only like \$450. You can also run it through a 4x12 cabinet and get a completely different sound. I used it a lot on the record—it's a great studio amp." (Wareham, by the way, does not have any serious endorsement deals: "Get too many, and you've gotta start putting people's names down on your posters and stuff," he cringes.)

As for effects pedals, Wareham will be the first to admit he's "got tons of them." His main two, normally found at the band's rehearsal space, are a **Boss CS-3** compressor-sustainer and a **Fulltone Full-Drive** overdrive pedal ("They're expensive, but they're really well made"). Also on hand are an **MXR Phase 100** phaser ⑧, a **Boss TR-2** tremolo ⑨ ("I used to have a Demeter

Tremulator, but some prick stole it off the stage after a gig at Maxwell's in Hoboken"), an Electro-Harmonix phase shifter, an **Ibanez TS-5 Tube Screamer** ⑩, a **Prescription Electronics Experience** pedal ⑪ (used heavily on the album), a **Boss**

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Luna's

Dean Wareham

analog delay, and a **Vox RCM-3** wah-wah 12 that he had hot-rodged by guitar tech Geoffrey Teese.

"People can get really carried away with pedals," Wareham warns. "They think they're gonna sound like Hendrix if they go out and get a Uni-Vibe." He does love his **Tech 21 SansAmp** 13, though, for several reasons. "You can run other things through SansAmps, y'know, like vocals—actually, you can use

them to fatten up just about anything."

For rack effects, he has a **Boss SE-50** stereo effects processor 14 and the **Lexicon Alex** reverb/delay 15 ("That thing is great," enthuses Wareham). At the bottom is his prized 20-year-old **Roland RE-201 Space Echo** 16. It's "too fragile for the road," so he mainly uses it for vocals and occasional guitar, like slide parts. "The SE-50 has got analog delay sounds in it, but there's nothing like

that," he sighs, pointing to the Space Echo.

Also in the rack, he keeps an **E-mu Proteus FX** synth module 17 for strings and piano sounds, that he frequently hooks up to an inexpensive **Casio MT-540** keyboard 18. "I paid \$75 for that," he says. "The amazing thing is, it has a MIDI out on it." Other integral components are a **Furman PL-8** power conditioner 19, an **Altec 1566A** mic preamp 20, and a **Valley People Dynamite 2** compressor/limiter 21. "Tom Verlaine sold the Altec to me," he says. "They made a lot of stuff for radio stations like compressors, equalizers and stuff. So when you can find anything, you can usually get it for two or three hundred dollars, as opposed to \$1,000 for new stuff."

Below the ADAT is an **Alesis SR-16** drum machine 22 that usually takes a back seat to the old **Maestro Rhythm King** drum machine 23 that San Francisco-based singer Angel Corpus Christi gave him. "They used to be sold as companion pieces for home organs," he says. "Usually I hate drum machines, but the Maestro is so easy and quick to write with because you just press 'Bossa Nova' or 'Go-Go' or 'Dixie.' There's nothing worse when trying to write a song than getting sidetracked for 40 minutes while you try to program your drum machine." Sometimes he'll run the Maestro straight into the board, but other times, since it's a mono output, he'll delay it a little and put the delay on an additional track, "to create some kind of a false stereo image."

While he "used to have a nice microphone, but it got stolen on the Lou Reed tour," the unlucky Wareham now relies on the **Realistic PZM** mic 24 that also picks up the vibrations off the wall. The **Alesis RA-100** power amp 25 is "the cheapest amplifier I could find for a home studio," Wareham laughs. He mixes down to a **Panasonic SV-3200** DAT machine 26, and his cassette deck of choice is none other than a **Sony D-3 Recording Walkman** 27: "I should buy a decent one, but who wants to waste three hundred bucks on a new cassette deck?" Finally, Dean monitors everything on a diminutive pair of **JBL Control 1** speakers 28. "I didn't have room for [Yamaha] NS-10s in here," he laughs. "The guy at Sam Ash was like, 'You should get NS-10s.' I was like, 'You just don't understand...'"

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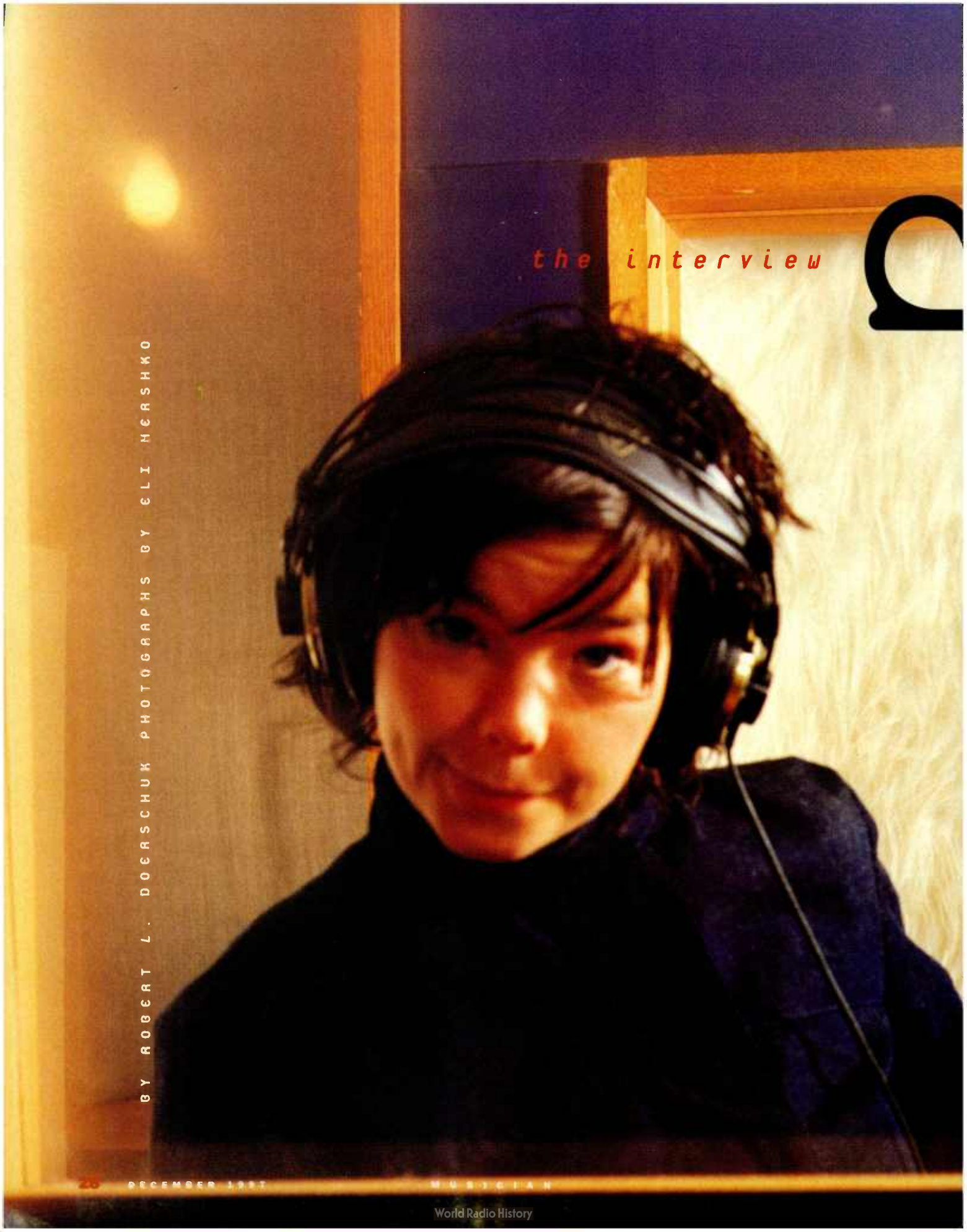
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the interview

Q

BY ROBERT L. DOERSCHUK PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELI MERSHKO

WORLD Sagas you can dance to MUSICIAN

It was a late night of music and anisette and seductive breezes. The road back home from Trevor Morais' El Cortijo studio dipped and slid along a sheer hillside; except for the swirl of stars overhead and the rush of ruts and dirt in the headlight glare, we drove in darkness, following the hint of ocean in the air, exhilarated by what we had heard, enticed by the promise of hearing more the following day. ■ And so we return this brilliant afternoon, near the southern coast of Spain. The valley spreads before us, flooded by sunlight, as El Cortijo comes into view. Morais, an expatriate drummer from the U.K., lives in and owns this place, a hacienda perched high above a swimming pool and a deep, scrub-filled

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ravine. In the distance, looking south toward the Mediterranean, the sky melts into a watery horizon. A patio, lined with colorful tiles and bordered by Cordovan pillars and arches, leads toward the open front door.

A few musicians gather at the dining room table, sipping coffee, munching cereal, talking quietly in a medley of languages and accents. After a while, Björk Gudmundsdottir appears, in white slacks and blue short-sleeved shirt. She's upbeat, smiling. Everyone around the table exchanges good-mornings as she reaches for the fruit bowl. "It's like the best thing before bed," she enthuses. "You open the window, get into bed, and . . ." Without warning, she uncorks a buzzsaw snore. "I mean, I fell asleep with a book in my lap."

That post-nasal skronk, followed by a pixieish grin and a delicate shrug, reflects one element of Björk that seems crucial to her as a person and an artist. Her singing, like her demeanor, is utterly uninhibited: When a melody peaks at a certain high note, some quick impulse prompts her to aim even higher. And she's one of the few artists whose albums can catch you totally by surprise: From saxophone quartets to big bands to electronic racket, Björk will draw from any source to animate her songs.

The only thing one could have predicted for her third studio album (not counting *Telegram*, a collection of remixes) was that it would be even more diverse than the previous two. Well, talk about unpredictable: *Homogenic* proved us wrong. As the title suggests, it's mainly one thing: an ambitious project based loosely on Icelandic literary tradition to create an impression that's more focused than any of her earlier projects. It contains the cascading, ecstatic vocals and wildly unorthodox rhythm programming that have become hallmarks of her style. But this time around, it's all in the service of a single idea, which Björk spelled out for us as we sat on the veranda. A cassette player, containing a rough mix of cuts from the album, sat nearby.

After all the diverse influences you've reflected in the past, is *Homogenic* more of a pure Icelandic expression?

First of all, there is no such thing as Icelandic music. But I want to prove that there should be. Just by looking at the mountains and walking around, you can feel that.

Iceland's literary history is so rich. Why hasn't its music developed as well?

There've been many thoughts about that. The Danish treated us very badly

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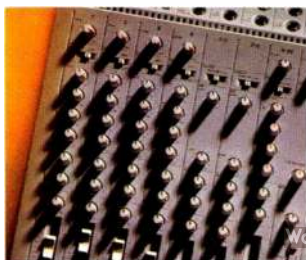
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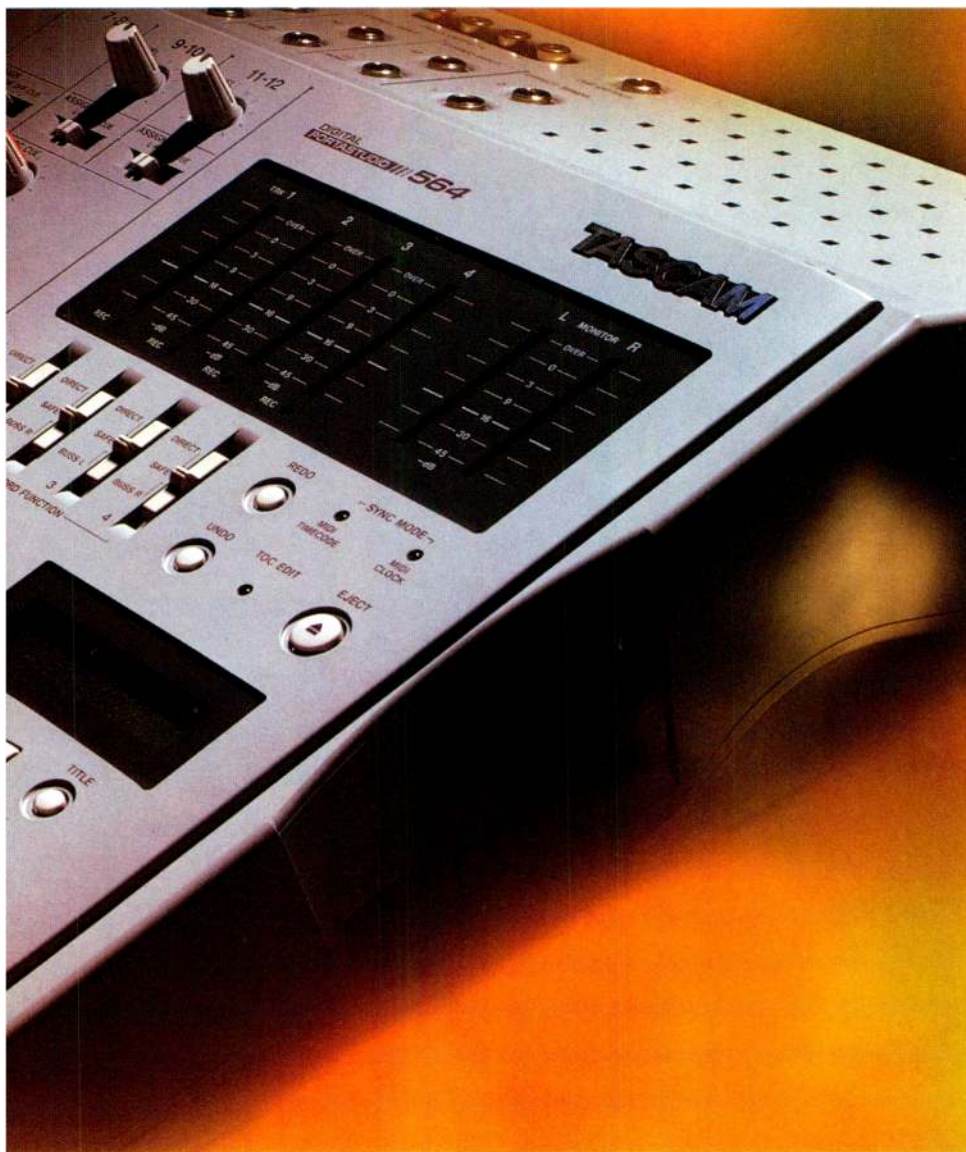
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for the six or seven hundred years we were their colony. For example, the church banned musical dancing. So storytelling became the thing that thrived with us. Storytelling *is* us. The Icelandic people, we were the ones who wrote down all the sagas. They memorized stories from generation to generation; they could go on for, like, two hours. That's why I believe in old-school songwriting. Now, I really respect the Sixties pop culture of the Beatles, where you get one idea and you repeat it nine hundred times. I respect that repetition: "Love, love me do." But that's not where I come from.

What about the musical side of the equation?

First, it's the beats. It's to prove that techno doesn't come only from Germany. There should be such a thing as Icelandic techno, which if you look at nature in Iceland, you'd see that it would be very simple, very explosive, very raw. I mean, NASA sends its astronauts there

to rehearse, because it's like a moon-
scape. So I want the beats like that.

Then the second thing is the strings. I attempted to make string arrangements, with a lot of help from [Eumir] Deodato. He's been like a big daddy, letting me experiment with notes but still being there for me when I need him, and sometimes just completely doing it for me. So the starting point of this album is beats and strings, with the voice in the middle. I wanted to have the whole album like that—just one flavor.

Which would be different for you.

Very different. That's why I call it *Homogenic*. It's like a challenge in that you have few tools to work with but you want the whole emotional scale, as before. Some of my favorite albums are just, say, one voice and one drummer, but you've got one sad song, one happy song, one intellectual song, one prankster song, just with fewer tools. So I approached Marcus Dravs, who's the engineer on this album. Actually, he's a

bit more than that, more like a creative engineer. He's worked quite a bit with Brian Eno; he comes from that angle, where it's not just a question of putting a microphone next to an instrument. I gave him a library of beats that I thought were slightly Icelandic. He came up with loads of noises, and we started tailoring them to the songs. Anyway, I'll play you a tune that Marcus and I did, with that kind of a beat. [*Björk cues up a cassette in a nearby tape player, and begins playing a very noisy track, with an electronic soundstorm raging over a repetitive synth riff in thirds.*]

What's the name of this song?

"Five Years." [*Ed. Note: This track was retitled "Joga" on Homogenic.*] Two days ago we recorded a string octet to this song, so it's very stringy, with a brutal beat and voice, not even trying to work together. Then [co-producer] Mark Bell came. I'd been watching him since 1990, when he was doing LFO, because I like the pioneers who have



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stayed faithful to techno. He did several remixes for me—for example, he did the first remix of “Telegram.” He played with my voice, adding effects. That’s another thing I’d never done, which I’d love to try more. That’s one reason why Mark and I work so much together; I trust and respect what he does for me. If I were to say who influenced me most, I would say people like Stockhausen, Kraftwerk, Brian Eno, and Mark Bell, because the work Mark did when he was

nineteen proved to our generation that pop music is what we understand. We walk around with all these telephones and car alarms, and we hear all these noises. We can keep saying, “No, it’s soulless, it’s cold,” but it’s part of our lives.

Well, this is very important: People have said that I do a bit of this and a bit of that, but that’s never been the case. I never wanted a style simply for style’s sake. Music is a very personal and

human thing, so if I go and do a song with, say, Tricky, I don’t give a shit where he comes from. His race is bollocks. And when I’m talking with you, I’m not looking for your passport and wondering where you’re from or what you brought here, like the hippies do: “I wonder what star sign he is.” No luggage, please! When I work with someone, it’s down to two characters. *Björk Goes Latin*, that wouldn’t be honest.

But when you recorded, say, your rendition of “Like Someone in Love,” the arrangement stays within the tradition of American standard tunes. In that sense, you seem to be going away from what might be your natural cultural reference.

[Sighs, a bit frustrated.] We can analyze forever what it’s about, but it’s just an instinct thing. It felt right to do that song, but I had to be respectful as well. Maybe it’s a balance of how much you can visit, like the balance between how much you stay in your house and how much you go to your friend’s house for dinner. For “Like Someone in Love,” you can say, “Let’s eat out tonight.” You just can’t do it that much.

So what will you be working on today?


We’ll be doing one of the songs that Deodato did the strings for. I haven’t even heard them yet, so I’m very excited about it. [Björk plays the next track on the cassette.] This was the first version. Later we introduced the bass line; it’s so easy to do a song for a bass line, so putting a bass line in at the last stage is like indulging yourself.

Deodato wrote the string charts without knowing what the bass would play?

Yeah [impish grin]. I wanted so much for it to be just beats, strings, and voice. [We listen for a few moments; the final version of the song, on Homogenic, is titled “Unravel.”] There’s a lot of storytelling going on, a lot of brutal, in-your-face stories. One of them is this kind of *Wuthering Heights* epic. [She puts one hand melodramatically over her heart.] The first song in this epic was “Human Behaviour” [from *Debut*]. The second one is “Isobel” [from *Post*]. I guess this one is the sequel.


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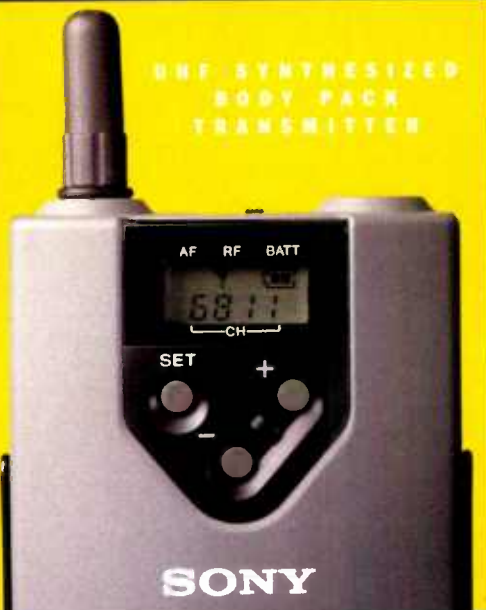
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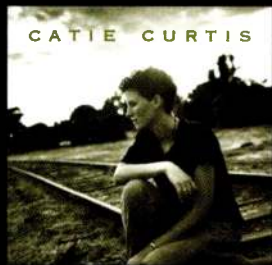
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connected to Iceland?

Well, I do go to Iceland. It's my home and it always will be. But I need to get away from that as well. Iceland isn't like it was when I was a kid, because I've become something . . . different. It's the same for me, but I'm not the same to them. If I'm gonna fight that one, I'll spend the rest of my life doing it. It's better to accept it. There were boring practical reasons too. The fact that I don't know anyone here in Spain keeps me working. It's also so beautiful here. There's not many places where I feel at home, and I feel at home here for some strange reason."

An hour or so later, we're downstairs. Behind the glass in the studio, an octet composed of young Icelandic string players works on the chart for what will become "Alarm Call." Other working titles are scribbled on paper and pasted on the wall: "Coba #1," "Bertolucci," and the proto-title for "Alarm Call," "Sod Off." Out in the main room, Deodato sits on a well-worn couch, scratching changes in his arrangement. A few feet away, Mark Bell finesses some synth and sample parts for another tune. "I really like working this kind of session," says the co-producer and keyboard specialist, whose credits include projects with Kraftwerk and Art Of Noise. "It's more open-minded. You can sometimes get locked into things, like with these guitar groups who are so

prejudiced, like you've got to study guitar for ten years before you can make a blues album. But with Björk, if it sounds good, it's good."

There's almost no guitar on *Homogenic*; "So Broken," a flamenco-like duet with guitarist Raimondo Amador, was bumped from the album just before release. The dominant textures are strings and synths, with many of the parts created by Björk. Using what she calls a "neutral string sound" on her preferred keyboard, a Nord Lead, she played into an Emagic Audio Logic program, from which Deodato later notated the parts. (The Nord keyboard was also used as a tuning reference for the string players.)

Many of the keyboard sounds on *Homogenic* come from libraries assembled by Bell, engineer Marcus Dravs, and the band Human League, since some early recording for the project was done at their studio. "A lot of Marcus' sounds are processed through old guitar pedals, since he works with Brian Eno, who likes that sort of thing," Bell reports.

The drums on the album often have an otherworldly quality, somehow distant and muffled, yet pushed high into the mix, where crackling, sharp-edged snares are usually heard. Their peculiar quality, Bell notes, stems from the fact that their drum samples were taken at a slower rate in order to create a texture that would stand apart from the dry, close-miked strings. Much of this derives

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from Björk's initiative.

"She'll go, 'Can you make the bass line more furry?'" Bell laughs. "It's always poetic, which is good, because if she tells you exactly what to do, you're more like an engineer. This way, you get to create atmospheres too."

Marcus Dravs agrees. "She wrote the song 'Joga' for a friend of hers, and she explained that particular character to me. First of all, she set out an overall picture, like whether it's a song of no compromise or whether it's about a character who's very enthusiastic and helpful; she'd say we should do heartbeats or whatever. I then came up with a rhythm that seemed to fit that description of a personality, and she said, 'Oh, the distortion is a bit too abstract; it should be more punchy.' We did other bits, maybe start again, but those first noises wouldn't necessarily be thrown away. Then Mark had a go with it. He took 99 percent of what I did and came up with some noises, which gave me new ideas and I'd have another go."

This collective morphing apparently brought the sounds to what Björk would consider an appropriate level of fuzziness. You don't hear too many crystalline timbres here; probably the purest electronic color on the record is a straight Roland Juno-101 tone—"practically a sine wave," says Bell—used for a few bass lines. Almost everything, including drums and voice, is run through a Yamaha CS15 filter and a maze of onboard gear, which most fre-

"There's no such thing as Icelandic music. but I want to prove there should be."

quently includes an Eventide H3000SE Harmonizer and an old Boss SE-70 pedal. "She's had that voice for thirty years," Bell says, "so it's good if we can do a few different things with it." The excised cut "So Broken," for example, begins with Björk's voice pinching

through a car radio-like filter, then gradually blossoming to full-spectrum strength as the piece builds. And on "Hunter" the juxtaposition of shattered bits of Björk and cool, smooth longer notes creates a kind of amphetamine reverie, soothing and jumpy.

"We process a lot of stuff in our Akai samplers," says engineer Russell Kearney. "There were really no rules. Before I got here, she even used the grand piano in the living room as a reverb. They just put a speaker underneath, blasted out some sounds, and got gorgeous results."

Now Deodato is in the studio with the strings, running them through a three-chord motif that ends the tune. Björk listens outside. When they nail it—sharp attack, sharp staccato, slight pause, and legato final chord—she jumps and claps her hands. "Rock and roll!" she says, and to Deodato, a big thumbs-up and a grin.

The taping begins. She's restless again, listening closely from the couch. After one take, she tells Dravs, "That's a great sound, but it needs to be much closer. You need to hear the violin in your face."

As mics are shuffled around the string players, Kearney points out that Björk wants the string sounds as clear as possible, to balance the obscurities of the rhythm and texture. "They're not processed in any way. No EQ. We're just using the Focusrite preamps direct to the tape machine. I'm not saying anything against the Euphonix that we used before; it's just that when Deodato was last here, we had a different desk. We haven't had time to do A/Bs on the Euphonix preamps, so we decided to go with what we know."

We observe that Björk traditionally prefers a dry string sound. "That's true," Kearney says. "But we've gone far closer with the mics than we've ever done. They're literally right in front of everybody's nose. I suppose it's tough when somebody sticks a mic in your face and says, 'Come on, play!' But these string players are great."

And now we're hearing Björk in deep discussion with Dravs. "We need contact mics; they'd be perfect for this song. We



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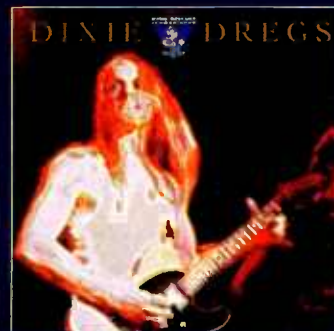
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It's been a long road for Brazilian composer and arranger Eumir Deodato. He rode the bossanova wave in the Sixties, doing charts and playing piano with Astrud Gilberto and Luis Bonfá. It's been all uphill since then, with movie scores, arrangements for Frank Sinatra and other MOR jazz icons, Grammys, awards from *Billboard* and *Playboy*, a proto-disco smash adaptation of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. And now he's poolside at the Morais studio, wondering over how he came to be swept into these turbulent currents of Nordic metaphor.

"The work on *Homogenic* is actually simple," Deodato says. "A lot of her rhythm loops are very contemporary, so before I attempted to write things on top of them I decided to write underneath,

on her vocals, rather than to fight or add to the rhythm. Writing over the beat means writing a new line that's not in the song, something that will stick out—a high violin part, for instance. But when you write a melody that's already there, or chords in the low or mid range as

*"communication is
about energy.
sometimes language
doesn't matter."*

pads, that's writing under.

"In some of the songs I followed her secondary vocal lines; there was very little harmony and very few chords. I was doing that on 'Isobel' too, where I wrote a natural C in a line that was in B minor. Much later on I learned that Björk is the type of singer who will sing the A sharp in A minor, but I wasn't yet aware that she did that when I did that first song. It's just something I felt about her."

Deodato's old-fashioned pencil-on-paper approach blends nicely with the sample-churning techniques his younger colleagues embrace. Rather than diminish his contribution, both he and Björk feel that his traditional skills make him all the more valuable—and exotic—a commodity.

"That's where I shine, because all most people can do these days is program their drum machines and sequencers," he smiles. "They will take samples from television, which they have already heard from other movies; that's just rewriting, not writing. Sure I can sample but nothing ever beats the real thing."

He looks up to the cloudless sky, stretching his arms wide. "I'm here, sitting in the sun, with beautiful mountains and this incredible view, in the company of Björk and all these musicians. I can't sample that."

Then he looks our way and winks. "But I can compose it."

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It's after midnight, once again. Musicians, production staff, and hangers-on have wandered off to their rooms, out to the pool table, or into the night. Björk sits on her canopied bed, thinking back to another part of her musical roots.

You studied classical music from ages five to fifteen. What was the most important lesson you learned in music school?

The best thing was that it introduced me to all music. . . . Well, that's not true.

That was another thing I learned. "Classical music" is really music from Germany over a period of two to three hundred years. You go to the classical section at Tower Records, and it's German music. That says a lot about the history of humans for two thousand years, because we've been making music all this time.

My obsession was always to work with people to create something that had never been created before. That

became very obvious in my school. I had a lot of meetings with the headmaster. He would sit there and say, "What are you doing with yourself? You've got this talent, and you're just wasting it! You've got no concentration!" It was like a love/hate relationship between us. I used to go to his classes, and he'd try to make me work. But I'd just sit there and cry my eyes out. I couldn't fit in the mold. He was Jewish; he escaped from Germany to Iceland just before the war. But I'm Icelandic; I've got a voice, and it doesn't have to be so complicated. It's just about me and you communicating. That's my biggest turn-on, to meet someone who comes from a completely different place than I do. I'll show them everything; I'll give them everything I've got. For me, that's creating: One plus one is three.

As you grew up, you weren't exposed to much electronic media, radio or television. Did this present any problems in learning to create in the language of pop culture?

For anyone to communicate, you have to make an effort. Whether you're born in Idaho with American TV or in Guatemala, you'll always have to fight certain barriers to communicate. For the first few years I sang, I used no words. Then very slowly I started throwing one or two Icelandic words in there. When I was eighteen I did my first tour abroad, and I would translate one or two words into English, sing the rest in Icelandic, and do noises as well. Communication is about energy. That's how we are, and the language sometimes doesn't matter all that much.

Are your English lyrics literal translations of original words in Icelandic?

They're as literal as they can get. Icelandic is quite personal to me. I've tried to do interviews like this in Icelandic, but I can't. I just feel like I'm lying, because English is in the head, being clever, analyzing myself, seeing myself from the outside. Icelandic is personal and private. I still can't translate certain lyrics, because they're just too intimate.

Do you dream in Icelandic?

It depends on what kind of day I've had.

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**Bob Moog Meets
The Next Generation
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Old amps, collector guitars, tone-wheel organs: For just about every kind of instrument these days, vintage is in. But there's one area where players have given earlier instruments a wide berth. The consensus: They're hard to operate. Their sound has "out of date" stamped all over it. They don't hold their tuning. Their musical applications are limited. • We're talking synthesizers here—the only instrument where, for a while at least, "new" was an unambiguous selling point. From the Seventies up until fairly recent times, one came to expect dramatic breakthroughs in design with each new NAMM show. Zip, they're polyphonic! Bam, their keyboards are touch-responsive! Wham, they're digital! Whoa, you can MIDI them together! Yow, they're rack-mountable! • Pretty soon, they started packing samples as well. • While synth players were dashing to the store every few weeks to drool over the latest buzz, older

models moldered in closets or got dealt off in garage sales. (Confession: I traded two excellent synths for a Maltese dog about ten years ago. Maybe it was a good deal, maybe not, but I've learned that you don't have to clean up after a DX7 and my dog still hasn't gotten me any gigs.)

Eventually things slowed down. Maybe engineers were finding it harder to come up with innovations at an affordable price. Maybe players began realizing some of

those old sounds were still cool. Hip-hop bass lines had a lot to do with it; to this day, nobody's beaten that low Moog rumble.

Only one problem: The 'boards that produced those classic sounds were out of production. So what do you do? A lot of synthesists learned to live with digital approximations of Moog and ARP tones. But some diehards aren't so accepting. They place or scrounge through trade ads, use word of mouth, track down the vintage

gear, dust off the old manuals, and tap the wellspring from which keyboard technology has gushed for over three decades.

The challenge for many synth-based bands today is to come up with applications that speak to the modern mentality. More and more, we're seeing this come to pass, with a new generation of early synth fanatics whose references are cutting-edge rather than *Close to the Edge*. Check out ex-Rentals member Matt Sharp's ear-tweezing lines on "Tired of Sex" from Weezer's latest album *Pinkerton*, or Roger Manning's swooping gliss at the end of the first chorus of "Zodiac Sign" on Imperial Drag's self-titled debut, or Tim Gane's stuttering electronics over the smooth jazz of "Brakhage" on Stereolab's *Dots and Loops*. Even with the differences in their sound, these guys share a commitment to exploration with the same tools.

When we learned that Bob Moog had never heard or met these three players, we realized we had to get them all together. After all, it was Moog who launched the synth era in 1964 with a paper titled *Voltage-Controlled Electronic Music Modules* and his first modular machine. His concept of a system based on oscillators, filters, and amplifiers guides the industry to this day. And although he's mainly concerned now with building and marketing theremins through his company, Big Briar Music, he remains interested in how people are using the instruments with which he changed the sound of music.

Manning, Sharp, and Gane were equally excited to talk with the man whose name became a synonym for the instruments they played. So after weeks of checking schedules, we found a time and place for all four to sit down and trade insights into the enduring and reviving phenomenon of vintage synths in modern rock.

First, what kind of vintage synths do you have?

Sharp: I pretty much use only two Moogs: a Source and an Opus 3.

Gane: I use the cheaper Moogs from the pre-Prodigy era. I've got two Opuses. But I don't have any modular synthesizers.

Manning: We all wish we did [laughs].

How has playing these instruments distinguished your band?

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Sharp: Whenever we go on the road, there's constant excitement because of the synthesizers, especially with the age group we're playing to. They don't know *what* those things are.

Gane: It fascinates people of 15 or 16.

Sharp: A lot of them come up thinking that they're new. They go, "Where did you get these things? This is amazing!"

What attracted you to older equipment?

Sharp: When we went in to do the first Rentals record, we completed it without any keyboards. I realized that it was missing something. So I went back to the studio, and there was the [Moog] Source.

Moog: What did you do with it?

Sharp: We replaced a lot of the original bass and lead guitar stuff. We used just that one synth for the whole record.

Were you playing other keyboards at that time?

Sharp: Not really. Earlier I'd used more "tech" keyboards, but they'd get me a bit confused.

Gane: We had lots of organs, Farfisas and Voxes. We also used things like the [EMS] VCS-3 and some early Moogs. But I'd started using modular synths when I was at school. When I was 15 I heard two records from the Seventies which had these sounds on them, and I couldn't figure out where they were coming from or what sort of people would make them. I had to find out what it was. Obviously the Moogs were number one, and the easiest to obtain. That sound gets in your blood. Now I can't really write music without knowing that they're gonna be used.

Sharp: Does a lot of the Stereolab stuff start out with those sounds?

Gane: When we first started using Moogs they were mainly for siren sounds. But then we began to use the Moog as the basis of chords. With that approach you can take a semi-original song and put it in a whole different atmosphere. So usually now that's the first thing to go on, because it gives the direction for everything else. I tend not to want to write too much, so I like that accidental thing about analog synthesizers. I always want to know exactly how they work, though, because I'm still discovering new sounds. There aren't many other instruments about which you can say that.

Sharp: That's definitely the position

I'm in most of the time, just discovering a sound and going, "Oh, my God! I've never heard that!" And taking it from there.

Moog: You don't get that from the digital stuff?

Sharp: Quite honestly, I don't understand digital stuff at all.

The point is, though, that the digital user interface doesn't invite you to explore as much as analog does.

Manning: Sure. A lot of the early synthesizers are laid out very sensibly. You don't have to know anything about music; they invite exploration. You turn knobs until something stimulates you, and that can inspire a whole composition. There were endless early-Eighties synth-pop bands who were notorious for that. It was an era when a lot of non-musicians picked up a couple of keyboards and a four-track, started twiddling knobs, and began making very fresh, exciting music.

Sharp: That's right. I bought my Opus 3 at a black market in San Francisco for \$75. I couldn't get anything out of it, but then I realized it was broken, so I took it out to get fixed, and when it came back I found all these amazing things in it. Now it's one of the keyboards I use the most.

Gane: Synthesizers that were made up to the late Seventies were doing something completely different from digital synthesizers. I don't think the Moogs or any of those others tried to emulate exactly the sounds of violins or basses. There were approximations of basses, but they were different. But that's exactly what makes them more interesting. It's a misnomer to state that we're using this equipment because we're nostalgic for something.

Sharp: Or to be considered hip.

Moog: I want to get back to something that Tim said. You said that when you did a piece of music and transferred it over to analog synths, you put it into a completely different atmosphere. Did that remind you of something else, or was it new?

Gane: It was new. I was attracted to it because it was otherworldly. It takes you far away from what you've been brought up to understand as being acceptable or normal music. I don't know any other instruments that can work with imagination more than these Moogs, because it's not a musicianly thing to understand them. People like Rick Wakeman play them in a

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musicianly way, but the point is it's exploratory; you discover things that you normally wouldn't find out about yourself. No one person will get the same thing out of these instruments as any other person.

Whereas people will punch up identical presets on more modern synths.

Gane: Yeah. When there's a Moog on a record I'm more inclined to buy it because that's a sign of some kind of imagination.

Bob, the musicians with whom you're often identified are from a very different

school, so how do you feel about the way these guys are using your old instruments?

Moog: Well, remember, before there were super-pyrotechnical musicians like Keith Emerson and Rick Wakeman, I worked with experimental musicians, like Dave Borden. They had a sense of tone and timbre, of shaping a sound from beginning to end, that was incredibly exciting. What I'm hearing from you guys sounds very much like that. You're really using the synthesizer appropriately.

Can you point to a way in which an older synth opened a door you might not have gone through with a digital synth?

Gane: Two or three years ago we started to filter most all the instruments we use through our Moog Rogue: guitars, vocals, organs, everything. Our soundman has a Rogue at the desk, and he puts the whole band through it at the same time.

Moog: You literally put your whole band through that filter?

Gane: Yeah, the band and the P.A.

Moog: Wow [*laughs*]! That's a lot of stuff to go through one little filter. It doesn't distort or sound like hell?

Gane: It does, but ours is the kind of music that works with that. It's like listening to music that someone else is creating.

Manning: I'm a fan of so many different analog synthesizers, but I always come back to the Moog because of that filter. In fact, my buddies and I like the filters so much that we had a friend of ours take some and put 'em into a Crybaby pedal.

Gane: I'll try that too [*laughs*]!

Okay, the floor is open. Does anybody have anything they've always wanted to ask Bob Moog?

Sharp: Was there a point where you heard your creation being utilized in what you might think of as the wrong way?

Moog: Oh, yeah, all the time [*laughs*]. I remember in particular one "Moog record." It was called *Moog España*. These two record producers from New York came up, smoking cigars, and they wanted to get a couple of synthesizer lines down on eight-track tape. John Weiss, this very sensitive musician, helped them get these God-awful bloopy-bleepy melody lines onto a couple of tracks in this smoke-filled studio. It *still* sounds terrible. But that's just something we deal with.

There are lots of lousy violinists out there too.

Moog: That's right!

Gane: Where do you think analog synthesizers are going to go in the future?

Moog: I'm surprised at how little advancement there's been. In the Sixties we had VCFs, ADSR envelope generators, VCOs—all the basic components. Very little has been added since, but there's a ton of stuff that you could add. For example, analog has knobs. Digital saw it as convenient to get rid of the knobs, which makes it

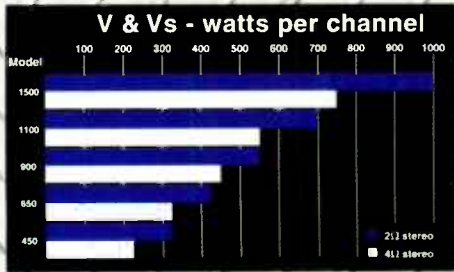
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trickier to get complex sounds with digital stuff. You get a nice clean oscillator and filter, but if you get any distortion it sounds like hell, whereas a little distortion with analog is warm and expressive. I'd like to see that aspect of analog explored more.

Is there any argument for taking samplers on the road rather than haul this cumbersome, irreplaceable gear?

Manning: You'd miss the live spontaneous control. Like Tim was saying, half the fun is getting that filter moving in real time. If you're onstage, there's nothing more fun than playing a bass line on the Opus 3, and you grab the filter knob during the performance. I don't even want to deal with that on samplers or a digital 'face.

Gane: Besides, the Moogs look so much better than the new stuff.

Manning: That's right! We haven't discussed the most important thing, which is how cool they look. The Sonic 6 is one of the most visually pleasing keyboards to me.

Moog: Really! Why is that?

Manning: It's reminiscent of the era of NASA, circa the late Sixties. It reminds me of the furniture in movies like *2001*. Any

time you get rounded corners and the color blue involved, that says it all. By the way, Matt, I hear that Weezer's been playing the [Manning side project] *Moog Cookbook* "Buddy Holly" cover before your shows.

Sharp: Absolutely!

Manning: I just wanted to thank you.

Sharp: I saw you playing it on television. The arrangement is incredible.

Manning: It's *Switched-On John Philip Sousa* [laughs].

Sharp: The funniest thing is that the bass frequency on it is so low that half the time we play it, the CD player skips.

Manning: It's off the Memorymoog.

Where did the idea of The Moog Cookbook come from?

Manning: Mostly from an era that Bob might want to forget, when people were doing "switched-on" albums, covers of hits from the late Sixties—Bacharach tunes, Beatle tunes—with the modular Moog systems. They were often done for very little money or were rushed, by people who didn't know how to use the machine, so you get a lot of pleasant and unpleasant mistakes. My partner [Brian

Kehew] and I were excited about doing this kind of record, so we decided to have some fun with current music. [Ed. Note: *Manning and Kehew will follow up The Moog Cookbook with the Oct. 28 release of Ye Olde Space Bande, featuring electronic arrangements of Seventies hits, on Restless.*]

So is the future of your invention in good hands?

Manning: Don't put him on the spot!

Moog: Sure sounds good to me. ♪

Moog Madness

Technically **Matt Sharp** is Weezer's bassist, so it's no surprise to find him with a Mexican Fender Jazz Bass or a Seventies Fender Jazz Bass (both with Schecter pickups) in his hands. But in his alter ego as a synthesist, he's a Moog man, with a Source and an Opus 3 plugged in and ready to wail through either a Gallien-Krueger 800RB or a late Sixties Orange 200-watt head and an Ampeg 8x10 cabinet. **Tim Gane** carries a pretty basic setup on the road with Stereolab; his stage arsenal boils down to a Fender Jaguar guitar, Fender Showman amp, and two pedals, a Lovetone Meatball and an Electro-Harmonix Electric Mistress. In the studio, however, that retro gleam in his eyes grows brighter, and out come the keyboards: a Moog Rogue synth, a Farfisa Duo Compact organ, and a Wurlitzer EP200 electric piano, with an EMS vocoder and a Sherman filter bank thrown in for sweetening. **Roger Manning** of Imperial Drag goes a little more overboard, especially when working on one of his Moog Cookbook projects. The latest one, featuring covers of Seventies hits, is a vintage synth extravaganza. Highlights include Rhodes Chroma and ARP 2600 solos on "Sweet Home Alabama," Minimoog melodies on "More Than a Feeling" and "25 or 6 to 4," cat noises from an Octave Cat on "Cat Scratch Fever" (which also features a Minimoog "tap dance," ARP Omni 2 strings, and an ARP Odyssey "guiro"), and plenty of other stuff from his EML 101, Oberheim 8-Voice, Sequential Prophet VS, ARP String Ensemble, Polymoog, Chamberlin M2, DKS Synergy—even a Evantoff Sonica and a Baldwin Fun Machine!

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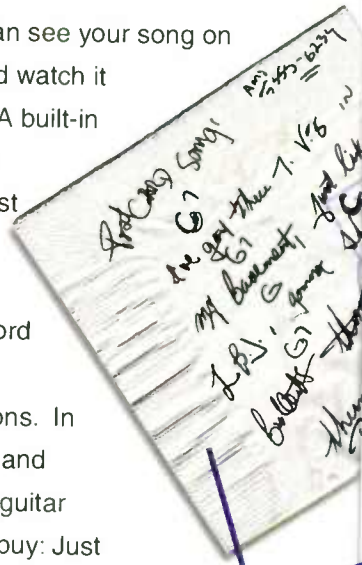
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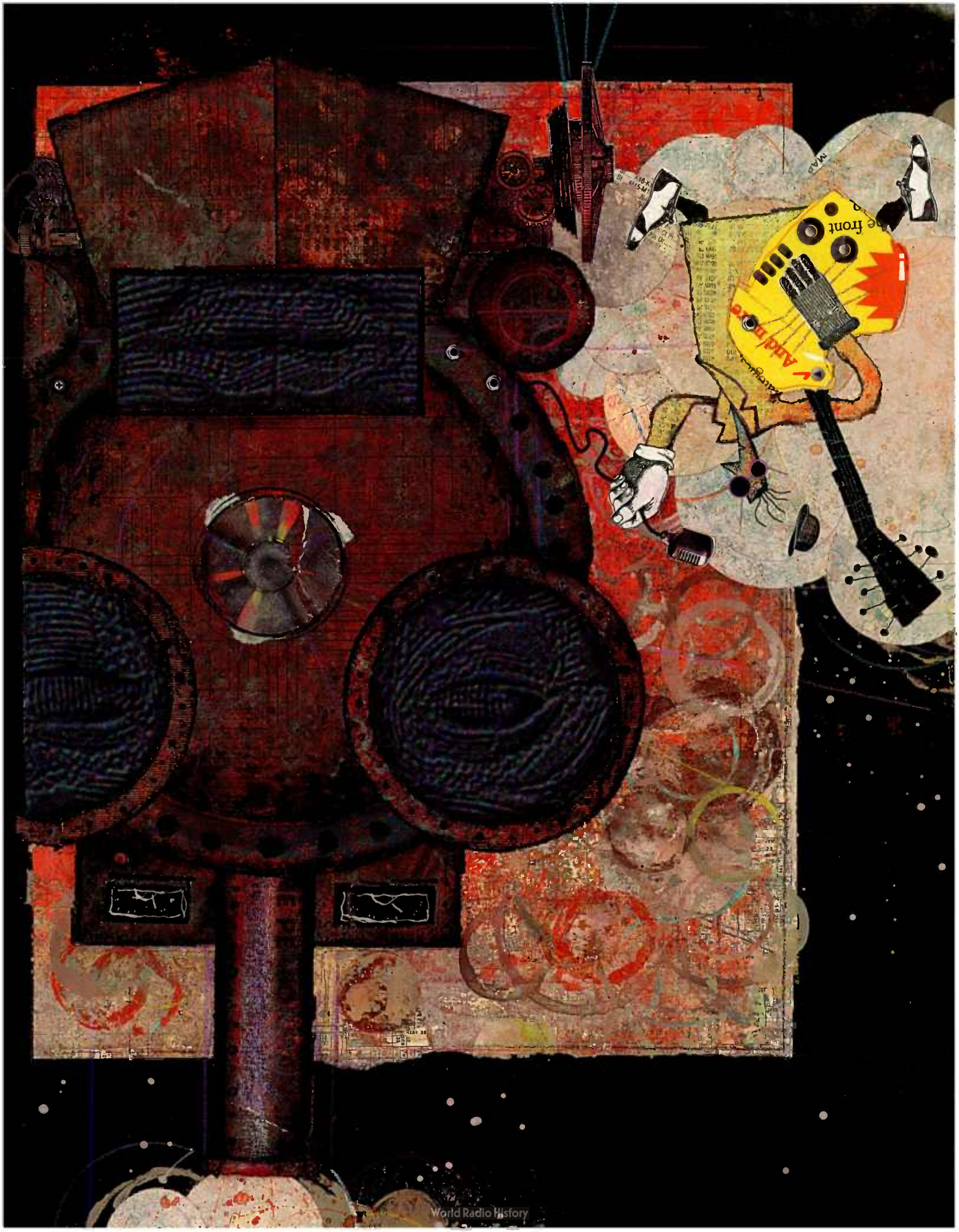
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CHASING

THE

SESSION

TRAIN

By Mike Levine**Illustration by David Povilatis**

**Forget what you've heard:
You can still make
money as a studio musician.**

There's no easy way to become a big-time studio player. But there are things you can do to help move the process along. First, let's look at what kind of session work you'd like to target. • Most national commercials are produced in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, and music production companies (more commonly known as music houses) are subcontracted by

ad agencies to produce the music. These music houses do most of the hiring of session players. This differs from movie dates, where contractors do all the hiring. For commercials, players are usually chosen by the composers or producers at the music house. When contractors do get used, it's often to hire orchestral musicians or to track down exotic instruments.

John Miller, who contracts both for Broadway and the recording business, points out that "the turnaround time from getting the call to when the date actually happens is extremely short. Sometimes a job description is not hard to fill: a bass player, a drummer, and a guitar player. But sometimes it's five bagpipe players or a Russian men's choir, and the turnaround time is very quick."

Turnaround is a key phrase in the jingle business, because music is usually one of the last elements to be produced prior to the commercial being edited. Most of the lead time gets eaten up by other production elements, and music houses often

have only two or three days to write and produce tracks. The business is perpetually in a rush, and there's no time to waste on musicians who can't do the job quickly—and well.

The pay scales for jingles are decent, but not great. In New York a union musician nets about \$90 (plus health and pension benefits) for a session of one hour or less. More important, he or she is listed as a musician on the American Federation of Musicians contract and can make a lot more in residuals if the spot stays on the air for more than thirteen weeks or is reused. Basically, the initial session payment covers the first thirteen-week cycle, and a slightly smaller "re-use" fee is paid for every subsequent cycle in which the spot runs. The trick is to get as many contracts as possible, because over time you can end up with a fairly steady stream of residual checks.

You might be called to play on a spot that's still in the demo phase. This occurs when one music house is competing with another to get picked by the ad agency.

Sometimes a music house has already been picked but is having an competition among its writers to see whose version the agency likes. In many cases, if the demo you played on wins the competition, you'll be paid as if it were a final session all along. If it doesn't, you're often paid directly by the music house rather than the union. This can be a problem because certain music houses aren't too enthusiastic about paying musicians for demos that didn't make it, which forces you to hound them for your money. It can take months to get \$80 or \$90, if you get paid at all.

Studio players and singers outside of New York, Chicago, and L.A. are often asked to play on non-union spots, known as *buyouts*. The initial payments for these jobs are usually in the same ballpark as the union spots, but there are no residuals, no health and pension payments, and little recourse if the music house refuses to pay you.

RECORD DATES

Like other forms of studio work, sessions for commercially produced CDs have grown fewer in number in recent years. For the sessions that do occur, the producer usually handles the hiring, although contractors may be brought in for sessions that involve large groups or orchestras.

The basic union scale for a three-hour record session (at the time of this writing) is \$271.72 plus pension. For each additional instrument you play (known as *doubles*) the scale increases. Because musicians can end up playing a lot longer than three hours on many sessions, the money can add up. In addition, there's a special payments fund that pays royalties for five years from the release date to the musicians who appear on albums.

But labels are no longer the only game in town. Many artists release their own CDs these days without being signed by a label at all. The problem is that most of these sessions are non-union and low-paying. The American Federation of Musicians has tried to unionize lower-end projects by establishing a "Low-Budget Phonograph Recording Scale," which applies to albums whose recording budget is \$85,000 or less. While this has helped somewhat, most lower-end CD sessions

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UNC - Chapel Hill, NC
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Rooms 211, 212

November 16, 10am - 5pm
Point Park College, Pittsburgh, PA
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November 17, 12pm - 5:30pm
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November 22, 9:30am - 3:30pm
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Dieterle Vocal Arts Center
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November 29, 11am - 5pm
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Philadelphia Marriott, PA
Franklin Hall, Level 4
Room 404, 1201 Market St.

December 3, 11:30am - 5:30pm
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Syracuse Stage, Room 245
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are not union-affiliated, and the players get only a session fee.

SONG DEMOS

The easiest avenue into session work is via the song demo, with most of the recording taking place in home studios rather than commercial facilities.

There are several advantages to this kind of work. First, you can find opportunities just about anywhere. Second, you don't have to be on some contractor's "A" list; most of the hiring stems from a musician's live reputation as well as word of mouth. Third, the competition is much less cutthroat.

There are also some disadvantages. Song demo work doesn't usually pay as well as other types of recording, and it almost never falls under the auspices of the union so pay for each song is negotiated separately. Demos are also harder to get on a steady basis, because many of the people you work for won't be hiring musicians regularly. If you're lucky, you can get hooked up with a producer who's got a steady clientele of songwriters.

FINDING THE WORK

Now that you know what kind of studio work you'd like to pursue, here are some ideas for how to begin.

TAKE STOCK OF YOUR CONTACTS

Think about musicians you know, teachers you've studied with, and any friends or relatives who are involved with the recording business or know someone who is. Through them you might be able to get a recommendation that will land you a session. The best kind of contacts are fellow musicians who've worked with you and have a good idea of your abilities. If you do get work from a contact, it's up to you to parlay that into more work.

STUDY WITH THE PLAYERS

The idea is to find a successful player who teaches and impress this person enough during your lessons that he or she will recommend you for some work, or at least give you some names to call. If you know the names of any session players in your area, you can find their numbers through the local union directory. If you don't know any names, ask at the union.

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DO THE HANG

Just about all the studio musicians I've spoken with suggest that players who are new in town should get themselves known by hanging out at the clubs frequented by session players and others from the recording business. Besides the musicians, it's also good to get to know producers, contractors, studio owners, engineers, and anyone else involved with the session scene. A good hint for finding where recording types hang out is to look in the local paper's entertainment listings for clubs that have studio players listed among their performers.

DEVELOP YOUR NICHE

If you can show that you have something unique to offer, like playing an unusual instrument or a distinctive style of performance, you can put yourself in a much better position. Let's say, for example, that you're trying to get sessions as a rock guitarist. Even if you've impressed a producer, there are likely quite a few other players who've been doing it longer on his or her

list. But if you present yourself as a specialist in a less common style, such as acoustic slide guitar, you may be able to rise closer to the top because you'll have less competition. Once you start getting calls, you should be able to prove yourself adept at other styles, too.

PUT TOGETHER YOUR OWN DEMO TAPE

Having a demo tape of your own playing (also known as your *reel*) can improve your visibility with producers, contractors, and other musicians. The challenge is to get anyone to listen, since people whose attention you want to get are often deluged with tapes like yours. Even if you do get them to listen, it's unlikely they'll hire you unless they've also gotten a recommendation about you from another player. Still, it's a way to get your name out there, and you never know where it could lead.

Your tape should consist of short examples of your playing, edited tightly together so that each piece runs into the next. Marshall Grantham, a co-founder of Russo/Grantham Productions, a busy New York music house, says, "You don't need to let a whole song play to show how you play drums or guitar. Thirty seconds, and move on to something else. Show another side of your talent."

While you should master your demo in a digital format, make your copies on cassette. I wouldn't advise using any noise reduction on your cassette copies because they may be played back on machines that don't have your format or aren't calibrated the same as yours. Make your copies with as hot a level as possible.

Keep these points in mind:

- Always put your best material at the front of the tape.
- Make sure the total length of your tape is no more than five minutes.
- If you're trying to position yourself as a player whose strength is in a certain style, load the tape with that kind of material.
- If possible, use excerpts from real projects, to show you have experience.

And be sure to package your tape nicely. At the very least, use a computer labeling program to print cassette labels and j-cards (the paper insert that goes into the cassette box). You don't need a super-fancy design, but you want the package to look professional. Make sure your name is printed on

the j-card's spine so that it's visible when your tape is on a shelf or in a pile of other tapes. Print your name and phone number on both the j-card and the cassette label. If your material is from previous sessions you've done, print a list with a brief description of each, on the j-card.

LEARN WHO TO CONTACT

If you live in or near a major city, send your demo to music production houses. You'll find them listed in annual publications such as *Shoot Directory*. Your union local might also have a list of music houses and contractors who hire for sessions. And call around to commercial recording studios, because they sometimes recommend studio musicians to clients.

Also, call owners of small project studios who are advertising their services as demo producers—they may need players on your instrument from time to time.

For everyone you call, try to at least get them to listen to your tape. Ideally, you'll set up appointments to play your tape for them, but most likely they'll tell you to send it in. After they've received your tape, give them a week or two to listen to it, and then make a follow-up call. If you're able to reach the person to whom you sent the tape, get their reaction to it and ask about getting future sessions. They'll probably tell you they've put the tape "on file," which is either the truth or a euphemism for the garbage. In any case, make a follow-up call to them every month or so to develop a rapport and keep yourself visible. And be sure to invite them to any gigs you're doing around town. You might even want to send out postcards announcing your upcoming appearances. As Marshall Grantham says, "You have to be persistent. It's a tough business to get into. It takes time [but] if you can deliver and get there and do a good job, you can definitely crack in." 🎸

Contributors: Mike Levine is a session player, composer, and producer in the New York area. He is the author of *Great Country Rock Riffs for Guitar*.

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World Radio History



1 Roland A-70 controller

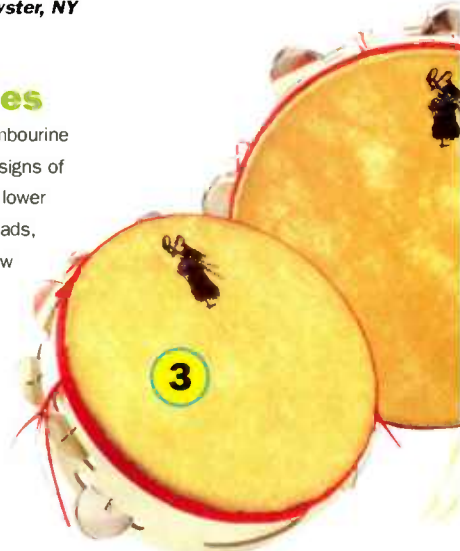
Remember the spirit of '76. Roland's certainly doing its part by putting out the A-70 expandable keyboard controller (\$1,495), a 76-key version of its A-90 model. A selectable velocity curve lets you choose the sensitivity appropriate for whatever style you're covering, while 20 controllers—including aftertouch, pitch-bend/modulation wheel, and four onboard sliders—give you a firm handle on every aspect of your sound. Four independent MIDI outputs permit the control of up to 64 channels, and the ability to divide the control of sound sources into eight independent zones ensures that the A-70 can handle even the most complex MIDI rigs. • **Roland Corp. US, 7200 Dominion Cr., Los Angeles, CA 90040-3696; voice (213) 685-5141.**

2 Brian Moore TC/4 bass

Two heads are better than one. And if those heads happen to belong to Brian Moore and Mike Tobias, you're basically guaranteed a great bass. These two designers' first joint effort, the TC/4 (\$1,895), features a lightweight, contoured swamp ash body, maple bolt-on 34"-scale neck with rosewood fingerboard, Seymour Duncan pickups, Sperzel tuners, and Wilkinson bridge. A five-string version, the TC/5, is available for \$2,095; piezo bridge and highly figured wood top options are available for a little extra. • **Brian Moore Custom Guitars, South Patterson Business Park, Rte. 22, Brewster, NY 10509; voice (914) 279-4142.**

3 Remo Alessandra Belloni tambourines

In the jingle-jangle morning we'll come following you. That's especially true if your tambourine of choice is from Remo's new Alessandra Belloni signature series. Based on the designs of vintage southern European tambourines, the Belloni series are larger, looser, and lower in pitch than you'd expect. They sport Acousticon shells and Fiberskyn 3 drumheads, and come in three variations: the Tamburello (2 1/2" x 12", red with single row jingles, \$49.50), the Pizzica (3 1/2" x 12", beige with double row jingles, \$58.50), and the Tammorra Napoletana (3 3/4" x 16", white with double row jingles, \$85.50). • **Remo, Inc., 28101 Industry Dr., Valencia, CA 91355; voice (805) 294-5600.**

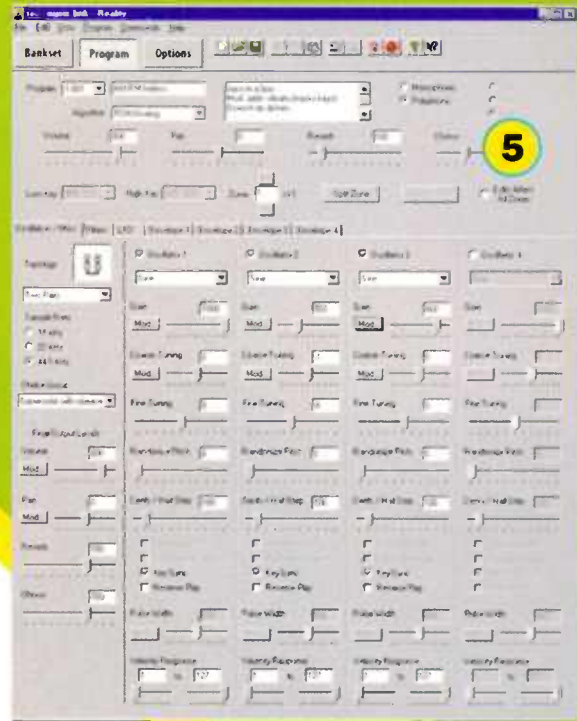


fast fo



4 TC Electronic G-Force

Too much is never enough. That seems to have been the operating principle behind TC Electronic's G-Force guitar multi-effects processor (\$1,795). Thanks to new developments in DSP technology, the G-Force can run up to eight different effects simultaneously with no degradation of sound quality. Effect types include delay, chorus, reverb, drive, compression, tremolo, and intelligent pitch-shifting, and all effects can be run in any combination and order, so you can flange your delay and distort the flanging if you want. ▶ **TC Electronic, 790-H Hampshire Rd., Westlake Village, CA 91361; voice (805) 373-1828.**



5 Seer Systems Reality

It's time to wake up and face Reality (\$495). If, that is, you have a Pentium-based PC, a Creative Labs Sound Blaster 16 or higher sound card, any MIDI controller or sequencer, and a strong desire to make cool sounds. Seer Systems' latest generation of software synthesizers provides five types of synthesis—PCM sampling (44.1K/16-bit), analog subtractive, analog additive, FM, and true waveguide physical modeling. All five can be used simultaneously and in real time, and the resulting sounds are fully polyphonic and multi-timbral. ▶ **Seer Systems, 301 South San Antonio Rd., Los Altos, CA 94022; voice (415) 947-1915.**

6 Stedman LD23 microphone

All we are is dust in the wind. (Yep, you guessed it, there's another bad joke on the way.) But that wind probably won't affect the performance of Stedman's LD23 dynamic microphone (\$139), which has an internal wind filter that eliminates excessive pops during close-up vocal applications. (That's the last woeful stab at hilarity in Fast Forward for this month; apologies to all.) A slight rise in frequency response above 3 kHz and a supercardioid polar pattern exhibiting excellent off-axis rejection mean that the LD23 lends extra presence to your sound and won't pick up what you don't want it to. ▶ **Stedman Corporation, 4167 Stedman Dr., Richland, MI 49083; voice (616) 629-5930.**



ward

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editor's pick

We guitarists often have strange priorities when it comes time to buy gear. I should be able to prove that right now by introducing the Yamaha DG-1000 digital guitar pre-amplifier to you and predicting your reactions. (Assuming you're a guitarist, of course; if you're not, you can just read along and have a

new settings? Now you want it bad, right? See. I told you—weird priorities.

The prioritization of glitzy surface features over deep sonic content is something that plagues a lot of us, and I'm certainly no exception. Those nifty-looking, auto-rotating knobs were what first hooked me on the DG-1000, too. In fact, they occupied so much of my attention that it took a while for the overall quality of the pre-amp to register. But make no mistake, that quality is high indeed. Over the course of several sessions with

turning a dial a notch or two beats having to punch your way through countless hidden banks of parameters any day. And that simplicity carries over to the rest of the unit's layout: one 1/4" input (on the front panel), one 1/4" output (on the back panel), one MIDI IN and

▼ **Yamaha DG-1000**



A Knobturner's PARADISE

by mac randall

good laugh at the end.)

If I tell you that the DG-1000 convincingly replicates the sound of several types of tube-driven amps, or that it gives you a tremendous amount of control over every aspect of your tone, you'll probably think, "Hmmm, interesting." If I add that it's fully programmable, and that it fits conveniently into two rack spaces, you'll most likely say to yourself, "That sounds cool, maybe I'll check it out sometime." But what if I tell you that the front panel has old-fashioned pointy knobs on it that look like they just came off a vintage Vox AC30? And that when you change from one program to another, the knobs automatically turn to the

the DG-1000, I gradually realized that this one box contains a small universe of top-notch, tube-worthy guitar tones. If you're looking for an all-purpose addition to your rig, you can't go wrong with the 1000.

Let's go back to the knobs for just a second, though, because they indicate real awareness on the part of the design people at Yamaha. Obviously, they've come to the (correct) conclusion that musicians are getting tired of dealing with those pesky little parameter buttons that became all the rage with the advent of digital devices. Yes, there's an LED display on the DG-1000, and yes, there are up and down buttons that get you from one to another of the 128 memory locations, but most of the tweaking you can do is handled by nine knobs, all of which state their function in no uncertain terms: TRIM (input level), OUTPUT, GAIN, MASTER, TREBLE, HIGH MID, LOW MID, BASS, and PRESENCE. It's refreshing to see a control setup that's so easily graspable;

Yamaha's DG-1000 is that, and much more

one MIDI OUT (on the back panel).

Actually, there are a few other buttons on the DG-1000's front panel, but they're only marginally harder to understand. A bank of eight buttons in the middle of the panel are jointly labeled AMP SELECT. In order, they are: LEAD1, LEAD2, DRIVE1, DRIVE2, CRUNCH1, CRUNCH2, CLEAN1 and CLEAN2. These buttons give you a basic preset "amp type" that you can then adjust to your liking with the knobs: not surprisingly, the lead settings are the most heavily distorted, the clean ones are cleanest, and the drive and crunch explore the areas in-between. Though Yamaha insists that these presets weren't modeled after any particular amp makes, they're definitely shooting for a tube rather than solid-state tone. In general, the first amp types (LEAD1, DRIVE1, etc.) are punchier with more pronounced low end,



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while the second types have a tougher, more trebly bite.

To the left of the AMP SELECT bank is a MIDI button. Pressing it will put you into MIDI mode, which is useful if you're connected up to another MIDI device and want to send or receive data or recall memory settings by remote control. (You can do this last task with a MIDI foot controller, too.) To perform these functions, you also have to press various combinations of buttons in the AMP SELECT bank, which do double duty in MIDI mode. Since I don't have any MIDI devices, this side of the DG-1000 was of little use to me. I mention it to be comprehensive and also because the MIDI button has a secret second function. If you hold it down while at the same time pressing the CLEAN2 and up-arrow buttons, an onboard speaker simulator is activated, which is very useful if you're going direct into a P.A. or recording console. Turning the simulator off is achieved by the same process, except you press the down-arrow button instead. As handy (and great-sounding) a feature as this is, it's not discussed anywhere in the manual, and so I mention it here.


When you first turn the DG-1000 on, the LED display will show a number corresponding to a memory location, the mode light immediately to its left will tell you you're in PLAY mode, and the knobs will automatically rotate to a preset position. (The only knobs that don't move automatically are the TRIM and OUTPUT controls, for obvious reasons.) Change any setting—whether it's a knob position or amp type—and you've entered EDIT mode. These changes won't remain in memory unless you want to store them; that's done by dialing up a memory location and holding down the STORE button for a second. If you want to go back to the original sound instead, press RECALL. The knobs take their time to turn when you're going from one patch to another, but don't be deceived—the preamp makes the sound change immediately, though there is a split-second silence after you press the button.

The best way to use the DG-1000, of course, is to hook it up to a power amp and a big cabinet and get cranking. However, I was more interested in its potential as a recording accessory. As every guitarist with a home studio knows, recording guitar direct sounds lame in most contexts, no matter how many effects you run it through, while

getting a good miked amp sound is a chore—and worse if you have sensitive neighbors. An adaptable preamp can be an ideal way to get around this dilemma, and I'm happy to report that the DG-1000 came through big time. It was necessary to make some substantial sound changes; I found most of the eight presets less than satisfying, and the clean amp types put out far less signal than the over-driven ones (the speaker simulator helped here). But in the end, the tracks I put down sounded so amazingly amp-like and alive that they practically leaped off the tape. Amps? Who needs 'em?

Well, sometimes you do still need them, and so I decided to hook the DG-1000 up to my Dean Markley CD-30 combo, using the effects return jack and thus bypassing the combo's built-in tube preamp (the approach recommended by Yamaha). One problem: Because the Markley's a small and not very powerful amp, I couldn't get it to go above a certain volume. But in every other respect, the 1000 performed very well. At its best, I could hardly tell its tone apart from that of the Markley's regular preamp; at its worst, it sounded like a high-res Xerox copy of a tube pre. The clean sounds lacked a certain tubey warmth but were still appreciably mellow. The lead sounds didn't offer much sustain (so what's a dirtbox for?) but lent a fantastic clarity to chords; LEAD1 had an endearing pinched quality that reminded me of a Fuzz Face.

But where the DG-1000 really excelled was in the intermediate areas between pure and filthy. The crunch settings' reactions to dynamics were impressive, sounding muscular but relatively clean when I played quietly and breaking up in a beautifully tube-like manner when I hit harder. And the drive settings had a down-to-earth grittiness that just begged you to strap on the Tele and do your best Keith Richards imitation. In all cases, the knobs offered real control over a wide sonic range—turn them just a hair, and you could hear the difference.

It would be wrong to say that the DG-1000 is the one-stop answer to all your rig's problems. After all, it's only a preamp, and you still need other components to go with it; at \$999 list, it ain't exactly cheap either. But its adaptability, its user-friendly interface, and most importantly, its great sounds make it an attractive option for both live and studio work. Check it out soon, and when you do, twiddle a few knobs for me. 

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In our Nov. '97 column we explored the inner workings of the Alesis ADAT and offered some troubleshooting tips. This month we'll focus on the ADAT's two most common problems: dirty heads and a defective idler wheel. We'll also delve into the mysteries of ERROR 9, and NOFO (no format) and FULL messages.

The Main Culprit.

Interpolation problems (indicated by excessive flashing of the interpolation LED) and ERROR 7 and 8 messages are most often caused by dirty heads. You can usually get the heads clean enough to cure interpolation problems with a high-quality video cassette cleaner, but after several hundred "drum on" hours of use (i.e., hours with the tape wrapped around the heads) or the problem's progressing to the point of ERROR 7 and 8 messages, you'll probably have to pop the hood and clean the entire tape path manually. (American Recorder

Technologies offers a complete ADAT cleaning kit, the K-171D, for \$69.) To display the number of drum-on hours your ADAT has accumulated, press and hold SET LOCATE while pressing the STOP button.

Be sure to study Alesis' video, titled *ADAT Head Cleaning* (\$19.95), before cleaning the heads manually, as using improper techniques or materials can easily cause misalignment or irreversible damage to the expensive read and write heads. And be forewarned: *Any damage you cause while working on your ADAT will void your warranty.*

Manually Cleaning the Heads.

First, eject your tape, turn off the ADAT, unplug the power cord, and remove the top panel. On the original ADAT, unscrew the thirteen Phillips-head screws that secure the top panel. To remove the top panel on an ADAT XT, unscrew the two screws on each side of the unit near the bottom and the one screw in the middle of the top lip on the back side of the deck. There's no

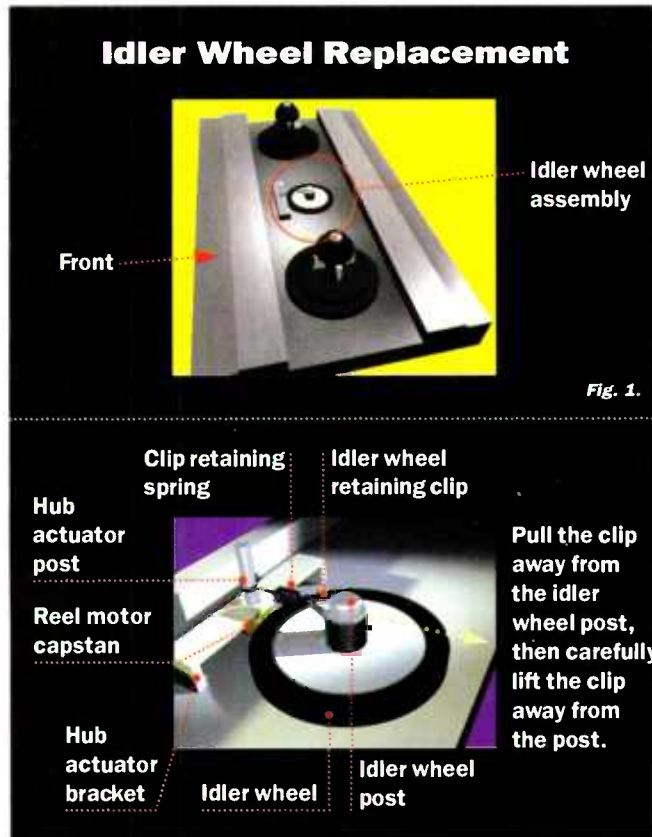


Fig. 1.

need to loosen the rack ears. Gently pull on the sides of the cover to splay it outwards, then lift the back edge upwards, using the front edge as the pivot point.

After removing the ADAT's top panel, note the transport compartment behind the cassette door. Clean the white plastic rollers, tension arms, metal tape guides, and capstan arranged around the sides and front of the head drum with anhydrous (water-free, non-residue) isopropyl alcohol, applied with foam swabs. Never use 71% isopropyl alcohol, as it contains water, which is bad for the ADAT's heads.

You can also use American Recorder Technologies' S721H cleaning fluid (\$8 per two-ounce bottle) on the ADAT's entire tape path. The company's S-711 cleaning fluid (also \$8 per two-ounce bottle) is

An Idiot's Guide to ADAT Maintenance, Part II

Hands-on help for cleaning heads and replacing idler wheels

by michael cooper

Whatever cleaning fluids you use, protect your hands with surgical rubber gloves. Always clean all parts with a side-to-side motion, consistent with the direction of tape travel, instead of up and down.

Never use cotton swabs to clean your ADAT's tape path, since they can leave behind a fiber residue that can clog the tiny heads. I usually use Tech Spray Techswabs (Model 2302, \$9.35 for fifty swabs) for cleaning the entire tape path *except the spinning drum and heads*, for which "wipes" are more effective.

effective but must be used only with their proprietary synthetic chamois swabs, as S-711 will dissolve the materials used in most other swabs. Unlike alcohol, these cleaning fluids can be safely used on rubber parts, such as the pinch roller and idler wheel.

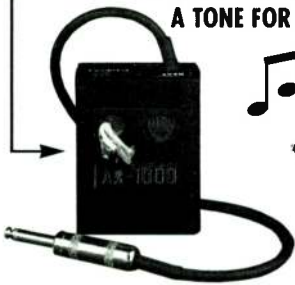
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To the right of the head drum and near the capstan and pinch roller, you'll see what looks like your typical analog tape recorder head. This is the linear head, which also needs to be cleaned with a foam swab dipped in anhydrous alcohol or S721H. Be sure to also clean the stationary, helical groove located below the revolving upper portion of the head stack, being very careful not to touch the heads with your hands or the foam swabs.

The rubber pinch roller can be cleaned with a foam swab dipped in S721H or Formula 409 kitchen cleaner; use the plain formula, with no disinfectant or scent added. Freon (trichlorotrifluoroethane) will work in a pinch but is not optimal for repeated use. Don't use alcohol, which will eventually crack the rubber. After cleaning, remove any residue with a dry swab.

Now you're ready to clean the ADAT's four little copper heads and upper revolving head drum. The heads are recessed inside the four narrow, rectangular, horizontal slots at the bottom of the head drum. For this procedure, use static-free, non-abrasive, "low-residue" or "non-lint" wipes wetted with anhydrous alcohol or S721H. I use American Recorder Technologies WP-1 Wipes (\$5 for a package of 100) or Tech Spray Techclean ® Wipes (Model 2350-100; \$14.35 retail for 100 wipes). Cotton swabs can permanently damage the heads. Even foam swabs can get caught on the heads. Wipes work best.

Fold the wipe over to a small size and generously wet it with anhydrous alcohol or S721H. Never use a dry cloth, as it could scratch the delicate heads. Carefully position the wipe to the right side of the head drum. Very gently press the moistened wipe's uncreased surface against the drum (from top to bottom) and hold it there. Gently rotate the circular green printed circuit board located above the head drum (not the rectangular PC board above that) counterclockwise with your free hand to spin the drum several times; don't move the wipe up or down. Using a clean, wet portion of the wipe, repeat the process until no more debris comes off the heads onto the pad.

Congratulations! You've now mastered cleaning your ADAT. Before you button the ADAT back up, be sure to record and play on a known good tape to verify that the heads are indeed clean. (Refer to last month's "dirty head test" for the correct procedure.) Wait several minutes before inserting the tape to ensure that all solvents have dried completely. Also make sure that no bright lights are shining inside the trans-

port compartment, as this may cause the ADAT to refuse to operate.

If your heads are sparkling clean and you're still getting ERROR 7 and 8 messages, you might have a transport or synchronization problem. The most common transport problem is a dirty or defective idler wheel.

Bad Idler Wheel Symptoms.

The idler wheel in the original ADAT is a plastic disk with a black rubber ring around its circumference. The part costs only \$5.64, including installation instructions. The XT's idler wheel features a longer-lasting, white neoprene ring in lieu of rubber. It costs just \$5 with instructions. On both models the black idler wheel is located between the supply hub and take-up hub (see Fig. 1). When you press **PLAY**, **RECORD**, **FAST FORWARD**, or **REWIND**, the idler wheel engages the appropriate hub to move the tape in the right direction.

The idler wheel eventually becomes coated with tape oxide and other debris, which causes it to lose traction and makes the ADAT increasingly sluggish in rewind and/or fast forward modes. As the problem worsens, you'll get **NOFO** (no format) messages as the tape fails to make proper contact with the heads. If this happens enough times, the ADAT's buffer may fill up and produce a **FULL** message. An **ERROR 9** message means the takeup reel isn't functioning—a condition that could damage your tape.

The rubber/neoprene ring on a good idler wheel will have a dull finish. You can manually scrub it with a foam swab dipped in rubber cleaner, S721H, or Formula 409, and that will sometimes restore its tackiness. But idler wheels are so inexpensive and short-lived (300 to 750 drum-on hours) that it's usually better to just replace the sucker. Don't forget to clean the two hubs where the idler wheel makes contact, using a swab dipped in anhydrous alcohol.

Replacing the Idler Wheel.

First, eject any tape inside the ADAT, power down, disconnect the power cord, and remove the top cover. Refer to the diagrams in Fig. 1 as you follow these instructions.

One end of the idler wheel retaining clip is secured to the idler wheel post above the idler wheel; the other end is secured to the hub actuated post by the retaining clip spring. There is another spring, called the idler wheel spring, under the retaining clip, on the idler wheel post and above the idler wheel. [cont'd on page 77]

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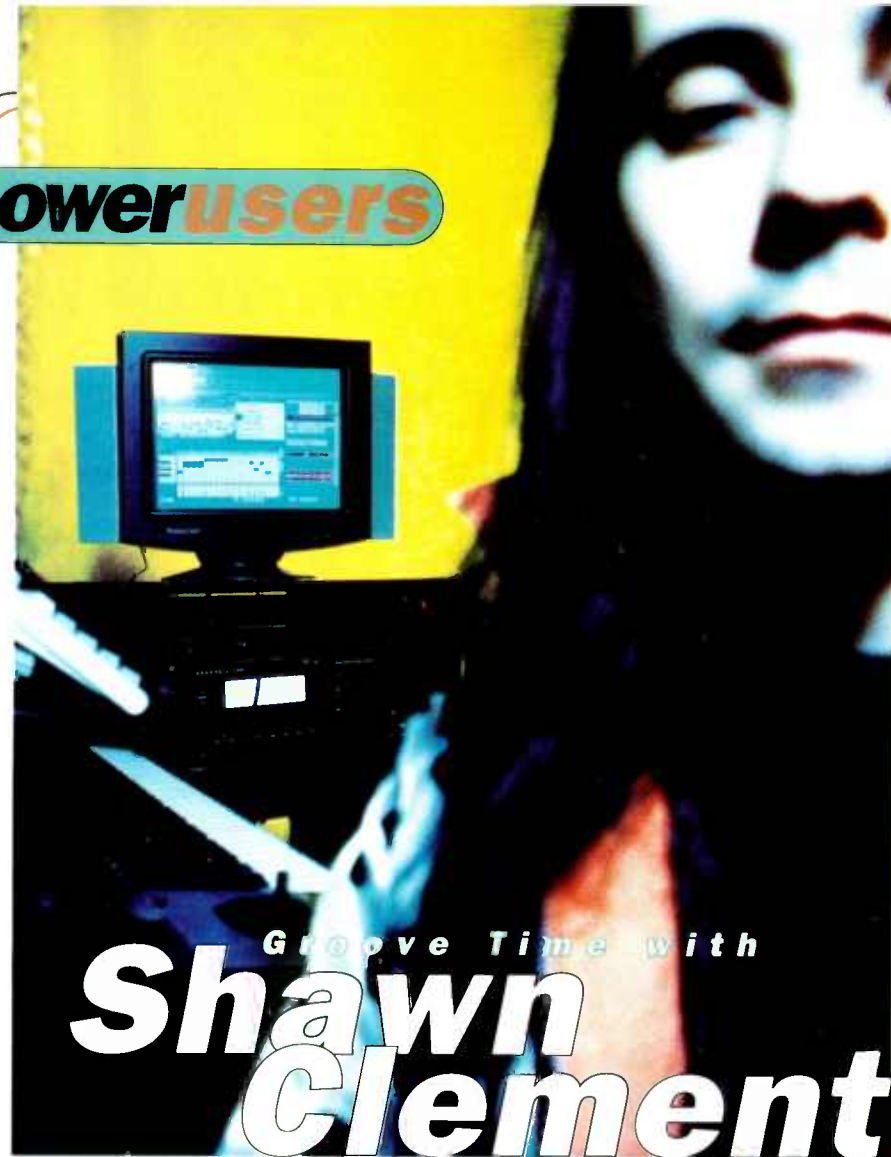
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Groove Time with
**Shawn
Clement**

Holed up at his bedroom studio in L.A.'s San Fernando Valley, Shawn Clement makes music that fills the world's living rooms via their TV sets. He's currently scoring episodes of Fox's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. He's also written numerous specials and features for Showtime, Columbia, and Paramount, plus the occasional commercial—all on a MIDI rig centered around Cakewalk Pro Audio 6.0 sequencing/audio recording software running on a Pentium 133 PC. A few of Cakewalk's editing features are especially handy in helping the composer give his clients exactly what they want.

To illustrate, Clement boots up a techno/hip-hop-influenced spot he recently did for the Beverly Hills Polo Club. When the client sent him the video worktape, a segment from the intro of the U2 song "Mofo" had been dubbed on as a temp track.

"I figured this is the kind of feel they're looking for," says Clement, "so I recorded it into Cakewalk. Then I figured out the tempo, which turned out to be 120 bpm."

To arrive at this figure, Clement created a two-bar loop from the temp track, which was now stored in Cakewalk as digital audio. He then laid the two-bar segment out on Cakewalk's track page. "Basically, I took the loop, stuck it at the beginning of beat 1 of a measure, then listened to the loop against a click track [generated by Cakewalk]. If it sounded too fast, I'd slow down the tempo. If it sounded too slow, I'd speed up the tempo. When I got really close, I took the two-bar segment and copied it to the next two bars [of the track], to see if everything sounded smooth and in time as it

went from the first segment to the second."

Next, Shawn searched his sample library and found a looped drum beat similar to the loop he'd created from the temp track. He recorded this new loop from his sampler into Cakewalk. The one snag was that the loop he'd chosen was slower than the temp track. Clement recalls. "So, I just put the new loop into Cakewalk's STRETCH AUDIO feature and changed its tempo to 120."

Now Shawn had a foundation groove for the commercial—similar to the client's temp track, yet original. From here he began adding other percussive elements, starting with a MIDI drum loop recorded into Cakewalk, again, as digital audio and also time-stretched to 120 bpm.

To make his two new audio loops groove like the temp track loop, Clement called on Cakewalk's GROOVE QUANTIZE function. The process involved a few stages, starting with a visit to a Cakewalk audio processing function called EXTRACT TIMING. "You go into your EDIT menu and select AUDIO," he directs. "Another box pops up and there's a list of functions. One of them is EXTRACT TIMING, which gives you a lot of flexibility," he comments, "because you can pick how defined you want things to be. Do you want to take just the quarter notes from [the audio loop] or get into the sixteenth notes? EXTRACT TIMING takes the audio sample and figures out the increments in that time."

Once extrapolated, the relevant rhythmic data was pasted to a clipboard. Clement then went to the GROOVE QUANTIZE window and went to work on the first of his own audio loops. Rather than select any of Cakewalk's preset quantize templates, he selected the data he'd pasted to the clipboard: the groove he'd lifted from the temp track loop. He used this to quantize the loop he'd created, making it groove like the temp track. He then quantized

**Cakewalk
Pro Audio 6.0
lets you draw
from a feel
without
ripping it off.**

by alan di perna

Dorit Thies

his second audio loop the same way, making it "breathe" with the first loop.

Having married his first two loops, the composer started layering up more MIDI percussion back on Cakewalk's main track page. "I added a kick and snare, some industrial hits, a few more loops, a triangle, some crash cymbals, and a couple of MIDI bass tracks," he recalls, "all GROOVE QUANTIZED to the original [temp track] audio loop."

Through digital audio chemistry, then, Clement created something that felt very close to the groove the client originally had in mind, without ripping off the track itself. To complete the spot, he added two guitar tracks (which were loosely inspired by the entry of the guitar in the "Mofo" intro),

some power chords, and percussive "ka-chunks," all recorded right into Cakewalk.

The software's WAVEFORM EDIT facilities enabled Clement to draw a volume envelope onto the power chords. "Each time the guitar played a power chord, I went in and faded the audio, so it would die down. I didn't want it ringing loud." One last, quick edit of the final power chord made the sound cut off dramatically at the end of the spot, leaving just a trail of echo

to help viewers absorb the sales message.

Getting multiple sampled loops to groove together was once a painstaking process. But as loop-based hip-hop and techno sounds infiltrate mainstream films and television, composers like Clement often have to loop those loops in record time. "And," says Clement, "a lot of the edit features in Cakewalk make orchestrations happen more quickly."

STUDIO TECHNIQUES

[cont'd from page 74] We're going to remove the retaining clip and idler wheel spring so that we can lift the bad idler wheel off the idler wheel post and replace it with a good one.

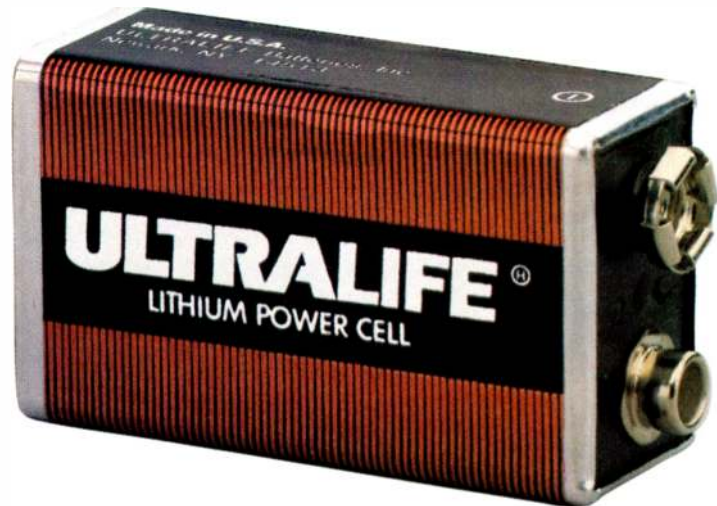
First, pull the idler wheel retaining clip away from the idler wheel post and lift it off the post. Be very careful not to lose the idler wheel spring, which will pop up. The retaining clip spring will probably come off the hub actuator post when you do this, so don't lose it.

Lift the bad idler wheel off the post. Clean any debris around the area with a foam swab moistened with alcohol. Then insert the new idler wheel with its recessed side facing down (i.e., with its short plastic post facing up).

With the new idler wheel in place, slide the idler wheel spring over the post so that it sits atop the idler wheel. Making sure the idler wheel retaining clip is attached to its retaining clip spring, push the retaining clip down over the idler wheel post until it clicks into place on the detent on the post. Finally, grab the hook end of the retaining clip spring with needle-nose pliers and pull it over the hub actuator post. Installation is complete!

Contributors: Michael Cooper is a producer, engineer, and owner of Michael Cooper Recording, a commercial studio in Eugene, Oregon. Call American Recorder Technologies at (800) 777-9580, Tech Spray at (800) 858-4043, and the Alesis product support line at (800) 525-3747.

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World Radio History

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The question heard most frequently on the floor of the Nashville Convention Center during July's Summer NAMM show was "Seen anything cool yet?" Though there were, to be sure, significant new products lurking in the Nashville halls, most seemed well hidden, at least to the untrained eye.

Such was especially the case among guitar makers. Sure, **Fender** had new Strats and **Gibson** had new Les Pauls, and the **Washburns**, **Ibanezes**, **Yamahas**, and **Fernandeses** had a few fresh models as well, though all of them were only variations on old formulas. But then we began hearing mumbblings about the **Lace** booth. It seemed that Don Lace, he of the Lace Sensor pickup, was debuting a line of guitars, so we high-tailed it over there.

What we found was nothing short of revolutionary: seven new electrics (\$899 to \$1,999) brimming with classy design ideas, from contoured bodies with "spined" backs to fingerboards with slanted frets (similar to but not the same as the Novax fanned-fret system). Our favorite was the Helix, the neck of which has a 20-degree twist that's visually arresting, especially if you're looking straight down it; the Lace folks claim this twist follows the natural curve of your hand as it moves up the fingerboard, and though we were skeptical about this, our apprehensions melted away when we felt just how comfortable it was. Not surprisingly, Lace provides the pickups for all their models, and not surprisingly, they sound great as well.

A couple of other offerings were only slightly less unusual. **Dodge** exhibited the Convertible Guitar, basically the neck and body of an



Lace Helix

technology

Just Another

by mac randall & howard massey

NAMM

or **WAS IT?**

We find the nuggets beneath the convention malaise.

electric guitar with a hole in the middle, which can be filled with any one of several interchangeable electronic "modules" (consisting of an output jack, pickups, volume and tone controls, and a pickup selector switch). The entry-level package (\$1,875) includes three modules: a dual-humbucker, a Strat-style and a Tele-style. And **Musicvox** showed its Spaceranger models (\$900-\$1,800), whose stretched-out headstocks and elongated single-cutaway horns earned them the nickname

"mutant," but whose solid feel and warm sound showed they were more than just a novelty. Outstanding among basses was the **Klein K-Bass** (\$2,290 four-string, \$2,460 five-string), which fits a headless, bolt-on Moses graphite neck to an alder or swamp ash body that resembles a wind-withered version of the state of Oklahoma. Odd as the K-Bass looks, its shape is remarkably ergonomic, and its two EMG pickups add sonic class.

In the amp realm, the main story at Summer NAMM was the attempt by several manufacturers to respond to the challenge thrown down last year by **Line 6's** remarkable multi-amp-simulating AxSys 212 (our Feb. '97 Editor's Pick). Line 6 itself debuted the Flexitone (in three sizes ranging from \$799 to \$949), a sort of simplified AxSys, with two dials replacing the vast array of push-buttons on the previous model. Meanwhile, **DigiTech's** new subsidiary company, **Johnson**, was showing off the Millennium Stereo 150 (\$1,595) and Marquis Stereo 100 (\$1,395), two 2x12 "integrated modeling" combos that feature six different amp "voicings" and an onboard programmable multieffects processor. The theme continued with **Peavey's** TransFex Pro (\$1,099), a 130-watt-per channel head featuring analog tube emulation preamp and power amp and a 24-bit stereo effects processor, and **ART's** Rules Breaker DST-830 (\$999), a combo sporting four preamp gain settings and 25 digital effects chains. (Both the Johnson and ART models have tube preamps, a feature that Line 6's prod-

ucts lack.) Even **Fender** got into the action with its Automatic GT and SE amps (both \$299), 25-watt 1x12 combos with five push-button presets for different tones.

Effects-wise, the **TC Electronic** GForce (profiled in this month's Fast Forward, pg. 64) was rivalled in the digital rackmount category only by **Oberheim's** GM-1000 (\$1,899), a two-rack-space monster with tons of features including 33 preset distortion curves, 31-band spectral analyzer, and the ability to run nine effects at once. (A smaller version called the GM-400 is available for just under \$1,000.) **ToneWorks** won the day in the pedal category with four new models, particularly the 301dl Dynamic Echo (\$199), which features a Lo-Fi/Hi-Fi control that lets you alter the delay's frequency response for either tape or analog simulation.

Fishman unveiled a foot controller called the Powerblend (\$TBA) that lets you dynamically blend the sound of your regular electric pickups with the convincing acoustic simulation of their Powerbridge pickups. And **EnRoute Music**

showed a curious item called the Porch Board Bass (\$449.95), basically a piece of mahogany with a pickup attached that plugs into a bass amplifier for low-pitched rhythms.

Other percussive news was more conventional. **Pearl's** SensiTone Custom Alloy snare drums have bridge lugs that attach to the shell at only two points, meaning greater resonance and projection. **Yamaha** debuted a new line of copper shell snares and also introduced two new bass drum pedals, the FP-840 single and the DFP-870 double, which both feature a stabilizing horizontal crossbar that eliminates friction in the hex rod bearings for a smoother feel. **Drum Workshop's** Purecussion line had two new entries designed by Terry Bozzio: the Sound Enhancer kit (\$39), consisting of three accessories—tambourine jingles, a miniature shaker, and **Sabian** finger cymbals—that can be attached to a kick drum pedal, and the Tonal Beater (\$59), a bass drum beater with three interchangeable striking faces (hard PVC, medium felt, and soft felt) that sticks onto any bass

pedal thanks to the wonders of Velcro.

One significant trend at Summer NAMM was the rise of the personal in-ear monitor. Both **Shure** and **Sennheiser** announced their entry into this potentially lucrative market, with other manufacturers rumored to follow shortly. **Samson** showed its new Series One UHF wireless system (prices start at \$450). **Lexicon** used this decidedly guitar-oriented show to debut the MPX R1, a dedicated pedal board MIDI remote control optimized for use with their MPX 1 multieffects processor (our August '97 Editor's Pick). Price is expected to be around \$500. **E-mu** had a slew of new products, including the **E-mu/Buchla** Hand Controller System (expected to be around \$2,000), the first fruit of the company's collaboration with synth pioneer Don Buchla. Unlike other drum controllers, this one uses optical sensors instead of impact pickups, allowing MIDI data to be generated by lightly moving your fingers around the surface.

Korg premiered the Z1 keyboard synthesizer (\$2,500), which is completely software-

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"SONY IS THE ORIGINAL DEVELOPER OF THE MINIDISC FORMAT, AND THAT MAY HAVE HELPED THEM REALLY NAIL IT WITH THE MDM-X4."

LOREN ALLDRIN, PRO AUDIO REVIEW.

As if inventing the MiniDisc format weren't enough, Sony took that technology one step further, with the introduction of the MD Data format rewritable optical disc—the heart and soul of all four-track MiniDisc recorders. It made it possible to record digitally on four tracks instead of two, which in turn led to the creation of the MDM-X4 MiniDisc Recorder. So don't be fooled by imitations. If anyone understands the capabilities of the MiniDisc format, it's Sony.

"SONY HAS DONE A WONDERFUL JOB WITH THE MDM-X4'S EDITING CAPABILITIES. YOU CAN NOT ONLY COPY AND PASTE SECTIONS OF SONGS AND ENTIRE SONGS, BUT, UNLIKE THE YAMAHA AND TASCAM UNITS, YOU CAN EVEN COPY PARTS OF TRACKS TO OTHER TRACKS AT DIFFERENT TIMES AND AMONG SONGS."

MAY 1997, KEYBOARD MAGAZINE.

Sony's exclusive Track Edit function allows you to edit freely over all four tracks, so you can combine the best parts of a multi-track recording to create the perfect take. And with MixWrite you can continually mix four tracks down to one or two, freeing up the third and fourth for additional recording. But best of all, you can use Track Edit to make a digital backup of each track, allowing you to complete as many mix downs as you want, without losing any of your original elements. Listen to the experts, without Sony's exclusive individual track editing you'll be settling for a lot less than the MD format has to offer.

"THE SOUND (OF THE MDM-X4) IS ALMOST AS GOOD AS DAT, AND LIGHT YEARS AHEAD OF CASSETTES."

CRAIG ANDERTON, EQ MAGAZINE.

Sony's MDM-X4 uses version 3.5 of ATRAC, the latest generation MiniDisc technology. It improves the resolution of mid-range sounds and expands the dynamic range even further, so the music you record will stay true to your original performance. And what's more, version 3.5 delivers sound that's as close to DAT as you can get in an MD multi-track. It simply blows away the old cassette based four-track machines, not to mention some of the toughest critics in the business.

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based, meaning that it can use a wide variety of sound-generating technologies such as physical modeling and sample playback. **Roland** is revamping its electronic drum systems with the introduction of new "Trap" and "Stage" drum sets (priced \$1,495 and \$2,595, respectively). Roland also surprised more than a few attendees with their entry into the sound reinforcement market. Three new speaker systems were debuted: the two-way SST-151 (\$399) and SST-251 (\$599), and the SSW-351 Subwoofer (\$599). Roland's **Boss** line is also expanding, with the SP-202 Dr. Sample (\$395), which features eight onboard pads, user-selectable sampling grades, and built-in effects. The looping functions are great—the Dr. can calculate BPM from the sample length, or you can input tempo before sampling via a Tap tempo button.

Fostex is upping the ante for affordable dedicated hard disk recorders with the release of their D-160. Priced at just \$3,995 for the basic system, this provides 16 tracks of CD-quality digital audio recorded onto a removable

2.55 GB hard drive. **Yamaha** unveiled their first professional-level XG tone generator, the MU100R (expected to be under \$1,300), which features dual A-to-D inputs with vocal harmonizer capability. If you own or are considering buying an O2R digital mixer (our October '96 Editor's Pick), you'll want to know about the new version 2.0 software (\$199 as an upgrade; all O2Rs shipped after August have the software installed). New features include six-channel discrete surround sound capabilities on every input, and the ability to control external devices including other mixers, tape and DAW transports, and outboard effect processors.

Alesis and **Studer** unveiled their new 20-bit ADAT recorders, the M20 and the V-Eight. Both products provide full backward compatibility with older ADATs but allow the recording of eight tracks of better-than-CD-quality 20-bit digital audio (along with separate tracks of time code and analog audio for chase-lock and monitoring purposes during shuttling). Prices are expected to be in the \$7,000–\$8,000 range.

Cakewalk, one of the longest-standing developers of Windows-based software, is going into the Macintosh market with a MIDI sequencer called Metro (\$199), which was originally developed and marketed by Macromedia. **Steinberg** announced the availability of its Magneto plug-in (\$399) for both platforms. This applet (which works within Cubase, WaveLab, Digidesign's Pro Tools, or any Microsoft Active Movie-compatible product) adds "soft" analog tape-like characteristics to any digital audio file. And a couple of new companies debuted interesting Windows products: **Mixman** showed their Mixman Studio (\$59), a fun graphic-oriented program that can combine various musical elements (including custom recorded files), complete with pitch shifting and time correction, while those of you looking to master a few Hendrix licks will want to check out **RePlay Technologies'** CD Looper (\$60), a great learning program that lets your computer loop user-specified selections from an audio CD and then slow them down without changing pitch. ♪

DON'T MISS A BEAT

- 212 7/96 **Brit-Pop.** Oasis, Pulp, George Harrison, Blur, Cast, Radiohead
- 213 8/96 **Kiss, The Blue Nile, Ani DiFranco, Perry Farrell, Boyz II Men**
- 214 9/96 **Duane Allman, Vernon Reid & Junior Brown, Red Hot Chili Peppers**
- 215 10/96 **Jerry Garcia, Sonny Rollins, Vinnie Moore, Screaming Trees**
- 216 11/96 **Guitar Trio: Steve Vai, Joe Satriani, Eric Johnson**
- 217 12/96 **Phish, Sting, Graham Maby, Burt Bacharach & Elvis Costello**
- 218 1/97 **Tom Petty & Beck, Iris DeMent, Tony Garnier, Evan Dando**
- 219 2/97 **20th Anniversary Issue.** Eddie Van Halen, Brian Blad, Frogpond

- 220 3/97 **Metallica, Soundgarden, 311, Bush, Ray Davies**
- 221 4/97 **The Artist Formerly Known As Prince, Nuno Bettencourt**
- 222 5/97 **Greatest Songs of All Time.** Ben Folds Five, Richard Thompson
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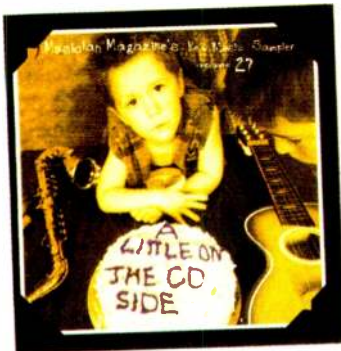


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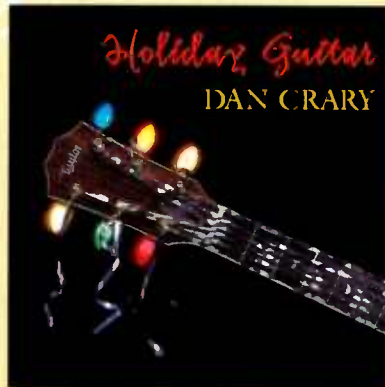
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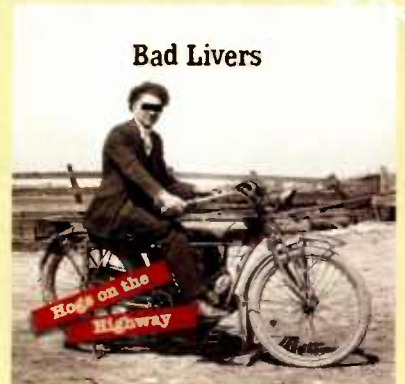
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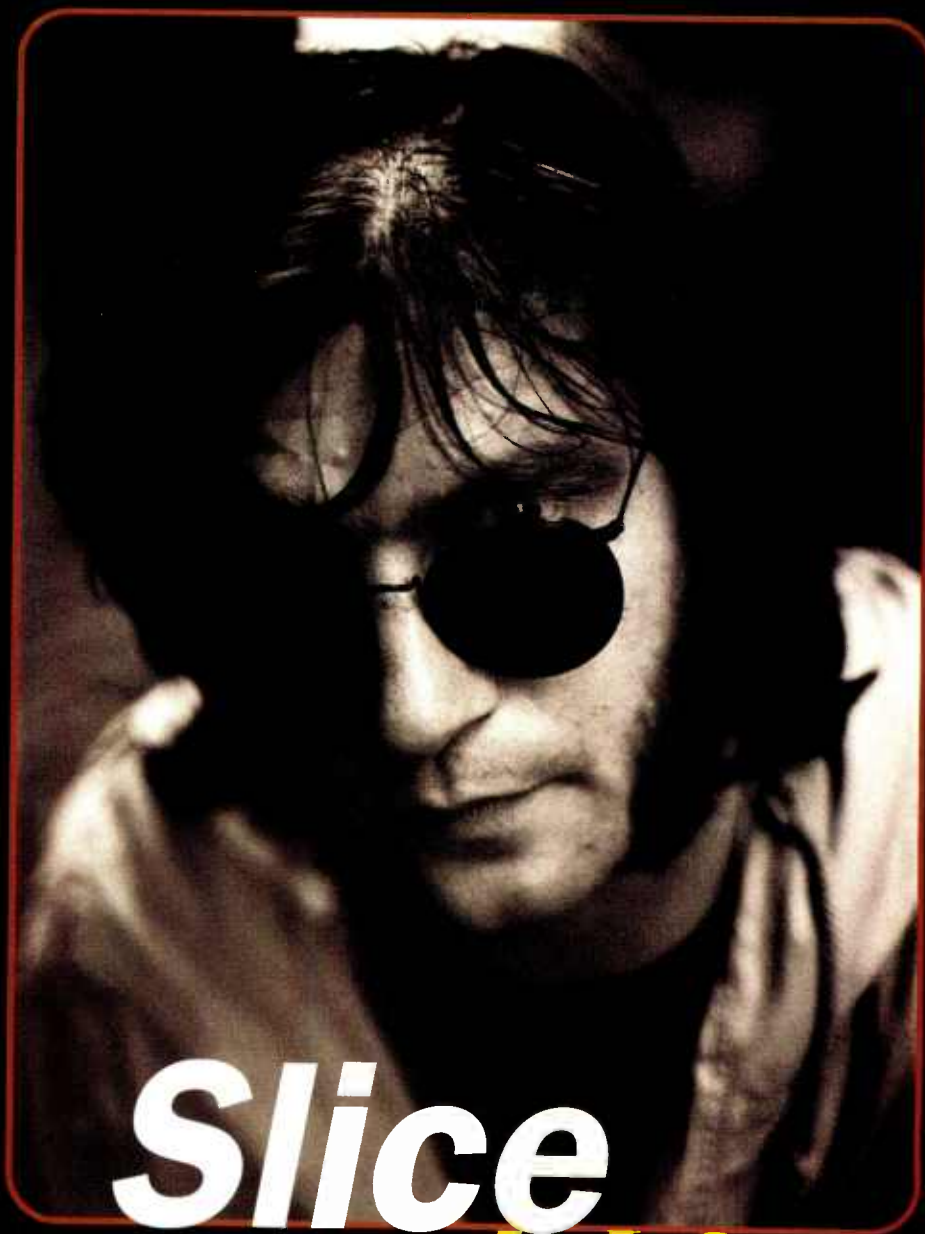
Steve Earle's heroic crusade to rescue Nashville's chrome-plated soul has been going on for so long that it's easy to miss the bigger picture. Earle's not just the most important figure in country music today, he's the most vital singer/songwriter in popular music, period. And *El Corazon* makes the point by reflecting Earle's ability to absorb and reflect traditions as diverse as folk, bluegrass, gospel, rock, punk, and country without conceding a fraction of his vision.

Enough ink has been spilled about Earle's outlaw persona that it's easy to miss his quest to nurture a musical community of kindred souls. It's no accident that *El Corazon* features contributions from Nashville vets Emmylou Harris, Buddy Miller, and the McCoury Band, or that its distinctive sound took shape at the Room and Board studio Earle shares with his co-producer Ray Kennedy. "Ray and I found a way of recording that works well for my voice, with compression taking the place of reverb and other effects. Those old Urei 1176 and 1178 limiters just have a sound: It's not tubes but early solid state stuff, with transistors before there were circuit boards. We've got a lot of CAD mics and a lot of old tube mics; it's very musical."

None of which would matter much if Earle wasn't a master of melody and a storyteller in the finest of Texas troubadour traditions. The music for "Taneytown," clearly inspired by Earle's tour with Neil Young last year, drives his story of racial violence with appropriately Crazy Horse-like ferocity. He stretches for a falsetto on a booming pop rocker, "If You Fall," while conjuring the bigger-than-life romantic sentiments of Roy Orbison—"another guy who made pop records in this town," Earle points out. On "The Other Side of Town" he not only mirrors the cadences and phrasing of Hank Williams' writing while perfectly replicating the sound of his band, the Drifting Cowboys, he even employs needle drops to emulate an old scratchy record. "But not because of the surface noise," Earle insists. "It's getting the rumble of the turntable; that's part of the sound on vinyl records."

Earle's various band lineups record live in the studio, building a sound at once raucous and solidly grooved. Earle's acoustic guitar, often a Taylor twelve-string Leo Kottke model tuned down to C sharp, is a key ingredient in the mix. "You don't hear many Led Zeppelin tracks without an acoustic guitar," he points out. "To me, it belongs on almost everything. But to say 'always' would make that a rule instead of a philosophy, so there are exceptions."

Indeed, the one exception on this disc, "Here I Am," provides a jarring counterpoint, as Steve and his son Justin brew a garage-band sound that reflects its composer's unrepentant attitude toward life. "I felt naked on the record without some kind of personal statement," he confesses. "It was sup-



Jim Herrington

Slice of Life

posed to be a three-piece but my son was standing there. During playback [bassist] Brad Jones said to me, 'There's something about a fifteen-year-old boy and an electric guitar,' so we mixed it."

And there's something about a Nashville pro who knows every songwriting trick in the book yet refuses to cheat his heart for a hit. "What you try to do when you write is take stuff that you're personally right in the middle of, but keep it in terms that everybody can relate to," Earle says. *El Corazon* is the wondrous result. Message to all aspiring songsmiths: *Do try this at home.*—**Mark Rowland**

Steve Earle
El Corazon
(E-Squared/Warner Bros.)

GREEN DAY KICKS BACK

For a minute, the L.A. facility where proto-punk outfit Green Day is tracking its new album looks like any other normal recording studio. But look closer, as bespectacled producer Rob Cavallo spins away for a second in his swivel chair. What's that penciled onto those pieces of masking tape that identify each of the 24 tracks? "Celli"? "Violins"? "?! Maybe we're in the wrong studio after all. No, says Cavallo. It's Green Day, alright. "They really pushed themselves on this one," he grins. "They really tried to discover more about their songwriting."

That's putting it mildly. Drummer Tre Cool, bassist Mike Dirnt, and feisty frontman Billie Joe Armstrong didn't rest on their multiplatinum laurels for *Nimrod*, their latest Reprise slugfest. Instead, they plunged into a strange sonic territory where few of their followers would expect to find them.

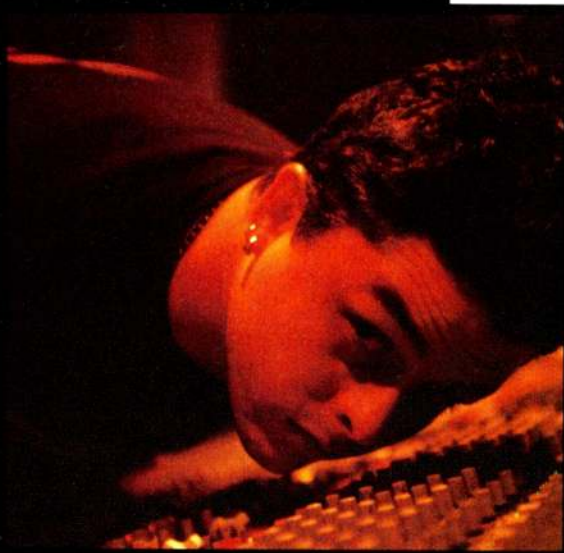
How strange? How about "Redundant," a walking-paced track with all the Top Forty charm of prime Beatles, with a few Kinks flourishes? Or "King for a Day," a ditty about a teenage drag queen that sports a mariachi trumpet bridge? Then there's a Dylanesque "Walking Alone" (with Billie Joe making his harmonica debut); an instrumental sendup of all things surf, called "Last Ride In"; "Good Riddance," a gentle acoustic ballad that's almost Nashville, with strings sweeping in at the end; and a violin-etched "Hitchin' a Ride," which accelerates the stomping riff from "Stray Cat Strut" until it's marching all over your brain. But don't have a cow, man! One spin of the hyperspeed "Platypus (I Hate You)" and "Take Back," and Green Day reclaims the punk rock throne.

Getting to this stage in his craft was all about decompressing, sighs Armstrong as he relaxes upstairs during a break from mixing. About leaving the high-profile touring life behind, returning home to sedate, small-town Berkeley, and playing loud in a rented garage, just like in the old pre-*Dookie* days. Only a year ago the singer was swearing he was through with music forever. "Which is no different from what everyone else goes through," he allows. "Everyone gets sick of their jobs, which are entrapments. You have to find ways to reinvent yourself without getting fucked up in the process. We'd gone from the success of *Dookie* into playing nonstop, and then coming up with another record one year after that, and then touring again. We got to that point where we had lost touch with our own lives."

Mister Cool stops nursing his Newcastle

brown ale long enough to interject. "Things were definitely outta hand with us for a while. Going home was what we needed to do—go home and write millions of great new rock & roll songs."

Armstrong looks about as adult as he sounds these days. Gone are the green-dyed dreadlocks of his early years; his slightly



Billie Joe Armstrong gets into the mix.

Photo: Gershman

messy mop of black hair is trimmed business-meeting short. And he's no longer the weasel-thin punk; the guy's put on a few healthy pounds. But don't be fooled by appearances, or by folksy new numbers like "Walking Alone." "I was writing stuff like that a long time ago, but I kept it to myself, trying to figure it out," he says. "Like I wrote 'Good Riddance' right after *Dookie* came out, but I detached myself from it, didn't really wanna put it out on anything. But it's appropriate for this record because that's what the album is all about: vulnerability, putting yourself out there and being completely honest. Almost too honest."

"I know kids who'll listen to 'Good Riddance' and go, 'This is a pile of shit! This isn't punk rock!' The only thing I can say to that is, before I'm a punk rocker, I'm a songwriter." At the same time, he likes the idea of "reclaiming the throne" of punk. "Yeah! I can see that!" he says, imagining a glowing marquee. "'Green Day, Kings of Punk.' Hell, yeah! I can live with that. You can even put that in the fuckin' headline of the article." —Tom Lanham

Portishead

Portishead (Mercury)

When Portishead's *Dummy* debuted in 1994, the Bristol-based septet seemed to condense thirty years of eclectic styles into one surprisingly weird album. Lush soundtrack strings, the reverberating guitar of James Bond flicks, wobbly hip-hop scratching, and the eerie voice of Beth Gibbons helped comprise a bleak slab of the ice-cold, sci-fi-drenched soul beloved by manic depressives everywhere.

Portishead is a more extreme affair. Gibbons' extraordinary voice has grown darker, nastier, and more spine-tingling, while the new songs vary from grim ("Half Day Closing") to serene ("Seven Months"). No longer offering fuzzy dice like "Wandering Star" and "Glory Box," *Portishead* looks over the cliff, then dives headlong into the abyss.

The group's fondness for old-school sounds continues, with Mini-moogs, Wuritzer and Rhodes electric pianos, Fender guitars, and Vox amps creating what sounds like organic music. But the band's primary weapons are samplers and turntables. Where *Dummy* sampled *Mission: Impossible*, Isaac Hayes, and crooner Johnnie Ray, this time Portishead mastermind Geoff Barrow recorded full horn and string sections, then sampled select bits to vinyl, which was then scratched back to tape. Drum loops were also cut to vinyl and scratched in, along with crackling vinyl distortion. You hear Gibbons' voice pitched above spooky space echoes, static, and vinyl potholes; alternately, the rumbling low end often buzzes like a swarm of angry wasps.

"We made all our own samples this time," Barrow reveals, "so they had to sound like they were from different records from the Fifties to the Seventies, as that's where our favorite sounds come from."

Similarly, a track like "Western Eyes" sounds like a live performance but is really the result of Barrow's remarkable collage technique: Piecing together unused string sessions from *Dummy*, sampled piano and drum notes, and ethereal jazz guitar, the song is both sublime and scary. After Gibbons' sad, cryptic tale over the hypnotic strings, the track closes with a scratched-in vocal of a late-night loser singing, "I feel so cold, all the hookers and gin, this mess we're in." This strange ending creates a surreal moment, like facing a ghost in a dark alley. It's one of many such episodes in this compelling, bizarre album, one that will probably find as many fans as it does detractors. —Ken Micallef

Jacky Terrasson & Cassandra Wilson

Rendezvous (Blue Note)

An album of jazz standards should be a no-lose proposition. Such songs have stood the test of time, and most accomplished



brian gingrich

Steve Ledell

through the line "I will bake a sugar cake . . . for all the boys to see" as the rest of the group simmers in a light Latin groove.

But Terrasson is the star of this recording. His harmonic, rhythmic, and tonal choices repeatedly surprise and delight, from his decision to strum the piano's strings prior to the line "on a magic carpet ride" in "Old Devil Moon" to his use of an ethereal synth pad to back a downright spooky version of "Autumn Leaves," one of the album's three instrumental numbers. ("I'm trying to buy my ticket into film scoring," he explains.)

Wilson's contributions, though not as dazzling as Terrasson's, anchor the mood. She occasionally drags the beat more than she should, especially on "Little Boy Lost," but more often her savvy renditions work well. On two of the tunes, she leaves the final lyric line unfinished, a postmodern touch that will puzzle some and intrigue others.

And on "Tea for Two" she ends the song by softly intoning its original verse—a Terrasson idea that cleverly places the setting after the plot.

Credit producer Bob Belden for helping select the tunes and for granting the performers enough creative space to defy convention. Credit Terrasson, Wilson, and the band for making *Rendezvous* one of the year's most captivating experiences.

—Bob Remstein

Brian Gingrich

The White Rim of Heaven (Alchemy)

The beauty and scope of textural music are vividly realized in Chicago bassist/composer Brian Gingrich's *The White Rim of Heaven*. These seven instrumentals recall the light-and-shadows painting of the Hudson River school, with deft turns of melody and tone illuminating the details of their flow.

This is music with spirit, hypnotic and transcendent, born of Gingrich's fusion of improvisation and canny arrangement. It's a close relative to Brian Eno's ambient works, Steve Reich's minimalism, the slowly uncoiling art rock of David Sylvian, and the sorcery of guitarists Robert Fripp and David Torn.

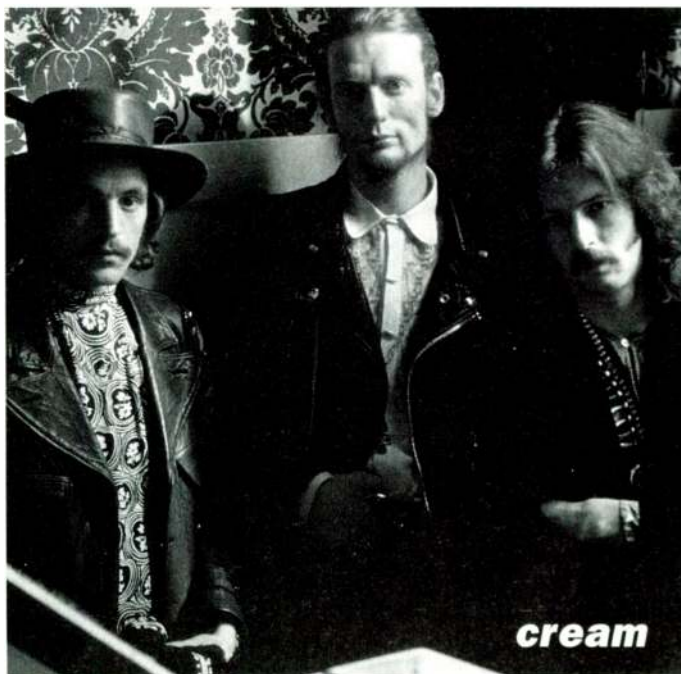
Torn is among the seven musicians who define this CD's terrain. Playing over a tremoring bed of synth pads and rich-toned bass, they conjure rhythmic monoliths of steel and raise tinkling percussive question marks as guitars caper by like gazelles or sing whalesongs. This pa-

rade of ideas and sounds bypasses the two-lane blacktop of boredom.

Gingrich's vision is so fully achieved that it seems the product of players with an intimate bond. Not so. "It was a virtual band," explains Gingrich. "None of the musicians played together. It's a matter of improvising *with* the studio, not *within* the studio. I explore signal processing and try to come up with interesting synth pads and tones. I spend incredible amounts of time twiddling knobs and with the computer. I take parts from the players, set them up just so, and hit Play on the sequencer, and it all spills out like I want it."

Gingrich made the album over two years, spending \$4,500. Many tracks began as samples. For example, he taped Eric Batterman and Leo Murphy playing percussion instruments into his only microphone, a Radio Shack PZM, plugged into a consumer-grade Sony DAT recorder. Later, while composing "Batteries of Last Resort" in the MIDI studio he's based around an Akai DR-4 hard disk recorder, Gingrich transformed Murphy's drumkit into "humongous sounds of beaten junk." He colored Murphy's free improv with prepared piano, kettle drums, and other voices from his Casio SZ-1 sampler and synthesizer modules, creating an air of queasy malevolence.

For the opening cut, "The Knotted Cord," Gingrich sent Torn ten minutes of click track and asked him to improvise. What came back was a virtuoso solo performance, packed with loops, backwards runs, pitch-shifting timbres, and notes that dance with the frantic commitment of a Jules Feiffer cartoon. Gingrich inked in the open spaces with melodies and throbs from his D1'ed fretless Carvin bass, which has a Zeta piezo pickup. Then he added synth pads and percussion samples that edge the listener up to Torn's mid-song flip from gamboling monolog to restless scream.



performers can handle them without working up much of a sweat. But there's the rub: Unless musicians rework these warhorses, a standards album can just as easily become a no-win proposition, where good enough truly never is good enough.

Luckily, when Jacky Terrasson devises the arrangements, lack of invention is not an issue. One of the most exciting pianists in jazz, the thirty-year-old Terrasson has demonstrated a flair for reinventing standards on each of his previous releases. Here, in a thoughtful and often remarkable collaboration with the smoky-voiced Cassandra Wilson, he creates a richly atmospheric disc that generates emotion without resorting to flashy chops displays.

Although Blue Note president Bruce Lundvall's original concept was a simple piano-and-voice duo project, Terrasson and Wilson ultimately expanded upon that idea, incorporating bass and percussion on most of the cuts. But rather than settle for run-of-the-mill bebop, bassist Lonnie Plaxico and percussionist Mino Cinelu lay down simple, understated parts, which allow Terrasson to splash unusual rhythmic licks across a wide-open sound canvas.

At the same time, Terrasson's arrangements and playing not only spice up Wilson's subtle, even subdued, singing, they transform her warmly resonant voice into another instrumental timbre. "Many times, it's like you have the singer, and the band," Terrasson says. "I think it should all be part of one ensemble."

On the best tracks here, that's just what happens. In a pensive, almost sly, reading of Patti Page's Fifties tearjerker, "The Tennessee Waltz," Wilson underplays the heartache while Terrasson thrusts and parries on an old Wurlitzer. Wilson locks onto a similarly seductive, deadpan sentiment on "Tea for Two," making one wonder exactly what she's thinking when she bursts into laughter midway



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This is Gingrich's fourth album, and his first on a label. A former rock and GB (general business) player, he's now employed in the computer industry and restricting his art to the studio. "Trying to take this amount of gear out into a club in Chicago would be a logistical nightmare, to say nothing of finding musicians to play it for virtually no money," he says. "But this music is something I've become obsessed with." Good thing for us. (Contact Alchemy at 61 Surrey Drive, Cohasset, MA 02025 or www.alchemymyrecords.com.)—**Ted Drozdowski**

Cream

Those Were The Days (Polydor)

The genius of Cream wasn't apparent to everyone in their heyday. But over time the best music, like cream itself, has a way of rising to the top, and with the release of *Those Were The Days*, a four-CD collector's box, a serious re-assessment is due.

Listening to the music they made during two tumultuous years, one begins to realize that Cream was really two bands, with two distinct phases: a studio band and a live band, with a heavy blues focus that evolved into a postmodern view of pop as their artistry grew and the technology of the recording studios rose to meet that challenge. "These guys played so loud, it must've been a serious problem trying to record them," says mastering engineer Joe Palmaccio. "Even if a guitar tone sounds thin, you can feel how cranked the amp was. That's a conflict I hear on those early recordings."

The masters Palmaccio had to work with were primarily 15 ips, although the live tapes from March 1968 at Winterland were 7 ips, and it's here that the most significant enhancements were made in terms of air, dynamics, and imaging. "In their original release the live tapes got bumped up to 15 ips with lots of EQ," explains compilation producer Bill Levinson. Palmaccio adds that "there was something about the live recordings that was more 'proper.' Things just sat more properly. Plus you had a big room to swallow up all that amperage. The studio stuff was very tricky to work, especially *Fresh Cream*, because they were so experimental. They would put the entire band in the right channel, vocals in the middle and solos on the left, and when stereo is that whacked out, it's very tough. The hardest part was playing the tape back with the correct EQ curve and azimuth. We tried to present the warm, earthy sound on those tapes and not reinterpret it too, too much. Everything is very bright today; that's the aesthetic we're all used to."

The results show Cream to be masterful studio craftsmen, with a pop feel that extends on the work of the Beatles. (Listen particularly to the studio tracks from *Goodbye*.) As live improvisers, their work could stretch out into experimental noodling, but when clicking on all cylinders ("Crossroads" and "Stepping Out") it was magical. Such was the fearlessness of Cream. No less an improviser than the intrepid Sonny Rollins, perhaps the greatest trio player who ever lived, still backs away from the challenge, because when inspiration ain't there, there's

no place to hide.

Those Were The Days is aimed at collectors and completists, who will appreciate an alternate live version of "N.S.U.," the complete unedited studio jam on "Passing the Time," and perhaps even some demo-quality kittles and bits. (But did we really need Jack Bruce doing his "If I Were King of the Forest" bit on a Falstaff commercial?) What's worth noting is that this box is a prelude for spiffy new 20-bit releases of the original albums and, wonder of wonders, the BBC tapes from Cream's prime in 1967-68, both of which will be coming out next year.—**Chip Stern**

Friends of Dean Martinez

Friends of Dean Martinez
(Retrograde/Sub Pop)

If you stop by the Friends' pad expecting a tumbler of lounge camp and kitsch, you've stepped into the wrong lounge—and an extremely dark and foreboding one at that. FDM are to the surf/lounge nexus what early Procol Harum was to Sixties psychedelia: more of a concept than a group, dedicated less to playing tunes than instrumental soundtracks—invariably slow, usually minor-key, often simultaneously pretty and disturbing.

The Friends' revolving-door policy centers around guitarist Woody Jackson and founder/steel guitarist Bill Elm, though Jackson is absent from six tracks here, including two he co-wrote. There is virtually no "soloing" on these eleven impressionistic vignettes, and the players display admirable technique without ever resorting to licks, let alone chops. "People have heard all that before," Elm points out. "That's not what we're shooting for. Leave a little more space and let the songs create a mood; don't just show people how many notes we can play. Besides, I'm certainly not Junior Brown on the steel."

Elm's steel of preference is the pedal-less type—specifically an early Seventies double-neck Fender Stringmaster, its two eight-string necks tuned to C6 and "an E thing with an extra G# on the end and two low Es to get more drone." Patched between that and his Fender Vibrolux reissue is a collection of stompboxes, including a Roland Space Echo, an MXR phaser, and other dusty devices. But when all else fails, he employs a "spacephone," which is essentially "a big long Slinky, with two phones on the ends. We put one end to the guitar amp and then mike the other."

The quirky but ingenious instrumentation on the band's cover of one of the Beach Boys' more harmonically complex ballads, "The Warmth of the Sun," came together bit by bit, as Elm details. "The basic track was recorded live with two guitars and two drums. Then Chris Cavacas put his organ on, I played the melody on steel, and Ralph Carney decided to throw on bass clarinet and bass harmonica. At the end I decided to double up the vocal intro, which I played with an E-Bow on the steel, so I added another organ myself."

Friends is a most impressive sophomore step in the evolution of a band that's sure to remain inter-

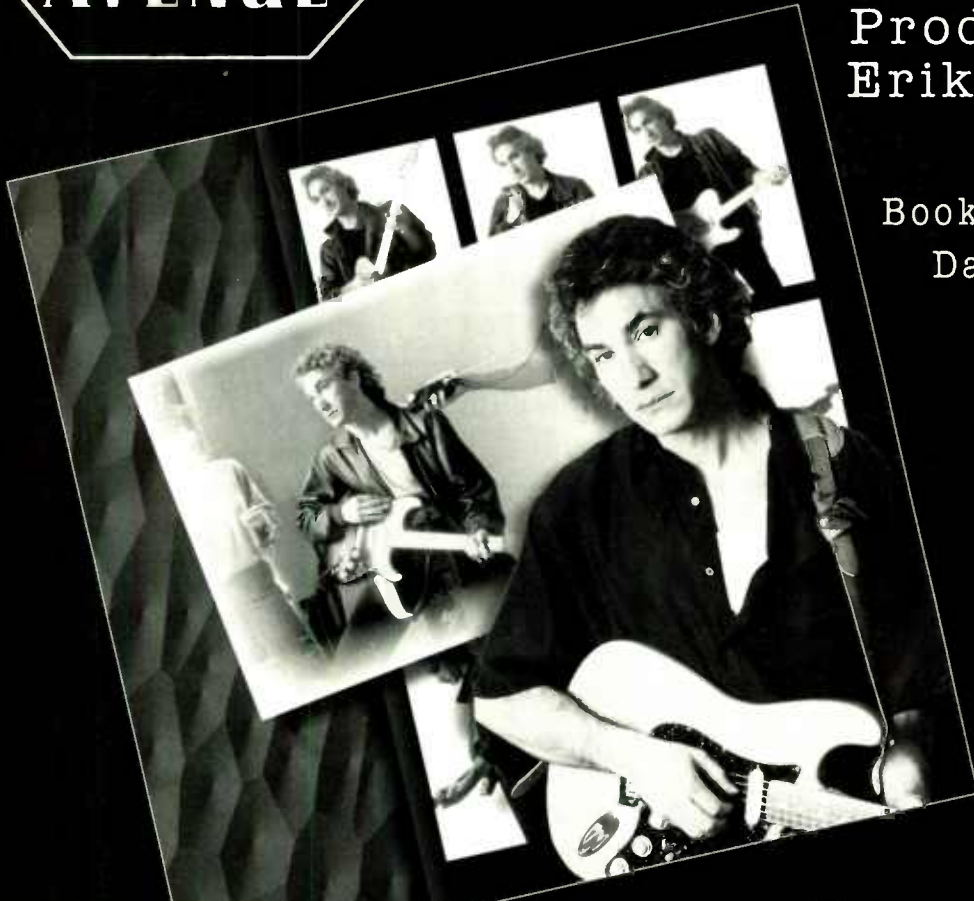
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esting. David Lynch (or Wim Wenders or Robert Rodriguez) should license the next Friends record and then make a film to fit that soundtrack.—**Dan Forte**

Cottonmouth, Texas

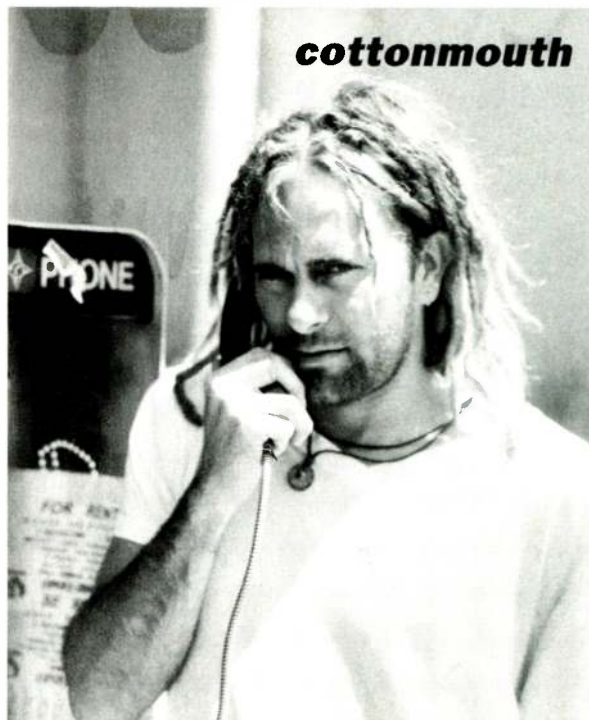
Anti-Social Butterfly (Virgin)

An innovative twist on spoken word CDs, *Anti-Social Butterfly* layers the sounds of jazz-inflected hip-hop from the Decadent Dub Team with writer/reader Jeffrey Liles' reflections on basketball, strip bars, LSD, hospitals, public schools, and the general teenaged confusions of growing up in Dallas. One innovation is that Liles' narrations preceded the recording of the music, allowing the players to respond to his words rather than the other way around, which is more typically the case. And respond they do, with such organic instrumentation as Hammond B-3 organ, Rhodes electric piano, and lap and steel guitar to complement a more predictable array of programmed samples, loops, and beats. The result is at once spacious and properly textured.

Liles tells his Southern Gothic tales in a quiet manner that pulls the listener into his world, and the pro audio soundscapes of producer/engineer David Castell—recorded on a DDA board coupled with the Spectral Synthesis workstation—help further the variant moods. "I wanted it to flow cinematically," Liles explains. "And David is one of those

guys who says 'Is the song deep enough?', not 'Put this gated reverb up on this.'" For his part, Liles tries a variety of experimental vocal approaches, approximating the sound of a voice on the telephone for "Three Dimes" and, for "Back On Meat," the sound of a man, as he puts it, "standing in the middle of a slaughterhouse." All vocals were initially recorded on an old tube microphone: "It sounds more intimate, and storytelling has to be intimate."

Liles' band moniker derives from a hospital stay in which cotton was literally stuffed into his mouth to prevent him from swallowing his tongue during an epileptic fit. Like the rest of the somewhat autobiographical experiences chronicled here, with titles like "Baked," "Ugly People," and "New Epileptic," the name Cottonmouth reflects the strangely uplifting suggestion that bad shit can make the best fertilizer.—**Harvey Kubernik**



Greg Brown

Slant Six Mind
(Red House Records)

Slant six engines are highly regarded for solid, dependable construction that enables them to keep going long after the body of the car has fallen into decay. That makes a fitting metaphor for Greg Brown's rootsy songwriting style and his affinity for acoustic instrumentation. The heavily detailed, folksy narrative theme that coarsens through this record—Brown's fourteenth over all—stands in defiant opposition to the spreading influence of Electronica.

Slant Six Mind builds on the triumphs of last year's *Further In*, with Brown and guitarist/co-producer Bo Ramsey once again capturing the spontaneous feel of the singer's husky baritone and nonsense acoustic guitar strummings while subtly accentuating his less-is-more style with carefully textured lap-steel guitar (by Kelly Joe Phelps) and equally disciplined performances on upright bass, percussion, banjo and fiddle. Recorded on an old Neve 8068 and a Studer 827 in the wooded seclusion of Pachyderm Studios, in Cannon Falls, Minnesota, the record delivers all the warmth and immediacy of a command performance, with an understated mix that draws as much attention to the spaces in between as the notes and words themselves.

Upon cursory listen, this album could be split into two distinct camps—one thick with rumbling, rhythmic tales like "Whatever It Was" and "Hurts So Nice," the other pregnant with gentler, introspective yearnings like "Vivid" and "Down At The Mill"—but after a few listens, you'll find that engineer Tom Tucker's bare-bones treatment harkens

back to a bygone era, focusing on Brown's rich, whiskey-soaked vocals and the placement of individual instruments in the stereo field—as directly requested by Brown. "The day Greg and I sat down and had our preproduction meeting, he told me that the kind of sound he was hearing was Muddy Waters' *Folk Singer*, which was the first time that he had really spoken that clearly using a reference," recalls Ramsey. "So I called Tucker and told him what Greg was hearing, and Tucker told me that he used to work at Chess Studios—it was his first job. He worked with Ron Malo, the engineer for Chess. That just freaked me out. So he knew exactly what we were talking about."

The Waters aesthetic is best applied on the frolicking "Wild Like A Sonny Boy," with a non-stop, impromptu banjo lead (played by Bob Black) that Ramsey likens to a barn dance on acid; and on "Dusty Woods," which finds Brown evoking the vision of a sweaty, hungover Robert Johnson writing "Hellhound On My Trail" in the back of a wagon. Brown's trembling voice (miked with a Neumann 49) and his growling Fifties Gibson CF100 cutaway (captured with a Neumann CMU 563 stereo tube mic and a Demeter tube DI) create the ominous mood, while Phelps' plaintive slide work and Gordon Johnson's meaty bass swells cause it all to slide in and out of consciousness.

According to Ramsey, the influence of the woods played a great role in the making of this record. "There's a lot of woods where Greg comes from, down there in southern Iowa, by Ottumwa, close to the Missouri border," says Ramsey. "There are places in Iowa that aren't towns, but they have a name. It's real funky country, and that's kind of where Greg's whole deal comes from." Sounds like a great place.—**Michael Gelfand**



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productindex

Here's our product guide which lists the equipment and page number where the players talk about the gear they use. Feel free to call or fax the manufacturers listed below for specific info on what the best players play.

AKAI 7010 Soquel Dr., Aptos, CA 95003, (800) 433-5627: samplers, **40**; DR-4 hard disc recorder, **87**
ALESIS 3630 Holdredge Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90016, (310) 558-4530: ADAT, **24**; SR-16 drum machine, RA-100 power amp, **26**; ADAT, **73**; ADAT M20, **82**
AMERICAN RECORDER TECHNOLOGIES 4394 Los Angeles Ave., Simi Valley, CA 93063, (800) 777-9580: S721H cleaning fluid, S-711 cleaning fluid, **73**; WP-1 wipes, **75**
APPLIED RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY 215 Tremont St., Rochester, NY 14608-2366, (215) 436-2720: Rules Breaker DST-830, **79**
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BRIAN MOORE GUITARS Route 22, Brewster, NY 10509, (800) 795-7529: TC/4 bass, **64**
CAKEWALK MUSIC SOFTWARE 44 Pleasant St., Box 760, Watertown, MA 02272, (617) 926-2480: Pro Audio 6.0, **76**; Metro, **82**
CARVIN 12340 World Trade Dr., San Diego, CA 92128, (619) 487-1600: bass, **87**
CASIO 570 Mt. Pleasant Ave., Dover, NJ 07801, (201) 361-5400: MT-540 keyboard, **26**; SZ-1 sampler, **87**
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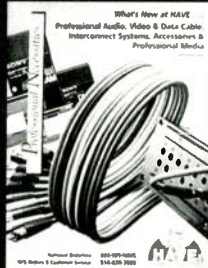
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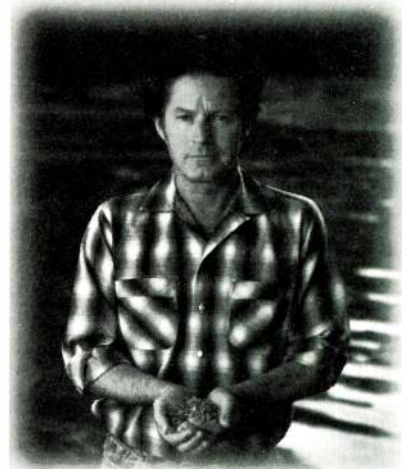
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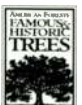
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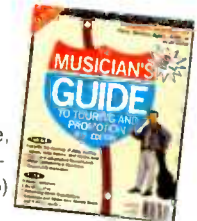
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Turns out it's a nationally televised fundraiser for Happy Valley, a halfway house for recovering nymphomaniacs. All the major labels will be in attendance, and I'll be sharing the bill with a new band from Columbia, South Carolina.

After driving all night, a hundred miles from the gig, my ten-year-old van throws a belt. Even worse, according to Cecil the tow-truck driver, it has a clogged catalytic bypass valve. I miss the gig, the other band gets signed, several of the halfway house residents appear in the band's first video, and I spend the night at Cecil's Garage.

Being an original, well-rehearsed band or artist is great, but first you have to make it to the gig: Remember, there are two types of vehicles—vans and everything else. And there are two types of vans—expensive new ones and expensive old ones.

Buying a New Van. Get what you need, not what you want. Find a reputable dealer—ideally, one who's dealt with other bands—and explain to him or her what you'll be using the vehicle for. (Inside tip: If you live on the East Coast, call Smith Stokes in Reidsville, North Carolina, at [800] 255-4595.)

Used Vans. First, never buy a van from "Honest Al" at the corner lot. Buy from individuals, or look for a van that's been used and maintained well by a day care center, a special school, or Happy Valley. If you're considering a used break truck or an ambulance, remember that Cecil also has recurring dreams. One of them involves Tanya Tucker and a Jacuzzi full of Roman noodles, but the other and even more pleasurable one involves towing your 1975 hearse into his shop and installing a new transmission a week before he's due to make a house payment.

Seek out Dodge Ram vans with a 318 engine; they're virtually indestructible. (Mine has 332,000 miles on it!) Before you buy, check underneath for oil leaks and worn parts. Better still, have a garage check it out. For the price of a six-pack and a Jeff Foxworthy tape you'll save yourself a lot of heartache later.

Make sure the van has A.C.—working A.C. Otherwise you'll be driving a four-wheeled sweat lodge, with your friends in the back loudly sharing their feelings. Try to get a van without a lot of windows. Windows may help if the A.C. is busted, but they also turn your wheels into a display case for thieves. And don't advertise the name of your group on the outside of the van, unless you want to tell the world: "This is a van full of easily pawnable musical equipment!"

Change your oil often. And don't buy cheap gas or tires.

Buying and maintaining a reliable vehicle is only slightly less exciting than wrapping mic cables. It won't get you groupies or a record deal. But it will get you to the gig safely and, most important, decrease the odds of spending another Saturday night with Cecil.

—Rev. Billy C. Wirtz

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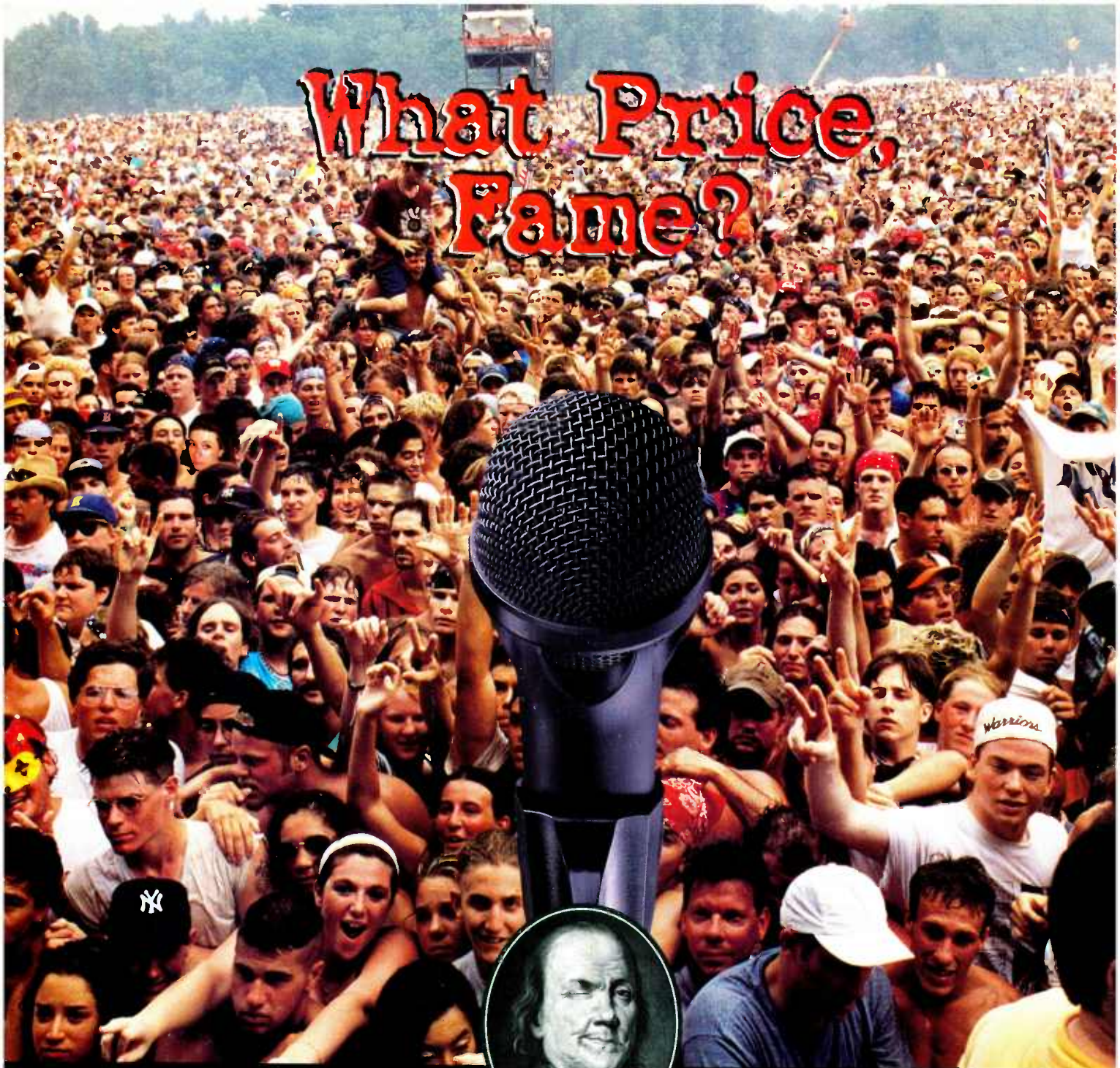
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